

## India-Malta Relations

India and Malta enjoy very friendly and cordial relations. India was one of the first countries to recognize independence of Malta in 1964 and in 1965 established diplomatic relations with it. India and Malta share a common heritage, being members of the Commonwealth. Malta attaches high degree of importance to Commonwealth, and had hosted the CHOGM Summit in November 2005. It again hosted the Summit in November 2015. External Affairs Minister, Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, visited Malta in November 2015, and represented India at CHOGM Summit.

An Assistant High Commission of India at Malta was opened in 1993. However, on grounds of economy, the Government of India closed down the Post in 2002 and appointed an Honorary Consul in Malta. However, the Indian Mission to Malta was re-opened in Jan. 2017, with High Commissioner Shri Rajesh Vaishnav, taking charge on 12th January, 2018. 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 Visits:

India-Malta bilateral relations have been friendly, with a number of visits having been exchanged between the two sides, notably the following:

#### **From the Indian side:**

- Hon'ble President, Shri R. Venkataraman, visited Malta in 1990.
- In Nov. 2005, Shri Kamal Nath, Minister for Commerce & Industry, visited Malta as Head of Indian delegation to CHOGM.
- In July 2008, Shri Chinmay R. Gharekhan, Special Envoy of Prime Minister, visited Malta for discussions regarding the nuclear deal with USA.
- Mrs. Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs, visited Malta in April, 2013 at the invitation of Foreign Minister of Malta, during which a 'Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement' was signed.

- Shri Shashi Kant Sharma, Comptroller & Audit General of India attended the 22nd conference of the Commonwealth Auditors General Meeting on 24-27 March, 2014.
- Prof. K.V.Thomas, Chairman, Public Accounts Committee, visited Malta to attend the Westminster Workshop: Effective, Independent and Transparent Public Accounts Committees for Robust Public Financial Oversight from 01-05 June, 2015.
- Mrs. Sushma Swaraj, External Affairs Minister, attended the CHOGM Summit 2015 from November 25-29, 2015 as head of the delegation, wherein the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri V.K.Singh, represented India at the Foreign Ministers' segment of CHOGM.
- Shri M. J. Akbar, Minister of State for External Affairs visited Malta on an official visit from 8-10 July 2018. During his visit, Minister of State Shri M. J. Akbar met Foreign Minister of Malta Mr. Camelo Abela and called on Prime Minister of Malta Dr. Joseph Muscat and President of Malta Ms. Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca.

**From the Maltese side, the notable visits to India were as follows:**

- H.E. the Prime Minister of Malta, Dr. Edward Fenech Adami, visited India, in 1989.
- H.E. Dr. Censu Tabone, President of Malta, visited India In January 1992.
- In March 2005, Dr. Michael Frendo, Foreign Minister of Malta, paid an official visit to India, and met, among others, with EAM and the Commerce Minister. A Protocol for Foreign Office Consultations between the two countries, was signed during the visit.
- In December 2006, Vincent A. De Gaetano, Chief Justice of Malta, visited India to participate in a Conference of Jurists in Lucknow, and had a one-to-one meeting with the then Chief Justice of India.
- In March 2007, a five-member goodwill Parliamentary delegation headed by the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Foreign and European Affairs, Mr. Jason Azzopardi, visited India at the invitation of Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs of India, and had meetings including

with Chairmen of India's Committees on External Affairs and Information Technology.

- H.E. Mr. Godfrey Farrugia, MP, visited Vishakhapatnam, for Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Parliament and Media Law Conference held during 7-11 April, 2015.
- In March 2007, 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 in New Delhi.
- In January 2010, Mr. Louis Galea, Speaker of the Maltese Parliament, visited India for the Commonwealth Speakers meeting.
- In January 2010, Dr. Tonio Borg, Deputy Prime Minister & Foreign Minister of Malta, visited India. Apart from holding talks with the External Affairs Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs, he 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.
- In November 2013 the Maltese Foreign Minister Dr. George Vella met EAM, Shri Salman Khurshid, on the sidelines of ASEM in New Delhi.
- In February 2015, Mr. Leo Brincat, Minister for Sustainable Development, Environment and Climate Change, visited India to participate and address the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit 2015 organized by TERI in New Delhi.
- In February 2018, Prof. Edward Scicluna, Minister of Finance of Malta visited India to participate in the Global Business Summit organized by the Economic Times and Yes Bank.
- In February 2018, Minister for Energy and Water Management of Malta, Mr. Joseph Mizzi visited India.
- In March 2018, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Promotion of Malta, Mr. Carmelo Abela visited India, leading a large business delegation. During the visit, Minister Abela participated in the India-

Europe Business Forum, hosted by FICCI in New Delhi. He met External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for External Affairs Shri M.J. Akbar during the visit.

### **Institutional arrangements**

India and Malta have entered into several bilateral MoUs/Agreements, which include a Cultural Cooperation Agreement, Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, Protocol on Foreign Office Consultations, e-Tourist Visa on arrival, among others. Some more MoUs/agreements are under discussion.

### **Economic relations and areas of mutual interests**

Malta is keen to attract Indian businesses and capital for taking advantage of its strategic location for accessing European and North African markets. In this regard, an Indian company, M/s Aurobindo Pharma, which had commenced its operations in Malta in January 2009 with 11 employees and initial investment of 5 million Euros, currently has about 140 employees and investment of approx. € 20 million. It is thus the largest analytical Pharma testing facility in Europe, generating employment for more than 100 knowledge based specialists in the local Pharma sector. Similarly, a Maltese company M/s Tolly Products had set up a facility for cosmetic packaging in Uttarakhand, India, sometime back, with an investment of Euro 5 million, which has since been closed.

Malta being a freight transit shipment point, financial centre, and ICT & R&D hub, there is scope for Indian companies to enter Malta in these fields to partner with Maltese companies or to provide exclusive services. Malta is a tourist destination and requires number of related services. Number of exploratory visits etc. have taken place from India to explore for opportunities in different fields. Scope for exploring cooperation in sectors like tourism, ICT, health, maritime, financial services and film production exists. Malta Chamber of Commerce and CII had signed MOUs. In the automobiles sector, India was exporting Maruti-800 and later Tata vehicles to Malta before Malta's accession to EU. There are also opportunities in the software sector as an Indian software company, I-flex, had earlier computerized the operations of Malta's Central Bank.

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.

### **Culture & Education**

The cultural relations between India and Malta have been old. A Cultural Cooperation Agreement between the both countries was signed in 1992, and remains in force. An 'India Week' was organized in June 2006 with screening of classic Indian films and documentaries coupled with tea and tourism promotion. Subsequently in July/August 2008 a cultural troupe comprising internationally-renowned Kuchipudi classical dancer, Ms. Vyjayanthi Kashi, and the renowned violinist, Ms. Anupriya Deotale, visited Malta and staged performances. The event was widely covered by the local media and helped lift India's cultural profile in the island state. In Oct 2013, 'Days of India' were celebrated in Malta with a 10 member ICCR-sponsored troupe giving performances in Valletta and Gozo; holding of an exhibition of the paintings of Mahatma Gandhi, inaugurated by the Maltese Speaker Dr Anglu Farrugia; live demonstrations of crafts by 3 artisans commissioned by EPCH, in the public areas; and holding of a Food Festival at the Sa Re Ga Ma Restaurant, Fortina Hotel, Malta, with the help of two ITDC chefs who were deputed by GoI Tourist Office, Rome. 100 years of Indian Cinema were also celebrated with the screening of 6 Indian films.

There are some Indian students studying in the University of Malta pursuing courses in diverse fields, as also in some other institutes. Though the number at present is small, there is scope for greater cooperation in the field of education. In this regard, a group of teachers from Indian schools had visited Malta in 2013. Another group of students and teachers from Indian schools visited Malta in April, 2014. In June 2014, a film festival was held in Malta. Shooting for a Bollywood film, Thugs of Hindustan, has recently been held in Malta (Aug./Sept. 2017).

### **Other events**

On June 21, 2015, the Mission celebrated "International Day of Yoga" in collaboration with India Tourism Office, Milan, Italy, ICCR New Delhi and Grand Hotel Excelsior Malta, with the participation of Maltese nationals. Another yoga session was held at the Valletta harbor at the visiting Indian Naval Ship, INS Tarangini. 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. The second and third International Day of Yoga were also celebrated in Malta.

### **Commonwealth**

Malta has hosted CHOGM twice – in 2005 and 2015. On both the occasions, India was represented at the Ministerial level. In Nov. 2005, Shri Kamal Nath, Minister for Commerce & Industry, visited Malta as Head of Indian delegation to CHOGM, in November 2005; and the External Affairs Minister attended the CHOGM Summit 2015 from November 25-29, 2015 as head of the delegation. The Minister of State for External Affairs represented India at the Foreign Ministers' segment of CHOGM from November 5-26, 2015. Malta participated in the Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi.

### **Visits of Indian ships**

Malta being strategically located in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea, between the continents of Africa and Europe, regularly hosts the international visiting ships calling on its ports for bilateral goodwill visits as well as for business and transshipment purposes. The Indian naval ships have similarly visited Malta few times in the recent past. This includes 3-day goodwill visit of Indian survey ship INS Darshak in April 2002. INS Tarangini visited Malta on 26 Feb- 1 March 2007; 20-22 June 2015, 6 Oct., 2015; and 20-23 May 2018.

### **Indian Community**

Even though some Maltese-Indians trace their roots in Malta to 1890s, the Indian community has remained small and is around 700 strong with about 110 of them having Maltese nationality. There are also some Indian students studying in Malta.

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