

## India – Cuba Bilateral Relations

India and Cuba enjoy excellent bilateral relations and have been traditionally warm and friendly. India was among the first countries to extend recognition to the new Cuban government following Cuban revolution in January 1959. The visit of Major Ernesto Guevera (Che) to India from 30 June to 4 July 1959 consolidated diplomatic ties which fructified in opening embassies in respective capitals. The first head of the Mission presented credentials on 12 January 1960 in Havana. India and Cuba maintain close contacts with each other in UN, NAM and other international fora.

### **A. Political relations:**

Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, there has been regular exchanges of visits at all levels. Immediately after the Cuban Revolution, first Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and President Fidel Castro and revolutionary leader Che Guevara had held meetings. Cuban Major Ernesto Guevera (Che) accompanied by five officials visited India from 30 June to 4 July 1959.

### **Visits at HOS/HOG level:**

#### **OUTGOING:**

- **1985** - Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi to Havana to attend the NAM Summit;
- **2006** - Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Cuba for NAM summits;
- **2018** (21-22 June) - Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind visited Cuba, on the first ever visit by the President of India to Cuba.

#### **INCOMING:**

- **1973** - President Fidel Castro paid a visit to India;
- **1983** - President Fidel Castro paid a visit to India to attend the NAM Summit.

*(PM Shri Narendra Modi and H.E. Mr. Miguel Diaz-Canel, President of Cuba exchanged on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa.)*

### **Visits at Vice President Level:**

#### **OUTGOING**

- 2013 (October) - Shri Hamid Ansari, Hon'ble Vice President led a high level delegation (on first VVIP bilateral visit) to Cuba.

#### **INCOMING**

- 2015 (March) The First Vice President, Miguel Diaz Canel visited India.

## **Recent ministerial level visits and meetings:**

### OUTGOING

- 2012 (February) - Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports (Independent Charge) Shri Ajay Maken visited Cuba;
- 2012 (June) - External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna visited Havana;
- 2012 (July) Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia visited Havana;
- 2013 (September) Minister of New and Renewable Energy Dr. Farooq Abdullah, led a delegation to Cuba;
- 2016 (October 23-26) - Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste, MOS for Health and Family Welfare visited Cuba;
- 2016 (November 29-30) - Shri Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister, led a 7-member All Party Parliamentary delegation to Havana to pay their last respects to Fidel Castro Ruz;
- 2017 (October 28-31) - CIM Suresh Prabhu accompanied by a large FIEO business delegation paid an official visit to Cuba;
- 2022 (September 19), EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Mr. Bruno Rodriguez, Foreign Minister of Cuba held meeting in New York on the sidelines of the 77<sup>th</sup> session of UNGA.
- 2023 (January 12-14) - Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi, Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture of India visited Cuba from 12 to 14 January 2023;
- 2023 (June 14-16) – Hon'ble CM of Kerala Shri Pinarayi Vijayan led a Kerala state government delegation to Cuba on official visit.

### INCOMING

- 2013 (May 25-27) - Foreign Minister of Cuba Mr. Bruno Rodriguez visited India;
- 2017 (December 6-7) Cuban Minister of Public Health Dr. Roberto Morales Ojeda, visited Delhi.
- 2018 (October 1-3) - Cuban Minister of Energy and Mines, Raúl García Barreiro, visited India to attend meeting of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).
- 2023 (March 9-15) – Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment Mr. Rodrigo Malmierca Diaz led a delegation to India and participated in Partnership Summit-2023.

## **Other recent senior level visits & meetings:**

### OUTGOING

- 2023 (September 14-17) – Shri Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs led Indian delegation to Cuba, and participated in the Summit of the Group of 77 and China on 15-16 September 2023.

## INCOMING

- 2014 (October 13-18) - Cuban First Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment Mr. Antonio Carricarte visited India to participate in FICCI-LAC Conclave held from 15 to 17 October, 2014 in New Delhi.
- 2015 (October) - Cuban Vice Minister of Energy and Mines, Yuri Viamontes Lazo, participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> CII India-LAC Conclave in New Delhi.
- 2019 (February) - Cuban First Deputy Minister of Communications, Wilfredo González, led a Cuban delegation to the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of 'INDIASOFT' in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- 2023 (March 26- April 1) – Cuban Deputy Minister of Communications Msc. (Ms.) Grisel Reyes Leon led a delegation to India to participate in INDIASOFT 2023.
- 2023 (August 2-6) – Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment Ms. Déborah Rivas Saavedra led Cuban business delegation, including Mr. Alexandre Corona Quintero, Governor of the province of Cienfuegos, which participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> CII India-LAC conclave in New Delhi.

### **Foreign Office Consultations:**

- In July 2006, Indian delegation led by Secretary (West) of Ministry of External Affairs visited Cuba for Foreign Office Consultations
- On 27 June 2022, Indian delegation led by Mr. Sourabh Kumar, Secretary (East) of Ministry of External Affairs visited Cuba for 2nd round of Foreign Office Consultations.
- On 7 April 2023, India-Cuba consultations on multilateral affairs was held in Havana. Indian delegation led by JS (UNP).

**List of MoUs/Agreements signed:** India and Cuba have signed agreements on Bilateral Trade, Culture, S&T, Standardization, Sports, Renewable Energy and Consumer Protection and Cultural Exchange Program.

- Agreement On Cooperation In The Field Of Sports Between India And Cuba was signed in February 2012.
- During the year 2013, the Cultural Exchange Programme and MOU on Cooperation in Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Cuban Radio and Television Institute were signed.
- MOU between Jawahar Lal Nehru University and Havana University for education cooperation was signed in September, 2014.
- Agreement on Visa Exemption for Diplomatic Passport holders was signed in March, 2015.
- An MOU on enhanced cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine was signed during the visit of Cuban Health Minister to Delhi in December 2017.
- MoU on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy was signed during the visit of President of India to Cuba in June 2018

- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Biotechnology was signed during the visit of President of India to Cuba in June 2018.
- MoU Between All India Institute of Ayurveda, Ministry of AYUSH, India and University of Medical Sciences of Havana (UCMH), Havana, Cuba on the Establishment of an Academic Collaboration in Ayurveda in December 2022.

## B. Commerce and Economic relations

Bilateral trade has been moderate. The main items of Indian export to Cuba are pharmaceutical products, organic chemicals, plastic products, medical equipment, engineering goods, textile products, metal products, mineral oil products and tools. Imports from Cuba primarily comprise of pharmaceutical and tobacco products. The latest available trade figures are as follows:

Values in US\$ Millions

S.No	Year	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 (Apr-Jun)
1.	EXPORT	35.00	47.51	20.33	26.57	79.04	32.91
2.	IMPORT	3.80	3.53	69.44	1.00	4.87	0.73
3.	TOTAL TRADE	38.81	51.04	89.77	27.57	83.91	33.64
4.	TRADE BALANCE	31.20	43.98	(-) 49.44	25.58	74.17	32.18

Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce

Indian companies participate in Cuba's largest trade fair- the Havana International Fair (FIHAV) on regular basis. In 2017 edition, Commerce and Industry Minister (CIM) Shri Suresh Prabhu led the Indian delegation to Cuba. 28 Indian exhibitors participated at FIHAV 2017 led by ITPO and EEPC. FIEO and Cuban Chamber of Commerce signed an MOU for cooperation in 6 priority sectors: pharmaceuticals, tourism, renewable energy, sugar, biotechnology and infrastructure development. At the 2018 edition of FIHAV, 45 Indian companies took part. 1<sup>st</sup> November was designated as India Day at FIHAV. In 2022 edition, India hosted a pavilion with the participation of 22 Indian companies and 3 of the main Indian trade organisations. Embassy of India also hosted a stall at the pavilion showcasing GOI's One District One Product scheme and International Year of Millets-2023.

Cuba participates regularly in major trade and IT related international events hosted in India, as mentioned earlier in bilateral visits section. Cuba's IT professionals enthusiastically participated in the INDIA: LAC IT Connect held virtually in March 2021.

**C. Development Cooperation:** Development Assistance has been a priority area in the bilateral relations. India has granted disaster relief assistance to Cuba in the wake of devastation caused by various hurricanes over the years viz. aid of US\$ 2 million after hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma in 2008; donation of medical supplies worth USD 1 million after Hurricane Mathew in 2016 (handed over in January 2018); and aid of US\$ 150,000 as emergency financial assistance after Hurricane Irma in 2017.

India donated an IT Centre – India Cuba Knowledge Centre- to Cuba, implemented by NIIT, for two years and later extended for another year. It was completed in July 2010 and trained over 1900 Cuban professional in different streams. To assist Cuba's agriculture sector, Government of India donated 60 tractors to Cuba in 2018.

During the First wave of Covis-19 India donated 524 boxes of life saving medicines to Cuba (November 2020). Also, assisted in supply of rice from India under short-term credit arrangement during 2022-23.

Bilateral assistance through Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has increased in the last few years, and ITEC has become popular in Cuba. Following the announcement of 10 additional slots in 2018, total 70 slots are allocated to Cuba. A specialized course has been scheduled under ITEC programme for Cuba (12 slots) on film production, co-production and distribution, to be held in October-November 2023.

One more dimension is the Lines of Credit for developmental projects in Cuba. India has extended five LoCs to the tune of \$243 million to Government of Cuba in agriculture, agro-food, and renewable energy sectors.

**D. Energy Cooperation:** Energy cooperation is one of the main aspects of India-Cuba relations. Cuba is a member country and the Vice-President of Latin America & the Caribbean region at International Solar Alliance (ISA). Government of India has extended Lines of Credit for 3 projects in Cuba related to the field viz. Power Cogeneration Project at 30 November Sugar Mill, 51 MW Wind Energy Farm project at Rio Seco, and 75 MW solar power projects. In addition, a MoU between Ministry of Energy and Mines of Cuba and Ministry of New & Renewable Energy of India is under negotiations.

**E. Science & Technology, Biotechnology and Health:** India-Cuba relations in the field of S&T and health have been strengthened by ministerial level visits from both sides. Both countries have collaborated in these fields under various agreements viz. MOU on Cooperation in Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Cuban Radio and Television Institute; the MOU on cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine; the MoU on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy; and the MoU on Cooperation in the field of Biotechnology.

Interest in Ayurveda and Indian Naturopathy is increasing in Cuba. Under the bilateral collaboration, a Panchakarma Centre was established in Cuba, at the

International health Centre “La Pradera” on 6 November 2019. Ministry of AYUSH deployed one Ayurveda expert and two Ayurveda therapists on short term deputation to assist the Centre.

International Day of Yoga and Ayurveda Day are celebrated in Cuba every year with the support of Cuban government.

**F. Cultural relations:** Indian culture and civilization is well appreciated in Cuba. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore occupy a special place in Cuba. ICCR donated a bust of Mahatma Gandhi and a bust of Tagore, which are placed in prominent locations in Havana. Mahatma Gandhi’s 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary was celebrated in Havana with a solemn ceremony at the Gandhi Park.

The depth and variety of Indian dance, music and cinema are well known in Cuba. The House of Asia in Havana organizes cultural events – exhibitions, film shows, talks -on India and has a hall dedicated to India where Indian art and craft objects are permanently displayed. An Indian movie is broadcast on Sunday on national television.

Multiple ICCR sponsored cultural troupes have visited Cuba. Besides, several cultural activities have been organised in Cuba:- Week-long Indian Food Festivals in December 2011, January-February 2013, February 2014, and August 2017; Indian Film Festival Week in May 2013; Festival of Indian Culture in October-November 2013 etc.

India was the ‘Guest of Honour’ country for 24<sup>th</sup> Havana International Book Fair held in February 2015. Cuba’s choir group Erfeon Choir Santiago won the first prize in the International Choral Festival organised by ICCR in December 2020.

Yoga and Vipassana meditation are practiced. With the support of Cuba’s INDER, Embassy of India have been organizing events related to yoga, including on the International Day of Yoga. From September 2022-August 2023, Indian Council for Cultural Relations deployed a Teacher of Indian Culture at Embassy of India in Havana, in order to promote yoga and Indian culture among Cubans. Cubans cherish the cultural performances of India on various occasions, for example national day celebrations. Indian festivals like Holi, Lohri, Diwali etc. are also celebrated with the participation of Cuban enthusiasts by the Indian Embassy.

**G. Indian Community:** Indian Community in Cuba is small. One of the components of the community is the people of Indian origin, descendants of Indians who came to Cuba in the early twentieth century from Jamaica and other part of the West Indies to work on sugarcane plantations. They are settled mostly in Guantanamo province in Eastern Cuba (no official record though). They have got totally assimilated into the local culture. Since last seven years, there are Indian labourers as part of an international company working on various real estate construction projects in Cuba.

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6<sup>th</sup> October, 2023