

Embassy of India

The Hague

Press Release

June 16, 2019

Representatives of Dutch armed forces take part in largest ever yoga day celebrations held in prestigious Dam Square of Amsterdam

The prestigious Dam Square Amsterdam was witness to the largest ever yoga celebrations in the Netherlands on Sunday, June 16. A great multitude gathered in front of the Royal Palace on Dam Square in the heart of the capital city of the Netherlands to mark International Yoga Day.

The event was inaugurated by the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh Mr. Jai Ram Thakur. Himachal Industries Minister Bikram Singh, Ambassador Venu Rajamony, International Cricket Star Suresh Raina, Dutch actor, model and photographer Ms. Micky Hoogendijk; Mr. V.K. Arora, Chairman and Managing Director of LT Foods and Dr. Deepak Mittal, Chairman, International Tractors Ltd. took part in the opening ceremony.

This is the first time the Dam Square is host to a public event related to India. The Square is the historical centre of Amsterdam with the neoclassical [Royal Palace](#), the 15th-century Gothic [Nieuwe Kerk](#) (New Church), the [Madame Tussauds Amsterdam](#) and the [National Monument](#) erected in 1956 for the victims of [World War II](#). Special permission for the same was provided by the City of Amsterdam at the request of the Indian Embassy.

Representatives of the Royal Dutch army also joined the celebrations for the first time. They participated in the group common yoga protocol session and also led the public in a special yoga workshop. Dutch Ministry of Defense has introduced yoga exercises for armed forces to enrich their training program and reduce stress. Yoga is taught weekly at various barracks and yoga instructors have been recruited to strengthen the physical and mental fitness of soldiers.

A unique addition to the program this year was also the promotion of Indian handicrafts through a 'Made in India' display featuring live demonstrations by five national award winning master artisans from India throughout the day. This display was organised jointly by the Embassy and COHANDS, Office of Development Commissioner Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India.

The morning began with a group session of traditional Indian yoga which saw participation by cricketer Suresh Raina, Indian and Dutch dignitaries, Ambassadors of different countries, former Deputy Mayor of Hague Rabin Baldew Singh etc.

Yoga workshops conducted by the Royal Dutch Army, well-known Dutch yoga guru Johan Noorloos of The New Yoga School, Amsterdam and a Sahaja Yoga Meditation by Mr. Sander Notenbaert & group followed. A Yin Yoga session was then led by Ms. Anita Smith.

Yoga sessions were interspersed with cultural programs of Indian dance and music for the rest of the day. The Tandav Group, Keyakar and Group performed Indian Folk Dance and modern dance while Djahan Manuela and Group presented a combination of South Indian martial art “Kalaripayattu” with dance and music.

In a parallel venue called The Yoga Hut, competitions in sun salutations and yoga pose challenges were held along with special sessions on therapeutic yoga etc. A stall put up by the Maharishi Ayurveda Centre provided advice on yoga, wellness and healthy living while five special food trucks provided vegetarian and vegan food as well as vegan ice cream for the participants and onlookers.

The grand finale was a performance titled “Soul Shanti Concert,” featuring “BMI Goes India” - a unique combination of classical sitar and modern electronic dance music, popular Bollywood DJ Don supported by local musicians from Team Madras Chorus joined BMI goes India adding a Bollywood Beat segment to the finale. The concert was a perfect culmination to the whole day of festivities promoting wellness, healthy eating, yoga and meditation.

International Yoga Day was also celebrated across 31 cities in the Netherlands - which included yoga workshops, meditation sessions, and concerts.
