

India-Greece Bilateral Brief

(As on 09 August 2023)

Basic facts about the country

Official Name	:	Hellenic Republic
National Capital	:	Athens
Number of Provinces/ Administrative Divisions	:	13 regions and 01 autonomous region (Agion Oros – Mt. Athos)
Population	:	10.48 million (as per 2021 census – ELSTAT)
Currency	:	Euro
Language	:	Greek
Time	:	Eastern European Time 3½ hours behind IST in winter; 2½ hours in summer
Head of State	:	Ms. Katerina Sakellaropoulou President
Head of Government	:	Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis Prime Minister
Foreign Minister	:	Mr. Georgios Gerapetritis

Overview: India's traditionally long standing, warm and friendly relationship with Greece has been marked by consistent support to each other on issues of core national interest, such as, Kashmir and Cyprus. On J&K, Greece's position reflects our concerns. It has not issued any statement on the recent developments in Kashmir. Greece supports our quest for permanent seat in an expanded UNSC. It supported India at the NSG in 2008 and in 2016, MTCR, WASSENAAR arrangements, Australia Group and India's candidature for ICJ, ITLOS, IMO, Postal Operations Council (POC), World Heritage Committee and for the position of the External Auditor of the IAEA for the term 2022-27. Following India's nuclear tests in May 1998, when most Western countries were

contemplating sanctions against India, the Greek Defence Minister visited India in December 1998 (first Defence Minister from a NATO country to visit India after the tests) and signed an MOU on Defence Cooperation. During the visit of EAM in June 2021 to Greece, the statue of Mahatma Gandhi was unveiled in Athens jointly by EAM and Foreign Minister Mr. Nikos Dendias. In the Defence front, the two sides intensified their exchanges during the virtual meeting held on 14th January 2022 and later a webinar between Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and Greek counterparts was held on 16 February, 2022.

Historical Linkages: India's contacts with Greece began over 2500 years ago. Trading between the Mauryan Kings and Greece is evidenced by coinage and writings. In 326 BC, Alexander's expedition led him to the North-Western part of the Indian subcontinent as far as the Hyphasis (Beas River), where he fought with Raja Puru, King of Pauravaa - between the Jhelum and Chenab), and Ambhi who ruled at Taxila. He did not cross the Indus into India; and turned South. The Mauryan dynasty which was contemporary to Alexander became the largest Indian Empire to spread west to Punjab and Afghanistan under Chandragupta and later his grandson Ashoka. Chanakya, in Chandragupta's Court records in Arthashastra about Yavan Ambassador in the Kings' court, named Megasthenes. Gandhara art is believed to be a fusion of Indian and Greek influences.

Political: Diplomatic relations were established between the two countries in May 1950. Greece opened its Embassy in Delhi in 1950 and India in Athens in 1978. The relationship has progressed smoothly over the last 70 years. Greece participated in the six-Nation Delhi Declaration of 1985 on Nuclear Disarmament. On Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)/National Register of Citizenship (NRC), Abrogation of Article 370, Reorganization of new Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh and Judgement on Ram Janm Bhoomi-Babri Masjid, the official stand of Greece is that these are internal affairs of India. Both the countries pledged reciprocal support for election to the non-Permanent seat in UNSC. Greece, as per understanding, voted for India's candidature to UNSC for 2021-22. It supported India at the Nuclear Suppliers' Group in 2008, and 2016, MTCR, WASSENAAR arrangements, Australia Group. Greece supported India's candidature for ICJ, ITLOS, IMO, Postal Operations Council (POC), World Heritage Committee and for the position of the External Auditor of the IAEA for the term 2022-27 and various other international bodies. On J&K, its position reflects our concerns. It strongly condemned the Mumbai terrorist attacks. Soon after the Pulwama terrorist attack in February 2019, it issued a

statement condemning the attack in strong terms.

During the India-EU Porto Summit held on 08 May 2021, the Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis expressed Greece's full solidarity and support for India in the EU. While addressing the inaugural session on Greeks' new National Strategy for Extroversion Plan – 2021, Prime Minister Mitsotakis made a reference on India's growth and economic policy of India in an appreciative manner. During the visit of EAM in June 2021, the Framework agreement on the International Solar Alliance was signed, which was ratified by the Greek Parliament on 15th march 2022. During the visit of Greek Foreign Minister to India in March 2022, MoUs on (i) Cultural and Educational Exchange Programme for the Years 2022-2026 (ii) Declaration of Intent on Migration and Mobility were signed.

Important Visits/Meetings:

From India: Hon'ble Minister of State (MoS) for External Affairs and Culture Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi visited Greece on 30-31 January, 2023. She called on Deputy PM Mr. Panagiotis Pikrammenos and also met with Greek Foreign Minister Mr. Nikos Dendias. Hon'ble MoS had extensive bilateral discussions with Greek Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Andreas Katsaniotis and Greek Minister of Culture & Sports Ms. Lina G. Mendoni.

Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Smt. Anupriya Patel visited Greece from 13-16 April, 2022 and co-chaired the 8th session of India-Greece JEC with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, H.E. Mr. Konstantinos Fragkogiannis. On the sidelines, she met Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food Mr. George Georgantas and Greek Deputy Minister for Research and Technology Dr. Christos Dimas on 14 April 2022.

Hon'ble EAM visited Greece from 25-27th June 2021. During the visit he called on Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and held bilateral meeting with Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias.

High powered business delegation led by Hon'ble MoS(C&I), Shri Hardeep Singh Puri participated in the 84th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) 2019, where

India was “Honored Country”

Visit of Hon’ble Rashtrapatiji to Greece from June 16-19, 2018. The Presidential visit from India to Greece after a hiatus of 11 years – was impactful and revitalized the bilateral ties by lending the required political impulse. He held a restricted meeting with the then Greek President, followed by delegation-level talks, meetings with PM Tsipras(now Opposition leader), and the Leader of Opposition, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis(now Prime Minister). He was accompanied by MoS(Steel), two MPs and a large business delegation. India-Greece Business Forum inaugurated by Rashtrapatiji and the Deputy Prime Minister and Economy Minister of Greece was held. Three MoUs on standardization, cooperation between the two Foreign Service institutes, and programme for cultural cooperation were signed.

In April 2018, then MoS (Agriculture) Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat visited Greece. He held a delegation-level meeting with the Minister of Rural Development and Food, and a wide interaction at the Hellenic Parliament with over 50 Greek MPs.

MOS(PK) Smt. Preneet Kaur paid an official visit to Greece from 30 January to 3 February 2013. She met her counterpart, the then Deputy Foreign Minister Dimitris Kourkoulas and called on President (Speaker) of the Hellenic Parliament, Mr. Evangelos-Vasileios Meimarakis.

Minister of State for Human Resource Development Dr. Shashi Tharoor visited Athens 15-17 September 2013 to participate in the International Herald Tribune’s series of Global Conversations entitled “Democracy Under Pressure”.

President Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam paid a State Visit to Greece in 2007.

President Shri Zail Singh paid a State Visit to Athens in November 1986.

Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi paid a visit to Greece in 1983.

From Greece: Foreign Minister of Hellenic Republic Nikos Dendias visited India from 22-23 March 2022. He held bilateral meeting with EAM. He gave a talk at the Chair of Greek Studies in JNU.

Tourism Minister Haris Theocharis visited Mumbai, on 4-5 February 2020 to participate in OTM (India's Outbound Travel Market). During his visit, Theocharis held meetings with MoS(Tourism) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel and other officials of Indian tourism industry.

Foreign Minister of Greece, Nikos Kotzias, accompanied by senior officials, visited India from 25–28 November, 2017 and met former External Affairs Minister, Late Sushma Swaraj and ex-Minister of State for External Affairs M.J. Akbar on 27 November 2017.

Defence Minister Panos Kammenos visited India on 17-19 December, 2015 and met Raksha Mantri and MOS (VKS).

Deputy Foreign Minister Kyriakos Gerontopoulos led a three member Greek delegation to New Delhi to attend ASEM Foreign Minister's Meeting, on 11-12 November 2013.

Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis, accompanied by Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis and others, visited India in January 2008.

George Papandreou (son of former President Andreas Papandreou) led a delegation to India from 28-30 January, 2007 to attend the Satyagraha Centenary Conference held in New Delhi.

Other engagements: A virtual meeting between EAM and his Greek counterpart, Nikos Dendias was held on 29 October 2020. EAM and Foreign Minister Mr. Dendias had a telephonic conversation on 18th January 2022.

EAM met briefly Mr. Dendias in Paris on the sidelines of the Ministerial Forum for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. They also met in New York on 22 September, on the sidelines of the 77th session of the UN General Assembly

Institutional Mechanism: The two main forums for conducting bilateral talks are: Joint Economic Committee (JEC) and Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). It meets alternatively in Delhi and Athens.

JEC: The 8th Session of the Greece-India Joint Economic Committee was held in Athens on April 15, 2022. Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, H.E. Mrs. Anupriya Patel, co-chaired the 8th session of India-Greece JEC with Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Hellenic Republic, H.E. Mr. Konstantinos Fragkogiannis. On the sidelines, she met Greek Minister of Rural Development and Food Mr. George Georgantas and Greek Deputy Minister for Research and Technology Dr. Christos Dimas on 14 April 2022. The 7th JEC was held in Delhi on 23 November 2016.

FOC: The Foreign Office Consultations at the Secretary-level have been held

since 1992. The 13th round of India-Greece Foreign Office Consultations was held on 14 June 2023 in Athens.

Agreements and MoUs: Greece and India have signed following agreements: Agreements on Avoidance of Double Taxation (1967), Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation in 1983, on Cultural Relations in 1961 which resulted in several Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs), on Tourism in 1998, on Defence Cooperation in 1998, and an MoU on Agricultural Cooperation in 2001. On Science & Technology and on Bilateral Investment Promotion & Protection (BIPA) in 2007. In February 2013, an agreement on visa-free travel for diplomatic passport holders. In 2017, Air Services Agreement and MoU on Cooperation in the field of New and Renewable Energy were signed, which were ratified by the Greek parliament on 15th March 2022. MoU on Standardization, Programme for Cultural Cooperation and MoU between FSI and Greek Diplomatic Academy were signed in June 2018. During the visit of Greek Foreign Minister Mr. Dendias to India, MoUs on (i) Cultural and Educational Exchange Programme for the Years 2022-2026 (ii) Declaration of Intent on Migration and Mobility were signed.

The agreements/MoUs under process are: Agriculture Cooperation (at the final stage); Manpower Mobility Partnership; Avoidance of Double Taxation; Extradition Treaty; Gainful Employment of Spouses & Eligible Dependents of Members of Diplomatic Missions and Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT).

Trade & Commerce: The main Export items from India to Greece are Aluminum, organic chemicals; fish and crustaceans; iron and steel; plastic; textile articles; edible fruit and nuts; peel or citrus fruit; onions, sesame seeds, spices, coffee, tea, cashew nuts; electrical machinery and equipment and parts; boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; apparel and clothing accessories; optical, medical or surgical instruments; automobiles and automobile components; carpets and other floor coverings; paper and paperboard; leather goods; handbags; and articles of animal gut etc.

The main import items from Greece are Aluminium foil; mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; sulphur; lime and cement; nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; cotton; chemical products; edible fruit and nuts, citrus fruits, melons, kiwi; copper scrap; electrical machinery and equipment; building stones – mainly marble and travertine; ships, boats and floating structures etc.

India Participated as 'Honoured Country' in the 84th Thessaloniki International Fair(TIF), the largest annual commercial exposition of Greece, and also the largest in Southeast Europe and the Balkans from September 7-15, 2019(India was also the 'Honoured Country in 2009).

The Export and Import figures are given at Annexure-A

Indian Companies in Greece: The Indian infrastructure company, GMR Airports Ltd. and its joint venture partner, GEK-Terna, a leading Greek infrastructure company, awarded a contract, for a €850 million construction project of a new airport at Kasteli in Crete Island, marks the first-ever entry of an Indian company in Greece in recent years. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis laid the foundation stone of the new airport on February 8, 2020, where Chairman of GMR was present, among others. It is a thirty five year project, with five years to build and thirty years to operate.

M/s. UPL Hellas, an Indian multinational company is also having its establishment in Greece. It deals in plant protection products, fertilizer, Biosilutions and agronomist in the country side and also farmers in Greece and neighbouring region.

Defence Cooperation: Bilateral defence cooperation received an impetus after the visit of Raksha Mantri (RM) to Greece in 1994. This was followed by the visit of Chief of Air Staff to Greece in March 1998 and Greek Defence Minister's visit to India in December 1998, during which the MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed. After 1998, our military interactions have been visiting by our NDC teams (2002, 2003, 2008 and 2022), transits by IAF Mirage 2000 ferries in 2004 involving a landing in Greece and two port calls by 2 Indian Naval Ships in 2003 and visits of 4 Indian Naval ships in July 2006 and 2009. A Passex exercise was undertaken by the Navy ships of both the countries during the visit. Six SU-30 MKI, two IL-78 Tankers and two IL-76 transport aircrafts of IAF made transit halts at Tanagra Air Base in Greece during June-July 2007 on way to and from UK. During the visit of late President Abdul Kalam to Greece in April 2007, he visited the Hellenic Aerospace Industries. The issues related to strengthening bilateral defence cooperation were discussed. The Chief of Hellenic Navy participated in the International Fleet review at Vizag in February, 2016. A team of two pilots and one technical officer visited Tanagra Air Base in Athens in October 2016, as part of SME exchange of Mirage 2000 aircraft which was flown by both Air Forces. A similar visit to India from Hellenic Air Force was carried out in August 2017. Four ships of Indian Navy (INS Mumbai, INS Aditya, INS Tarkash and INS

Trishul) paid a goodwill visit to Souda Bay, Crete on 17-20 April 2017. A Passex exercise was undertaken between the Navy. A high-level defence delegation led by Lt. Gen.(Rtd.)Theodoros Lagios, (HAF) Director General of General Directorate for Defence Investment and Armaments participated in DefExpo 2020 in February 2020, Lucknow.

Indian Army Chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane had spoken through video call on 29 July, 2021 with his Greek counterpart Lieutenant General Charalambos Lalousi. The two chiefs discussed aspects of bilateral defence cooperation between the two countries. Both Indian and Hellenic Air Forces participated in the 'Blue Flag' exercise, held in Israel from 17 October to 28 October, 2021.

India sent two officers as observers in MEDUSA 11 exercise held from 16 November to 22 November, 2021 in Crete (Greece).

On 14 January, 2022, a virtual bilateral meeting between delegations led by Mr. Somnath Ghosh, JS (IC) on Indian side and Dr. Konstantinos Balomenos, DG, General Directorate of National Defence Policy & International Relations, from Greek side was held. A follow up webinar between Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and Greek counterparts was held on 16 February, 2022.

An 18 member delegation from National Defence College (NDC), New Delhi led by Lt. Gen. M.K. Mago, Commandant, NDC, New Delhi visited Greece from 05-10 June, 2022 for foreign study tour.

A group of 31 officers from College of Defence Management (CDM), Secunderabad led by Rear Admiral Sanjay Datt, Commandant, CDM undertook a tour to Greece from 20-24 February 2023. The aim of the visit was to gain exposure by visiting various institutions in the field of defense and strategy of Greece, study their functioning and gaining insights into concepts being practiced in their organisations.

Indian Air Force participated in the multinational air exercise INIOCHOS-23 hosted by the Hellenic Air Force at the Andravida Air Base in Greece from 24 April to 04 May, 2023. The IAF participated with four Su-30 MKI and two C-17 aircraft.

INS Chennai naval ship of Indian Navy visited Souda Bay, Crete from 27-29 July,

2023 and undertook a Passage Exercise with the Hellenic Naval Ship Nikiforos Fokas in the Aegian Sea.

Sacrifices of Indian Soldiers in Greece during the two World Wars:

According to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 518 identified soldiers of undivided India, sacrificed their lives, defending the Allied cause in Southern Europe during World War-I were buried/commemorated in different cemeteries in the territory of Greece. Cemeteries located close to the town of Thessaloniki are: (i) At Monastir Road: Indian Cemetery : 352, Indian Memorial :159; (ii) Struma Military Cemetery : 2; (iii) East Mudros Military Cemetery: 2; (iv) Doiran Military Cemetery :1; (v) Salonika (Lembet Road) Military Cemetery:1; and (vi) Mikra Memorial Municipality of Kalamaria in the City of Thessaloniki

The British Embassy in Athens organises Remembrance Day Ceremony on 2nd Sunday of November every year at the Commonwealth Grave Cemetery at Phaleron, Athens. Ambassadors including India and Representatives of other Commonwealth countries lay wreath at the War Memorial. During his State Visit to Greece in June 2018, Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind visited the Commonwealth War Graves memorial Phaleron and paid his respects to the Second World War Commonwealth servicemen, including Indian soldiers, at the site. Former President late Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, during his visit to Greece in April 2007, also paid his respects to the servicemen at the Commonwealth War Graves memorial Phaleron. From 20-24th May 2021, in commemoration to honour the sacrifices in the war of Crete 80 years ago, special events were held in Chania and Crete.

Science & Technology: With the aim of encouraging and supporting cooperation in the field of science and technology on the basis of equality and mutual benefit, the Agreement on Science & Technology was signed during the visit of Rashtrapatiji to Greece in April 2007. The Agreement has been ratified by both sides.

A four member science & technology delegation from Department of Science & Technology, visited Athens for the First S&T Joint Committee Meeting from 4-5 November 2010. The two sides signed an Executive Programme (2010-2013) to start cooperation in a number of areas of mutual interest, including Information and Communication Technology, Nanotechnology, Life Science and Biomedical Science, Seismology and Geodynamics, Agricultural Science, Chemical and Physical Science, Ocean & Marine Science, Environment Science, and

Renewable Energy.

A team of 7 scientists from ISRO/DoS participated in the 44th Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) assembly at Athens from 16-24 July, 2022 and they also participated in various committee meetings of COSPAR. On the sidelines, opportunities for cooperation in Space between India and Greece were explored.

Culture: Dimitrios Galanos a Greek, became the first European Indologist gaining world reputation. His translations of Sanskrit texts into Greek made knowledge of the philosophical and religious ideas of India available to many Europeans. Born in Athens, in 1760, he spent 47 years in India, where he translated many Hindu texts into Greek and compiled a Sankrit-English-Greek dictionary of over 9000 words. He died on 3 May 1833 in Varanasi, India. A "Dimitrios Galanos" Chair for Hellenic Studies has been established at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India in September 2000.

The prestigious Andreas G. Papandreou Foundation honoured the Indian Nobel Prize winner Shri Amartya Sen in October 1998. Smt. Sonia Gandhi is an honorary member of the Foundation. In January 2002, President Shri K.R. Narayanan presented the Padma Shri Award to Ambassador Dimitris Velissaropoulos who has written several books on India. The award was the first ever given to a Greek citizen. In October 2002, the Sahitya Academy elected Dr. Vassilis Vitsaxis, a distinguished Greek diplomat and well-known scholar, as its Honorary Fellow in recognition of his contribution to the promotion of the understanding of Indian culture. Dr Dimitris Vassiliadis, President of the Indo-Hellenic Society for Culture & Development (ELINEPA), an Indophile, under an ICCR Fellowship, studied at the BHU, Varanasi, is active in propagation and promotion of Indian culture in Greece. In India, Prof. (Retd) Bharat Gupt has done comprehensive work in Greek theatre, and is the author of "Dramatic Concepts – Greek and Indian". In 2019, he was appointed as President of the Indo-Hellenic League in New Delhi.

ICCR has been offering an annual scholarship for Greek student to study in India and students have been taking up this offer.

Prof. Nicholas Kazanas, a distinguished Greek Indologist, was declared as one of the awardees of the prestigious Padma Shri award on the occasion of the 72nd Republic Day of India 2021. As he was unable to travel to India, he was presented the award by the Indian Ambassador in Athens in the first quarter of

2022 in a ceremony where Ms. Lina G. Mendoni, Minister of Culture & Sports was the Chief Guest.

Indian Community: According to 2011 Greek census, the number of Indian community is 11,333. Currently, they are estimated to be between 13000-14000. They have been living across various parts of Greece for many years and are predominantly from Punjab and largely Sikhs. Most Indians are farm, factory or construction workers. Many Indian workers, who did not have required papers after some period of stay, acquired stay permits during different periods of amnesty, offered by the Greek government. The last amnesty was in 2005.

Annexure-A

Bilateral Trade figures

Year	Export from India to Greece (in US\$ Million)	Import from Greece to India (in US\$ Million)	Total India-Greece Trade (in US\$ Million)
2023-24 (April-May)	205.24	375.82	581.06
2022-23	785.72	1157.90	1943.62
2021-22	1,077.45	299.94	1377.39
2020-21	489.73	125.99	615.72
2019-20	445.53	123.71	569.24
2018-19	503.37	144.02	647.39
2017-18	433.87	96.11	529.98
2016-17	381.77	125.95	507.72

Useful Resources :

Mission's Website <http://www.indiaingreece.gov.in/>

Mission's facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInGreeceOfficial>

Mission's Twitter link: <https://twitter.com/EmbIndiaAthens>

Mission's YouTube

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTAL9UFgdXnMV94AIL1ZHjg/
videos](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTAL9UFgdXnMV94AIL1ZHjg/videos)
