

India – Cuba Bilateral Brief

Political: India-Cuba relations have been traditionally warm and friendly. India was amongst the first countries to recognize Cuba after the 1959 Revolution. The bilateral relationship has essentially been political in nature as both countries hold similar views on most critical international matters and have maintained close contacts with each other also 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 and at the Financial Action Task Force. Cuba supports India's inclusion as a permanent member in the restructured UN Security Council. Cuba has stated the support publicly several times.

Relief Assistance and Goodwill: India granted an aid of US\$ 2 million in cash as disaster relief assistance to Cuba in the wake of massive devastation caused by the hurricanes Gustav, Ike and Paloma during August and September 2008. 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 granted aid to Cuba when it was passing through severe economic crisis in early 1990s. In 2016, in the aftermath of Hurricane Mathew, India announced donation of medical supplies worth USD 1 million.

Bilateral Visits: Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, 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 and President Fidel Castro and revolutionary leader Che Guevara had held meetings. Thereafter former PM Rajiv Gandhi and former PM Manmohan Singh paid visits to Cuba for NAM summits. Former Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports (Independent Charge) Shri Ajay Maken visited Cuba in February 2012 followed by former External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna in June 2012 and former MOS(C&I) Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia in July 2012. In September, 2013 Dr. Farooq Abdullah, former Minister of New and Renewable Energy led a delegation to Cuba. In October, 2013 Shri Hamid Ansair, Hon'ble Vice President led a high level delegation (on first VVIP bilateral visit) to Cuba which included Shri Jitin Prasada, former MOS for Human Resource Development, four Members of Parliament and other high ranking officers. From the Cuban side, President Fidel Castro (1973 and 1983) and Che Guevara (1959) paid visits to India. Mr. Bruno Rodriguez, Foreign Minister of Cuba visited India from 25th to 27th May, 2013. Mr. Antonio Carricarte, Cuban First Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment visited India from 13th – 18th October and participated in FICCI-LAC Conclave held from 15th – 17th October, 2014 in New Delhi. The First Vice President, Miguel Diaz Canel visited India in March, 2015. Cuban Vice Minister of Energy and Mines, Yuri Viamontes Lazo, participated in the 6th CII India-LAC Conclave in New Delhi in October 2015. Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste, MOS for Health and Family Welfare visited Cuba from 23-26 October 2016. Shri Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister, led a 7-member all party Parliamentary delegation to Cuba from 29-30 November 2016 to pay their last respects to Fidel Castro.

Agreements: India and Cuba have signed agreements on Bilateral Trade, Cultural, S&T, Standardization, Sports, Renewable Energy and Consumer Protection and Cultural Exchange Program. During the year 2013, the Cultural Exchange Programme Agreement 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. MoU on cooperation in the field of Biotechnology between Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology and BioCubaFarma of Cuba has been finalised. Besides, there are some other agreements/MOUs which are being negotiated, viz., Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners, Mutual Treaty on Criminal Matters, Extradition Treaty, Cooperation in the field of Education and MOU in the field of Health. Agreement on Visa Exemption for Diplomatic Passport holders was signed in March, 2015.

Commercial relations:

Lines of Credit: Government of India has provided Line of Credit (LOC) for five projects in Cuba: “Milk Powder Processing Plant” for an amount of USD 5 million; LOC for an amount of USD 5.04 million for modernisation of injectable products plant; & LOC for an amount of USD 2.712 million for bulk blending fertiliser plant. Further, LOC of US\$90.3 million for a Power Cogeneration Project and LOC of US\$ 70 million to install the 51-MW Wind Farm at Rio Seco, Banos Municipality, Holguin have also been approved.

The latest available trade figures are as follows:

Values in US\$ Millions as on 19th August, 2017

INDIA -CUBA	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Imports from Cuba	1.12	3.99	3.95	2.40	1.57	1.33	1.31
Exports to Cuba	25.51	36.67	35.82	35.53	37.32	54.31	41.87
Bilateral Total Trade	26.63	40.66	39.77	37.93	38.89	55.64	43.18
Trade Balance	24.39	32.68	31.87	33.13	35.75	52.97	40.56

Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce

ITEC: Bilateral assistance through Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) is an important element of the bilateral relations between India and Cuba. ITEC programs are popular with Cubans and Cuba’s utilization of the slots have been very good. For the year 2014-15, 60 training slots were allotted, all of which were utilized fully. For the current FY, the numbers of slots have been increased to 80.

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 professional in different streams. The Centre was implemented by NIIT.

Cultural relations

Indian culture and civilization 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. Workshops on Indian Philosophy were organized in December 2012. Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated every year. On 7th 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 on 12th 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 from 15-18 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 and has a hall dedicated to India where Indian art and craft objects are permanently displayed. The library at Casa de Asia is named after Rabindranath Tagore. An 8-member martial arts group from Hindustan Kalari Sangam, sponsored by ICCR, performed four shows in Cuba in November 2010.

A week long yoga festival was organized in Havana in 2013 and the Cuban Yoga Association was also encouraged to likewise host yoga events in other cities of Cuba. This coincided with the visit of Indian Vice President to Cuba. The interest in yoga is being sustained through yoga classes conducted regularly in different parts of Cuba.

Hon'ble Vice President inaugurated the Indian Cultural Festival on 29th October in Mella Theatre where Nrityarupa, a seamless ensemble of various Indian classical dances was performed by the artists of the Sangeet Natak Academy. The Indian Cultural Festival was held in Havana from 24th October to 4th November 2013. A 10-member Kathak group led by Ms. Shovana Narayan performed to a full house at Nacional Theater of Havana on 25th March 2017.

India was the 'Guest of Honour' country for the 24th edition of prestigious Havana International Book Fair held in Havana from 12th to 22nd February, 2015. Shri Ravindra Singh, Culture Secretary, inaugurated the India pavilion, and the Fair was declared open earlier in the presence of Mr. Miguel Diaz Canel, Cuban First Vice President.

On the occasion of 70th Anniversary of India's Independence, the Embassy of India in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC), Ministry of Culture, Government of Cuba organised a Food Festival and performance of Indian classical dance. A 9-member Kathak dance group led by Ms. Shubhada Dubey performed on 12th of August at the Nacional Theatre of Havana. Two chefs especially came from India for the Indian Food Festival organised from 13-17 August at the Nacional Hotel, Havana.

This year, Embassy in collaboration with National Institute for Sports Physical Education (INDER) of Cuba and ICCR organised a yoga learning session from 19-23 August 2017 by Dr. Sivakumar Rajaguru who was sponsored by ICCR.

Sports Cooperation

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 Indian 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. Former MOS for Youth Affairs & Sports Shri Ajay Maken led a six-member delegation to Cuba from 12-15 February, 2012. Besides holding discussions with his Cuban counterpart, President of the National Institute of Sports Mr. Julio Christian Jimenez Molina and visiting Cuban Sports Facilities in Havana, he also signed an MoU on Cooperation of Sports between India and Cuba 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

Indian Community in Cuba is small. It comprises 25 sisters doing charitable work and eight medical students and two Indian nationals married to Cubans who are settled in Havana. Besides, there are a few businessmen of Indian origin. A third component of the community are 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. 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.

In Addition to the above, over 600 Indian labourers have come under contract for building of hotels/resorts by French company Bouygues which is in joint venture with Cuban Military Tourism Group, Gaviota S.A.

Useful Resources

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