



## Toespraak

van de Voorzitter van de Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal, prof.dr. J.A. Bruijn,  
ter gelegenheid van de viering van de 75e Republiek Dag van India

*datum 26 januari 2024*

Honourable Ambassador,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Namasté,

It is a great honour for me to be invited to speak on the occasion of the 75th Republic Day of India, also known as Purna Swaraj.

On this day India celebrates that on January 26, 1950, the Constitution of India came into effect.

Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar, who drafted the constitution in 1948, wrote – and I quote – “Constitution is not a mere lawyers document. It is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of age.” Unquote.

And how the spirit of India’s Constitution has come of age indeed!

In 2024, more than 900 million Indians will have the chance to vote during the general elections. Like King Willem-Alexander said during his state visit to India 5 years ago, and I quote: “*India is proof that democracy and freedom are stronger and more durable than oppression. What you have built together in 70 years is extremely precious, a unique achievement.*” Unquote.

I myself am also impressed by the extensive manner in which India and the Netherlands have had - and still have - close relations on many levels, from the days of the Dutch East India Company to today with Dutch companies doing business in India, and Indian companies, especially in the IT-sector are active here in the Netherlands.

Not just economically, also politically and culturally the exchanges between our countries are extensive and solid. Our governments have over the past decades shared experiences during visits both here and there.

On a parliamentary level we have had many exchanges as well. I would like to highlight three of these:



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First, last October I was in New Delhi for the P20, the parliamentary dimension of the G20, and I met with my colleagues from the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha, the Upper and Lower Houses of India.

And second, in 2022 your then-President His excellency Ram Nath Kovind visited the Netherlands. I was honoured to receive him together with my colleague of the House of Representatives.

Thirdly, our countries work together in the UN Human Rights Council, and important cooperation between our countries on this topic also takes place on the level of civil society. I join our King once more in wishing that, for future generations too, India will be a country where there is room for all Indians, whatever their belief, origin or position in society.

Honourable Ambassador,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I congratulate the Republic of India and all Indians on this Republic Day. In the Netherlands we cherish the long lasting bond between our two countries.

It is an honour to celebrate this important day with you.

बधाई हो

Congratulations.