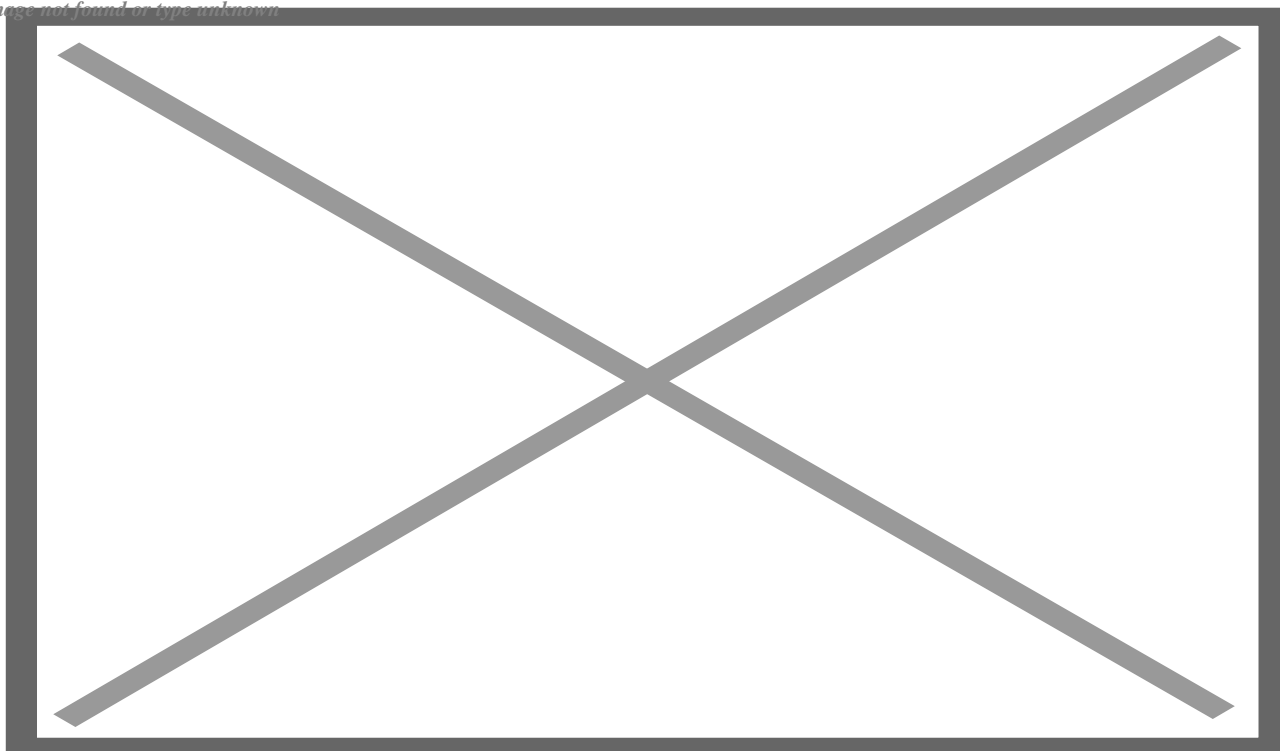


# *Cuban medical cooperation reaches the Maldives*

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**There are 16 Cuban doctors in this Indian Ocean country. / Photo: Prensa Latina**

By María Josefina Arce

Geographical distance has not been an obstacle for the cooperation between Cuba and Maldives, located in the Indian Ocean, south of India, and formed by a group of 1,190 coral islands, distributed in 26 atolls.

In the last few days, a group of 12 Cuban health professionals arrived in that state to immediately provide their services in several places, including the most distant ones.

These aid workers join the 16 who have been in the Maldives since June 29 to help improve the country's health indicators.

The arrival of the doctors from the Greater Antilles is part of the cooperation agreement, signed last December in Havana, between the two nations to expand and strengthen the links between their health systems.

According to the information, the agreement will also enable the development of human resources in that sector and microbiology laboratory services.

And as part of the agreement, it is not ruled out that in the not too distant future more Cuban professionals, including doctors and nurses, will arrive in that Indian Ocean state.

Recently, in the framework of the seventy-fifth World Health Assembly, held last May in Geneva, the Cuban Minister of Health, José Angel Portal, met with his Maldivian counterpart, Shah Abdulla Mahir, to continue consolidating actions for the benefit of both peoples.

Maldivian authorities have expressed their gratitude for Cuba's granting of scholarships to young people from that territory to study at ELAM, the Latin American School of Medicine.

There are also proven links between the Parliaments of the two nations and common points of view on various issues. In fact, there is a friendship group with Cuba in the Maldivian legislative body.

The Maldives has always supported the struggle of the Greater Antilles against the criminal economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed for 60 years by the United States against the Cuban people.

The Caribbean country, for its part, supported the election of Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid as president of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, which began last September.

Cuba and the Maldives have maintained excellent diplomatic relations since January 1997 and are interested in consolidating cooperation in health and other spheres of socioeconomic life, as well as in supporting each other in the face of common challenges.

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