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May 12 - May 18 2002

| [Global NRI](#) | [Headliner](#) | [Tech Toppers](#) | [Newsmakers](#) | [Success Story](#) | [Trendsetters](#) |

**HOME**

### In this week...

- ☐ [Vineet Bhatia's Original and Inventive Indian Cuisine Wins Rich Acclaim](#)  
*Headliner*
- ☐ [Dr. Shamsheer Prakash: Geotechnical Expert, Yoga Exponent and Peace Promoter](#)  
*Success Story*
- ☐ [Suresh Nichani: Mission Critical Solutions in the Global Marketplace](#)  
*Tech Toppers*
- ☐ [Wahid Saleh: On-going Efforts to Promote Indo-Dutch Understanding](#)  
*Trendsetters*
- ☐ [Tim Madhanagopal Named Central Florida's Engineer of the Year](#)  
*Newsmakers*
- ☐ [Marina Budhos: Poignant and Evocative Prose](#)  
*Authorspeak*

### Press

- [Press Room](#)
- [Press Coverage](#)

## Wahid Saleh: On-going Efforts to Promote Indo-Dutch Understanding

by Shirin Pais

Dutch Queen Beatrix has honoured **Wahid Saleh**, a prominent leader of the Indian community in the Netherlands, with the prestigious "Ridder va de Orange Nassau" in recognition of his many contributions to the promotion of Indo-Dutch ties and his efforts to encourage mutli-cultural activities in the Netherlands. The Award Citation says that this is "a tribute to his commitment, devotion and years of dedicated work promoting knowledge about and understanding between the peoples of India and the Netherlands of the culture, history, philosophy, religious and social structure of the two countries."

Saleh is the first Indian to receive this "kighthood of the Order of Orange" which is cgenerally conferred on Dutch citizens whose socio-economic contributions mage a significant diferrence to life in the Netherlands. He was presented with this rarte honour on the Queen's birthday, by M.E.B. de Goeij-Smulders, the Major of Berkel en Rodenrijs.

An Information Technology professional, Saleh originally hailed from Assam, India, and moved to the Netherlands in 1968. For many years he has played an integral role in helping people from South Asia, mainly India, settle down into the Dutch way of life. Saleh is also the Netherlands-India Association's secretary and a member since 1969. Almost 50 years old and 500 hundred members strong, this association has a rich history of promoting Indo-Dutch cultural relations through lectures, get-togethers and a range of cultural happenings.

According to Saleh, its aims are to promote knowledge and understanding of Indian and Dutch culture, history and social structure among the peoples of both countries. The association also hopes to further relations between the peoples of India and the Netherlands by deepening personal, cultural and social contacts, a through a wide range of lectures, exhibitions and social get-togethers that celebrate Indian culture

### Other Trendsetters

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by Shirin Pais



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| [Newsmakers](#) | [Success Story](#) | [Trendsetters](#) |

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