

# MP-IDSA *Commentary*

## India-Cyprus Relations: From Comprehensive to Strategic Partnership

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### **S***ummary*

India and Cyprus are transforming a long-standing friendship into a strategic partnership spanning defence, security, connectivity and economic cooperation.

## Introduction

India and the Republic of Cyprus have maintained warm and friendly relations since establishing diplomatic ties in 1962. Built on mutual respect and shared interests, the partnership has expanded over the years to encompass trade, investment, technology, defence and security. Both countries also cooperate closely on regional and global issues and work together in multilateral forums such as the United Nations and the Commonwealth.<sup>1</sup> India–Cyprus relations are now increasingly being shaped by broader geopolitical and connectivity transformations linking the Indo-Pacific, the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe.

Although Cyprus is a relatively small state in terms of territory, its strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean and its membership in the European Union (EU) enhance its geopolitical relevance for India. Cyprus provides India with an important maritime and economic gateway into Europe, particularly as New Delhi seeks to diversify connectivity routes, strengthen supply-chain resilience, and expand its engagement with the Mediterranean region. Simultaneously, Cyprus views India as a major economic partner, technology market and emerging geopolitical actor capable of contributing to its broader connectivity, innovation and investment ambitions. As of April 2026, around 15,500 Indians are living and working in Cyprus, including professionals employed in the shipping, information technology and fintech sectors, as well as farm workers, domestic workers and students.<sup>2</sup>

## Recent Momentum in Bilateral Relations

A major milestone in the bilateral relations came with Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Cyprus in June 2025, the first by an Indian Prime Minister in over two decades. During the visit, both sides reviewed cooperation in trade, investment, science, research, culture and people-to-people ties. They identified new areas such as fintech, start-ups, defence industry cooperation, connectivity, digitalisation, artificial intelligence and mobility. The two countries agreed to prepare a five-year roadmap for cooperation in strategic sectors. They welcomed the establishment of

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<sup>1</sup> [“India-Cyprus Bilateral Relations”](#), High Commission of India, Nicosia, Republic of Cyprus, May 2026.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

the India–Greece–Cyprus (IGC) Business and Investment Council to deepen economic engagement.<sup>3</sup>

During the June 2025 visit, security and connectivity emerged as central pillars of the partnership. India and Cyprus agreed to establish cyber and maritime security dialogues and mechanisms for real-time information exchange on terrorism, drugs and arms trafficking. The Bilateral Defence Cooperation Programme, signed in January 2025, provides a framework for expanding defence ties. Discussions on improving air connectivity and supporting the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) further underscored the growing strategic and economic significance of the relationship.<sup>4</sup>

Building on the momentum in bilateral relations, Cyprus President Nikos Christodoulides visited India from 20 May to 23 May 2026. As Table 1 specifies, the two sides concluded MoUs on counter-terrorism cooperation, diplomatic training, innovation and technology, higher education and research, and cultural cooperation, among others.<sup>5</sup>

**Table 1. MoUs and Agreements Signed in May 2026**

| MoU / Agreement | Nodal Agencies                                                                                                               | Theme                                                               |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MoU             | Government of India & Government of the Republic of Cyprus                                                                   | To establish a Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism Cooperation |
| MoU             | Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service & Diplomatic Academy of Cyprus                                                    | Diplomatic Capacity Building & Training                             |
| MoU             | Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation & Digital Policy, Cyprus & Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, India | Innovation & Technology Cooperation                                 |

<sup>3</sup> [“Prime Minister Meets the President of the Republic of Cyprus”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 16 June 2025.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> [“List of Outcomes: State Visit of President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides to India”](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of India, 22 May 2026.

| MoU / Agreement       | Nodal Agencies                                                                                                       | Theme                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Technical Arrangement | Larnaca Joint Rescue Coordination Center of Cyprus & Ministry of Defence, India                                      | Search & Rescue (SAR) Cooperation                                                        |
| MoU                   | Ministry of Education, India & Ministry of Education, Sport & Youth, Cyprus                                          | Cooperation in Higher Education & Research                                               |
| MoU                   | Ministry of Culture, India & Deputy Ministry of Culture, Cyprus                                                      | Cultural Cooperation (2026–2030)                                                         |
| MoU                   | Cyprus Defence & Space Industries Cluster (CyDSIC) & Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM)                  | Cooperation in Defence & Space                                                           |
| MoU                   | Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) & Cyprus Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI)                                | Trade, Investment & Technology Collaboration                                             |
| MoU                   | Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) & the Institute of Certified Public Accountants of Cyprus (ICPAC) | Accounting & Auditing, Mutual recognition & Employability in Finance & Business services |

Source: [“List of Outcomes: State Visit of President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr Nikos Christodoulides, to India”](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of India, 22 May 2026; [“CII, Cyprus Chamber Sign MoU to Boost Investment and Defence Collaboration”](#), *Fortune India*, 21 May 2026.

Bilateral ties were elevated to the level of a Strategic Partnership and a Defence Cooperation Roadmap for 2026–2031 was adopted.<sup>6</sup> These key announcements reflect a growing alignment between India’s Indo-Pacific outlook and Cyprus’s increasing interest in maritime connectivity and regional strategic cooperation. They signal the transition of India–Cyprus relations towards a multidimensional strategic partnership encompassing defence, cyber security, connectivity and economic engagement.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

**Table 2. Key Announcements in May 2026**

| <b>Announcement</b>                                                                                              | <b>Stakeholders / Agencies Involved</b>                                | <b>Broad Theme</b>                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Elevation of bilateral relationship to a Strategic Partnership                                                   | Government of India (GoI) & Government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC) | Strategic & Comprehensive Bilateral Cooperation |
| Roadmap for Defence Cooperation between India & Cyprus for 2026–2031                                             | Defence establishments of India & Cyprus                               | Defence & Security Cooperation                  |
| Establishment of a Cyber Security Dialogue between India & Cyprus                                                | Cybersecurity & digital governance agencies                            | Cyber Security Cooperation                      |
| Establishment of a Consular Dialogue between India & Cyprus                                                      | Ministries of External/Foreign Affairs of India & Cyprus               | Consular and People-to-People Engagement        |
| Cyprus is joining the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative under the pillar “Trade, Connectivity & Maritime Transport” | GoI & RoC                                                              | Indo-Pacific & Maritime Cooperation             |
| Gifting of Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri (BHISHM) Cube to the Republic of Cyprus             | GoI & RoC                                                              | Humanitarian Assistance & Health Diplomacy      |
| Celebration of the first-ever India–Cyprus Space Day on 18 May 2026                                              | Space & scientific institutions of India and Cyprus                    | Space Cooperation & Scientific Collaboration    |
| Announcement of intention to open a Cyprus Trade Centre in Mumbai                                                | Cypriot trade & investment authorities                                 | Trade, Investment & Economic Engagement         |

Source: [\*\*“List of Outcomes: State Visit of President of the Republic of Cyprus, H.E. Mr Nikos Christodoulides to India”\*\*](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of India, 22 May 2026.

## **Convergence: Security, Defence and Multilateral Cooperation**

Beyond bilateral issues, both countries support a comprehensive, just and lasting resolution of the Cyprus Question based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation with political equality in accordance with the UN framework and relevant UN Security Council resolutions. Both sides expressed support for the mandate and role of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), with the President of Cyprus appreciating India’s contribution to the mission.<sup>7</sup>

Notably, India is the largest military contributor to UNFICYP, deploying 4,090 personnel as of 31 March 2026,<sup>8</sup> reflecting its longstanding commitment to peace and stability in Cyprus. This engagement also carries wider geopolitical implications given Türkiye’s position on the Cyprus dispute and its support for the Turkish Cypriot administration in northern Cyprus. The issue continues to shape regional politics in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly regarding the UN-backed framework surrounding the Cyprus Question and the UNFICYP mandate.<sup>9</sup>

Therefore, the strengthening of India–Cyprus relations cannot be entirely divorced from the context of deepening Türkiye–Pakistan military engagement. According to officials from Cyprus, discussions also touched on the geopolitical implications of Türkiye’s support for Pakistan and its strained relationship with Cyprus. Cyprus has also expressed interest in acquiring Indian military equipment, such as drones and missiles.<sup>10</sup>

Cyprus expressed solidarity with India by condemning the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam and near the Red Fort. Both countries emphasised stronger international cooperation, accountability and support for multilateral counter-terrorism mechanisms, including the early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.<sup>11</sup> Bilateral cooperation in areas such as radicalisation, terror financing, cyber threats, and the misuse of emerging technologies also reflects the expanding security dimension of bilateral ties and India’s broader

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<sup>7</sup> [“Joint Statement on the State Visit of the President of the Republic of Cyprus”](#), President of the Republic, Republic of Cyprus, 22 May 2026.

<sup>8</sup> [“UNFICYP: Peacekeeping Factsheet”](#), United Nations, 31 March 2026.

<sup>9</sup> Nasia Hadjigeorgiou and Bart Klem, [“Contested Citizenship in the Liminal Spaces of a Divided Cyprus”](#), *Citizenship Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 6, 2025, pp. 533–554; [“No: 21, Regarding UN Security Council Resolution No. 2815 \(2026\) on the Extension of the Mandate of the UN Peacekeeping Force in the Island of Cyprus”](#), Turkish Embassy in New Delhi, Republic of Türkiye, 31 January 2026.

<sup>10</sup> Shubhajit Roy, [“India, Cyprus Upgrade Ties to Strategic Partnership, Sign Pacts on Defence Cooperation, Cyber Security”](#), *Indian Express*, 23 May 2026.

<sup>11</sup> [“Joint Statement on the State Visit of the President of the Republic of Cyprus”](#), Press Information Bureau, Prime Minister’s Office, Government of India, 22 May 2026.

engagement with European and Mediterranean partners on non-traditional security challenges.

Defence cooperation has emerged as an important pillar of India–Cyprus relations following the signing of the MoU on Defence and Military Cooperation in December 2022. Since then, the two countries have institutionalised engagement through annual Bilateral Defence Cooperation Programmes (for 2025 and 2026), high-level military interactions, and the accreditation of an Indian Defence Attaché in Cyprus. Cooperation has expanded in the maritime domain as well, exemplified by INS Trikanth's port call in Limassol in September 2025 and joint naval activities with the Cyprus Navy in September 2024. The relationship has also acquired a defence-industrial dimension through engagements like the 'Brand India' defence production event in Nicosia.<sup>12</sup>

## **Economic and Connectivity Dimensions**

Bilateral trade between India and Cyprus has remained resilient despite fluctuations in recent years. The total trade has increased from US\$ 136.17 million in 2023–24 to US\$ 157.73 million in 2025–26. India's exports to Cyprus primarily include pharmaceuticals, chemicals, iron and steel products, and electrical machinery, while Cyprus exports metals, machinery and paper-related products to India.<sup>13</sup> Financial connectivity has also improved through cooperation between India's digital payment ecosystem and Cypriot financial institutions.<sup>14</sup> However, significant opportunities remain in investment, fintech, logistics, clean energy, digital innovation and research collaboration.

Moreover, the establishment of the IGC Business and Investment Council, the India–Cyprus Business Forum in Mumbai, and new B2B agreements reflect efforts to strengthen commercial engagement and institutionalise economic cooperation. Maritime cooperation emerged as a major pillar of the partnership, particularly in relation to shipping, logistics and Europe-bound trade routes. Both countries further agreed to deepen collaboration in maritime services, green shipping,

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<sup>12</sup> [“India-Cyprus Bilateral Relations”](#), no. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> [“Joint Statement on the State Visit of the President of the Republic of Cyprus”](#), no. 11.

innovation ecosystems and disaster-resilient infrastructure, including Cyprus’s interest in joining the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.<sup>15</sup>

The growing importance of India–Cyprus relations is closely linked to evolving connectivity initiatives connecting Europe, West Asia and the Indo-Pacific. In this context, Cyprus’ location in the Eastern Mediterranean could enhance its relevance within the IMEC, particularly if the corridor advances beyond its current conceptual and infrastructural stages. Cyprus’ decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative reflects increasing alignment between the two countries in connectivity, maritime governance and regional cooperation.

As an EU member and presently holding the Presidency of the Council of the EU, Cyprus also provides India with an important channel for engagement with Europe. Both countries welcomed the India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the Joint India–EU Comprehensive Strategic Agenda 2030. The FTA is expected to provide Cyprus with opportunities in services, trade, investment, shipping, and the professional sectors of India, while reinforcing Cyprus’s role as a gateway for Indian businesses entering European markets.

## **Conclusion**

India–Cyprus relations have entered a significant phase marked by the elevation of ties to a Strategic Partnership and the expansion of cooperation across defence, security, technology, connectivity, trade and multilateral diplomacy. While economic exchanges remain modest, recent high-level visits, institutional mechanisms and sector-specific agreements have provided a stronger foundation for long-term engagement. Cyprus’s strategic location in the Eastern Mediterranean, its role within the EU, and its growing interest in Indo-Pacific connectivity complement India’s broader geopolitical and economic objectives. As both countries deepen collaboration in areas such as maritime security, counter-terrorism, digital innovation and regional connectivity, India–Cyprus relations are likely to acquire greater strategic significance, linking the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Eastern Mediterranean in an increasingly interconnected global order.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

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