



Prime Minister Mark Rutte's Visit: Assessing India-Netherlands Relations

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Netherlands Prime Minister Mark Rutte visited India on 24-25 May 2018 with the aim to boost economic and political cooperation between the two countries. The visit came within a year of Prime Minister Modi's visit to the Netherlands on 27 June 2017. This was Prime Minister Rutte's second visit to India since June 2015.

The paper analyses the recent visit of Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to India, highlighting the issues raised during the bilateral meeting between the two leaders. The paper also draws upon the Joint Statements from the three bilateral meetings (2015, 2017 and 2018) between India and the Netherlands to identify major issues of cooperation between the two countries. The analysis of the three joint statements is done to highlight the intensification of relations between India and the Netherlands. These visits were significant because they not only enhanced the scope of relations between India and the Netherlands but also happened after a long interval following the last visit at the prime ministerial level by Dr. Manmohan Singh in 2004 and Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's visit to India in 2006.

India-Netherlands Relations: An Overview

Formal diplomatic relations between India and the Netherlands were established in 1947 and have become multi-faceted, encompassing close cooperation in various areas including political, economy, academics and culture. Since the early 1980s, the Dutch Government has identified India as an important economic partner making trade and investment cooperation a key component of India-Netherlands relations. With the Netherlands being the 5th largest investor in India in terms of FDI inflows with cumulative investments of US\$ 23 billion comprising 6% of total FDI inflows between April 2000 and September 2017, India's relations with Netherlands have been on an upward trend.¹ The two-way trade between India and the Netherlands increased to US\$ 8.7 billion in 2017-18 as compared to US\$ 6.9 billion in 2016-17. Netherlands is also India's 28th largest trading partner globally and 6th largest trading partner in the EU.² Many Dutch multinationals and major companies like Phillips, Shell, Unilever (Hindustan Lever in India),

KLM, the three big banks – ABN AMRO, ING, Rabobank and others have a growing and successful presence in India. Dutch SMEs with world-class expertise are also actively looking at the Indian market. Similarly, several Indian companies including major IT companies have established their presence in Netherlands. There are almost 174 Indian companies, like Tata Consultancy, Bharti Airtel, Apollo Tyres etc. which have based their operations in the Netherlands.³

On the political level, there have been periodic high-level exchanges including the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Netherlands in 2004, followed by visit of Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende in January 2006. In 2006, Dutch Government declared India, along with China and Russia, as priority countries in Dutch foreign policy. The visit of the Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to India (June 2015) laid the foundation to expand the ties and realize the full potential of the relationship. The visit of Prime Minister Modi to the Netherlands in June 2017 provided a further boost to the bilateral ties. In light of convergence of economic and political interests, both countries see value in enhanced dialogue and are currently collaborating in strengthening and expanding the framework of cooperation in various areas like trade and investment, science and technology, information and communication technology, education and culture.

Prime Minister Rutte's Visit

The visit of Prime Minister Mark Rutte on 24-25 May 2018 took forward the momentum set by the last two meetings in 2015 and 2017. He was accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality and Ministers for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Infrastructure & Water Management and for Medical Care. Further, a large number of business delegates representing 130 companies registered to join the Trade Mission, making it the largest Dutch trade delegation to visit India.⁴ The visit was aimed at boosting the economic and political cooperation between India and the Netherlands by focusing on the existing and the potential partnerships in agriculture, water management, healthcare, innovation, startups among several other sectors.

India and the Netherlands signed a number of pacts to deepen cooperation in areas like education, water and waste management, agriculture, food processing, information technology and the development of smart cities. Prime Minister Modi, in a joint press statement, said that his visit to the Hague in 2017 and Prime Minister Rutte's current visit had helped sustain a high momentum of interaction between the two countries. Noting the Netherlands expertise in agriculture and food processing sectors, Prime Minister Modi said that India was keen to partner with Dutch companies and said that the Netherlands had agreed to open a centre of excellence in agriculture in Baramati. He said besides bilateral matters, he and Prime Minister Rutte discussed regional and global issues of mutual interest. Prime Minister Modi also hailed the Netherlands for becoming part of the International Solar Alliance.⁵ The joint statement released at the end of the bilateral meeting highlighted key areas of cooperation like science and technology, security, water, agriculture, urban development, economy, trade, people to people contact etc. Prime Minister Rutte had to cut short his two-day visit by half to join a cabinet meeting about new findings on the downing of a Malaysian passenger flight MH17 over Ukraine in 2014.⁶

Indian and Dutch companies signed more than 50 MoUs and partnership agreements worth 170 million euros, including the inauguration of the Indo-Dutch startup initiative '#StartUpLink'. The Indo-Dutch initiative aims to fulfill the objective of facilitating markets expansion for startups in the two countries alongside fostering a joint sense of innovation and entrepreneurship. The delegation focused on business synergies and partnerships with Indian companies in areas such as high-tech and space, smart cities, life sciences and healthcare. India and the Netherlands announced a wide range of MoUs and partnership agreements, for example, a MoU between Government of Netherlands and Government of Haryana to support the state with the diversification of the agricultural sector, with a focus on horticultural crops. A tripartite MoU was signed between the Dutch companies Schouten Europe, Incluvest and India's LT Foods to establish a "fair factory" for the production of Plant Based Protein products for local market and export purposes. In dairy sector, a tripartite MoU was signed between Dutch companies Larive International and Trouw Nutrition with the Baramati Agricultural Development Trust. The companies are looking to set up a joint multi-year program for the Indian dairy sector. For water management, Arcadis, a Dutch global design, engineering and management consulting company, and Tata Consulting Engineers signed a MoU to strengthen their collaboration on a variety of water management and ports & waterways related projects. The MoU reflects the basic terms and conditions under which companies shall collaborate for the submission of proposals for the awarding of projects in selected geographical areas and on selected business themes. In IT and High Technology, a MoU was signed between India's first cyber security cluster, Hyderabad Security Cluster and Europe's biggest security delta, The Hague Security Delta to increase cooperation. In the field of education, a planned partnership agreement was signed between the Netherlands and India to enhance possibilities for Indian students to spend a considerable amount of time in the Dutch Universities. Also, the Clingendael Institute, the independent think tank and diplomatic academy of the Netherlands and the Foreign Institute Service of India under the Ministry of External Affairs agreed on collaboration for diplomatic training. The MoU will provide for exchange of information of structure and content of training programmes for diplomats, identification of experts in mutually decided areas and promote contacts and exchange of diplomats, faculty members and experts.⁷

Issues of Cooperation in the Three Joint Statements

The following table identifies the main issues of cooperation between India and Netherlands as highlighted in the joint statements of 2015, 2017 and 2018.

S.no.	Issues of Cooperation	Joint Statement 2015	Joint Statement 2017	Joint Statement 2018
1.	Economy, Trade & Investment	<p>The Netherlands identified India as a priority country for economic engagement. In the above context, the two Prime Ministers exchanged views on India's flagship initiatives such as "Make in India", "Digital India", "Skill India" and "Clean India" and agreed that these and other specific programmes like "Affordable Housing for All", "Ganga Rejuvenation Plan" and "Smart Cities" offered significant collaborative commercial opportunities for Indian and Dutch industries.</p> <p>Trade figures for 2015-16: US\$ 6.5 billion</p> <p>Dutch FDI into India for 2015-16: US\$ 2.6 billion</p>	<p>The two leaders appreciated the growth in two-way trade and investment flows between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi called for concerted efforts to mobilize Dutch and European private capital for investing in infrastructure opportunities in India. Prime Minister Rutte called for more Indian companies and financial institutions to strengthen their presence in the Netherlands.</p> <p>Both leaders agreed that an institutional partnership between the Netherlands and India would underscore the role of the Netherlands as the financial hub of Europe as well as an important source of private capital to fund India's development.</p> <p>Trade figures for 2016-17: US\$ 6.9 billion</p> <p>Dutch FDI into India for 2016-17: US\$ 3.3 billion</p>	<p>The Leaders welcomed the launch of the StartUpLink initiative by Invest India and the Netherlands Embassy in Delhi. The initiative seeks to provide startups easy access to mentorship, partners, tools, services and key information for success in India and the Netherlands.</p> <p>The Leaders reaffirmed the crucial role of the rules-based multilateral trading system, and the importance of enhancing free, fair, and open trade for achieving sustainable growth and development. They reaffirmed their commitment to work together with all members of the WTO.</p> <p>Trade figures for 2017-18: US\$ 8.7 billion</p> <p>Dutch FDI into India for 2017-18: US\$ 2.3 billion</p>
2.	Water, Agriculture and Urban Development	<p>Collaboration in cold chain and seeds between a Dutch consortium and the Indian retailer Future Group.</p> <p>In infrastructure, exploring the possibilities for a project for wetland reclamation in Kanpur.</p>	<p>A key ingredient in the Indo-Dutch cooperation is the use of innovation and technology to improve water and waste management, thus contributing to the Clean India campaign.</p> <p>Dutch agro-experts are involved in exploring ways to shift to crops that are</p>	<p>In Indo-Dutch water cooperation, the respective institutions of the two countries have joined hands in several projects including a waste2wealth approach to solid waste and waste water in the Hindon Basin; in assisting leather industries in Kanpur and Unnao to adopt ecofriendly</p>

		<p>To collaborate on developing a Smart City in India and to explore involvement of Dutch companies in providing affordable urban street lighting and other solutions (LED technology for both lighting and smart grids solutions).</p>	<p>less water intensive and will generate higher income for the farmer. In this context, the Netherlands has created a consortium of fruit chain companies mainly working in hilly regions.</p> <p>The Prime Ministers also noted that more Dutch companies were planning significant investments in India, supporting the Make in India campaign.</p> <p>MoU signed between the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India and the Ministry of Infrastructure & Environment of the Netherlands.</p>	<p>technologies.</p> <p>The Indian side appreciated the capacity building programs provided to Indian officials by the Netherlands based water institutes - Deltares and IHE Delft. Commended the continuous exchange of information on river modelling, use of satellite data for air quality purposes and the reuse of sludge contributing to a transition towards a circular economy.</p> <p>Commended the successful operationalization of the first Indo-Dutch Centre of Excellence (CoE) in Vegetables in Baramati, Maharashtra. The Leaders called for early completion of works in the remaining CoEs of Uttar Pradesh.</p> <p>Both sides have noted the finalization of a concrete joint action plan under the MoU on Technical Cooperation in the Field of Spatial Planning, Water Management and Mobility Management with focus on smart city development.</p>
3.	Security cooperation	<p>The Prime Ministers agreed to expand security and defense cooperation between India and the Netherlands. Both Prime Ministers welcomed the possibility of Dutch participation in India's 'Make in India' initiative in the defence sector.</p>	<p>Both leaders resolved to continue their efforts to strengthen global non-proliferation objectives.</p> <p>Prime Minister Modi thanked the Netherlands for its role in India's accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime in June 2016. Both</p>	<p>The Netherlands congratulated India on its accession to the MTCR, Wassenaar arrangement and the Australia Group. The Netherlands reaffirmed its strong support to building consensus among regimes' members on the issue of India's membership to the Nuclear Suppliers</p>

			<p>leaders agreed that the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Wassenaar Arrangement and Australia Group would benefit from India's membership.</p> <p>The Prime Ministers agreed to continue their joint efforts to strengthen a free, open and secure cyberspace. They stressed the importance of the Global Conference on Cyberspace (GCCS) as a unique platform where strategic cyber issues are discussed in a representative high-level multi-stakeholder setting.</p>	<p>Group.</p> <p>Agreed to hold the bilateral cyber dialogue in 2018 to discuss issues including internet governance, and data protection, cyber security policy and Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) cooperation and international capacity building.</p> <p>MoU signed between The Hague Security Delta and Hyderabad Security Cluster, India's first Cyber Security Cluster.</p> <p>The Leaders noted the progress made by the two sides in finalizing the text of the Agreement on Mutual Protection of Classified Information in the field of Defence.</p>
4.	Terrorism	<p>The Prime Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and reiterated the need for a unified and collective effort by the international community. To eliminate terrorism through a holistic approach, including the implementation of the U.N. Global Counter Terrorism Strategy and early conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT).</p>	<p>Agreed to strengthen cooperation in combating terrorism both at the bilateral level and within the multilateral system. In this regard, they called for early conclusion of negotiations on the CCIT.</p>	<p>For the first time, the joint statement named certain organizations and deplored the violence caused by Al Qaeda, Daesh/ISIS, Jaish-e-Mohammed, Hizbul Mujahideen, Lashkar-e-Tayabba, and their affiliates as well as terrorist groups threatening peace and security in South Asia and Europe.</p> <p>The Leaders also called for an early conclusion of negotiations and the adoption of the CCIT. Both sides agreed to hold the next round of counter terrorism dialogue in The Hague in the second-half of 2018.</p>

<p>5.</p>	<p>Science and Technology</p>	<p>Expand collaboration between the Netherlands Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Indian Department of Science and Technology under the umbrella of the MoU between these Ministries.</p> <p>To implement agreed projects between Dutch and Indian counterparts (NWO, DBT/DST/DeitY) on a cost sharing basis.</p>	<p>The Prime Ministers appreciated the substantive investments made by Indian companies in the Dutch economy, in particular in the fields of information technology, pharmaceuticals, vaccine, iron and steel, machinery and automotive sectors.</p> <p>Taking advantage of greater technology connect through Amsterdam Internet Exchange Hub, major Indian IT and technology companies are enhancing their footprint in the Netherlands.</p> <p>The two leaders welcomed the ongoing cooperation in the field of science and technology, particularly in biotechnology.</p>	<p>Leaders commended the 10th anniversary of the Indo-Dutch collaboration in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI).</p> <p>They appreciated the increased focus on public private partnerships, and the linking of ecosystems to help drive innovation. The cooperation is aimed at addressing common societal challenges and opening new markets in areas such as water, health, agriculture, and high-tech systems and IT.</p> <p>India also welcomed the Netherlands as the Partner Country for the TechSummit in 2019.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Health Cooperation</p>	<p>To identify partners to advance Anti Microbial Research collaboration within the framework of the MoU on Health.</p> <p>They welcomed initiatives from the private sector like Readiness of Philips to invest in scanning equipment in hospitals and provide affordable diagnostic solutions; ONCOVAN project for mobile healthcare solutions in rural areas.</p>	<p>-----</p>	<p>The Leaders discussed the importance of collaboration in the global fight against Anti-Microbial Resistance (AMR) and commended the joint efforts made by the relevant health departments and agencies of the two countries in identifying areas of cooperation under India's National Action Plan on AMR.</p> <p>The Leaders also took note of the selection of Krishna District in the state of Andhra Pradesh for the implementation of a Pilot Project using the 'One Health' approach under the Indo-Dutch collaboration on AMR.</p>

7.	European Union	Recalling that the India-EU Strategic Partnership was launched in 2004 during the Dutch Presidency of EU, they acknowledged the importance of early conclusion of negotiations to finalize a balanced and ambitious India-EU Broadbased Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA).	The Prime Ministers agreed that bilateral relations between India and the EU merit increased focus and attention. Recalling EU-India Summit of March 2016 that took place during the Dutch Presidency. They expressed the hope for an early resumption of negotiations leading to the conclusion of the BTIA between India and the EU.	The Leaders agreed that India and the EU should deepen their cooperation on multilateral and security issues, as well as on economic, trade and climate change issues and welcomed the outcome of the 14th EU-India summit held in New Delhi in October 2017. They expressed support to re-engage actively towards timely re-launching of negotiations for EU-India BTIA and agreed to explore opportunities for further cooperation that will be generated by the next EU-India Summit.
8.	Connectivity	To facilitate private sector initiatives such as Agreement of cooperation with Rotterdam for Port-on-Port development in India; to initiate talks between carriers on enhancing connectivity between New Delhi/Mumbai and Amsterdam.	Welcomed the strengthening of direct air connectivity between India and the Netherlands, which will contribute to further deepening of people to people ties and business links.	The Leaders underlined the importance of stepping-up connectivity between both countries by the sea route. They agreed that the untapped potential for direct port-to-port contacts as well as cooperation in the area of port infrastructure development and shipping should be further explored.
9.	Climate Change and Energy	To enhance cooperation in renewable energy between Energy Research Centre of the Netherlands, National Institute of Solar Energy (NISE) and Sardar Swaran Singh National Institute of Renewable Energy. Also, to increase cooperation on Solar Road Project including solar photo voltaics and vibrations, in association with the Indian National	Prime Minister Modi invited the Netherlands to join the International Solar Alliance (ISA).	They committed to fully implement the Agreement under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India welcomed the signing of the Framework Agreement of the International Solar Alliance by the Netherlands. The two Prime Ministers

		Institute of Solar Energy. The leaders also welcomed initiative by DSM (solar) and Dutch consortium on Waste to Energy projects in India.		urged research institutions and industry to collaborate, including in third countries, to promote greater use of solar technologies through the ISA.
10.	People-to-People exchanges	The Netherlands is home to the second largest Indian Diaspora in Europe. The two leaders welcomed India's decision to include the Netherlands in the Electronic Tourist Visa Scheme.	Both Prime Ministers welcomed the strengthening of direct air connectivity between India and the Netherlands, which was set in motion after their 2015 meeting. They also welcomed the growing number of Indian students and professionals in the Netherlands.	They welcomed the signing of a MoU between the Foreign Service Institutes of the two countries. The MoU will provide for exchange of information of structure and content of training programmes for diplomats; identification of experts in mutually decided areas; and promote contacts and exchange of diplomats, faculty members and experts.

Source: India-Netherlands Joint Communiqué released during the visit of Prime Minister of the Netherlands to India (5 June 2015); India-Netherlands Joint Communique, The Hague, (27 June 2017); India-Netherlands Joint Statement during visit of Prime Minister of Netherlands to India (24 May 2018); Fact Sheet on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), From April, 2000 To December, 2017, DIPP

Assessment

The issues identified in the joint statements represent the intensification of bilateral relations between the countries. The visits affirmed that the two countries shared interests and responsibilities in addressing a broad range of global issues, including climate change, peace and security, free and fair trade, sustainable development, a free, open and secure cyberspace and an open, just, inclusive and rule-based international order. The importance that the Netherlands give to India was evident from Prime Minister Mark Rutte's statement on 24 May 2018 that "India is still largely absent from the strategic agenda of the EU and its member states. That's a mistake. By 2025 or 2030, your population will be bigger than any other in the world. And India is currently the world's fastest-growing major economy. India has truly begun to realise its economic potential. In the long term, these mutual blind spots pose a risk for Europe, the Netherlands and India alike. If we work together we can achieve so much more in areas like security, the economy and sustainability." He added that there was huge scope for the two countries to deepen cooperation in areas of trade and investment, clean energy, agriculture and smart cities.⁸

Important potential for collaboration exists in the agriculture and water sectors. India wants to double its food production, while the Netherlands has the most efficient and intensive agriculture in the world. India has welcomed the Dutch initiative to further strengthen cooperation in boosting productivity of apples; manufacturing food processing equipment; breeding high-yielding vegetable seeds; providing capacity building and training to dairy farmers; cooperating in the areas of bovine genetics and food safety; and supporting sustainable and climate resilient agriculture to mitigate water shortages and end the practice of stubble burning. Similarly, innovation, technology and governance being key-aspects in Indo-Dutch water cooperation, the respective institutions of the two countries have joined hands in several projects including a waste2wealth approach to solid waste and waste water. Both sides have also agreed to intensify their resolve to enhance cooperation in water management, Clean Ganga campaign etc.

Trade and investment form a crucial aspect of India-Netherlands relations. In his press statement, Prime Minister Modi said 'there is huge scope for ramping up trade ties between the two countries...I am happy that the business community in Netherlands is enthusiastic about opportunities being created in India. I have also assured them of my strong commitment towards economic reforms in India'.⁹ The two leaders have also consistently underlined the significant role the Netherlands can play as India's "Gateway to Europe". Prime Minister Rutte, in the previous two joint statements, had lauded the transformative economic initiatives introduced by Prime Minister Modi and had identified India, in the joint statement of 2015, as a priority country for the economic engagement. In this context, the two Prime Ministers exchanged views on India's flagship initiatives such as "Make in India", "Digital India", "Skill India" and "Clean India" and agreed that these programmes offered significant collaborative commercial opportunities for Indian and Dutch industries. In the joint statement of 2018, the Leaders acknowledged the role of the private sector in boosting trade and investment relations and underlined the opportunities for intensive Indo-Dutch collaborations under Government of India's flagship initiatives such as Make in India and StartUp India. Highlighting the role of youth in enhancing future collaboration in innovation and startups, the leaders welcomed the launch of the StartUpLink initiative by

Invest India and the Netherlands Embassy in Delhi. The initiative seeks to provide startups easy access to mentorship, partners, tools, services and key information for success in India and the Netherlands.

Both the countries have enhanced their scope of cooperation with each other in security aspects. Both the leaders have been vocal in their condemnation of terrorism saying that there can be no justification for acts of terror on any grounds whatsoever. The joint statement of 2018 is much more comprehensive in addressing this problem and for the first time also names certain terror organizations. Both the countries have also consistently called for the finalization of UN CCIT. In security cooperation, both the countries have stressed the need to strengthen a free, open and secure cyberspace. Prime Ministers Modi and Rutte also agreed to hold a bilateral cyber dialogue in 2018 to discuss issues pertaining to internet governance, data protection, cyber security policy and Computer Security Incident Response Team (CSIRT) cooperation. Also, with Dutch companies keen to explore the Indian market and be part of 'Make in India' programme in the defense sector, the two countries are in the process of finalising the text on the Agreement on Mutual Protection of Classified Information in the field of Defence.

The two nations already serve as important sources of economic growth, entrepreneurial opportunities and innovation for each other. Both countries have pledged to enhance their capabilities in science and technology with an increased focus on public private partnerships, and the linking of ecosystems to help drive innovation. The political ties between the two nations are also close, with India and the Netherlands cooperating on global issues ranging from governance of cyberspace to climate change. The Netherlands is also a source of important technical know-how, in a variety of sectors – water management, upgrading of ports and airports, dredging, agro-processing, telecommunication, energy, oil refining, chemicals, and financial services. Given this complementarity between Dutch competencies and India's current needs, the Netherlands is very well placed to become a preferred partner for India.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed are that of the Researcher and not of the Council.*

Endnotes

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