

Mr. Wahid Saleh : Distinguished son of Assam



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

Hailing from Rajabari, Jorhat District of Assam in northeastern India, Saleh moved to West Germany in 1963 for his higher training in Aeronautical Engineering but landed up in the Information Technology. He moved to the Netherlands in 1968. He is in this field since 1965. His last job was Head of the department of Quality and Research of a major Dutch company. He was responsible for a data communication infrastructure involving more than 5,000 computers. In the year 2002 he had taken early retirement and now is been involved in social work.

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 was also the Netherlands-India Association's member of the Board for 19 years and was the Secretary of the Association for 15 years as secretary. Last June '02 he handed over his duties to the new secretary of the association. 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. He had also designed the web site for the Netherlands-India Association. He collected all the data and did all the work related to this site. The address is: <http://www.netherlands-india.nu/>.



Wahid Saleh has been awarded the coveted Dutch honor, Ridder va de Orange, Nassau, or the Knighthood of the Order of Orange, Nassau. It was presented on the occasion of the queen's birthday. 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. 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.

Mr. Saleh was also a national coordinator of the First Convention of Overseas Indians held in New York in 1989. He was a member of the advisory committee of the European Regional Conference of the First International Convention of Overseas Indians held in London in 1989. In 1998, on behalf of the Indian community in the Netherlands, the Mayor of Zoetermeer and the Ambassador of India presented Mr. Saleh with The Golden Jubilee Community Service Award.

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.

Unquestionably, Mr. Saleh is unique in the Netherlands in having a comprehensive overview of Dutch-Indian relations and many details of the presence of Indian community in the Netherlands. He lends his vast knowledge as a service to the Dutch multi-cultural society on an honorary basis. For example, he authored the book, Indiawijzer, a reference guide on Indian culture in the Netherlands, which gives a complete overview of all the organizations and institutions in the Netherlands that are directly or indirectly involved with India.

The income from the 1st edition (1992) of this publication was given to the Netherlands-India Association. A second and a revised edition was published in 1999 (416 pages). He is now working on the 3rd edition of the book and to put the informations on the Net.

From 09-01-2003 to 11-01-2003 the Government of India is going to organise the First Pravashi Bharatiya Divas in New Delhi for the NRI's and PIO's. The Prime Minister of India will open the Divas. The organisers have invited him as one of the speakers of the Divas to speak at the breakout session on Culture, Language, Literature, Films and The Diasporic society.

He is married to a Dutch national and has two grown up children. His daughter did her MA in Law and then MA in Pedagogy. She is working as a senior strategic adviser in the ministry of Justice. His son did his MA in financial economics and worked as a tax consultant. He went on a world tour for 19 months. You can read some his experience in <http://www.q.kampeert.nl/> .

We met Mr. Saleh on his recent visit to Assam on 30/12/2002.



From left : Jyoti Rupam Dutta, Chief Editor, Beautifulassam.com, Wahid Saleh, Lucy Neog (Sp. correspondent, Pratidin and Mr Adip Kumar Phukan, Executive Editor, Pratidin.



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