

# *Fiji's Minister of Sports praises Cuban experiences*

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Havana, September 28 (JIT) - Fiji's Minister of Youth and Sports, Jese Saukuru, visited the anti-doping laboratory in this city, the Institute of Sports Medicine and the Cerro Pelado High Performance Athletes Training School, as part of his intense agenda on the island.

In the Havana laboratory, one of the 28 accredited worldwide, he received extensive information on its creation, operation and sustainability, despite the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. government.

Rodny Montes de Oca, director of that institution, explained details of the laboratory's operation, such as the technology, supplies and professionals needed, as well as the minimum required number of 3,000 tests per year.

Saukuro was accompanied by Steve Chand, chairman of the Higher Education Commission of the Republic of Fiji, who expressed his interest in incorporating sports and anti-doping culture topics in his country's education system.

Both visitors confirmed their interest in having a laboratory in Fiji, given that their status as rugby-7 champions has been upgraded by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

Montes de Oca emphasized that the national anti-doping program involves much more than the laboratory, for which there is a body that conducts testing and coordinates various activities.

Saukuru and Chand described the center as wonderful and considered the possibility of receiving technical assistance to establish a similar center in their country.

#### FROM ESFAAR CERRO PELADO TO THE IMDP

Saukuru was also received by the boards of Esfaar Cerro Pelado and IMD.

Upon his arrival at the Esfaar, the words of welcome were given by Oscar Nuevo Reyes, head of the Technical Methodological Department of Inder, and by Yoel Pérez Crespo, director of a team that has forged Olympic and world champions.

Nuevo Reyes informed about the Cuban sports system, which rests on the pillars of comprehensive education through specialized centers characterized by inclusion from early ages to high performance.

In this superstructure, he said, 37 sports are practiced divided into two schools. The Cerro Pelado school hosts 22 and the Esfaar Giraldo Córdova Cardín school 16, as boxing is duplicated in the latter.

He added that these centers are fed by sports initiation schools in all the provinces of the country, plus the Special Municipality of Isla de la Juventud. This pyramidal structure has allowed Cuba to have dozens of Olympic titles, he said.

Pérez Crespo gave a broad description of the Esfaar Cerro Pelado, which has the best athletes in the country in several sports and nine schools attached to it. He pointed out an enrollment of 936 athletes and prestigious coaches.

The visiting minister admitted the interest of creating in his country a sports institute similar to the one in Cuba. At present they hold the games up to junior high school and then lose the athletes because they do not have more competitions. They also want to create a research center and a medical institute based on the Cuban experience.

Saukuru also toured the IMD facilities, where he was received by its director Pablo Castillo Díaz, who explained the role of the center in the care of athletes and sports glories.

The visitor was interested in the services offered and the scientific solutions to the health situations of athletes at any given time (Víctor Vitaliano Báez).

#### VISIT TO THE ICAP

The Hero of the Republic of Cuba and president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), Fernando Gonzalez, received today the delegation from Fiji presided by Saukuru.

At the ICAP headquarters, they exchanged information of interest and agreed to continue developing the ties of friendship and solidarity between the two countries and peoples.

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