

**Ambassador's speech at Independence Day function of
The Netherlands-India Association
15 August 2022**

It is with great joy that I stand before you at this special event organized by the Netherlands India Association.

2. Let me begin by congratulating the NIA President and all the members of the Executive Board for organizing this wonderful Independence Day celebration. The Netherlands India Association is the oldest Indo-Dutch organization which has done excellent work in strengthening ties between our two countries, bringing people together, promoting greater understanding of culture, history, religion and widening the personal, cultural, and social contacts. I thank NIA for their valuable contribution and hope that they will continue their good work.

3. Today marks the 75th anniversary of India's Independence, a moment of great pride for all Indians across the world. Friends, we are celebrating 75 glorious years of India's remarkable progress and tremendous achievements of the Indian people. As we observe the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, it is a time to reflect on where we started and where we have reached. In the past 75 years of its independence, India has been successful in consolidating its unity and integrity. Despite its enormous diversity, with over hundred different languages and 28 States, each having their unique culture, history, and tradition, India is today the largest democracy in the world. India opted for democracy from day one and its faith in democracy has never wavered. It is the strength of Indian democracy that we have recently elected for the first time a woman President from the tribal community.

4. Friends, India is an ancient civilization but a young republic. For us, nation-building is a constant endeavour. In 75 years we have made impressive progress in all spheres. **Today**, India is the world's 6th largest economy and among the top ten manufacturing nations of the world. India has the world's third largest ecosystem for startups and is home to more than 100 unicorns. We have made massive gains in innovation and ease of doing business. India is working with great speed on 5G mobile connectivity, opening doors to new opportunities. We have one of the world's leading space programmes, having sent 342 satellites of 32 countries in space, and have reached both the moon and Mars.

5. Indian culture has growing fans and followers. **Today** Indian food, yoga and Bollywood movies are well-known globally. A large part of the credit for this goes to the Indian diaspora, including here in the Netherlands. All of you here are representatives of a multi-ethnic, diverse and well-respected Indian community and an important pillar of the growing India-Netherlands relations. We are proud of your achievements and wish for your continued success.

6. This year is also special as both India and the Netherlands are celebrating 75 years of establishment of diplomatic relations. Both countries have reiterated their commitment at the highest levels to take our relations to new heights, drawing on our mutual complementarities. We count on the Netherlands as a key partner in our national development and growth flagship programmes. India provides the Netherlands a huge economic opportunity. I am confident that in the coming years our bilateral relations will become stronger and more robust.

7. The President of India Smt Draupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi both addressed the nation on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of Independence today. In their speeches, while they outlined the accomplishments of India over the past 75 years & the challenges ahead, they also spoke of the next 25 years in India's journey, or the Amrit Kaal, which will be a critical period in the future growth of our country. India is a young country with 66% of its population below the age of 35 years and it is this young people who will be the main drivers of India's growth in the next 25 years. Prime Minister urged the youth to work towards building a strong and Atma Nirbhar Bharat, a new India that is self-reliant, economically advanced, prosperous and proud of its heritage. Their words are a source of inspiration for all of us.

I wish all of you Happy Independence day.

Jai Hind.