

INDIA - CYPRUS BILATERAL RELATIONS: KEY OUTCOMES (MAY 2026)

1. STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP & DEFENCE

- **Elevation of Ties:** Bilateral relations between India and Cyprus have been officially elevated to the status of a "**Strategic Partnership.**"
- **Defence Cooperation Roadmap:** A comprehensive Roadmap for Defence Cooperation has been announced for a five-year period (**2026-2031**).
- **Search and Rescue (SAR):** A Technical Arrangement was signed for official coordination and cooperation on SAR matters between India's Ministry of Defence and the Larnaca Joint Rescue Coordination Center of Cyprus.

2. GEOPOLITICS & INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

- **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):** Cyprus has officially joined India's IPOI, specifically aligning under the "**Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport**" pillar.
- **BHISM Cube Gift:** India gifted a "**Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog Hita & Maitri**" (BHISM) Cube – an indigenously developed portable disaster hospital – to the Republic of Cyprus.
- **India-Cyprus Space Day:** The first-ever India-Cyprus Space Day was celebrated on **18 May 2026**.

3. SECURITY, COUNTER-TERRORISM & DIPLOMACY

- **Counter-Terrorism:** An MoU was signed to establish a **Joint Working Group (JWG) on counter-terrorism.**
- **Institutional Dialogues:** Two new institutional mechanisms were announced – the **Cyber Security Dialogue** and the **Consular Dialogue.**
- **Diplomatic Training:** An MoU was signed for institutional cooperation between the Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (India) and the Diplomatic Academy of Cyprus.

4. ECONOMY, TECHNOLOGY & EDUCATION

- **Cyprus Trade Center:** Cyprus announced its intention to open a new Cyprus Trade Center in **Mumbai** to boost commercial ties.
- **Innovation & Tech:** An MoU was signed between India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) and Cyprus's Deputy Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digital Policy.
- **Education & Culture:** MoUs were signed to foster cooperation in Higher Education and Research, alongside a **Cultural Cooperation agreement covering the years 2026-2030.**

Quick Revision Notes for Aspirants:

- **Visiting Dignitary:** President of Cyprus, H.E. Mr. Nikos Christodoulides.
- **Defence Roadmap Timeline:** 2026–2031 (5 Years).
- **Cultural MoU Timeline:** 2026–2030.
- **IPOI Pillar Chosen:** Trade, Connectivity and Maritime Transport.
- **New Trade Center Location:** Mumbai.
- **Key Strategic Term:** BHISM Cube (Indigenous medical assistance block).

KHET BACHAO ABHIYAN (SAVE THE FIELDS CAMPAIGN) - KEY POINTS

1. CORE BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

- **Nodal Ministry/Organization:** This nationwide campaign is managed by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** under the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- **Primary Objectives:**
 - To protect and preserve **soil health**.
 - To curb the overdependence on chemical inputs by promoting the **balanced use of fertilisers**.
 - To encourage **soil test-based nutrient management** and advance **sustainable agriculture**.

2. KEY ACHIEVEMENTS & STATISTICAL DATA

Official metrics frequently targeted in Banking, SSC, and State Civil Services exams:

- **Total Digital Outreach:** The digital outreach of the campaign via social media platforms extended to **2.712 Crore citizens** across the nation.
- **Farmer Sensitisation:** A total of 12,979 awareness camps and seminars were conducted, directly engaging **7.17 Lakh farmers**.
- **Capacity Building & Field Demonstrations:** Organised 3,145 training sessions for over 1.11 Lakh participants, alongside **7,928 field demonstrations** showcasing green manuring, bio-fertilisers, and organic nutrient sources.

3. INSTITUTIONAL & GRASSROOTS ENGAGEMENT

- **Janpratinidhi Sammelans:** Conducted **4,916 grassroots assemblies** involving local governance representatives including Panchayat, Sarpanch, and Zila Parishad members.
- **Supply Chain Dialogue:** Held **9,609 strategic dialogues with input dealers** to promote the retail-level dissemination of balanced fertiliser practices.
- **Farmer Collectives:** Integrated **8,383 farmer-members** into the movement through Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs).

Quick Revision Notes for Aspirants:

- **Campaign Name:** Khet Bachao Abhiyan
- **Implementing Agency:** ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)
- **Focus Areas:** Soil health cards/testing, balanced fertilisation, bio-fertilisers, and green manuring.
- **Total Citizens Reached:** 2.712 Crore
- **Farmers Sensitised:** 7.17 Lakh

INDIA-EUROPE TRADE PARTNERSHIPS UNDER NEXT-GENERATION FTAS - KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. CONFERENCE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

- **Organisers:** The **Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL)** of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT), in collaboration with the **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI)**.
- **Theme:** "Next-Gen Trade Pacts: Leveraging India's Partnership with Europe under FTAs".
- **Timeline & Venue:** Convened on 19 May 2026 at FICCI Federation House, New Delhi.

2. DEFINITION & SIGNIFICANCE OF 'NEXT-GENERATION' FTAS

- **Scope Beyond Tariffs:** Next-generation Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) extend well beyond traditional tariff liberalisation (cutting customs duties). They encompass complex regulatory disciplines including digital economy frameworks, cross-border services, intellectual property rights, and environmental standards.
- **The India-EU FTA Benefit:** The impending conclusion of the India-EU FTA negotiations marks a major milestone in India's economic diplomacy. It will grant **preferential tariff treatment to 99.5% of Indian exports**.
- **Global Value Chain Integration:** The trade architecture aims to seamlessly integrate Indian manufacturing and services into European global value chains while systematically tackling non-tariff barriers (NTBs).

3. CORE STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES DEBATED

The thematic sessions directly addressed critical structural components frequently asked in UPSC Mains (GS Paper III - Economy/International Trade) and banking interviews:

- **SPS and TBT Measures:** Navigating the stringent European regulatory compliance standards under **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS)** measures (food safety and animal/plant health laws) and **Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)** (technical regulations and testing procedures).
- **CBAM Challenges:** Analysing the severe economic implications of the European Union's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**—a carbon border tax on carbon-intensive goods—on major Indian export sectors like steel, aluminium, and iron.
- **Digital Economy & Services:** Strategizing pathways to leverage next-gen trade pacts with the **UK, EU, and EFTA** (European Free Trade Association) blocs to expand India's digital services footprint.

Quick Revision Notes for Aspirants:

- **Implementing/Advisory Node:** Trade Remedies Advisory Cell of CTIL (IIFT).
- **India-EU FTA Market Access Coverage:** 99.5% of Indian goods exports will get preferential tariff access.
- **Major Geo-economic Hurdle Discussed:** CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) and EU carbon compliance metrics.
- **Key Trade Partners Addressed:** UK, EU, and EFTA.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (IDB) 2026 - KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. BASIC INFORMATION & BACKGROUND

- **Observed On:** 22 May 2026
- **Venue of National Event:** Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM), Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.
- **IDB 2026 Theme:** "Acting Locally for Global Impact"

- **Co-organizing Bodies:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), Government of Madhya Pradesh, National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), and International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).

2. CORE MILESTONES & POLICY UPDATES

A) PROJECT CHEETAH

- **Launch Year:** 2022 (World's first intercontinental translocation of a large carnivore).
- **Objective:** Restoration of grassland ecosystems and ecological/biodiversity recovery.
- **Current Status (2026 Update):** Successful adaptation and breeding of cheetahs in Madhya Pradesh, marking significant progress in long-term species recovery and habitat restoration.

B) ACCESS AND BENEFIT SHARING (ABS) MECHANISM

- **Regulatory Act:** Governed under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- **Financial Progress:** Nearly ₹145 crore has been disbursed nationwide under the ABS framework, directly benefiting around 11,000 Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Recent amendments to the BD Act, Rules, and Regulations streamline industrial compliance while ensuring local communities receive their due financial benefits from commercial biological resources.

C) INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

- India reiterated its solid commitment to implementing the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** and the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**.

3. KEY PUBLICATIONS & INITIATIVES RELEASED

High probability area for direct multiple-choice questions (MCQs):

1. **India's Biodiversity Report 2026:** Insights from the 7th National Report submitted to the CBD.
2. **First National Report on Nagoya Protocol:** Documenting India's progress in implementing the Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) mechanism.
3. **ABS End-to-End Portal:** A dedicated digital portal launched to ensure transparency in ABS processing.
4. **Conservation Documentaries:** Short films released on the **Amarkantak Biodiversity Heritage Site** and the **Devlok Vans** (Sacred Groves) of Madhya Pradesh.
5. **Customized MyStamp:** A commemorative postal stamp released to mark the occasion.

✦ CORE EXAM POINTERS

- **'Tiger State of India':** Madhya Pradesh.
- **Three-Tier Institutional Framework (BD Act, 2002):** National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) at the central level → State Biodiversity Boards (SBBs) at the state level → Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) at the local/village level.
- **Mission LiFE:** Lifestyle for Environment—a global movement spearheaded by India emphasizing sustainable traditional conservation practices (like sacred groves and landraces) to tackle climate change.

NHAI AND NORWEGIAN GEOTECHNICAL INSTITUTE (NGI) MOU - KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. BASIC INFORMATION & AGREEMENT BACKGROUND

- **Signatory Organizations:** National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute (NGI), Norway.
- **Venue of Signing:** Oslo (Capital of Norway).
- **Validity Period:** The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will remain valid for a period of **5 years**.
- **Nature of Agreement:** Non-exclusive and on a project-to-project basis, providing flexibility for independent collaborations.

2. CORE OBJECTIVES & TECHNICAL COLLABORATION

A) TUNNEL ENGINEERING & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Leveraging advanced international expertise for site characterization, feasibility studies, and preparation of Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for upcoming tunnel projects.
- Conducting structural assessments and safety audits of currently operational tunnels to ensure standard alignment.

B) SLOPE STABILITY ANALYSIS

- Managing and securing road infrastructure in geologically sensitive and challenging terrains.
- Conducting advanced slope stability assessments to identify potential natural hazards and recommend suitable mitigation measures.

C) EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS & SATELLITE MONITORING

- Analysis and interpretation of **InSAR** (Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar) data to monitor slope displacements and structural movements.
- Development of robust Early Warning Systems aimed at improving overall infrastructure safety along highways.

3. INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY BUILDING & KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- **Research & Development (R&D):** Collaboration on joint R&D initiatives specifically targeted toward the reduction and mitigation of natural hazards.
- **Skill Upgradation:** Scaling up the technical capabilities of the Indian highway sector through joint workshops, seminars, technical training programs, and the publication of specialized technical literature.
- **Statutory Status of NHAI:** The National Highways Authority of India is a statutory body constituted under the NHAI Act, 1988. It operates under the aegis of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).
- **InSAR Technology:** An advanced remote sensing technique that uses radar images of the Earth's surface collected by satellites to detect microscopic deformations, displacements, or structural shifts over time.
- **Bilateral Ties:** This partnership underscores the expanding bilateral cooperation between India and Norway in sustainable engineering practices, technology exchange, and resilient infrastructure.

JEEVAN APP AND SHATAYU GERIATRIC CAREGIVER DASHBOARD - KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. BASIC INFORMATION & LAUNCH

- **Launching Ministry:** Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India.
- **Launched By:** Dr. Virendra Kumar (Hon'ble Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment).
- **Occasion of Launch:** Launched during the National Workshop on "Creating a Well-Functioning Care Economy."
- **Core Objective:** To ensure the safety, care, dignity, and empowerment of senior citizens by enabling an elder-care ecosystem through technology-driven caregiving support.

2. JEEVAN MOBILE APPLICATION

- **Full Form:** Joint Elderly Empowerment & Virtual Assistance Network (JEEVAN).
- **Target Beneficiaries:** Senior Citizens.
- **Core Features & Functions:**
 - Enhances safety, welfare, healthcare access, and social inclusion of the elderly across India.
 - Acts as a single window for information on Government welfare schemes and social security programmes.
 - Provides seamless integration for emergency assistance and support services.
 - Offers detailed directories of senior citizen homes supported directly by the Department of Social Justice and Empowerment.
 - Features an accessible, simplified navigation layout tailored to elderly users.

3. SHATAYU GERIATRIC CAREGIVER DASHBOARD

- **Full Form:** Senior Holistic Care Assistance and Training For Your Utility (SHATAYU).
- **Geriatric Care Definition:** A specialized sub-field of medicine and care focusing on the health care and holistic well-being of elderly people.
- **Core Features & Functions:**
 - A dedicated digital dashboard developed to organize, scale, and strengthen professional caregiving services across the country.
 - Provides real-time, localized data regarding the availability of trained **Geriatric Caregivers** at specific District and State levels to aid families.
- **The Care Economy:** Refers to the economic sector encompassing paid and unpaid labor related to caregiving (such as childcare, eldercare, and healthcare). With India's shifting demographic indicators over the coming decades, managing the aging transition via the care economy is a critical policy focus area for UPSC.
- **Constitutional Provision (Article 41):** Under the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in the Constitution of India, **Article 41** directs the State to secure the right to work, education, and public assistance in cases of unemployment, **old age**, sickness, and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity.
- **Nodal Agency:** The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment is the nodal ministry for executing policies, national programs, and international commitments concerning senior citizens in India.