

# *Chinese President Slated to Visit Cuba in July*

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Havana, April 25 (RHC) — Chinese President, Xi Jinping, is scheduled to visit Cuba next July, as part of a planned Latin America tour that will also take him to Brazil, where he will attend the BRICS summit.

The last visit of a Chinese president to Cuba was in 2008, when Hu Jintao signed several cooperation and financial agreements. Xi Jinping visited Cuba in 2011 as vice president, signing various investment agreements.

“We need to work in a coordinated fashion to ensure the full success of this visit, so China-Cuba relations may enter a new development stage,” Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, said during a visit to Cuba last week, with the objective, among others, to organize the upcoming presidential visit.

Wang Yi and Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodríguez, discussed a “broad bilateral agenda” and underlined the “excellent state of bilateral relations.” The Chinese official, who also met with President Raúl Castro, emphasized that his government will continue to “enhance mutually beneficial cooperation” in exchange of political experiences, trade, investment, agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and mining. Wang added that the two countries should also focus on “new growth points,” such as in tourism, renewable energy and biotech.

Wang expressed gratitude for Cuba's role in bringing about the CELAC-China forum. Cuba held the rotating presidency of the new Latin American bloc until January.

China, Cuba's second trade partner, represents 12.5% of the island's foreign trade. Chinese companies have invested in on-shore and off-shore oil drilling. Chinese companies play a decisive role in telecommunications, information technology, public transportation, and home appliances,. Chinese companies have also established biotechnology and pharmaceutical joint ventures with Cuba in China. Major cooperation projects have continued in railroad, port and merchant fleet modernization,.

Cuba has motivated Chinese companies to invest in the Mariel Special Development Zone, and the Mariel Zone CEO said recently that Chinese companies are among 15 investors that may open an operation at Mariel soon. Automanufacturer Geely has been mentioned by semi-official Chinese media as a prime candidate for establishing a small assembly operation, but no Chinese company has made any public announcement.

Meanwhile, Agustín Lage, director of the Center for Molecular Immunology (CIM) in Havana, traveled to Beijing and Guangdong to attract Chinese biotech and pharmaceutical companies to Mariel. Lage told Prensa Latina that he is talking to Chinese companies that have long relations with Cuba.

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