

# Cuba National Day Special

## Long-standing support, mutual cooperation

**GISELA GARCIA**  
AMBASSADOR OF CUBA



The Republic of Cuba celebrates its National Day on Jan. 1, the 66th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. From this event, our country achieved its true independence and

sovereignty. Despite the many challenges we face today, the Cuban people, together with their party and government, continue to defend the construction of a more just, humane and supportive society.

In this long journey, Cuba and Japan have remained united and maintained a special relationship based on friendship, cooperation and mutual respect. In 2024, both countries celebrated the 95th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, although there had already been official exchanges since 1902, the year in which they mutually recognized each other.

The first friendly contacts date back to 1614, when the samurai Hasekura Tsunenaga and his delegation, considered the first great Japanese diplomatic mission to travel abroad, arrived in Cuba from Mexico on their way to Europe.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the traditional support of the Japanese government and people in favor of lifting the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. government against my country.

We also must be grateful for the historical cooperation of the government of Japan toward Cuba, to preserve it and if possible, increase it. This cooperation, initiated in the 1960s, has been maintained with a very positive social impact on the Cuban people. In this context, I would like to highlight the

excellent work done by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

During 2024, collaboration projects were carried out in health care, renewable energy, water resources, human resources training and other areas. It is worth mentioning the inauguration of the Electric Power Improvement Plan on the Isle of Youth, as well as the sending of humanitarian aid to address the damage caused by Hurricane Rafael by the Japanese government and friends of Cuba.

Last year, we also commemorated the 50th anniversary of the creation of the Japan-Cuba Economic Conference, which has made an outstanding contribution to promoting economic ties between our countries. We are grateful to the Japanese member companies of the conference, which, despite difficult circumstances, have maintained their presence in Cuba.

I have been impressed by the sympathy that exists for the Cuban people here in Japan, and I was able to confirm this during the visits I made to 10 prefectures this year. I can assure you that it is a mutual sympathy.

In the words of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, "We admire Japan for its industrious spirit, for its culture, for its talent, its philosophy, for its way of facing life."



**A trumpet player livens up the streets of Havana, known for its vibrant music scene.**

TERUO SEKIGUCHI



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We are proud that in 2024, another great friend of Japan, Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Ricardo Cabrisas, was awarded the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun by Emperor Naruhito in recognition of his contribution to the development of bilateral relations between the two countries.

Culture and sports are essential elements in our bilateral relationship. We thank all the artists, Cuban and Japanese, who for years — and especially this year — have worked tirelessly to spread Cuban culture in Japan and vice versa.

The "Japan Sings Cuba" concert on Dec. 3 at Min-On Concert headquarters was one of the many activities during the year that showed this special bond that unites us despite geographical and cultural differences. Today, we also have skilled Cuban baseball players in the Japanese leagues who have become true representatives of Cuban sports and whom we congratulate for their excellent results.

This year, Cuba will participate in the World Expo in Osaka, which will undoubtedly be another favorable space for bilateral exchange.

On the occasion of Cuba's National Day and the beginning of 2025, I would like to reiterate our firm determination to con-

tinue strengthening and deepening ties with Japan. On behalf of the Cuban people and government, and on my behalf, allow me to convey our best wishes for health, peace and prosperity to the government and people of Japan.

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



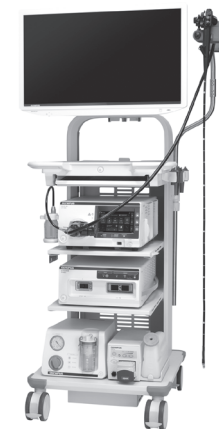
**Classic cars are a common sight cruising the streets of Havana.**

TERUO SEKIGUCHI

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