

India- Malta Relations

Background

India was one of the first countries to recognize independence of Malta in 1964 and established diplomatic relations with it in 1965. Although Malta is a small country, with population of 4.15 lakhs, the island's accession to the EU on May 1, 2004, has brought about a shift in its global profile. With a view to bring its policies in line with EU positions, Malta has quit NAM as well as G-77. However, Malta continues to attach high degree of importance to Commonwealth, and hosted the CHOGM Summit in November 2005 again in 2015. Malta also attaches considerable importance to the Mediterranean dimension, and is a member of the 5+5 Dialogue.

Diplomatic Presence

Malta has been concurrently accredited to Libya even though the Assistant High Commission of India in Malta was opened in 1993. However, on grounds of economy, the Government closed down the Post in 2002. India has also appointed an Honorary Consul in Malta. Malta opened its High Commission in Delhi in July 2007 and has appointed a resident High Commissioner. It also has Honorary Consuls in Mumbai and Chennai.

Bilateral

India-Malta bilateral relations have been friendly with high level visits between the two countries. From the Maltese side, Prime Minister Dr. Edward Fenech Adami visited India in 1989. President of Malta Dr. Censu Tabone had visited India in January 1992. From the Indian side, President R. Venkataraman had visited Malta in 1990.

The Foreign Minister of Malta, Dr. Michael Frendo, visited India in March 2005. In his meeting with EAM, the two leaders reviewed bilateral relations. A Protocol for Foreign Office Consultations between India and Malta was also signed. The Maltese FM also met the Commerce Minister. India's former Minister for Commerce & Industry, Shri Kamal Nath, visited Malta as Head of Indian delegation to GHOGM in November 2005.

The Chief Justice of Malta, Mr. Vincent A De Gaetano, visited India in mid-December 2006 to participate in a Conference of Jurists in Lucknow. He had a one-to-one meeting with the then Chief Justice of India.

Foreign Minister of Malta, in his capacity as the Chairman of the Steering Committee of Commonwealth Connects [on bridging the digital divide], visited India to take part in Commonwealth Connects 2007- e-Partnership Summit held on March 23-24, 2007 in New Delhi.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta, Dr. Tonio Borg visited India during January 6-11, 2010. He met EAM and Minister of State for External Affairs (PK) and also delivered a talk at the Supreme Court Bar Association. During the trip he formally inaugurated the Maltese High Commission in New Delhi (established in 2007) and also the Honorary Consulate of Malta in Chennai.

A two-member Indian Shipping delegation led by Secretary (Shipping) visited Malta to explore the opportunities for cooperation in the Shipping sector between India and Malta. The delegation visited various shipping facilities including Malta Transport Centre in July 2010. The Dean of Foreign Service Institute visited Malta in September 2010 to participate in the 38th Annual Meeting of Deans and Directors of Diplomatic Academies and Institutes of International Relations.

An Indian CBDT delegation participated in the 33rd Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators (CATA) Technical Conference from 14-19 October in Floriana. Shri Hardeep Puri, Permanent Representative of India to UN attended a UN meet in Valetta. Minister of State for External Affairs (PK) paid a four day official visit to Malta from 7th to 10th April, 2013. A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement was signed between the two countries during the visit.

A two member delegation of ONGC Videsh Ltd. visited Malta in the month of August 2013 to explore hydrocarbons potential in Malta. This was followed by the visit of a 2 member technical delegation.

A delegation composed of 11 school principals from different States in India visited Malta in September 2013 and met with senior officials from the Maltese Ministry of Education as well as with senior officials from the University of Malta to explore areas of mutual interest and cooperation through collaborative exchanges.

On October 31, 2013 Director General level Foreign Office consultations were held between India and Malta in New Delhi. Also the Maltese Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. George Vella visited India to attend ASEM meeting in November 2013. A MoU for Waiver of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic passports was signed during the visit.

A two-member delegation led by Shri Rajat Bansal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance visited Malta to attend the meeting of the Peer Review Group of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes on 17-21 March, 2014

Shri Shashi Kant Sharma, Comptroller & Audit General of India led a two-member delegation to Malta to attend the 22nd conference of the Commonwealth Auditors General Meeting on 24-27 March, 2014.

A 37-member student faculty delegation from schools in Bangalore, Delhi and Jammu visited Malta from 24 April 2014 for a week long orientation under an exchange programme.

In February 2015 (05-07) Mr. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change, visited India to participate and address the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2015 held in New Delhi. The Summit was organized by TERI.

Mr. Godfrey Farrugia, Hon'ble MP along with his wife Ms. Marlene Farrugia visited Vishakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh for Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Parliament and Media Law Conference held during 7-11 April, 2015.

Mr. Thanglura Darlong, Joint Secretary (CT-GCI&PP&R) along with Mr. Anurag Kumar, Superintendent of Police (TFFS) – National Investigation Agency (NIA) MHA, visited Malta to attend Criminal, Justice and Rule of Law (CJ-ROL) meeting from 13-14 April, 2015.

Prof. K.V.Thomas, Chairman, Public Accounts Committee along with Shri Shivkumar Chanabasappa Udasi, MP Lok Sabha and Shri Devender Singh, Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha Secretariat, visited Malta to attend 5th Westminster Workshop : Effective, Independent and Transparent Public Accounts Committees for Robust Public Financial Oversight from 01-05 June, 2015.

Justice Mr. Cyriac Joseph, Acting Chairperson, Indian Human Rights Commission (IHRC) accompanied by Dr. Savita Bhakhry, Joint Director (Research) visited Malta to attend the CFNHRI Biennial Meeting held from 23 to 25 November, 2015 in Malta.

India was represented by Hon'ble EAM as head of the delegation. MoS (VK) represented at the CHOGM Summit held in Malta from November 24 -29. MOS (VK) at the Foreign Ministers' segment from November 25-26 and EAM as Head of the delegation from November 26-29, 2015. The last CHOGM hosted by Malta was in 2005.

Exchange of Parliamentary visits

A five-member goodwill Parliamentary delegation headed by the Hon'ble Jason Azzopardi, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs visited India from March 12-17, 2007 at the invitation by Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs of India. The delegation called on the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, MOS for External Affairs, and MOS for Information Technology. It also had meetings with Chairmen of our Committees on External Affairs and Information Technology. Speaker of the Maltese Parliament, Mr. Louis Galea visited India for the Commonwealth Speaker's meeting from January 4-8, 2010.

Visit of Indian Survey ship INS Darshak

The Indian survey ship INS Darshak paid a three day goodwill visit to Malta. The ship was under the command of Capt. Sulsri Sridhar Karnik. It was 86 metres long and had a complement of 200 officers and crew. The ship was opened for the public on 28 April.

Visit of Indian Naval Ship Tarangini

INS Tarangini visited Malta among other countries from February 26- March 1, 2007. The visit was prominently featured in the media and was a great success. The reception on board was amongst others attended by Foreign Minister of Malta and members of Maltese Indian community. In 2015, INS Tarangini visited Malta from 20-22 June and again on 6th October.

Cultural relations:

The cultural relations between India and Malta have been old. A Cultural Cooperation Agreement between the both countries was signed in 1992. A Cultural Troupe comprising classical Dancer (Kuchipudi) Ms. Vyjayanthi Kashi and Violinist Ms. Anupriya Deotale, visited Malta in July 2008. "Days of India" were organized from 2-6th Oct., 2013 which included performance by a 10 member Indian folk dance troupe, film & food festival and an exhibition on Gandhi ji. Dr Anglu Farrugia, Speaker of Maltese Parliament inaugurated the celebration of Mahatma Gandhi's birthday. Also Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Economy among various other dignitaries attended the 'Gala dinner and Dance' performances. In June 2014, an Indian film festival was organized in Malta.

On June 22, 2015 Incredible India Tourism Road Show in collaboration with India Tourism Office, Milan, 'MAKE IN INDIA' presentation and a cultural presentation on Bollywood dance performance were organized in Malta.

International Day of Yoga

On June 21, 2015 High Commission of India celebrated 'International Day of Yoga' in Malta with a participation of Maltese nationals, in Malta in collaboration with India Tourism Office, Milan, Italy, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), New Delhi and Grand Hotel Excelsior, Malta. Another yoga session was held at the Valletta harbour at the visiting Indian Navy Sailing Ship INS Tarangini in which Yoga experts from Malta and ship crew participated. On June 22, 2015 Incredible India Tourism Road Show in collaboration with India Tourism Office, Milan, 'MAKE IN INDIA' presentation and a cultural presentation on famous Bollywood dance performance were also organized.

Second International Day of Yoga and India Tourism road show

On June 21, 2016 High Commission again celebrated the second International Day of Yoga with the participation of Maltese nationals in collaboration with India Tourism Office, Milan, Italy, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

The Yoga event was followed by Incredible India Tourism Show and a short cultural programme of Bollywood dance presented by three dancers from Italy.

Commonwealth Games

Malta is a member of Commonwealth. In connection with the XIX Commonwealth Games, the Queen's Baton Relay (QBR) on its routing through 70 nations and territories of the Commonwealth transited in Malta on 4-8 December, 2009. Baton was taken to different Maltese schools and wider publicity was arranged for this event. Malta participated in Commonwealth Games held in Delhi from 3-14 October.

Bilateral Agreements

During the visit of Maltese President in 1992, two agreements, one on Cultural Cooperation and the other on Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, were signed. A MoU in Power sector was signed in 1992 and under this BHEL representative in Libya visited Malta in November 2009 and made presentation on solar-energy projects and small thermal plants to the Ministry of Resources in Malta. A Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement was signed during Smt. Preneet Kaur, the then Minister of State for External Affairs' visit to Malta in April, 2013. A MoU for Waiver of Visas for Holders of Diplomatic passports was signed in November 2013 during the visit of the Maltese Foreign Minister H.E. Dr. George Vella to New Delhi to attend the ASEM 2013. MOUs on Cooperation between Confederation of Indian Industry and Malta Chamber of Commerce entered into force on 8 April, 2014 for a period of 3 years.

Bilateral Trade

Bilateral trade between India and Malta stood at US \$ 351.46 mn in 2015-16. India's exports to Malta were of US \$ 325.03 mn in 2015-16 whereas imports from Malta were to the tune of US \$ 26.43 mn. The main items of India's exports to Malta are marine products, drugs, pharmaceutical & fine chemicals, inorganic/organic/agro chemicals, manufactures of metals, transport equipments, and other commodities. The main items of India's imports from Malta are pulp and waste paper, metal scraps, organic chemicals, medicinal & pharmaceutical products, electronic goods.

A high level business delegation from Malta visited India to explore business opportunities and attract investments into Malta in late November 2009. The delegation participated in business meetings/seminar organized by Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). Focus of the visiting delegation was cooperation in sectors like tourism, information & communication technology, health, maritime, financial services and film production. Malta Chamber of Commerce and CII also signed two MOUs on cooperation. Indian pharmaceutical company, Aurobindo Pharma which established its first European GMP certified facility in Malta in 2008 launched its products in the Maltese market in October 2010 and has since further expanded its operations and

acquisitions. OVL sent a team to explore opportunities in hydrocarbon sector.

In April 2014, a high level CEOs delegation led by CII visited Malta at the invitation of Malta Enterprise to scout for business opportunities. Most of Indian businessmen were able to establish viable commercial contact. CII and Malta Enterprise also signed a MoU for cooperation with Malta Enterprise.

Areas of mutual interests:

Malta is focusing on six specific areas and has set targets to be achieved by 2015. The Maltese Prime Minister has suggested that India could be Malta's partner in the development of these identified areas.

- Financial Services: Malta is strong in the financial services sector and has one of the best financial infrastructure, expertise and investors-friendly tax system in Europe. Malta provides excellent location for Indian IT and Financial Services because of its strategic location and availability of skilled manpower. An Indian company I-flex, computerized the operations of Malta's Central Bank.
- ICT: Malta recognizes India's strength in Information and Communications Technology sector. Malta has opened a Smart city project in 2009 similar to the project being set up in Kerala. There could be synergy between these two projects. Maltese side has suggested the ' cloud' concept through which India, EU and North Africa could be virtually networked.
- Tourism: Although for Malta Europe, has been a favoured tourism destination, an increasing number of Maltese are going to other tourist destinations and there is potential to promote India as a tourism option in Malta, and vice versa.
- Manufacturing: The manufacturing sector especially pharmaceutical sector could be potential area for the cooperation as Maltese patent laws provide an advantage over other EU countries. The health care is another promising area for bilateral cooperation. An Indian company, Aurobindo Pharma has set up its plant in Malta in April 2009.
- Education: Malta has some of the oldest universities in the region including institutes for specialized training in areas such as maritime sector, diplomatic studies, management education etc. Universities/institutes of the two countries could consider cooperation.
- Shipping: Malta has one of the best free port facilities and shipping service sector in the region. Malta is strategically located in Mediterranean region for locating warehouses to re-ship Indian goods to North Africa and EU.

Indian Community

Even though some Maltese-Indians trace their roots in Malta to 1890s, the Indian community has remained small and is no more than 400 strong about of 110 of them have Maltese nationality. They are mostly engaged in business of textiles, and food industry. There are also some Indian students studying in Malta. Malta has extended full cooperation during the evacuation of Indians from Libya in 2011 and again in August 2014.

For more information and latest updates please visit Embassy of India to Libya and High Commission of India to Malta website : <http://indianembassylibya.in>

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