



No. 01/14

April 2014

From the Ambassador's Desk

Dear Friends,

As this is the first issue of the year, may I take this opportunity to wish you a happy and prosperous 2014? We have just come through one of the mildest winters the Netherlands has seen in a long time. The spring has made a promising start. Arguably, spring is also the best time to be in the Netherlands!

I am happy to get back to you with this issue which covers events from October 2013 to March 2014.

There have been some useful official and Ministerial level interactions during this period. Dutch Foreign Minister Mr. Frans Timmermans had a meeting with the Indian External Affairs Minister Mr. Salman Khurshid on the margins of the ASEM-11 Ministerial Meetings in New Delhi on 11 November 2013. The two Ministers also met recently on 25 March 2014 on the margins of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague. During his recent visit to The Hague, the External Affairs Minister also had a meeting with Her Majesty Queen Maxima. Ms. Sujatha Singh, Foreign Secretary was also a part of the Indian delegation for the NSS Summit. The Dutch Minister of Health, Sports and Welfare Ms. Edith Schippers had a successful visit to India in end January 2014. She had fruitful discussions in the fields of health, sports infrastructure development, coaching, training systems, training of referees for various sports disciplines, sports management etc. During her visit to India, two Memoranda of Understanding had been signed, one in the field of cooperation in the field of healthcare and public health and the other in the field of sports. Political Director level talks were also held between India and Netherlands on 14 March 2014. Additional Secretary (Europe West) in the Ministry of External Affairs had discussions with her counterpart in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Additional Secretary (Europe West) also called on Secretary General in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Early in January, we received the good news from Delhi that the Deputy Mayor of The Hague Municipality, Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh had been conferred the Pravasi

Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) for the year 2014. The prestigious PBSA has been awarded for the first time to a member of the Surinami-Hindustani community in the Netherlands.

We are grateful to the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the very successful “India Focus Day” hosted by them on 21 January 2014. The function was well attended and a useful exercise in taking forward India-Netherlands relations.

The 65th Republic Day of India was celebrated with the traditional flag hoisting ceremony at the Gandhi Cultural Centre in The Hague on 26 January 2014. Our Reception for the Dutch dignitaries, the Diplomatic Corps, the diaspora and others, which was held on 27 January 2014 was, by all accounts, extremely well attended.

With the arrival of the new Director of the Gandhi Centre in November 2013, the tempo of activities at the Gandhi Centre has picked up. Hindi classes have been resumed. Yoga and Kathak dance classes are now being held on Saturdays also. It is gratifying that the numbers attending these regular classes as also those who attend functions at the Gandhi Centre is on the rise.

During the last four-five months, I have also had the opportunity to travel to different parts of the Netherlands. I have had meetings with Mayors, Rectors, Professors of Universities, editors of print and electronic media and key officials of centres of excellence in different fields including water management, dairy, energy etc.

Back in India, we are now very much in the election mode. The electoral process, comprising nine phases of voting in 543 constituencies across the country, from 7 April to 12 May 2014 will culminate with the announcement of results on 16 May 2014. By the time the next issue of this publication comes out, the new Lok Sabha would have been constituted.



(R.N. Prasad)

Ambassador of India

Photo Feature



External Affairs Minister, H.E. Mr. Salman Khurshid with the Dutch Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Mark Rutte during the NSS 2014 in The Hague



External Affairs Minister H.E. Mr. Salman Khurshid with Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Maxima of the Netherlands during the NSS 2014 in The Hague



Prof. Amartya Sen being awarded the Honorary Doctorate by the University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht on 29 January 2014



Ambassador of India with Prof. Dr. Amartya Sen at the reception following the conferment of Honorary Doctorate on Prof. Sen by University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht on 29 January 2014.

Visit of CII delegation

A 9-member CII delegation led by Shri Girish Ramachandran, Corporate Vice President, Tata Consultancy Services visited the Netherlands from 1-2 October 2013. An MoU with VNO-NCW (Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers) was signed during the visit. The CII delegation also attended the 8th Edition of the annual Netherlands-India Business Meeting. The event was organized by ING, KPMG and the Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce and Trade (NICCT). The Director General, Foreign Economic Relations in the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Chief of Mission from the Mission participated in the event.

Gandhi Jayanti celebration

The Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Foundation (Stichting Standbeeld Mahatma Gandhi), Amsterdam, celebrated Gandhiji's birthday on 2 October 2013. Members of the Indian and Surinami-Hindustani community attended the function. Bhajans were sung by school children who also recited quotations of Gandhiji. This function is being celebrated annually since 1999. The Mission was represented by the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Gandhi Memorial Day 2013

The 5th Edition of the Gandhi Memorial Day was organized by the Foundation "Hum Hai Hindustani" at Delft on 05 October 2013. On this occasion, the Guest of Honour was Ms. Ela Gandhi, grand-daughter of Mahatma Gandhi. The Deputy Chief of Mission represented the Embassy. The Deputy Mayor of The Hague was also present on the occasion. Ms. Ela Gandhi gave a speech about the ideals of Gandhiji.

Indian Film Festival The Hague (IFFTH)

Third edition of the annual Indian Film Festival was organised by the Foundation Indian Film Festival The Hague from 02-06 October 2013. The festival marked the 100 years of the Indian Cinema. At the opening ceremony, a Marathi film "Touring Talkies" was screened. The event was very well attended.

Durga Puja celebrations

Durga Puja was organized by Kallol, an Indian diaspora association in Voorschoten from 11-14 October 2013. Ambassador of India was the Chief Guest at the event. The event was also attended by the Mayor of Voorschoten. During the concluding ceremonies on 14 October 2013, a Kathak dance performance was presented by the Kathak Dance Teacher from Gandhi Centre.

Tata Consultancy Service (TCS) Marathon in Amsterdam

The 38th edition of the Amsterdam Marathon took place on 20 October 2013. Since 2011, this event is being sponsored by TCS. About 42,000 runners from all over the world and from all age-brackets participated in the 1km (for children), 8km, half marathon and full marathon. The Deputy Chief of Mission attended the opening ceremony and also took part in the half marathon.

Diwali celebrations

The fifth edition of the Indian Diwali Festival organized by Diwali Festival Foundation was celebrated at Amstelveen on 26 October 2013. Mayor of Amstelveen and Ambassador of India were the Chief Guests at the event. Many cultural events were organized on the occasion.

The second edition of the Indian Diwali Festival was organized by the United Dreamz Foundation in The Hague on 02 November 2013. An impressive cultural event was presented on the occasion by artists from Surinami-Hindustani community.

On 16 November 2013, a Diwali Function was organized by Gandhi Centre of the Indian Embassy with support of prominent Indian and Surinami-Hindustani organizations. A total of about 400 guests were present at the event. Many cultural programmes were also organized on the occasion by artists from Surinami-Hindustani and the local neighborhood community.

Indian Dance Festival

An Indian Dance Festival took place from 18 October - 02 November 2013 at the Korzo theatre in The Hague. The Kathak Dance Teacher of the Gandhi Centre gave a performance during the programme titled "Sharad Utsav" on 19 October 2013. It was highly appreciated by the audience comprising predominantly Dutch and Surinami-Hindustani community.

Meeting between EAM and Dutch Foreign Minister

Foreign Minister of the Netherlands Frans Timmermans met External Affairs Minister of India on 11 November 2013 on the margins of the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi and discussed bilateral issues of mutual interest.

Visit of Indian delegation from IIM, HPCL

A 9-member delegation sponsored by Indian Institute of Management, Kolkatta comprising senior managers from Hindistan Petro Chemicals Limited, Rashtriya

Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd, GVK Projects and Technical Services Ltd, visited the Netherlands from November 5-7, 2013 as part of the foreign study module to certain Northern European Countries. The group was led by Professor Ambuj Mahanti of IIM Calcutta. The Commercial Section of the Mission facilitated their visit to two prominent companies in the Netherlands [M/s Vopak, which is the world's largest independent tank storage provider, specializing in storage and handling of liquid chemicals, gasses and oil products and Afval Energiebedrijf (AEB) a waste management company in Amsterdam]. The delegation had interactions with officials of the Embassy. Certificates of completion of course were handed over to the participants by the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Participation of Coir Board of India at the International Horticulture Trade Fair 2013

The Coir Board of India, along with five other companies, participated in the fourth edition of the International Horticulture Trade Fair held at the EXPO Haarlemmermeer from 6-8 November, 2013. The Indian companies exhibited various coir products from India like coir pith, coir netting for strengthening of embankments, coir mats etc. The stands of the Indian companies received a large number of Dutch visitors and enquiries were made regarding the products exhibited by them. Over three hundred exhibitors participated in the Fair, encompassing over 34000 m² exhibition space.

Foundation for Critical Choices for India (FCCI) Seminar

A seminar on 'Functioning of Coalition Governments in India & relevance of Dutch experience' organized by the FCCI took place on 23 November 2013 at Hotel Van der Valk, A4. There were presentations by Dr. Vasant Moharir on "Functioning of Coalition Governments in India at the Centre" and by Mr. Eric Niehe, Former Dutch Ambassador to India & President Nyenrode Institute on "Functioning of Coalition Governments in the Netherlands and its possible relevance for India". This was followed by a panel Discussion on "Enhancing Effectiveness of Coalition Governments in India: Issues, Challenges & Solutions" which was chaired by Moderator Mr. Ram Lakhina, President Emeritus FCCI. The panel included the above-mentioned speakers and Professor Pralay Kanungo, Chair of Modern India Studies, University of Leiden and local politicians. Embassy was represented by DCM.

Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) Annual Meeting

On 10-11 December 2013, the 25th annual meeting of the Governing Council of the Common Fund for Commodities (CFC) took place in The Hague. India was represented by Shri J.S. Deepak, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce, as Governor of CFC.

Concert by Choir of the American Protestant Church at Gandhi Centre

On 13 December 2013, a Concert by Choir of The American Protestant Church of The Hague featuring soloists from various Musical Conservatories of the Netherlands presented the Highlights of Christmas Oratorio by J.S. Bach was held at the Gandhi Centre.

Celebration of Festival of Lights in Utrecht

On 15 December 2013, Stichting India Nederland Suriname (INS) along with Stichting ASHA with support from Municipality of Utrecht celebrated the Festival of Lights. Many cultural programs were organized on the occasion.

Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) 2014

The Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs conferred the 2014 Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award (PBSA) for the Netherlands on Deputy Mayor of The Hague Municipality, H.E. Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh, a highly regarded leader of the over 220,000 strong Surinami-Hindustani community.

India Focus Day

On 21 January 2014, the Asia and Oceania Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized an event titled "Focus on India" as part of the "Azië Carrousel" which literally translates "Asian Merry-go-round". The last such event with focus on India was organized in 2008. The event was extremely well attended. There were three panel discussions on (i) Indian & Dutch perspectives on the bilateral relationship (ii) Development of human capital and (iii) Maritime Security respectively.

NICCT New Year Reception 23 January 2014

The Netherlands India Chamber of Commerce and Trade (NICCT) organized a New-Year Reception with the theme "Strengthening Economic and Business Relations between India and the Netherlands" on 23 January 2014. Ambassador of India was one of the keynote speakers.

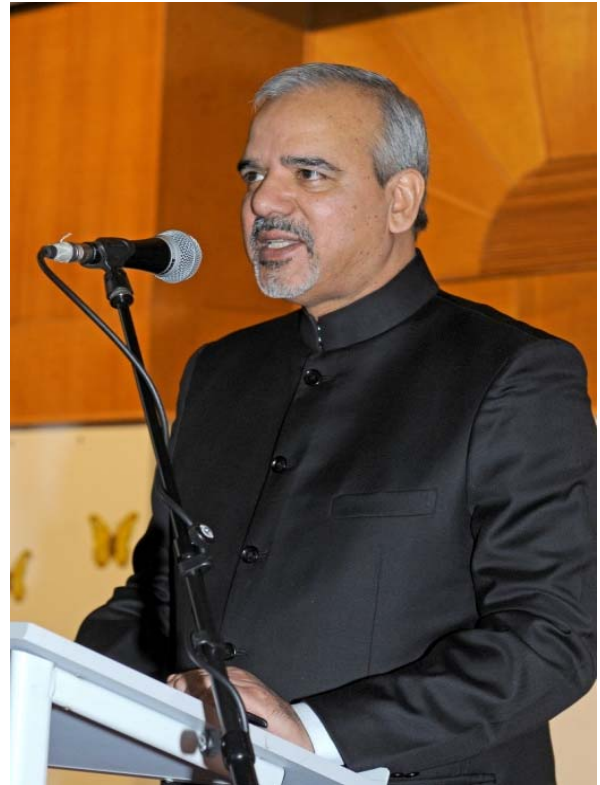
65th Republic Day of India

The 65th Republic Day of India was celebrated at the Gandhi Centre, The Hague on January 26, 2014. The Indian national flag was hoisted by the Ambassador of India. This was followed by the singing of the national anthem. The Ambassador then read out the traditional Eve of the Republic Day Message of the Hon'ble President of India. Apart from the officials of the Embassy of India, the function

was attended by the Indian diaspora and Surinami Hindustani Community. The event was well attended by members of Indian diaspora and the Surinami-Hindustani community. A reception for Dutch dignitaries, members of the Diplomatic Corps and the Indian diaspora and the Surinami Hindustani Community and friends of India was hosted on 27 January 2014.



Flag hoisting at Gandhi Centre



Ambassador Prasad reading the President's Message



Ambassador with Mr. Govert Bijl de Vroe Director of Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands and Mrs. Loes Bijl de Vroe

Conferment of Honorary Doctorate Degree to Prof. Amartya Sen

An impressive convocation ceremony was held on 29 January 2014 to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht. On this occasion, eminent economist and Nobel laureate (1998) Prof. Amartya Sen was awarded the Honorary Doctorate degree along with Prof. Carol Ryff and Prof. Joan Tronto for their significant contribution to the development of Humanistic Studies. Ambassador was invited to the ceremony as a special guest by the Members of the Board of the University. Ambassador hosted a lunch in honour of Prof. Amartya Sen at Embassy Residence on 30 January 2014.

Rotary Club meeting, 04 February 2014

Ambassador Shri R.N. Prasad delivered a talk on 'India and India-Netherlands Relations' at a Rotary Club event held in The Hague, Den Haag on 4 February 2014. This was followed by a Question and Answer Session which covered various issues.

Lecture at Gandhi Centre

On 28 February 2014, Prof. Pralay Ranjan Kanungo, ICCR Chair of Contemporary Indian Studies at Leiden University gave a lecture on "Relevance of Mahatma Gandhi in Contemporary World" which was followed by a Q&A session.

Panel discussion on "Empowerment of Women"

On 08 March 2014, a panel discussion on "Empowerment of Women" was organized at the Gandhi Centre by the Indian Ladies Club in association with the Indian Embassy Ladies Club. Mrs. Swarupa Reddy from the Indian Embassy was one of the panelists.

Political Director Level Consultations

Political Director level consultations between India and the Netherlands took place on 14 March 2014. Ms. Ruchi Ghanashyam, Additional Secretary (Europe West) had interactions with her Dutch counterpart Mr Karel Hartogh, Director, Asia and Oceania Division of the Dutch MFA. Ms. Ghanashyam also called on Ms. Rene Jones-Bos, the Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Netherlands.

Holi celebrations at Gandhi Centre

To mark the festival of Holi, a cultural programme was organized at the Gandhi Centre on 14 March 2014 where the Kathak Dance teacher Hari, his wife Chetna and the students learning Kathak dance performed.

Nuclear Security Summit 2014

The Third Nuclear Security Summit (NSS 2014) took place on 24-25 March 2014 at the World Forum in The Hague. India was represented by a 7-member led by the EAM and including the Foreign Secretary of India. EAM made a plenary statement at the Summit in which he emphasized that nuclear terrorism and clandestine proliferation continue to pose a serious threat to international security. EAM welcomed the galvanising role that the Nuclear Security Summit process has played in raising awareness of this threat and in promoting national actions and international cooperation.

On the margins of the Third Nuclear Security Summit, EAM had a meeting with Her Majesty Queen Maxima and the Dutch Foreign Minister Mr. Frans Timmermans.

ICT Delegation from the State of Kerala

A 15-member delegation of ICT companies from the State of Kerala led by the Principal Secretary (Industries & IT) visited the Netherlands on 17 March 2014. In a meeting organized by the City of Amsterdam the delegation was given presentations by different speakers on ties between Amsterdam and India, investment climate in the Netherlands, taxation advantages of the Netherlands, strategy on how to enter the European market, trends in the IT market in the EU etc. The seminar was followed by a networking session with Dutch companies.

ICT Delegation from the State of Gujarat

A 14-member IT delegation from Gujarat led by Shri Pankaj Shah, President Gujarat Electronics and Software Industries Association visited the Netherlands from 15-17 March 2014. On 16 March 2014, they participated in a Business Seminar organized by Stichting India Netherlands Suriname (INS) at Utrecht.

S&S Consultants BV Amsterdam in partnership with the Netherlands Business Support Office, Ahmedabad organized a daylong session for the delegation at Amsterdam which included presentations from Ms. Jolanda van der Aart, Amsterdam in Business and Mr. Eric van Pelt from Netherlands Foreign Investment Agency. There was also a presentation from M/s S&S Consultants on How to Start a Company in the Netherlands which was followed by a presentation by Mr. Pankaj Shah, President GESIA.

Activities of the Gandhi Centre



Samarpan', a Bharat Natyam presentation by Indu Panday, Anuradha Pancham and Usha Kanagasabai at Gandhi Centre on 21 February 2014



'Prerna' an open stage programme aimed at inspiring and motivating talented dance artists on 22 February 2014



'Ras Rang' – Kathak recital to welcome the festival of colours 'Holi' by Hari, Chetna and students of Gandhi Centre