

NRI knighted for promoting Indo-Dutch ties

By **RANVIR NAYAR**



Wahid Saleh is the first Indian to receive the Knighthood of the Order of Orange, Nassau

Paris: A prominent leader of the Indian diaspora in the Netherlands has been honored by Dutch Queen Beatrix for his contribution to the promotion of Indo-Dutch ties.

Wahid Saleh, a former secretary of the 50-year-old India-Netherlands Association, has been awarded the coveted Dutch honor, Ridder van de Orange, Nassau, or the Knighthood of the Order of Orange, Nassau. It was presented

on the occasion of the queen's birthday, according to reports reaching here.

Saleh is believed to be the first Indian to receive the rare honor, which is normally given only to Dutch nationals who have made distinguished contributions to socio-economic life in the Netherlands. He was chosen for the award for his efforts in the promotion of multicultural activities in the country.

Hailing from Assam in northeastern India, Saleh moved to the Netherlands in 1968 and works as an information technology specialist.

The Dutch award was given to him as "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 their culture, history, philosophy, religious and social structure of the two countries," according to the citation for the award.

On behalf of the queen, M.E.B. de Goeij-Smulders, mayor of Berkel en Rodenrijs, a town about 37 miles from the Dutch capital of Amsterdam, conferred the knighthood on Saleh on April 26 during a special presentation of royal decorations at The Hague.

Saleh has been instrumental in helping people of South Asian origin, mostly from India, blend into Dutch society and has been actively involved with several organizations of people of Indian origin from Suriname, as well as other cultural institutions, such as the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam.

He has also authored a book, 'Indiawijzer,' which serves as a reference guide for Indian culture in the Netherlands and gives an overview of all the organizations and institutions in the country, with details of groups that are involved with India.

Saleh is married to a Dutch national and has two grown-up children.

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