

INDIA-CUBA RELATIONS

India and Cuba share traditionally warm and friendly relations, dating back to India being among the first countries to recognize the Cuban Government after the 1959 Revolution and establishment of diplomatic relations in both countries in 1960. India and Cuba maintain close cooperation at the United Nations, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and other multilateral fora, with convergence on issues of importance to the Global South.

A. Political relations:

President Fidel Castro met Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on the sidelines of UNGA in 1960. Important Indian visits to Cuba include those of Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi (1985 NAM Summit) and Dr. Manmohan Singh (2006 NAM Summit), Vice President Hamid Ansari (2013), President Ram Nath Kovind (2018), and several ministerial and official-level visits. From Cuba, notable visits include those by President Fidel Castro (1973 and 1983), then First Vice President Miguel Díaz-Canel (2015), Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez (2013 & 2026), and other senior ministers. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Miguel Díaz-Canel have also met on the sidelines of BRICS Summits in 2023 and 2025.

Bilateral cooperation has expanded across diverse sectors, including health, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, renewable energy, digital transformation, education, culture and traditional medicine. Key agreements include Cooperation in the Field of Sports (February 2012); Cultural Exchange Programme and MOU on Cooperation in Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Cuban Radio and Television Institute (2013); MOU between Jawahar Lal Nehru University and Havana University for education cooperation (September 2014); Agreement on Visa Exemption for Diplomatic Passport holders (March 2015); MoUs on health and medicine (2017); biotechnology and traditional systems of medicine (2018); Ayurveda cooperation (2022 and 2025); India Stack cooperation (2024); drug regulation and recognition of Indian Pharmacopoeia (2024–25); and cooperation under the Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) through an agreement between HLL Lifecare Ltd. and MEDICUBA S.A. (March 2026). Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between India and Cuba, Protocol on Cultural Exchange and Collaboration between the Ministry of Culture of India and Ministry of Cuba were signed during the visit of MoS(PM) to Cuba on 10 November 2025.

India and Cuba continue to work closely in multilateral platforms, particularly the UN and NAM, with strong convergence on issues concerning developing countries and the Global South. Cuba supports India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council and has consistently condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Recent high-level engagements, including Foreign Office Consultations and ministerial visits, reflect the continued momentum in bilateral relations.

B. Commercial and Economic Relations

India-Cuba bilateral trade remains modest and below its potential, primarily due to challenges arising from US sanctions and the routing of several Indian exports through

third countries. India's major exports to Cuba include pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals, plastic products, medical equipment, engineering goods, textiles, metal products, mineral oil products and tools, while imports from Cuba mainly comprise pharmaceutical and tobacco products. Bilateral trade stood at US\$ 24.31 million in 2025-26, with Indian exports at US\$ 18.79 million and imports at US\$ 5.52 million. Indian companies have regularly participated in Cuba's largest trade exhibition, the Havana International Fair (FIHAV). In 2017, Commerce and Industry Minister Shri Suresh Prabhu led the first-ever multi-sectoral Indian delegation to FIHAV, with participation of 28 Indian companies. FIEO and the Cuban Chamber of Commerce signed an MoU identifying cooperation in priority sectors including pharmaceuticals, tourism, renewable energy, sugar, biotechnology and infrastructure. Indian participation has continued intermittently in subsequent FIHAV editions.

C. Development Assistance & Cooperation:

India has consistently extended development assistance and humanitarian support to Cuba as a gesture of solidarity and friendship. India provided disaster relief assistance following hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma (2008), Matthew (2016), Irma (2017), and hurricanes Oscar and Rafael and earthquakes in 2024, including essential medicines and emergency supplies. Following Hurricane Melissa (2025), India extended HADR assistance comprising relief material, medicines and the Aarogya Maitri BHISHM Cube, which was handed over by Hon'ble MoS for External Affairs and Textiles Shri Pabitra Margherita to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment Mr. Oscar Pérez-Oliva Fraga during his visit to Cuba in November 2025. India also wrote off Cuba's debt of US\$ 62 million in 2008, donated the India-Cuba Knowledge Centre (IT training facility), supported construction of a hockey turf in Havana with US\$ 1 million assistance, donated tractors and life-saving medicines, and facilitated supply of rice under a short-term credit arrangement. India has extended five Lines of Credit amounting to US\$ 243 million for projects in agriculture, agro-food and renewable energy sectors, including a Euro 100 million short-term credit arrangement in 2022 under which 166,000 MT of rice was supplied to Cuba by July 2023. Capacity-building cooperation under ITEC has also expanded, with Cuba allotted 60 slots, including training programmes in AI, digital transformation, entrepreneurship, sericulture and India's Digital ID ecosystem.

D. Energy Cooperation:

Energy cooperation is an important element of India-Cuba relations. Cuba a member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), hosted an ISA delegation led by the Director General along with Indian businesses in August 2025. During the visit, the delegation inaugurated the Solar Technology Application Resource Centre (STAR-C) at the University of Havana and held discussions with Cuban authorities on solar pumps for tobacco and agriculture sectors and solar transition of BioCubaFarma facilities.

E. Science & Technology, Biotechnology and Health:

India-Cuba cooperation in Science & Technology, biotechnology and health has strengthened through various agreements, including MoUs on Health and Medicine, Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy, and Biotechnology. The first Joint

Working Group (JWG) meetings on Biotechnology and Health were held in February 2025, followed by a visit of Indian delegations from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and AYUSH in April 2025. Cooperation in Ayurveda and traditional medicine has expanded, including establishment of a Panchakarma Centre at the International Health Centre “La Pradera” in 2019 with support from the Ministry of AYUSH, and ongoing efforts to establish an Ayurveda Chair at the University of Medical Sciences, Havana. Significant progress has been made in pharmaceutical cooperation, including recognition of the Indian Pharmacopoeia by Cuba’s regulatory authority CECMED in 2025, discussions on recognition of Ayurvedic and Homoeopathic Pharmacopoeias, and an agreement between HLL Lifecare Ltd. and MEDICUBA S.A. under PMBJP to facilitate supply of affordable generic medicines from India. India also donated in 2024 Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) worth Euro 10 million under the grant component of the rice Short-Term LoC, enabling Cuba to produce essential antibiotics. Both countries continue collaboration in traditional medicine, with Cuba participating in WHO Global Summits (2023 & 2025) on Traditional Medicine in India and regularly observing International Day of Yoga and Ayurveda Day with government support.

F. DPI Cooperation: Following the signing of *India Stack* – MoU on Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions in January 2024 in New Delhi, India and Cuba made considerable progress in DPI cooperation. The *Digilocker-like platform for Cuba* is almost ready for Pilot launch in Cuba. It has also expressed keen interest in India’s Digital ID (Aadhaar), UPI, Disaster Warning System (Sachet), to complement Cuba’s digital transformation of the government, and their officials met all concerned organizations in India in September-October 2025.

G. Cultural Relations:

Indian culture and civilization enjoy considerable appreciation in Cuba, with Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore holding a special place in Cuban society. ICCR has donated busts of Mahatma Gandhi and Tagore, which are installed at prominent locations in Havana. The richness of Indian dance, music, cinema and art is widely recognized, with the House of Asia in Havana regularly organizing exhibitions, film screenings, talks and displays on India, while Indian films are broadcast weekly on Cuban national television. Several ICCR-sponsored cultural troupes have visited Cuba, and numerous cultural events, including Indian Food Festivals, Film Festivals and Festivals of Indian Culture, have been organized over the years. In 2025, a festival of 16 Indian films dubbed/subtitled in Spanish was screened for the first time across cinema halls in all Cuban provinces. Cuban cultural groups have also participated in international events in India, including the Conjunto Folklórico Nacional at the ICCR International Folk Dance & Music Festival in 2023, while Cuba’s Erfeon Choir Santiago won first prize at the ICCR International Choral Festival in 2020.

H. 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 been totally assimilated into the local community. Since

2016, there are Indian labourers as part of an international company working on various real estate construction projects in Cuba.

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