

Cuba National Day Special

Honoring 90th anniversary of diplomatic ties

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AMBASSADOR OF CUBA



On Jan. 1, the Republic of Cuba, on its National Day, celebrates the 60th anniversary of the revolution, the culmination of more than a century of struggles by the Cuban people for their true and definitive independence. Since then, the firm determination to build a nation with all, for all and for the good of all has prevailed.

On such a significant date, I am honored to convey on behalf of the Cuban people and government, our best wishes for peace and prosperity to His Majesty Emperor Akihito, Empress Michiko and other members of the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan.

During the previous year, we celebrated

the 120th anniversary of the Japanese presence in Cuba and honored its valuable contribution to various areas of our society, where the footprints of those first migrant communities who chose our island as a destination to shape their future persist.

In this context, we can affirm with satisfaction that the bilateral exchange was deepened in multiple areas for the benefit of both parties and taking advantage of the interests and challenges that we share.

In the economic and commercial sector, the inauguration of the Japan International Cooperation Agency office in Havana stands out, which will contribute to further boosting bilateral cooperation that has already seen positive results. Likewise, for the 50th anniversary of the founding of Villa San Cristobal de La Habana (historic name of Havana), it has been working together with the Japan International Cooperation System regarding a program for the economic and social development of the country directed to the Cuban capital. The interest of the Japanese business sector

has been maintained for Cuba, which for the fourth consecutive year, has exhibited its products and services at the Havana International Fair and participated in the Investment Forum. There was an increase of 20 percent in bilateral trade during the previous year. The celebration in December of the 15th meeting of the Cuba-Japan Economic Conferences and the third Cuba-Japan Public-Private Committee yielded positive results and consolidated the prospects of trade in both directions.

The signing of the bilateral economic agenda, which was also last December, will allow the establishment of working mechanisms to deepen the economic and commercial cooperation in various sectors. Likewise, progress was made in the negotiation of an agreement for the reciprocal promotion and protection of investments, which will provide a legal framework for entrepreneurs from both countries for future investments in Cuban national territory.

In addition, there were several visits to Cuba by important government delega-

tions, parliamentarians and other institutions, which explored the potential of exchange with the Greater Antilles. The visits of then-Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Mitsunari Okamoto, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Masahisa Sato and Japan-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship League President Keiji Furuya stand out. In the case of Furuya, he met in Havana with our President Miguel Diaz-Canel, and both recognized the progress made in recent years and exchanged pleasantries on the excellent state of bilateral, economic and financial relations between both countries.

From Cuba, we received the minister of sports in Japan, an appropriate occasion to discuss the participation of Cuban teams in the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics in Tokyo, training bases and host cities. The first deputy minister of science, technology and information also fulfilled an intense agenda with Japanese counterparts, and outlined the increase of bilateral cooperation in knowledge and practices for adaptation to climate change, among other



President of the Japan-Cuba Parliamentary Friendship League Keiji Furuya and President Miguel Diaz-Canel shake hands in Havana on Dec. 19. EMBASSY OF CUBA

areas. For his part, the head of international relations of the Communist Party of Cuba noted in his meetings with the country's main political forces and many other friends of Cuba in Japan the sympathy and will that everyone shares to strengthen the ties that bind both countries.

Japanese tourists have maintained a deep interest in visiting Cuba, attracted by its natural beauty, its rich culture and historical heritage, who will always be welcomed by a hospitable and happy people.

I would like to reiterate our gratitude for the traditional expressions of solidarity with Cuba, friendly organizations, parliamentarians, parties and Japanese society in general. We especially appreciate your support for the Cuban people's demand for the immediate cessation of the economic, commercial and financial blockage of the United States against Cuba, the most pro-

longed, unjust and severe sanctions system that has been applied against any country, and that was condemned for the 27th consecutive occasion at the United Nations.

2019 marks the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between both countries, and will become an opportune pretext to continue strengthening bilateral ties through mutual appreciation, respect and trust.

It will also be the year that a new constitution will be submitted to a popular referendum and enter into force in Cuba, whose draft proposal was openly discussed by millions of our citizens.

My dear friends, I renew our firm commitment to reinforce Cuba and Japan's friendship and reassurance, with pride and enthusiasm, the determination that guides our people to build a socialist, democratic, prosperous and sustainable society.



Cayo Coco, an island in central Cuba, is known for resort hotels and beautiful waters that are perfect for marine activities. EMBASSY OF CUBA



A couple dances at Floridita, a bar in Havana that is famous for daiquiris, cocktails and a sculpture of 20th-century American writer Ernest Hemingway, who was a regular customer. EMBASSY OF CUBA



Tropicana is a famous cabaret in Havana established in 1939. The show dazzles the audience with dancing, singing and a repertoire of Cuban music played by an orchestra. EMBASSY OF CUBA



San Pedro de la Roca Castle in Santiago de Cuba was constructed in 1638. This historic, military fortress was built in response to the commercial and political rivalries that threatened the Caribbean in the 17th and 18th centuries. EMBASSY OF CUBA

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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Highlights of Cuba-Japan relations

July 23, 1614: A 180-person group of Japanese delegates led by the samurai Hasekura Tsunenaga arrives in Havana for a stopover.

Sept. 9, 1898: The first Japanese immigrant, registered as Pablo Osuna, arrives in Cuba aboard the steamer Olinda from Mexico.

Dec. 21, 1929: Establishment of diplomatic relations.

1957: Opening of embassies in Tokyo and Havana.

July 1959: Che Guevara visits Tokyo and Hiroshima on behalf of the new government.

1962-1974: More than 100 Japanese fishermen and their families travel to Cuba and enroll as crew members on tuna and shrimping vessels.

1974: Establishment of the Cuba-Japan Economic Conferences.

1976: Foundation of the Friendship Parliamentary League.

1995: Cuban President Fidel Castro's first visit to Japan.

2003: Castro's second visit to Japan, including time at the Peace Memorial in Hiroshima.

Present day: More than 1,200 individuals of Japanese heritage live in Cuba and contribute in the areas of agriculture, business and art, among others. The Nikkei communities are concentrated on the Isle of Youth and Havana, and work to share Japanese culture and tradition with future generations.

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