

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.

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 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. The medicines were handed over to the Cuban Ministry of Public Health in January 2018. Government of India approved an aid of US\$ 150,000 as an emergency financial assistance to Cuba aftermath the Hurricane Irma in September 2017. Government of India donated 60 tractors to Cuba worth around US\$ 6,25,000/-. The tractors arrived in Cuba in February 2018 and were handed over to Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba on 26 February 2018.

Bilateral Visits: Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, important bilateral visits at HOS/HOG level have been exchanged from both sides (though not in bilateral visit format). 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 in 1985 and 2006 respectively. 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 Ansari, 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. 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 Havana from 29-30 November 2016 to pay their last respects to Fidel Castro Ruz. CIM Suresh Prabhu accompanied by a large FIEO business delegation paid an official visit to Cuba from 28-31 October 2017 at the invitation of his Cuban counterpart, Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz, Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment.

Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind visited Cuba from 21-22 June 2018. This was the first ever visit by the President of India to Cuba. They were accompanied by high level delegation that included Minister of State for Steel, Shri Vishnu Dev Sai and two Members of Parliament from Lok Sabha Dinesh Kashyap and Nityanand Rai. Two MoUs were signed on biotechnology and traditional medicines. President announced India's offer of US\$ 75 million

LoC for 100 MW solar power project in Cuba. An additional 10 slots under ITEC programmes for Cuba was also announced during visit.

A delegation mounted by the D/o Biotechnology and BIRAC (Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council) visited on the sidelines of the visit of President of India to Cuba on 20-23 June to hold discussions with 'Bio CubaFarma'. A Tripartite Letter of Intent between BIRAC, KIHT and Kalam Institute of Health Technology (KIHT) and 'Bio CubaFarma' was also signed.

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 25 to 27 May 2013. Mr. Antonio Carricarte, Cuban First Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment visited India from 13 to 18 October and participated in FICCI-LAC Conclave held from 15 to 17 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. Cuban Minister of Public Health Dr. Roberto Morales Ojeda, visited Delhi on 6-7 December 2017 at the invitation of Minister of Health and Family Welfare. An MOU on cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine was also signed during visit. Cuban Minister of Energy and Mines, Raúl García Barreiro, visited India from 1-3 October to attend meeting of the International Solar Alliance (ISA).

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. 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. Two MoUs on cooperation in the field of Traditional Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy and on Cooperation in the field of Biotechnology were signed during the visit of President of India to Cuba in June 2018.

Commercial relations:

CIM Suresh Prabhu inaugurated the Indian pavilion at the Havana International Fair, FIHAV 2017 on 30 October 2017 along with the Cuban Energy Minister and First Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Antonio Carricarte Corona. 28 exhibitors were participated at FIHAV 2017 under the aegis of ITPO and EEPC. This was the first ever multi-sectoral participation from India at FIHAV. CIM also addressed the B2B meeting organized by the Mission and FIEO. Aside from the B2B meeting, the Mission organized sectoral meetings for the FIEO delegation with Cuban companies, which was well attended. FIEO and Cuban Chamber of Commerce signed an MOU for cooperation in 6 priority sectors: pharmaceuticals, tourism, renewable energy, sugar, biotechnology and infrastructure development.

45 Indian companies took part in 36th International Trade Fair of Havana FIHAV 2018, from 29 October-2 November 2018. The Embassy also organized a meeting of the visiting businessmen with the Chamber of Commerce of Cuba. 1st November was designated as India Day at FIHAV which was attended by Ms. Ileana Núñez, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment. Speaking on the occasion, she said that there were several potentialities in terms of investments and expanding links, particularly economic and commercial between India and Cuba. On November 2, Mr. Rodrigo Malmierca, Minister of Foreign Trade & Investment visited the Indian Pavilion and met with the Indian businessmen at their stalls. He assured of his Government's full support to the Indian companies intending to do trade or invest in Cuba. A letter of Intent was signed between Escort and GELMA, Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba.

LOCs: India has extended 5 LoCs aggregating to **US\$ 178.104 million** to Government of Cuba.

(i) LoC of US\$ 2.712 million for bulk blending fertilizer plant in Cuba for supply and installation of the plant was awarded to Aar Ess Exim Company Pvt. Limited (AEEPL) of India and included under the LoC on 13.07.2015.

(ii) LOC of USD 5.092 million for Modernization of Injectable Plant (LABIOFAM): EXIM Bank and its counterpart Banco Exterior de Cuba (BEC) signed the LOC in October 2014. Government of Cuba issued letter of Intent for the contract before signing the LOC and the Cuban side was asked to submit a fresh DPR by EXIM Bank, which was submitted in November 2016. Exim Bank informed the Cuban side in May 2017 that Fabtech Technologies UK Ltd. was pre-qualified for execution of the contract. Fabtech, after their visit to Havana in July 2017, quoted USD 11 million for the plant. In order to limit the cost estimates within the LOC amount, LABIOFAM has decided to complete 2 production lines, instead of the 4 as per DPR. The EXIM Bank and BEC are working on the revised contract.

(iii) LOC of USD 5 million for Milk Processing Plant (ALIMPEX): The Agreement between the EXIM Bank and BEC was signed in October 2012. Project was awarded to M/s. Angelique. The Cuban side had proposed changes in the site of the plant project as well as the scope of work which required submitting a fresh DPR, which was subsequently approved by DPA Division. The revised contract between M/s. Alimpex and M/s. Angelique was sent to EXIM Bank in May 2017. EXIM Bank has referred the matter to DPA Division in June 2017 as it involved M/s. Angelique.

(iv) LOCs of (i) USD 90.3 million for Power Cogeneration Project at 30 November Sugar Mill (AZCUBA) and (ii) USD 70 million for 51 MW Wind Energy Farm project at Rio Seco (UNE): MEA approved the LOCs in January 2017. Documents sent by EXIM Bank were handed over to the Cuban side in January 2017. Exim Bank and BEC have been working on the documents since then.

(v) LoC of US\$ 75.00 million for a 100 MW solar power projects in Cuba under the framework of the International Solar Alliance (ISA): Shri Ram Nath Kovind, President of

India announced India's offer of US\$ 75 million LoC for 100 MW solar power project in Cuba during his visit in June 2018.

Bilateral Trade

The latest available trade figures are as follows:

Values in US\$ Millions as on 14 Dec 2018					
INDIA -CUBA	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Imports from Cuba	2.40	1.57	1.33	1.31	2.06
Exports to Cuba	35.53	37.32	54.31	41.79	41.80
Bilateral Total Trade	37.93	38.89	55.64	43.10	43.86
Trade Balance	33.13	35.75	52.97	40.48	39.74

Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce

The main items of Indian export to Cuba are pharmaceutical products, organic chemicals, plastic products, medical equipment, textile products, metal products, mineral oil products and tools. Imports from Cuba primarily comprise of pharmaceutical and tobacco products.

ITEC: Bilateral assistance through Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has increased in the last few years. ITEC programmes are popular and Cuba's utilization is near total. 60 ITEC slots have been allotted to Cuba under the ITEC programme. An additional 10 slots for ITEC programmes, bringing the total to 70 slots for Cuba announced during the recent visit of President of India to Cuba in June 2018.

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 practiced. 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.

Likewise a week-long Indian Food Festivals were organized in hotel “Nacional” from 5-9 December 2011, again from 26th January to 1st February, 2013 and another during February, 2014. An exhibition on churches of India was held in the Nacional Hotel of Cuba, Havana, on 19th December, 2012. A documentary “Fabric of Love” on Christian heritage in India brought out by Public Diplomacy Division was also screened during the event. An Indian Film Festival Week was organized in Havana from 16th to 22nd May, 2013. 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 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. The Vidha and Abhimanyu Lal Kathak group performed, to live music, in Havana (ticketed) and Cardenas (Matanzas) in December 2013.

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. Besides, exhibition of books and participation of 13 renowned publishers, India participated in several manifestations – performances Rajasthani folk troupe, yoga instructors gave demonstrations and organized classes, four master craftsmen gave live demonstrations, food festival, film festival shown in theatres. Shri Chiranjeevi, a cine star also was present when his films were shown in theatre. All Indian cultural activities have been greatly appreciated by the Cuban authorities and the general public alike and helped to further promote understanding of Indian culture.

Embassy in collaboration with National Institute for Sports Physical Education (INDER) of Cuba and ICCR organised a yoga learning sessions from 19-23 June 2017 by Dr. Sivakumar Rajaguru who was sponsored by ICCR. A 10-member Kathak dance ICCR group led by Ms. Shovana Narayan performed in Havana’s prestigious Nacional Theater on 25th March 2017.

As in the previous years, Embassy celebrated the 4th International Day of Yoga was celebrated in Havana on 23 June 2018 in collaboration with the Manuel Fajardo Physical Education Institute. About 300 people attended the event which included senior officials from the Government of Cuba, Cuban sports personalities and members of diplomatic corps.

On the occasion of 70th Anniversary of India's Independence, the Embassy of India in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, GOI and India Tourism Development Corporation (ITDC) organised a Food Festival and performance of ICCR cultural troupe. A 9-member Kathak dance ICCR group led by Ms. Shubhada Dubey performed on 12 August 2017 at the Nacional Theatre in Havana. Two chefs especially came from India for the Indian Food Festival organised by the Embassy of India from 13-17 August 2017 at the Nacional Hotel, Havana.

Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary was celebrated in Havana on 2nd October with a solemn ceremony at Gandhi Park where people gathered to pay their respects to Gandhiji. It was followed by a programme in old Havana with the support of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the People (ICAP) and India-Cuba Friendship Association. The event was organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture at the prestigious 'Fototeca de Cuba'. The 'Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye' video was premiered in the presence of famous Cuban showman Bobby Carcases and other artists, and also released commemorative stamps and organized the digital projection of "150 Years of Mahatma Gandhi" on the façade of 'Fototeca de Cuba'.

A hockey turf at the National School of Hockey was inaugurated on 19 November in Havana for which India has contributed US \$ 1 million. Ambassador Madhu Sethi was invited as a Special Guest to be part of the event. The Cuban dignitaries expressed gratitude for India's contribution.

Indian Community

Indian Community in Cuba is small. It comprises sisters from Mother Teresa Missionary of Charity and Brigittine Order doing charitable work and 7 medical students. There is only one businessman of Indian origin running an Indian restaurant in Havana. 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 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. Since last two years, there are over 700 Indian workers working with M/s Pamposh Design and Construction Company on various hotel construction projects in Cuba.

Useful Resources

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