

Embassy of India
Havana, Cuba
India- Cuba Bilateral Relations

India - Cuba Bilateral Brief

India and Cuba enjoy excellent bilateral relations and have been traditionally warm and friendly. India was among the first countries to extend recognition to the new Cuba government in January 1959 following Cuban revolution. The visit of Major Ernesto Guevara (Che) to India from 30 June to 4 July 1959 consolidated the 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 forum.

Political:

Since the Cuban Revolution in 1959, there has been regular exchanges of visits at all levels. 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. Cuban Major Ernesto Guevara (Che) accompanied by five officials visited India from 30 June to 4 July 1959.

Important visits at HOS/HOG level:

- Prime Minister Shri Rajiv Gandhi to Havana in 1985 to attend the NAM Summit;
- Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to Cuba for NAM summits in 2006.
- 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.
- President Fidel Castro paid a visit to India to attend the NAM Summit in 1973
- President Fidel Castro paid a visit to India to attend the NAM Summit in 1983

Important visits at Vice President Level:

- Shri Hamid Ansari, Hon'ble Vice President led a high level delegation (on first VVIP bilateral visit) to Cuba in October, 2013. He was accompanied by Shri Jitin Prasada, MOS for Human Resource Development, four Members of Parliament and other high ranking officers.
- The First Vice President, Miguel Diaz Canel visited India in March, 2015.

Visit of Parliamentarians:

- 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.

Ministerial and other visits:

- Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports (Independent Charge) Shri Ajay Maken visited Cuba in February 2012;
- External Affairs Minister, Shri S.M. Krishna visited Havana in June 2012
- Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Shri Jyotiraditya Scindia visited Havana in July 2012
- Minister of New and Renewable Energy Dr. Farooq Abdullah, led a delegation to Cuba in September, 2013
- Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste, MOS for Health and Family Welfare visited Cuba from 23-26 October 2016
- 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.
- Foreign Minister of Cuba Mr. Bruno Rodriguez visited India from 25 to 27 May 2013
- Cuban First Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment Mr. Antonio Carricarte visited India from 13 to 18 October and participated in FICCI-LAC Conclave held from 15 to 17 October, 2014 in New Delhi.
- 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 signed during visit.
- 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).
- 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.

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.

- 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 in 2013.

- 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 were signed during the visit of President of India to Cuba in June 2018.

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 as on 10 Jan 2022

S.No.	Year	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
1.	EXPORT	41.80	35.00	47.51	20.33	20.49
2.	IMPORT	2.06	3.80	3.53	69.44	0.79
3.	TOTAL TRADE	43.86	38.81	51.04	89.77	21.28
4.	TRADE BALANCE	39.75	31.20	43.98	(-)49.44	19.70

Source: Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce

During the visit of Commerce and Industry Minister (CIM) Shri Suresh Prabhu, with the Cuban Energy Minister and First Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Antonio Carricarte Corona, the Indian pavilion at the Havana International Fair (FIHAV 2017) was inaugurated on 30 October 2017. 28 Indian exhibitors participated at FIHAV 2017 led by 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. At the 2018 edition (36th) International Trade Fair of Havana FIHAV 2018, from 29 October – 2 November 2018, 45 Indian companies took part. 1st November was designated as India Day at FIHAV which was attended by Ms. Ileana Núñez, Vice Minister of Foreign Trade and Foreign Investment who 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.

Further, a delegation of FICCI was planned in late 2020 which could not materialize due to the pandemic.

Cuban IT professionals enthusiastically participated in the INDIA: LAC IT Connect held virtually on 28-30 March 2021.

Development Assistance has been a priority area in the bilateral relations. 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. During the First wave of Covis-19 India donated 524 boxes of life saving medicines to Cuba. (November 2020).

The other dimension is the Lines of Credit (LOC) for developmental projects in Cuba. India has extended six LoCs to the tune of US\$ 248 million to Government of Cuba which include US\$ 2.712 million for bulk blending fertilizer plant; US\$ 5.092 million for Modernization of Injectable Plant (LABIOFAM); US\$ 5 million for Milk Processing Plant (ALIMPEX); US\$ 90.3 million for Power Cogeneration Project at 30 November Sugar Mill (AZCUBA); US\$ 70 million for 51 MW Wind Energy Farm project at Rio Seco (UNE) and US\$ 75.00 million for a 75 MW solar power projects Earlier, a 5KW solar power plant was donated to Cuba under ITEC in 1995. It was followed by a onetime 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.

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.

ITEC: ITEC programmes are popular and Cuba's utilization is near total. Bilateral assistance through Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation (ITEC) has increased in the last few years. 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. ITEC was utilised well in 2019 but in 2020 onwards focus has been shifted to e-ITEC owing to pandemic guidelines.

Cultural relations:

Indian culture and civilization is well appreciated in Cuba. Interest in Ayurveda and Indian Naturopathy is increasing. 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. Mahatma Gandhi, Nehru and Tagore occupy a special place in Cuba.

There is a bust of Mahatma Gandhi and a statue of Mother Teresa in Havana. On 7th May, 2007, a bust of Tagore donated by ICCR was unveiled in Old Havana.

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.

Some of the cultural events held:

- An 8-member martial arts group from Hindustan Kalari Sangam, sponsored by ICCR, performed four shows in Cuba in November 2010.
- Yoga and Vipassana meditation are practiced. 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.
- 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.
- 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 20-17 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'.
- Festival of Diwali was celebrated by the Mission along with Namaste Cuba on October 25, 2019 at House of Culture, Havana. The event was attended by around 300 members from Government of Cuba officials, Asian Diplomats, India Cuba Association, Friends of India Group etc.
- Guru Nanak Jayanti was celebrated on 12 November 2019 at House of Culture, Havana. A documentary video on Golden Temple along with devotional songs was played followed by chanting of Shabad Kirtan by Kundalini Yoga and Langar.
- A Yoga Workshop was organized on 12 December 2019 at House of Asia, Havana by Mr. Pimentel, President, Yoga Association of Cuba along with Namaste Cuba. The workshop was conducted with 50 yoga students along with members of the Mission.
- An event showcasing the State of Punjab on the occasion of Lohri was organised on January 14, 2020 at House of Culture, Havana. A documentary video on Punjab and Incredible India videos was telecast followed by chanting of Shabad Kirtan by Kundalini Yoga, cultural performances including Bhangra and other dances by Cuban artists, fashion show (in sarees and Punjabi dresses), lighting of bonfire and ended with DJ music.
- Cuba's choir group Erfeon Choir Santiago won the first prize in the International Choral Festival organized by ICCR in December 2020.
- On the occasion of the 7th International Yoga Day, IDY was celebrated on 21 June 2021. Many activities were performed on Social Media Channels, like Little-Guru Yoga Quiz & International Yoga Day celebrated in Cárdenas, Matanzas province in Cuba. Message of Prof. Eduardo Pimentel, President of the Cuban Yoga Association was telecast on Radio Ciudad Habana
- 6th Ayurveda Day was celebrated by the Embassy on 2nd November 2021 in association with with "La Pradera" International Health Centre in Havana. Dr. S. Janakiraman, Ambassador of India and Mr. Luís Fernando Navarro Martínez, Vice Minister of Public Health, Dr. Tania Margarita Cruz Hernández, Vice Minister of Public Health presided over the event and attended by Dr. Nelly Cristina Valdivia

Onega, Director General, Centro Internacional de Salud “La pradera” and Mr. Fernando Gonzalez Llort, President of Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples. An Agreement was signed between La Pradera and M/s Agrogourmet for provision of nutritional agricultural plant and other products to the centre, which reflects the theme of this year’s Ayurveda Day for Nutrition.

- The Embassy of India offered floral tributes to Dr Bheem Rao Ambedkar on Mahaparinirvan Diwas (December 6, 2021). In this connection, a Photo Exhibition on life of Dr. B R Ambedkar was also organized. The visitors appreciated the photographic exhibition on the Constitution of India at the Embassy.

Indian Community:

Indian Community in Cuba is small, which includes sisters from Mother Teresa Missionary of Charity and Brigittine Order doing charitable work, one medical students and 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. They have got totally assimilated into the local culture. There are about 200 such people of Indian origin. Since last seven years, there are Indian labourers as part of an international company working on various real estate construction projects in Cuba.

Source: Embassy of India, Cuba Web site Jan 2022.