

## **Embassy of India Athens**

### **India-Greece Bilateral Relations**

#### **Political Relations**

India and Greece have traditional long-standing ties which go back to antiquity. Both countries are ancient civilizations and have been in contact since over 2500 years ago. Greece is the oldest democracy and India the largest. The ties were renewed as both shed the colonial yoke to emerge as modern democracies. India and Greece established diplomatic relations in May 1950. Greece established its Embassy in India in 1950 and India in Athens in 1978.

India and Greece share common approaches to many international issues, such as UN reforms and Cyprus. Greece has consistently supported India's core foreign policy objectives. Greece participated with India in the Six-National Delhi Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament in 1985.

The relationship has progressed smoothly over the last 69 years. Bilateral VVIP visits have taken place fairly in the past. Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji paid a State Visit to the Hellenic Republic from 16-19 June 2018 after a gap of 11 years. Rashtrapatiji held a meetings with Greek President Pavlopoulos and Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. The Leader of the Opposition, called on Rashtrapatiji. During the visit, MoU on Standardization, Programme for Cultural Cooperation and MoU between FSI and Greek Diplomatic Academy were signed. From the Greek side, Greek Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis visited India in January 2008 and PM George Papandreou in February 2010 to attend the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. Other recent visits were MoS (Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare) Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat paid an official visit to Greece on April 18-19, 2018, MoS for Commerce and Industry Shri Hardeep Singh Puri on September 7-8, 2019 and Greek Defence and Foreign Ministers visited India in December 2015 and November 2017, respectively. Air Services Agreement and MoU on Cooperation in the field of New and Renewable Energy were signed during Greek FM's visit in Nov. 2017.

Vice President, M. Venkaiah Naidu met with the Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, on the sidelines of ASEM Summit 2018 in Brussels on 18 October 2018.

The two main forums for conducting bilateral talks are: the Joint Economic Committee (JEC), and Foreign Office Consultations (FOC). The JEC, which was set up in 1983, is headed by MoS (Commerce) on the Indian side and the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs on the Greek side. It meets alternatively in Delhi and Athens and 7<sup>th</sup> JEC was held in Delhi on 23 November 2016. The Foreign Office Consultations at the Secretary-level have been held since 1992. The 11<sup>th</sup> round was held in New Delhi on 26 October, 2016 and discussion focused on various issues of bilateral, regional and international importance.

#### **Commercial Relations**

The bilateral trade was US\$ 503.02 in 2016-17, US \$ 529.98 in 2017-18 (India's export 433.87 million and import 96.11 million); and US \$ 647.39 in 2018-19 (India's export \$ 503.37 and import \$ 144.02 million). The trade balance is in India's favour.

The figures from the Hellenic Statistical Authority indicate the total trade turnover during 2018 as Euro 642.5 million; Indian Exports worth Euro 466.9 million, and Imports at Euro 175.6 million. There was an increase of 14% of Indian exports as compared to 2017.

The main items of Indian exports are: aluminium, organic chemicals; fish and crustaceans; iron and steel; plastic; textile; coffee, tea, spices; nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and mechanical appliances; articles of apparel and clothing accessories; medical or surgical inst.; automobiles and automobile components; carpets and other floor coverings; paper and paperboard; leather goods; travel goods, handbags; articles of animal gut; paints, etc. The main Indian imports are: aluminium foil; iron and steel; mineral fuels, mineral sulphur; lime and cement; machinery and mechanical appliances; cotton; edible fruit and nuts, feel or citrus fruit or melons, kiwi; building stones – mainly marble and travertine; ships, boats and floating structures; etc

An India-Greece Business Forum was organized by the Mission in collaboration with Enterprise Greece on 19 June 2018. The business meeting attended by an Indian business delegation comprising 31 business representatives and a large number of leading Greek business persons representing the sectors of information technology, electronics, shipping, real estate, agriculture, tourism and food processing etc. Rashtrapatiji addressed the business leaders at a India-Greece Business Forum.

India Participated as 'Honored 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 'Honored Country in 2009). High powered Indian business delegation led by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Shri Hardeep Singh Puri. New India Pavilion was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the MoS Shri Hardeep Singh Puri on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2019. During the visit, MoS for C&I also held meeting with PM Mitsotakis, and breakfast B2G meeting with CEOs, and the Minister of Economic Development & Investments. The fair was attended by officials of Indian Government from the Ministries of Commerce and Industry, Electronics & Information Technology, Social Justice and Empowerment, Tourism, MSME and officers of Embassy of India in Greece, ITPO, IBEF and CII as well as prominent Indian entrepreneurs. Around 60 exhibitors participated, included ISRO, NTPC, APEDA, NSIC and companies from the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, etc. Hon'ble Rashtrapatiji conveyed acceptance of India's participation as 'Honored Country' during his visit to Greece in June 2018. The US, China and Russia participated as the Honored Country in TIF 2018, 2017, and 2016, respectively and Germany will be in 2020.

The Indian infrastructure company, GMR Airports Ltd. in a joint venture with Greek company, GEK-Terna, was awarded the contract in February 2019 for a €850 million construction project of a new airport at Kasteli in Crete Island. In March 2019, the Mission organised meetings of the visiting GMR delegation with Greek Minister of Infrastructure and Transport and with the Special Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister. A draft bill ratifying contract was approved in principle by the Greek Parliament's Standing Committee on Production and Trade on May 7, 2019.

## **Cultural Relations**

Relations between India and Greece and its cultural ties can be traced dates back to 4th centuries BC. The first authentic source of India-Greek relations is available in "Indika" written by "Megasthenes", a great Greek historian and diplomat, who was sent to India by the

Hellenistic king Seleucus-I as Ambassador in the court of the Mauryan emperor "Chandragupta".

Dimitrios Galanos spent 47(1760-1833) years in India, studied Sanskrit in Benares and became the first European Indologist of world reputation. His works encompasses translations into Greek of Indian texts, as well as a Sanskrit-English-Greek dictionary.

Several Cultural Organizations promote cultural contract between the two countries. In India there are two Greek centres in Kolkata and Varanasi, while in Athens, there are several organisations such as Yoga institute, Shantom (Indian dance centre), 1st Bollywood Dance & Academy Greece, Brahma Kumaris Centre, Sahaja Yoga Center, Art of Living, etc.

The Embassy of India organized a cultural event to celebrate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi on 2nd October, 2018 at the Agricultural University of Athens. A Bharatnatyam Dance performed by a well-known Greek Dancer Ms. Leda Shantala and her group.

Several Cultural groups sponsored by ICCR regularly participate in Greek dance and music festivals and cultural events. Kathak Dance group led by Ms. Swati Wangnoo Tiwari participated in the 3rd Bollywood and Multicultural Dance Festival held in Athens on 3-5 July 2015 and 8-members Kathakali Dance group led by Mr. Rajendran Pillai gave two performances on Sept 8 and 9, 2019 in Thessaloniki during TIF 2019 where India was 'Honored Country.

ICCR also offers one scholarship every year to the Greek students to study in India. A few students are studying in India under self-financing scheme also.

### **Indian Community**

11,333 (as per 2011 census), which includes a few thousand Indians without proper documents. They have been living across various parts of Greece for many years. Some Indians have also left Greece for India or other EU countries due to the economic decline in Greece since 2010. Most of the Indians are farm, factory or construction workers or petite shop-keepers. Many Indian workers who entered Greece illegally, obtained stay permits during periods of amnesty announced by the Greek Government. The last amnesty was in 2005

Immigrants from India, who are mostly Sikhs with some Hindus and Buddhists, have set up Gurudwaras (presently there are about 15 Gurudwaras) and temples (about two temples) on an informal basis. They obtain permission from the local municipal administration to set up community centres which are used as places of worship. The local municipalities are aware of this practice and have been tolerant. Greeks deeply appreciate Indian civilization and Indians. They have a positive attitude towards the Indian immigrant population.

**Useful Resources :** Mission's Website <http://www.indianembassy.gr/>

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

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

Mission's YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTAL9UFgdXnMV94AILIZHjg/videos>

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