



India and Cyprus Strengthen Their Defence Deal

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60 Years of Diplomatic Ties

The Republic of India and the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) established diplomatic ties on 10th February 1962. There has been a close and friendly relationship between both the countries since then. India supported the Republic of Cyprus's struggle for independence and has since consistently backed a settlement of the Cyprus dispute based on UNSC resolutions, international law, and the European Union's viewpoints. On the other hand, Cyprus backed India on important matters like India's bid for UNSC; the civil nuclear agreement between India and the US as also the issues with the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In addition, it also backed India on various security matters such as the Pulwama terrorist attack; the post-Shakti series of nuclear tests following the abolition of Article 370 in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Goodwill gestures have also been prevalent between the two countries. India has named an avenue in New Delhi in honour of Archbishop Makarios, the first President of RoC. A series of high-level visits has helped to enhance India-Cyprus relations. President V.V. Giri (July 1972), President R. Venkataraman (September 1988), Prime Minister Indira Gandhi (September 1983), and Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee are among those who visited (October 2002) Cyprus. Parliamentary exchanges include trips such as by Mr A. Ghalanos, President of the House of Representatives of RoC to India in 1995, and visits of Dr. Najma

Heptullah, Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, and Shri S. Malikarjunaiah, Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, to RoC in 1996. Shri Prahlad Singh Patel, MP attended the 45th Regional Conference of the British Islands and Mediterranean Region, which was held at RoC. (May 2015).

Both Republics also enjoy lively cultural links. There are many similarities in the cultures, values, and ethos of the two countries. To highlight these features, the High Commission of India has organised a number of events in RoC, such as Indian festivals, photo exhibitions, and dance/music performances. Every year, National Days and International Days of Yoga are observed. The High Commission conducted cultural events to honour Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary from 2018 to 2020. The High Commission has also organised numerous Indian book nooks in various institutions around the RoC.

India's External Affairs Minister's recent visit to Cyprus

During the meeting (December 30th, 2022), External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said to his counterpart Ioannis Kasoulides that, the India-Cyprus partnership is one of immense importance, "It is rooted in our shared values of democracy, diversity, pluralism and respect for the law. In growing our own ties and working with other partners, we are both guided by shared values and common principles".

Cyprus's foreign minister Ioannis Kasoulides thanked India for supporting the mandate of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), where the UNSC expressed concern over unauthorised activities in the buffer zone separating Greek and Turkish communities in the northern and southern regions of the Mediterranean island since 1974. There were also discussions on issues of mutual and global interests like the Ukraine conflict.

Marking the 60 years of diplomatic relations, the two countries signed three agreements: first, defence and military cooperation; another, a Letter of Intent on immigration and mobility which will provide a common framework of arrangement and cooperation to facilitate the mobility of students, academics, business people and professionals and also help in combating irregular migration, and lastly, an agreement on Cyprus joining the International Solar Alliance (ISA) which will promote the usage of renewable energy. The vision for world peace, freedom, democracy and the rule of law was also brought into the picture. Kasoulides said that to deepen the partnership between the two countries, one needs to accelerate the partnership and deepen the people-to-people contact.

Bilateral relations, multilateral cooperation, on geopolitical and regional challenges, respect for neighbourhoods, Indo-Pacific region, Middle East or West Asia, Europe and on India-EU relations were also among the key areas of International Relations which were given importance during the meeting.

The Cypriot minister said India and Cyprus welcomed the strong momentum in their bilateral cooperation but looked to further strengthen the ties in fields such as trade, commerce, investment, maritime affairs, tourism, and education.

The visit between the two ministers also discussed the issue of “Turkey’s provocative actions against Cyprus”. History showcases that the relationship between Turkey and Cyprus has remained strained and its effects have made Ankara give a separate status to Northern Cyprus. After Turkey violated UNSC resolutions by opening the ghost town of Varosha, which was once a popular resort, India extended its support to Cyprus in 2021. India’s position on the Cyprus issue and its commitment to bi-communal bi-zonal Federation on the UN Resolutions has made the bilateral relationship even stronger than ever before.

Conclusion

With Cyprus facing imbroglio for the last several decades over the issue of Turkish dominant Northern region and the Republic of Cyprus (an EU member). India is backing Cyprus for a bi-communal, bi-zonal federation contingent on UN Resolutions as the solution to the Cyprus issue. With this as a stated principle position, the Indian Foreign Minister inked the Defence and Military Cooperation Deal. Both countries are looking forward to expanding their strategic partnership. Closer links between Delhi and Nicosia and the recent signing of the Defence deal are most likely to annoy Turkey and Pakistan.