



**Embassy of India
The Hague**

PRESS RELEASE

Swami Vivekananda Statue Unveiled in the Netherlands

The first statue in the Netherlands of the renowned Indian thinker and philosopher Swami Vivekananda was installed on January 12, 2024 in the City of Utrecht. On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda, the statue was jointly unveiled by Mrs Reenat Sandhu, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Mr Eelco Eerenberg, Deputy Mayor, Utrecht, in the presence of distinguished guests from India, students and community members. The statue was gifted by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

2. Swami Vivekananda was a respected spiritual leader and a pivotal player in bringing the Indian philosophy of Vedanta and practice of Yoga to the Western world. He inspired the youth to be self-confident and communities to come together in the spirit of harmony and tolerance. In his honour, India celebrates National Youth Day on his birthday – Jan 12.

3. In her remarks, Ambassador Sandhu highlighted Swami Vivekananda's timeless message of universality and religious tolerance. She underscored his significant contribution to introducing the world to Indian thought and philosophy through his historic speech at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. She also highlighted Swami Vivekananda's focus on human development and how his vision is shaping India's progress and policies today. Deputy Mayor Mr Eleco praised Swami Vivekananda as an exemplary man and emphasized the significance of his Statue in Utrecht. He added that Swami Vivekananda's statue served as a symbol of the City's desire for the exchange of cultures and embracing diversity. Speaking on the occasion, Swami Sunirmalananda of the Rama Krishna Mission in the Netherlands recalled that Dutchman Cornelis Johannes Heijblom was the first non-Indian monk of the Ramakrishna order to have spent his entire life in monastic order. Mr R.D.D. Gurnani of The India Foundation highlighted Swamiji's inspiring life and teachings which have transcended boundaries.

4. The statue is located in the vicinity of two schools - OBS Pantarijn and Shri Krishna School, as a symbol of mutual understanding, tolerance and harmony. The unveiling ceremony also witnessed cultural presentations by school students. The initiative was supported by The India Foundation, Utrecht.

5. The installation of the statue of Swami Vivekananda is a major landmark in the India-Netherlands cultural and people-to-people ties. The statue will remind people of his teachings and desire to reach across to communities with respect and empathy.

**The Hague
January 16, 2024**