

Economic Update September 10



Arrivals of Tourists to Cuba Grew 17% to July

Cuban Minister of Tourism Manuel Marrero said the amount of visitors has grown 17% so far this year, thanks to the favorable performance of the main source markets.

The list of countries bringing more tourists to Cuba is topped by Canada, England, Spain, Mexico, France and Italy, reflecting the efforts of the nation to improve the offer in the most important centers of this Caribbean destination.

Recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics and Information (*ONEI* by its Spanish acronym) indicates that 2 194 134 people arrived to the archipelago in the first half of 2015, representing an increase of 17% compared to last year.

Raising the quality, in general, is every day challenge for workers in the sector, and to that end they work intensely to achieve better services in the country, said Marrero.

After inaugurating the new headquarters, which will host the Faculty of Tourism, the Minister told reporters that due to the growing demand for training in Havana, a development strategy, which includes the construction of several hotels and maintenance of others, is being implemented.

Although we are in a good moment, he said, it is not enough. "We know there are many things to do, but we are going in the right direction, gradually giving response to the demand," he added.

Mexico Explores Business Opportunities in Cuban Tourist Sector

When the flow of foreign visitors is growing at historic rates on the island, 17% in the first half of the year, the interest of foreign capital to do business in the Cuban market also increases.

While this is shown by the visit to the island last Wednesday of an important Chilean business and government delegation, it was also confirmed on Thursday with the arrival in Havana of Enrique de la Madrid, new head of the Mexican Tourism Secretariat.

Sources from the Cuban Tourism Ministry told ACN about the mission of the high Mexican official on the island includes its participation in a business forum with its Cuban counterpart Manuel Marrero to explore investment opportunities in this key sector.

As informed by the Mexican Editorial Organization (OEM) website, the Mexican Secretary of Tourism arrived in Havana accompanied by 40 businessmen interested in knowing the portfolio of projects offered to foreign capital by the Cuban nation.

According to their program, the entrepreneurs plan to visit the famous seaside resort of Varadero, the island's main tourist area.

For both Cuba and Mexico, the incomes generated by the tourism industry are considerable, so it is a priority sector in their development strategies.

Today, with more than 2 billion dollars of revenue a year, tourism represents to Cuba one of its top 3 sources of greatest contribution to the GDP, and it's among the main activities generating jobs and attracting foreign investment dynamically.

Cuba and Serbia Sign Parliamentary Cooperation Accord

Cuba and Serbia recently signed in Havana a protocol of cooperation to strengthen their parliamentary ties, and thereby contribute to boost the current economic and commercial bonds between both nations.

Esteban Lazo, member of the Politburo of the Cuban Communist Party and President of the National Assembly of the People's Power (ANPP) and his Serbian counterpart, Maja Gojkovic, signed the document that sets the guidelines about where legislative relations should focus on from now on.

This agreement is the first of its kind that Serbia signs with a Latin-American country, underlined Gojkovic, on an official visit on the island, the first by a legislative President since the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia.

I believe that our cooperation should not be limited only to the inter-parliamentary level, but that we should contribute to further deepen bilateral economic ties, and expressed his country's interest in expanding trade in areas such as medicine, education, agriculture, science, industry, culture and sports.

Lazo recalled the visit to Cuba of the Serbian president Tomislav Nikolic in May, "a reflection of the historic ties of friendship and solidarity uniting the two peoples."

Gojkovic expressed his country's support for the lifting of the blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States for over 50 years now.

Chilean Food and Beverage Products to Try Enter Cuban Market

To strengthen trade with Cuba, Chile promoted a wide portfolio of food and beverage of proven quality, that could help to diversify the supply of such products on the island, a tourist market in full expansion.

The event *Sabores de Chile* took place last Thursday at the Melia Cohiba hotel, in this city, to take advantage of the visit to Cuba of an important business and government delegation from the South American country, led by its Foreign Minister Heraldo Muñoz.

The appointment is a support tool to help *ProChile*, agency in charge of promoting foodstuffs of this nation in various markets worldwide.

A statement from *ProChile* says that the purpose of the meeting was to show Cuban buyers, authorities and press the variety and attributes of high quality food offered by the agency, which can complement Cuba's rich culinary tradition.

The event was attended by some 200 guests, who tasted dishes based on products such as salmon, beef, lamb, seafood, fruit, vegetables, dairy and olive oil, among many others, which were accompanied by wines and pisco, beverages representative of that land.

In addition, the Chilean Chef Cristián Correa, seduced the participants with his preparations for the appointment.

The food, particularly frozen, ranks first among exports from Chile to Cuba, and have tariff preferences under the *Economic Complementation Agreement* (ACE No. 42) reinvigorated by both countries in 2012.

The program of visit to Cuba includes business rounds between Chilean and local entrepreneurs, as well as a meeting aimed at enhancing the opportunities offered by ACE to promote trade.

Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea Strengthen Commercial Bonds

Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea signed on Friday two agreements on commercial exchange and payments, at the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment (MINCEX) in this capital.

Rodrigo Malmierca, Minister of the MINCEX, and Pak Chang Yul, ambassador of that nation to Cuba, signed the agreements, as well as a protocol on the general conditions for the delivery of goods between the two ministries.

After the signing, Malmierca highlighted the bonds of friendship uniting the two nations, a reflection of the historic relations uniting their governments, parties and peoples and urged to continue working with determination to achieve results for mutual benefit.

Pak Chang underlined that the signing of these documents will contribute to diversify Cuba's commercial exchanges.

Increasing Demand of Cuban Teaching Services Abroad

The demand abroad of Cuban professors of different subjects relevant to technical education has increased this year, thus bringing financial benefits to the island's Education system.

Technical Education director Eugenio Gonzalez said that the number of countries requiring Cuban services continue to increase, with requests of professors in areas such as electricity, mechanics, agronomy, math, physics, civil construction and others.

During 2014, these academic services translated for the Cuban Education Ministry into an income calculated at 15.4 million dollars, while that figure is expected to reach 17 million dollars this year.

The directive recalled that following the latest *Cuban Pedagogy Congress* last February there was a diversification of subjects requested by different countries, whose requests went from methodological assistance to direct instruction services.

Some of these requests come from Central American countries, but most of them are issued by Caribbean and African nations, said the official who regretted that at times they are not able to cope with all the demands due to the language barrier.

He insisted that in to meet those needs, Cuban professors must particularly learn English, French or Portuguese as their mastery of these languages is later evaluated by expert commissions in the client countries.

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