

# Cuba national day

## Cuba moves toward economic sustainability and prosperity

Marcos Rodriguez Costa  
AMBASSADOR OF CUBA

Cuba's National Day on Jan. 1 this year marks the 55th anniversary of the triumph of the Revolution, the historical process in which the Cuban people, after more than 100 years of struggling, finally won their independence.

On this remarkable date, I am honored to express on behalf of the Cuban people and their government, my best wishes for peace, prosperity and friendship to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and other members of the Imperial family, as well as to the government and friendly people of Japan, so close to Cuban people's hearts.

The history of the bonds between Cuba and Japan dates back to July 23, 1614, when an unusual delegation headed by Hasekura Tsunenaga, a samurai in the service of Sendai feudal lord Date Masamune, arrived in Havana. The year 2014, will witness celebrations between Cuba and Japan of the 400th anniversary of this pioneering journey that has joined our peoples forever. There is a natural sympathy between Cubans and Japanese, a kind of mutual fascination that makes us enjoy our respective cultures in a very special way.

In the current context characterized by negative tensions in the world economy, the adverse effects of climate change, and the consequences of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. government on Cuba for more than 50 years, the island's main economic indicators continue to advance steadily, demonstrating the willingness and ability of our people and government to overcome adversity.

These results are supported



Cuban President Raul Castro

by the new measures recently adopted by the government to update the Cuban economic model, with a view to achieving a prosperous and sustainable socialism. Our state is getting rid of unnecessary features, giving enterprises greater autonomy, while people engaged in self-employed activities are continually growing. Dialogue with society, especially the direct participation of the entire population in the decision-making process, has ensured a broad national consensus.

Tourism, the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries as well as the export of medical services, have continued to be major sources of income.

The Special Zone of Development of Mariel port, in a strategic location next to Havana, is the largest project in progress, and it will play a decisive role in the future development of Cuba. It is also a unique opportunity for foreign investors, who will enjoy significant tax benefits.

Thousands of Cuban doctors save lives in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific, under the banner of solidarity.

Cuba defends the right to a world free of nuclear weapons and strongly condemns the practice of terrorism in all of its forms in main international forums.

For years, our country has been suffering numerous terrorist attacks carried out by groups based in U.S. territory. As part of Cuba's struggle to defend itself from these criminal acts, five Cuban antiterrorist fighters infiltrated these organizations to neutralize their plans. In 1998, a fully rigged trial convicted and imprisoned them. In May 2013, René González, one of these brave men, after serving his wrongful conviction, was able to return to his homeland, being welcomed by his people with great fondness. However, his four comrades continue to suffer unjust imprisonment in U.S. jails. The whole world demands their immediate release.

The successful visit to Japan in November 2013 of Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla is a living expression of the current state of relations between the two countries and that many opportunities are increasingly opening for them.

The Japanese business community continues to center its attention on Cuba, supplying equipment and high-quality technology to the island. We have high hopes of a greater participation of Japanese companies in oil exploration, mining, pharmaceuticals and other major investments.

Finally, I want to express the esteem, respect and special consideration of the Cuban people and their government to the con-



sistent and renewed expressions of solidarity and friendship from friendship organizations, Diet members, political parties and Japanese society as a whole, over the years.

We are confident that the Japanese people will continue along

the road to recovery, in order to successfully reverse the great human and material losses caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011.

Despite the 11,850 km between Havana and Sendai, the statue of samurai Hasekura



**Future pointers:**  
(Above) The Special Zone of Development project at Mariel port is under way in a strategic location next to Havana. (Left) In 1614, a delegation headed by Hasekura Tsunenaga, a samurai in the service of Sendai feudal lord Date Masamune, arrived in Havana. EMBASSY OF CUBA

Tsunenaga, situated in the Bay of Havana in a ceremonial pose with outstretched arm and wielding a traditional fan, marks at this point in time the route of the beautiful friendship between the Cuban and Japanese peoples.

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