

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT LUNCH HOSTED BY PRIME MINISTER OF THE
NETHERLANDS, H.E. MARK RUTTE**

The Hague, 06 April 2022

Thank you Prime Minister Rutte for the warm reception and the kind words. I applaud your commitment to foster stronger relations between India and the Netherlands. Together with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, you have provided a new impetus to the bilateral cooperation.

Let me also take this opportunity to again convey my gratitude for the generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation. I am confident that under your leadership our bilateral relations will achieve new heights.

Excellency, India and the Netherlands are long-standing partners with historical ties of friendship and collaboration. In the 75 years of our diplomatic ties, we have worked together in wide-ranging areas of mutual interest. These include our cooperation in water, agriculture, healthcare, science and technology, urban development and smart cities. Our partnership has been both meaningful and impactful, contributing to improving lives of our people. I look forward to hearing from the experts on the joint initiatives and their impact in the areas of water, agriculture and healthcare.

This is the season of the blooming Tulips in the Netherlands and many people from across the world come to enjoy their beauty and serenity. I myself had the pleasure of witnessing the Tulips in their full splendour. The colourful tulips represent the welcoming nature of the Dutch people, their belief in pluralism and multiculturalism, and also the spirit of hard work and perseverance of the Netherlands as a nation braving harsh climate and geographic conditions. The ingenuity and resourcefulness of your people are truly inspiring. For

Indians, our national flower Lotus represents the purity of thought and mind, knowledge and enlightenment, and is a symbol of adaptability as it grows in muddy waters. It is no surprise that the two flowers are the inspiration behind the joint logo of the celebration of 75 years of our diplomatic relations.

Excellency, we would like to set higher goals inching up to 100 years of our ties. Let me share some of my thoughts on how we can unleash the potential of strengths of our two countries.

Reflecting on these strengths of our two countries, I would like to call for a new-age partnership between India and the Netherlands. This can focus on three broad elements. First, we become knowledge and innovation partners with our people joining hands to undertake pioneering work in the fields of digital technology, artificial intelligence, semiconductors and fintech. Second, as two responsible members of the international community, we play a more proactive role in addressing common global challenges including climate change and adaptation. Third, India and the Netherlands as key partners in defence and security working for a stable global order. The tides of the Indo-Pacific region will help shape the future of this century. The Indo-Pacific strategy of the Netherlands is a clear demonstration of our convergence on this matter.

Our new-age partnership must act to combine the resources, expertise and knowledge with the skill to address contemporary challenges, add strategic direction to the cooperation, and maximize benefits for both countries.

Excellency, India is a land of opportunities as well as aspirations. India offers growth in scale, ambition and results. We welcome the Netherlands to be part of our growth story. As home to one-fifth of the world's youth population, the needs and aspirations of the young Indians are critical to the future of India and the world at large. Young Indians are driving a culture of innovation, entrepreneurship and diversity. I have learnt that many of the young Indians are joining universities, start-ups and businesses in the Netherlands.

Prime Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you for your kind attention.

I would now like to raise a toast with you – to the start of a new-age partnership between India and the Netherlands!
