

India – Cuba Relations

Political Relations:

India-Cuba relations have been traditionally warm and friendly. India was amongst the first countries to recognize Cuba after the 1959 Revolution. Both countries have maintained close contacts with each other in various international fora, such as the UN, NAM, WTO, etc. India supports resolutions in the UN General Assembly calling for lifting of US sanctions against Cuba. Cuba shares India's views on democratizing UN and expansion of the UN Security Council. It also holds the reform of the UN Security Council as central to the overall reform process. Cuba supports India's inclusion as a permanent member in the restructured UN Security Council. Cuba has stated the support publicly several times.

2. In 2008, Government of India wrote off the principal and interest of US\$62 million, equivalent to Rs. 1.28 billion debt owed to India. The donation was a measure of solidarity towards the friendly people of Cuba. India also provided aid to Cuba when it was passing through severe economic crisis in early 1990s. India granted an aid of US\$ 2 million in cash as disaster relief assistance to Cuba in the wake of massive devastations caused by the hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma during August and September 2008.

3. Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, many important bilateral visits at HOS/HOG level have been exchanged from both sides. Immediately after the Cuban Revolution, first Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru received Che Guevara in Delhi and met President Fidel Castro in New York. They developed instant rapport. Thereafter PM Rajiv Gandhi and PM Manmohan Singh paid visits to Cuba in 1985 and 2006 respectively. Shri Hamid Ansari, Hon'ble Vice President, accompanied by a high level delegation, paid an official visit to Cuba in October, 2013. The then External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna visited Havana in June 2012. From the Cuban side, President Fidel Castro visited India in 1973 and 1983 and Che Guevara in 1959. Mr. Bruno Rodriguez, Foreign Minister of Cuba visited India in May, 2013. First Vice President, Mr. Miguel Diaz Canel Bermudez visited India in March, 2015.

4. India and Cuba have signed agreements on Bilateral Trade, Cultural, S&T, Standardization, Sports, Renewable Energy and Consumer Protection and Cultural Exchange Program. The Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement and MOU on Cooperation in Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati and Cuban Radio and Television Institute were signed in 2013. Agreement for Visa Exemption to Diplomatic Passport Holders between India and Cuba was signed in March, 2015. MoU on cooperation in the field of Biotechnology between Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology and BioCubaFarma of Cuba has been finalised.

Commercial Relations:

5. India-Cuba two-way trade that used to be around USD 300 million annually in 1980s, saw steep fall following demise of former USSR and changes in India's economic policies in 1990s. The latest available trade figures are as follows:

Values in US \$ Millions

S.No.	Year	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
1.	EXPORT	25.51	36.67	35.82	35.53	37.32
2.	IMPORT	1.12	3.99	3.95	2.40	1.57
3.	TOTAL TRADE	26.63	40.66	39.77	37.93	38.89
4.	TRADE BALANCE	24.39	32.68	31.87	33.13	35.75

Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce

6. India's major export items to Cuba are pharmaceutical products, organic chemicals, plastic & rubber articles, machinery and mechanical appliances, etc., while major import items from Cuba are pharmaceutical products, tobacco items, raw hides and skins, leather, etc.

7. **Science & Technology:** has been a significant area for bilateral cooperation. Main areas of interaction have been bio-technology and software. There has been active cooperation between Indian company BIOCON and Cuba's CIMAB on monoclonal antibodies for cancer treatment. Cuban Principal Scientific Advisor, Dr. Fidel Castro Jr., visited India in September, 2014.

8. **ITEC:** programmes constitute an important element of the bilateral cooperation. Cuba is allotted 60 ITEC slots annually which are fully utilised. Since 1989, 671 Cuban professionals have been trained in India in different areas. A 5Kw solar power plant was donated to Cuba under ITEC in 1995. It was followed by a one time post commissioning spare parts support worth Rs 5 Lacs. India donated an IT Centre – India Cuba Knowledge Centre- to Cuba for two years and later extended for another year. It was completed in July 2010 and trained over 1900 Cuban professionals in different streams. The Centre was implemented by NIIT.

Cultural Relations:

9. Indian culture is well appreciated in Cuba. Yoga and Vipassana meditation are practised and the former forms part of the health curriculum of the Government. There are several followers of Shri Shri Ravi Shankar/Art of Living and also ISCON. Interest in Ayurveda and Indian Naturopathy is increasing. Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated

every year. On 7 May, 2007, a bust of Tagore donated by ICCR was unveiled in Old Havana. A dance drama was dedicated to the 150th birth anniversary of Gurudev Tagore in May 2011. Painting exhibition and seminar on Gurudev's life were also organized. A 6-member Indian modern fusion troupe "Naad Brahma" sponsored by ICCR participated in the 27th edition of the Cuban Jazz Festival in December 2011. There is a bust of Mahatma Gandhi and a statue of Mother Teresa in Havana. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore occupy a special place in Cuba. The depth and variety of Indian dance, music and cinema are well known in Cuba. The House of Asia in Havana organizes regular cultural events – exhibitions, film shows, talks - on India. The library at Casa de Asia is named after Rabindranath Tagore.

10. During the visit of Vice-President to Cuba in October, 2013, the Indian Cultural Festival was held in Havana from 24th October to 4th November which consisted of seven manifestations: Performing Arts; Indian Food Festival in National Hotel; Indian Film Festival at Charlie Chaplin Theatre; Literary event featuring eminent poets and authors from Sahitya Academy in ALBA; Art exhibition also at ALBA and Indian films on Cuban T.V. channels.

11. India was the 'Guest of Honour Country' for the prestigious Havana International Book Fair from 12th to 22nd February, 2015. India is the first Asian country to be accorded this rare honour.

Sports Cooperation:

12. During the visit of the then Minister for Sports Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyer in early 2007, an agreement on Sports Cooperation was signed. The Indian Amateur Boxing Federation and the Army Sports Institute, Pune have been hiring Cuban coaches – boxing, athletics, volleyball, wrestling, judo and diving – on a regular basis. Coaching by Cuban Specialists has helped India to win medals in various competitions including Olympics. A four to six weeks training programme was sponsored jointly by the Ministry of Sports & Youth Affairs, Sports Authority of India and Panchayat Khel Kood Authority (PYKKA) for 54 High Performance and Community Coaches from all over India at the Cubadeportes in Havana, Cuba in January/February, 2011 and another batch of 22 sportsmen in April/May, 2012. MOS for Youth Affairs & Sports Shri Ajay Maken led a six-member delegation to Cuba from 12-15, February, 2012. During the visit, an MoU on Cooperation of Sports was signed for a period of three years. India sent 32 Community Coaches in the field of different sports to Cuba for training from January/February, 2013. India presented US \$ One Million as gift for development of astro turf hockey in November 2013.

Indian Community:

13. Indian Community in Cuba is small. It comprises of a few Christian missionary sisters working for charity organizations, seven medical students and two PIOs married to Cubans who are settled in Havana. Besides, there are a few businessmen of Indian origin. A third component 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

parts of the West Indies to work on sugarcane plantations. They are settled mostly in Guantanamo province in Eastern Cuba. These people have got totally assimilated into the local culture though some still carry Indian names. There are about 200 such people of Indian origin.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Havana Website:

<http://eoi.gov.in/havana>

Embassy of India, Havana Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/indianembassyhavana>

Embassy of India, Havana Twitter:

@EOIHavana

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