

## **Antigua and Barbuda - Bilateral Brief**

### **Introduction:**

Antigua and Barbuda, which has a population of nearly 90,000, is one of the dominant countries amongst the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS). It is a parliamentary democracy with unicameral legislature consisting of 17 MPs, of which the ruling Antigua and Barbuda Labour Party has 15 MPs while the Opposition has 2 MPs. Queen Elizabeth II is the Head of the State who is represented by the Governor General Sir Rodney Williams, PM Gaston Browne is the Head of the Government and Chet Greene is the Foreign Minister.

2. The country's per capita income is US \$ 15,781 (2021) and its economy is driven by sun and sand tourism which contributes almost 80%. It is known for its beautiful beaches- 365 beaches and hence they say one beach per day for the visiting tourists. Most of the tourists are from US and UK.

### **Bilateral Relations:**

3. India and Antigua & Barbuda enjoy warm and friendly relations with similarity of views on most issues of common concern. In a foreign policy statement, Antigua & Barbuda (A&B) expressed its desire to further develop relations with India.

4. India has provided a direct cash assistance of US\$100,000/- and another US\$1 million through UNDP from India-UN Development Partnership Fund for rehabilitation of Barbuda after the devastating hurricane in 2017 under which Hannah Thomas Hospital in Barbuda was refurbished/renovated and inaugurated by the Prime Minister of Antigua & Barbuda in August, 2020. India has also assisted with medicine (10,000 Hydroxychloroquine tablets) through DPA Division. India donated 40,000 doses of Covishield to Antigua and Barbuda on 1 March 2021 under Vaccine Maitri initiative and provided US\$ 1 million Grant through India-UNDP Fund to the Government of Antigua and Barbuda for combating COVID-19 pandemic by improving health infrastructure and capacities in Antigua and Barbuda.

### **Bilateral Visits:**

(a) The visit of Secretary (AMS, CPV & SA) from MEA, New Delhi took place in July 2015, during which he called on Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Health Minister.

(b) Hon. Molwyn Josph, Minister of Health, Wellness and the Environment visited India on 11-13 December 2018 to attend the Partners' Forum-2018 in New Delhi. Hon. Michael Ascot, Member of Parliament had visited India in April 2012.

(c) Hon'ble Mr. Chhota Ram Chaudhary, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Commerce & Industry, visited Antigua & Barbuda from April 22-25, 2018 under the special "Outreach Programme" which provided an opportunity to demonstrate

our goodwill and convey that we value the relationship with A&B. The visit was the first ever visit by a Minister from India to the country since its independence in 1981. It provided an excellent opportunity to discuss wide ranging issues relating to bilateral as well as multilateral relations. The visit afforded the opportunity for our Minister to meet and discuss issues of mutual interests with Prime Minister and four other dignitaries viz. Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade & Immigration, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries & Barbuda Affairs, Minister of Investment & Trade and Minister of Health, Wellness & Environment.

(d) Then Hon'ble EAM met A&B's Foreign Minister, Chet Greene, at his request on September 26, 2018 on the sidelines of UNGA in New York. The focus of the meeting was on the on-going extradition request concerning fugitive Mehul Choksi. While Antiguan FM assured that his government would extend its fullest cooperation in the matter, EAM sought the help of A&B to fast track the process, including choosing the option of deportation of Choksi as delay could lead to Choksi fleeing the country. FM Greene, however, cautioned that the intervention of his government at that stage may seem to be interference by the Judiciary. Greene also expressed his desire to visit India in the first quarter of 2019, particularly to study the electoral processes in India.

(e) PM Gaston Browne indicated his desire to make a private visit to India in 2016 and 2017 but could not take place so.

(f) Governor General of Antigua & Barbuda Sir Rodney Williams accompanied by the First Lady visited India to participate as the Chief Guest in the 23<sup>rd</sup> International Conference of Chief Justices of the World held from 16-27 November 2022 at City Montessori School, LDA Campus, Lucknow. This was a private visit.

(g) Antigua & Barbuda Chief of Army Staff Telbert L.A. Benjamin visited India for the Aero India 2023 in February 2023.

(h) Hon. Melford Nicholas Minister of Information Communication Technologies, Utilities and Energy visited India for the DPI Summit on 12 June 2023. He signed MoU on sharing INDIA STACK, i.e. successful digital solutions implemented at population scale.

(i) Hon. Henry Charles Fernandez, Minister of Tourism, Civil Aviation, Transpiration and Investment visited India to attend the 9th edition of CII India-LAC Conclave in August 2023.

(j) Secretary (West) Shri Pavan Kapoor visited Antigua & Barbuda to represent India in the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on SIDS held from 27-30 May 2024. India extended a financial assistance of US\$ 300,000 to Antigua & Barbuda for hosting the Conference through PMI, New York. Secretary (West) held bilateral meetings with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Antigua & Barbuda, Prime Minister of Guyana, Foreign Minister of St. Kitts & Nevis, Prime Minister of Samoa, Secretary General of CARICOM among others.

(k) Hon. Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State, Ministry of External Affairs visited Antigua & Barbuda from 06-08 October 2024. During the visit he met with Governor General, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and Minister of Tourism.

### **Defence:**

5. No mechanism for cooperation in defence exists between the two sides. However, India has allocated 2 slots in defence ITEC training for Antigua & Barbuda Coastguard/Navy from 2023-24.

### **Trade and Investment:**

6. On the trade front, Antigua and Barbuda is interested in foreign investments in tourism, real estate, ICT, agro-processing, international financial services, higher education, infrastructure building, etc. Indian companies can seize the opportunity by investing in these sectors. This would require visit of an Indian business delegation to Antigua and Barbuda in the near future. Antigua & Barbuda treats foreign investors on the same footing as local investors with respect to the operation of a business in its territory and the court system is fairly efficient and unbiased in commercial matters. The government operates in a generally transparent manner.

7. India's bilateral trade with Antigua and Barbuda picked up in 2023-24 to US\$ 15.81 million from US\$ 3.42 million in 2022-23 and US\$ 2.61 million in 2021-22. India's export to Antigua and Barbuda stood at US\$ 14.97 million during this period while India's imports were pegged at US\$ 0.84 million.

### **Science & Technology:**

8. No bilateral cooperation in the field of Science & Technology exists so far.

### **Education:**

9. Manipal Education Trust, a private sector organization has made substantial investment first in taking over Antigua College of Medicine and later by adding substantially to that facility. It has made great strides to set up Antigua as a regional centre for specialized education.

### **Consular:**

10. **PIO/NRIs :** There are about 300 Indians and 200 PIOs in Antigua & Barbuda who are mostly doctors, professors, traders and medical students. The Manipal University run American University of Antigua College of Medicine has more than 1200 students most of whom are PIOs from US and majority of its faculty members are Indians. Almost 250 Indian students studying in Antigua & Barbuda.

11. **Visa Agreement:** Under an agreement signed in September, 2019 between the two countries diplomatic and official passport holders do not require visa. Many categories of Indian ordinary passport holders such cricketers, Doctors, faculty members and students of medical schools, businessmen and their family members do not need visa to enter the country.

12. Further, visa free entry to Indians holding ordinary passports with US/UK/Schengen visas/permanent residency in any one CARICOM member states is also under consideration by Antigua & Barbuda. Antigua & Barbuda has E-visa facility for India.

**Technical Cooperation/Capacity Building:**

13. India has extended assistance in training and capacity building through ITEC and 16 slots were allocated to Antigua & Barbuda.

**Culture**

14. Yoga is quite popular in Antigua & Barbuda and has been introduced in some of the schools. International Yoga Day events and occasionally cultural shows attract active participation.

**Appointment of Honorary Consul**

15. Mr. Vijay Tewani has been appointed as Honorary Consul on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

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*November 2024*