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havana, july 30, reuter -- the people's republic of china has contracted to buy 440 000 tonnes of crude sugar from cuba this year, a chinese diplomat told reuter today.

the contract was signed during the visit of a delegation to havana in march headed by chienesie vice-minister of foreign commerce, lu xu shang.

the barter agreement calls for a total of approximately 300 million dollars in trade between the two nations. among the major products exported to cuba are textiles and rice.

over the past four years china has been one of the major clients for cuban crude, according to cuban government statistics.

the greatest purchase of cuban sugar was made in 1978 when china bought almost 534 000 tonnes.

cuban president fidel castro announced on july 26 that cuba produces over eight million tonnes of cruse sugar during the 1982 harvest.

despite expressed differences over foreign policy, cuba and china maintain normal diplomatic and commercial relations. the communist parties of the two nations do not maintain formal ties. — — — — —

--reuter lem/syl