

India-St. Kitts and Nevis Bilateral Brief

Introduction

The 1983 Constitution provides St. Kitts and Nevis with a Parliament headed officially by Queen Elizabeth II who is represented by a Governor-General. Of the 14-member House of Assembly, 11 members are elected from single member constituencies on the basis of universal suffrage and three members are nominated to the House out of which two on the advice of the Prime Minister and one on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition. Mid-term elections were held on 5 August 2022 in St. Kitts & Nevis three years earlier than scheduled. Seven years after being booted out of office, the main opposition St. Kitts Nevis Labour Party led by Dr. Terrence Drew won six of the 11 contested seats. Concerned Citizens Movement won 3, while People's Action Movement and Peoples Labour Party won 1 each. The Governor General makes appointment to the remaining four seats after the elections. Prime Minister Dr. Terrence Drew is the Head of the Government and Douglas Denzil is the Foreign Minister.

2. Saint Kitts and Nevis economy is characterized by its dominant tourism, agriculture, and light manufacturing industries. It has per capita income of US\$ 23,300 (2020).

Bilateral Relations

3. St. Kitts & Nevis and India have maintained friendly and cordial relations. On account of extensive damages suffered by St. Kitts & Nevis due to Hurricane Luis in 1995, the Government of India provided Rs. 5 lakhs as hurricane relief assistance, a gesture which was greatly appreciated by the Government of St. Kitts & Nevis. Shri Prakash Shah, the then PR, PMI New York, visited St. Kitts & Nevis as Special Envoy of the Foreign Minister in May 1996 for exchange of views on matters of mutual interest. In July 2007, India and St. Kitts & Nevis signed a MOU for enhancing the mechanism of Foreign Office Consultation at bureaucratic level. India being a Commonwealth country, its nationals do not require visa to enter St. Kitts & Nevis. India has extended its hand of friendship to St. Kitts and Nevis by recently providing essential medicines and medical supplies worth US\$ 100,000 to aid in the country's efforts to combat COVID-19 pandemic. Besides this, the Government of India is also processing St. Kitts and Nevis's request for assistance for the project titled "Support for COVID-19" under India-UNDP Fund which will be considered under the "Quick Impact Community Development Projects" Fund of US\$1 million out of which US\$ 300,000 has already been disbursed. St. Kitts and Nevis is generally supportive of Indian's positions in international fora.

Bilateral Visits:

4. India has had no official structured visits with St. Kitts and Nevis in the recent past. Though an MoU has been signed for Foreign Office Consultations in 2007, no meeting has taken place.

5. Hon. Ian Patches Liburd, Minister of Public Infrastructure, Post, Urban Development and Transport of St. Kitts and Nevis visited India to attend the Second General Assembly of the International Solar Alliance held in New Delhi from 31 October to 2 November 2019. Then Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas who is currently the Foreign Minister had visited India in his personal capacity in 2012, when he met Indian business leaders.

6. Hon'ble Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Commerce & Industry, Shri C.R. Chaudhary visited St. Kitts & Nevis from April 25 - 28, 2018 under Government of India's 'Outreach Initiative.' The visit of our Minister to St. Kitts & Nevis is the first ever visit by a Minister from India to the country since its independence in 1983. The visit provided opportunities to discuss wide-ranging issues concerning bilateral as well as multi-lateral relations. During the visit, Hon'ble MoS met and discussed various issues of mutual interest with the Prime Minister; Minister of Agriculture, Human Settlement, Cooperatives and Environment; Minister of State for Health, Community Development, Gender Affairs & Social Services and Minister of Public Infrastructure, Posts, Urban Development and Transport. The visit also provided opportunities for following-up with the higher authorities of SKN for their early joining of the International Solar Alliance and signing of MoU on Traditional Systems of Medicine.

7. Commander of the St. Kitts & Nevis Defence Force Lt. Col. J. Anthony Comrie visited India for the Aero India 2023 in February 2023.

UN Reforms / International Organizations

8. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes in reform of the United Nations Security Council. However, it coordinates its approach with other members of CARICOM. CARICOM's position is both permanent and non-permanent categories of membership should be expanded and it should accommodate CARICOM's (Small States) interests and reflect Africa's position.

9. St. Kitts and Nevis has consistently supported India's candidates / candidatures in the elections to the International Organizations.

Trade and Investment

10. St. Kitts and Nevis is a small island country with a population of little more than fifty four thousand people and trade with India is low at US\$ 5.59 million for 2021-22 despite it increased almost five fold from 0.99 in 2020-21. India's export to St. Kitts and Nevis during the period 2021-22 was US\$ 2.61 million while during the same period its imports were US\$ 2.98 million. For the period April-January 2022-23, bilateral trade was US\$ 3.43 million with exports of US\$ 2.21 million and imports at US\$ 1.22 million. Most of the export and imports items were scrap metal in the shape of ships, boats and floating structures. Their imports included pharmaceuticals, auto parts, apparel and clothing, toys, games, etc.

11. **NRIs/PIOs:** The largest wholesale/retail trading company in Caribbean - Ram Trading is owned by an NRI. Many NRIs are involved in trading at duty free zone and restaurant business. About 200 Indian nationals and 100 PIOs are estimated to live in St. Kitts & Nevis.

12. **International Solar Alliance:** St. Kitts and Nevis has signed and ratified the Framework Agreement on International Solar Alliance. Immense potential exists for trade and investment in solar energy.

Education

13. One of the largest off-shore medical institutes in Caribbean, viz. Windsor Medical University is

run by an NRI and many Indians are working as faculty members; there are large number of Indian origin students and a few Indian students studying there.

Agreements / MoUs

13. Agreement on exemption from visa requirement for holders of diplomatic and Officials Passports - signed on 16-2-2018.

14. Framework Agreement on International Solar Alliance - signed in October 2019, and ratified it.

Technical Cooperation/Capacity Building

15. India has been assisting St. Kitts and Nevis in capacity building under the ITEC programme under which 15 slots are offered on annual basis.

Culture

16. International Yoga Day events and occasionally cultural shows through the visiting cultural troupes from India through ICCR attract active local participation.

Appointment of Honorary Consul

17. Mr. Ramesh Mulkanoor was appointed as Honorary Consul with effect from 17 September 2021.

October 2023