

## **India – Cuba Bilateral Brief**

### **Political Relations**

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.

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. In October, 2013 Shri Hamid Ansari, Hon'ble Vice President led a high level delegation (on first VVIP bilateral visit) to Cuba. 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.

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. He was accompanied by high level delegation 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.

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 Minister of Energy and Mines, Raúl García Barreiro, visited India from 1-3 October 2018 to attend meeting of the International Solar Alliance (ISA). The First Deputy Minister led the Cuban delegation to Software and Technology Expo Indiasoft 2019 in February 2019 in Telangana. A Cuban delegation headed by Vice Minister Alfredo Gonzalez traveled to India to learn about the experiences of applying different modalities of traditional medicine and held meetings with Secretary Ministry of Ayush in June 2019.

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, the principal and interest of US\$62 million was written off as a mark of solidarity towards the 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. and an emergency financial assistance to Cuba

aftermath of Hurricane Irma in September 2017. Government of India donated 60 tractors to Cuba worth around US\$ 625,000, which were handed over in February 2018.

60 ITEC slots have been allotted to Cuba under the ITEC programmer. 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. 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.

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.

### **Commercial relations**

Bilateral trade between India and Cuba stands at USD 38.81 Million. 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. India has also extended 6 LoCs aggregating to USD 248 Million to Government of Cuba in the area of solar power generation, wind energy, fertilizers, pharma and dairy processing

CIM Suresh Prabhu 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. He 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 participated at FIHAV 2017 under the aegis of ITPO and EEPC. This was the first ever multi-sectoral participation from India at FIHAV. 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. Escorts signed a letter of Intent on exploring business opportunities with with Cuban company HELMA – the logistical arm of the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture.

### **Cultural relations**

Indian culture and civilization is well appreciated in Cuba. Yoga and Vipassana meditation are practiced. Interest in Ayurveda and Indian Naturopathy is increasing. Tagore's birth anniversary is celebrated every year. On 7<sup>th</sup> May, 2007, a bust of Tagore donated by ICCR was unveiled in Old Havana. There is a bust of Mahatma Gandhi and a statue of Mother Teresa in Havana.. 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 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. A hockey turf at the National School of Hockey was inaugurated on 19 November 2018 in Havana for which India has contributed US \$ 1 million.

As in the previous years, the 5<sup>th</sup> International Day of Yoga in Havana on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2019 in collaboration with Cuban Institute for Sports and Recreation INDER was organised.. About 200 people attended the event which included senior officials from the Government of Cuba, Cuban sports personalities and members of diplomatic corps. In 2019 the IDY was extended to city of Trinidad with the theme "yoga for all" and was attended by members of the geriatric community.

The celebrations for Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary began on 2nd October 2018 with a ceremony at Gandhi Park where people gathered to pay their respects to Gandhiji. Followed by LED projection at the prestigious 'Fototeca de Cuba'. The Cuban version of 'Vaishnav Jan to Tene Kahiye' video was premiered in the presence of famous Cuban showman Bobby Carcases and other artists,. In September 2019 the postal agency of Cuba Coreos de Cuba launched commemorative postal stamps to mark the celebration of the 150th anniversary. On 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019 - World Environment Day, 150 trees were planted at the Botanical Garden of Havana (Cuba). A special outreach program and photo and book exhibition was organized in the adjoining province of Madruga, Cuba,. The Mission also held multiple activities such as Satya Varta, contributions to Gandhi anthropology and interactions with children to talk about the life and ideas of Mahatma Gandhi.

### **Indian Community**

Indian Community in Cuba is small. It comprises sisters from Mother Teresa Missionary of Charity and a few medical students and an Indian businessman who owns the Indian restaurant in Havana . There are 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. Since last two years, there are a few hundred Indian workers working with a construction company on various hotel construction projects in Cuba.

### **Useful Resources**

#### **Embassy of India**

- Website: <http://eoi.gov.in/havana>
- Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/indianembassyhavana>
- Twitter: @EOIHavana
- Youtube - <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt7JEQbiGxgwdCoaj8jx82g>

**Tourism in Cuba** Lonely Planet - <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/cuba>

September 2019

\*\*\*

