



**Embassy of India
The Hague**

PRESS RELEASE

**Visit of Minister of State for External Affairs & Culture
Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi to the Netherlands: 8 – 10 November 2023**

Minister of State for External Affairs & Culture (MOS) Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi, visited the Netherlands on 8 – 10 November 2023. During the visit, MOS met several Dutch dignitaries, attended cultural events and interacted with the students and Indian community.

2. Over the course of her 2-day visit, MOS met the Secretary General of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Paul Huijts. They discussed the wide ranging & multifaceted cooperation between India and the Netherlands and reiterated their commitment to further strengthening the bilateral partnership. They agreed to explore new areas of cooperation, especially in high-tech innovation and clean energy, and acknowledged the vast potential for future collaboration.

3. MOS met the G20 Sherpa of Netherlands, Ms. Elske Smith. They had a useful exchange on India's successful G20 presidency and forthcoming virtual G20 summit, which will be attended by Prime Minister Mark Rutte of Netherlands.

4. MOS also held a productive meeting with Mr. Rudmeer Heerema, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives of Netherlands. The meeting focused on the rich parliamentary and democratic traditions of India and the Netherlands and highlighted the intent of both sides to enhance parliamentary exchanges.

5. In a virtual meeting with the State Secretary for Culture, Ms. Gunay Uslu, MOS discussed opportunities for expanding cultural cooperation in areas such as exhibitions & preservation of shared cultural heritage.

6. Other meetings of MOS included an interaction with Mr. Rabin Baldewsingh, Dutch National Coordinator against Discrimination & Racism and Pravasi Bharatiya Samman awardee. MOS also met Mr. Ron Ton, Director of Clingendael Academy, which has been hosting young Indian diplomats for training.

7. During her stay, MOS visited the Peace Palace in The Hague which is the seat of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA). She met Dr. Marcin Czepelak, Secretary General of the PCA and congratulated him on the PCA's 125th Anniversary. Both sides discussed India's long-standing collaboration with PCA. MOS also met Judge Dalveer Bhandari for an overview of the work of the ICJ.

8. MOS offered floral tributes at the statue of Mahatma Gandhi and the Pravasi Monument in The Hague. She paid homage to the indomitable spirit of the Surinami Hindustanis, who left India 150 years ago to work in Suriname and still maintain their cultural roots and connection with India.

9. MOS was the chief guest at a cultural performance at The Gandhi Centre of the Indian Council for Cultural Affairs (ICCR). She applauded the Centre for promoting Indian cultural heritage in the Netherlands through outreach to the Indian diaspora and Dutch friends of India.

10. MOS attended an Indian community reception hosted by Ambassador of India. In her address, MOS spoke about India's growth story and extraordinary advancements in all spheres. She also appreciated the Indian diaspora's positive contribution to the economy and society of the Netherlands and their role in consolidating friendship between the two countries.

11. MOS also visited the Vahon Hindu School in the Hague, TU Delft University and The Hague University of Applied Sciences and interacted with the students. Her other engagements included a visit to the Mauritshuis museum, a cultural landmark, which houses a remarkable collection of paintings of great Dutch masters from the Golden Age. She also graced a special yoga session organized to mark the auspicious occasion of Dhanteras and Ayurveda Day on November 10.

12. This was the first visit of MOS to the Netherlands in her present capacity. Netherlands is a special friend and valued partner for India. Our countries share a multifaceted and broad agenda of cooperation including political, trade & investment, water, agriculture, health, climate action, science & technology, innovation and education. Visit of MOS to Netherlands served to strengthen the wide-ranging bilateral relations and underlined significant opportunities for future cooperation.

The Hague
10 November 2023