

'Clean Air India Initiative' launched

Collaborative effort: Dutch PM Mark Rutte and his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Thursday. AFP/MONEY SHARMA

Prime Minister of Netherlands Mark Rutte, who is in India on a two-day visit, launched the 'Clean Air India Initiative' in the national capital on Thursday. The campaign aims to curb air pollution in Indian cities by promoting partnerships between Indian start-ups and Dutch companies and build a network of entrepreneurs working on business solutions for cleaner air.

The Clean Air India Initiative is a collaborative project between Get In The Ring, a platform for start-ups, the government of the Netherlands, Start-up India, and INDUS Forum, an online matchmaking platform of Indian and Dutch businesses.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Rutte said, "Governments need to be articulate about the problems they want to solve, bring together the right partners, and channelise entrepreneurs in the right direction to find solutions to global problems." "Sustainable businesses present an opportunity to do social good, as they represent a for-profit orientation in the right framework. They advance the U.N.'s Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] in a smartly profitable way," said Ms. Sigrid Kaag, the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation.

Stubble burning

A major business opportunity for Dutch firms that was highlighted included the potential for sale of equipment (such as sensors), data, and solutions concerning air quality monitoring (AQM), with experts estimating that 80% of India is not covered by AQM data collecting which is the first step toward monitoring and combating air pollution.

Also under focus was the severe air pollution in Delhi caused by the burning of paddy straw in neighbouring Haryana and Punjab. An 'INDUS impact' projects aims to halt the hazardous burning of paddy stubble by promoting business partnerships that "upcycle" it. This entails using paddy straw as feedstock to make materials that would find use in construction and packaging — a technology and expertise that Dutch companies are keen to market in India.

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