

India Netherlands Bilateral Relations - Explained

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India Netherlands Latest News

- The Netherlands recently returned the **11th-century Chola-era copper plates** to India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit, marking a major cultural repatriation after a 14-year diplomatic effort.

India-Netherlands Bilateral Relations

- India and the Netherlands share strong ties based on trade, investment, technology, water management, and cultural cooperation.
- Their partnership has gained momentum in recent years, especially in areas such as climate resilience, renewable energy, and semiconductors.
- **History of Bilateral Relations**
 - Relations between India and the Netherlands date back to the **17th century**, when the **Dutch East India Company** established trading links with India.
 - After India's independence, diplomatic ties were formalised in **1947**. Over time, relations evolved from traditional trade to broader cooperation in agriculture, science, technology, water management, and

climate action.

- In recent decades, the relationship has acquired a strategic dimension through high-level political engagement and growing economic interdependence.

Strategic and Diplomatic Engagement

- India and the Netherlands maintain regular **high-level political dialogue** through visits by Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers, and business delegations.
- The two countries have strengthened cooperation in sectors such as:
 - Water management and river rejuvenation, particularly through Dutch expertise in flood control
 - Renewable energy and green hydrogen
 - Semiconductor and high-technology manufacturing
 - Agriculture and food processing
- The Netherlands is also an important partner in India's efforts to modernise ports and logistics infrastructure.

Economic and Trade Relations

- Economic engagement forms one of the strongest pillars of bilateral relations.
- According to recent official data:
 - The **Netherlands is among the largest export destinations for India in Europe.**
 - Bilateral trade exceeded **USD 27 billion in 2023-24.**
 - Out of this, India exported USD 22.367 billion worth of goods to the Netherlands. The merchandise exports to the Netherlands account for 5.12% of India's total merchandise exports.
 - India's major exports include **petroleum products, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, machinery, and textiles.**
 - Imports from the Netherlands include **machinery, chemicals, medical equipment, and technology products.**
- The Netherlands is also among the **top foreign investors in India**, particularly in sectors like logistics, technology, renewable energy, and manufacturing.

Cultural and Educational Cooperation

- People-to-people ties have strengthened cultural relations between the two countries.
- The Netherlands hosts the **2nd largest Indian Diaspora** (after the UK) in Europe and the largest on mainland Europe, totalling around 2,60,000 comprising 60,000 Indians and 2,00,000 strong Surinami-Hindustani community of Indian origin.
- The Netherlands is a popular education destination for Indian students, particularly in the field of science & technology.
- The number of Indian students has been growing over the years and more than 3500 Indian students are studying in the Netherlands presently.

Multilateral Cooperation

- India and the Netherlands cooperate closely in multilateral forums on issues such as:
 - **Climate change and sustainable development.**
 - **Maritime security and international trade routes.**
 - **Rules-based international order.**
- The Netherlands has supported stronger **India-European Union engagement**, including trade and technological partnerships.

News Summary

- During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit, the Netherlands formally returned the **11th-century Chola-era copper plates**, an important cultural artefact linked to Tamil heritage.
- The return followed a 14-year diplomatic effort involving Indian authorities, historians, and Dutch institutions.
- The plates were brought to the Netherlands around 1712 by Florentius Camper, who was in India as part of a Christian missionary in the period when Nagapattinam was under Dutch control.
- Dating to the reign of Emperor **Rajaraja Chola I (985-1014 AD)** regarded as one of the greatest rulers in Indian history, one of the objects comprises 21 copper plates, weighing approximately 30 kilograms.
- The plates are divided into two sections: one in Sanskrit and one in Tamil. The other object being restituted comprises three copper plates containing a Tamil inscription. Both are bound together by bronze rings that bear the royal seal of the Chola dynasty.
- Such inscriptions are historically important because they contain details related to **land grants, governance, taxation, and socio-economic conditions** of the period.
- Prime Minister Modi described the return as a **"joyous moment for every Indian"**, highlighting the significance of preserving India's civilisational heritage.
- The development also reflects India's growing diplomatic efforts to repatriate stolen or illegally exported antiquities from foreign countries.
- In recent years, several nations, including the **United States, Australia, and European countries**, have returned ancient artefacts to India.

Source: **IE** | **TOI**

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