

# *Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela Attends Panama-Cuba Business Forum in Havana*

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Havana, September 11 (RHC)-- Panamanian President Juan Carlos Varela is participating in a Panama-Cuba Business Forum here in Havana, as part of his official visit aimed at boosting bilateral trade and economic relations.

Varela held official talks Thursday with his Cuban counterpart, President Raúl Castro, after which he told reporters that this visit will be historic for both Panama and Cuba.

The Panamanian president arrived in Havana Wednesday evening, accompanied by a delegation made up of Minister for Commerce and Industries Melitón Arrocha and 12 business executives, representing different economic fields.

The Panamanian head of state and his accompanying delegation have already visited Cuba's Special Development Zone at Mariel and other places of economic and social interest.

Friday's Business Forum at Havana's iconic Hotel Nacional de Cuba, was also attended by Cuba's Minister for Foreign Trade and Investment Rodrigo Malmierca and other senior officials from the ministry,

who offered the Panamanian visitors detailed information on the opportunities offered by the new Cuban Foreign Investment Law.

Déborah Rivas, Director General for Foreign Investment at the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Investment, briefed the Panamanian business executives about new regulations governing the participation of foreign capital in Cuba.

Meanwhile, Ana Teresa Igarza, Director of the Special Development Zone at Mariel, spoke about the functioning and the main characteristics of the enclave.

After his participation in the business forum, President Varela is also scheduled to visit the Havana-based Latin American School of Medicine, where he will meet with young Panamanians who are being trained there in different medical disciplines.

President Varela told reporters in Havana that during his visit, which runs through Saturday, the two sides will debate ways and mechanisms to strengthen bilateral relations in such areas as health, culture, sports and trade.

Panama supports the Cuban people's cause against the U.S. economic, financial and trade blockade. The two countries have long maintained fruitful and mutually beneficial cooperation relations in different sectors, including education, culture and sports.

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