

## India – Cuba Bilateral Relations

India and Cuba enjoy excellent bilateral relations which has 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. Revolutionary leader Major Ernesto Guevera (Che) accompanied by five officials visited India from 30 June to 4 July 1959. President Fidel Castro met first Prime Minister of India Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in September 1960 on the side lines of UNGA in New York.

#### **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 summit;
- **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 greetings on the sidelines of the 15<sup>th</sup> BRICS summit in Johannesburg, South Africa in August 2023.)*

#### **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 then First Vice President, Miguel Diaz-Canel (now President) 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 a meeting in New York on the side lines 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 an official visit.
- 2024 (25 September)- EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and Mr. Bruno Rodriguez, Foreign Minister of Cuba held a meeting in New York on the side lines of the 79<sup>th</sup> session of UNGA.

#### 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 15-17 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.
- 2023 (October 31) - First Deputy Minister of Energy & Mines, Argelio Abad, and his delegation participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> International Solar Alliance (ISA) Assembly in India.
- 2024 (January 15-20) – Cuban First Deputy Minister of Communication Mr. Wilfredo Gonzalez Vidal led a delegation to participate in the India Electronics Expo / India SoftExpo at Pragati Maidan.
- 2024 (August 17) – Cuban Foreign Minister Mr. Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla delivered a video

message for the VOGSS 3.0 Foreign Ministers' Meeting.

- Other visits of delegations in 2024 and 2025 include: A 3-member delegation led by First Colonel Luis Angel Macareno Veliz, Deputy Chief at the National Staff of Civil Defence (Secretary rank) to the International Conference on Disaster Resilient Infrastructure in New Delhi and to hold bilateral meetings at CDRI(24-25 April); A 3- member delegation from the Ministry of Industry (in charge of textile manufacturing in Cuba) to attend the India Garment Fair, New Delhi(24-27 June); A 4-member delegation from BioCubaFarma to participate in the 10<sup>th</sup> edition of iPHEX, organised by Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India, at Greater Noida (28-30 August); A 3-member delegation from Ministry of Industry and its subsidiary 'GEMPIL' participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of UP International Trade Show(25-29 September); A 3- member delegation from Ministry of Communications to Bharat Mobile Congress in New Delhi (15-17 October); A 5-member delegation from Ministry of Communications to participate in the World Telecom Standardisation Assembly (WTSA) in New Delhi(15-24 October); A 2-member delegation from Ministry of Energy and Mines to the 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Session of International Solar Alliance at New Delhi (ISA) (3-6 November); A 3-member delegation from Cuban Ministry of Agriculture to Gujarat for study of Gir cows breeding techniques for Cuban livestock development and genetic improvement programme(3-10 January); An official from Ministry of Foreign Affairs attended the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Disarmament and International Security Affairs Fellowship Programme at Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Studies, New Delhi(13-31 January, 2025).

#### **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. Saurabh 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.

- ‘India Stack’ – MoU on Cooperation in the field of sharing successful digital solutions implemented at population scale for digital transformation was signed between Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT and Mr. Wilfredo Gonzalez Vidal, First Deputy Minister of Communications of Cuba on 19 January 2024 in New Delhi.
- MoU on Cooperation in the field of Medical Products Regulation between Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO), India and the Centre for the State Control of Drugs and Medical Devices (CECMED), Cuba was signed in October 2024.

## 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.	Item	19-20	2020-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25 (Jan-Nov)
1.	Export	51	20.33	57	104	146	155
2.	Import	3	69.44	0	7	9	2
3.	Balance of Trade	104	89.77	57	91	125	
4.	Trade Balance	98	(-)49.44	58	17	27	

*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. In November 2023, FIEO led 19 companies to participate in FIHAV 2023. The Embassy put up a stall at the FIHAV 2024 and shared information provided by various Export Promotion Councils of India.

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. India- LAC virtual meetings were held on Digital Public Infrastructure (8 July 2023), and India-Cuba virtual meeting on DigiLocker on 20 December 2024.

## 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 Covid-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. A specialized course was organized under ITEC programme for Cuba (12 slots) on film production, co-production and distribution, in October-November 2023 at Satyajit Ray Film and Television Institute, Kolkata. A Specialised course in Artificial Intelligence has been organised at C-DAC, New Delhi for 20 Cuban IT specialists from 24 February-7 March 2025.

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.

**Donation of APIs:** As part of the 10 per cent grant component of Euros 100 million Short term LOC for rice, EAM had approved donation of 80 tons of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs) worth Euro 10 Million to Cuba. The APIs dispatched from India in the first week of June arrived at Mariel Port in Havana on 30<sup>th</sup> July. The APIs were formally handed over on 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024 by Ambassador Mr. T. Armstrong Changsan to Dr. Mayda Mauri Perez, President of BioCubaFarma in the presence Ms. Deborah Rivas Saavedra, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment and Mr. Ariel Lorenzo, Director for Asia and Oceania Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the premises of "8 de Marzo" Pharmaceutical plant. The gesture of donation of APIs was well-appreciated. The donation of these APIs will enable the Cuban drug manufacturers to produce antibiotics, which will be sufficient to address the shortage of antibiotics for 6 months up to 1 year.

**HADR Assistance:** HADR assistance in the form of anti-biotic and essential medicines for US\$1 Million in the wake of the October-November 2024 devastating hurricanes 'Oscar' & 'Rafael' and earthquakes, was provided to Cuba in January 2025.

#### **D. Energy Cooperation:**

Energy cooperation is an important element 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. US\$ 90 million 50 MW Power Co-generation Project at 30 November Sugar Mill, US\$ 75 million 75 MW Photovoltaic solar power projects, US\$ 70 million 51 MW Wind Energy Farm project at Rio Seco. While the DPRs for the Power Co- generation Project and Photovoltaic solar power projects is under the consideration of the Ministry, none of the 4 companies could qualify for the Wind Energy Farm project.

#### **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 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.

Cuba participated in the 1<sup>st</sup> Global Summit on natural and traditional medicine by WHO in India on 18 August 2023. Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP) showcased, at the exhibition area for the Pan American Health Organization, the integration of traditional practices in the health sector.

International Day of Yoga and Ayurveda Day are celebrated in Cuba every year with the support of Cuban government. The 6<sup>th</sup> Ayurveda Day, on 10 November 2023, was celebrated in association with Manuel Fajardo Medical School, Havana. The 7<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga was celebrated on 25 June 2024 at Colosio de la Ciudad Deportiva, the biggest stadium in Havana.

#### **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 Sundays 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 organized by ICCR in December 2020. Cuban dance group 'Conjunto Folklorico Nacional' participated in the 7<sup>th</sup> India-International Folk Dance & Music Festival, by ICCR, in India in November 2023.

Yoga and Vipassana meditation are practiced. With the support of Cuba's INDER (National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation), Embassy of India has 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, 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, Diwali etc. are also celebrated by the Embassy with the enthusiastic participation of Cuban population.

## **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 been totally assimilated into the local community. Since last eight years, there are Indian labourers as part of an international company working on various real estate construction projects in Cuba.

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