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Health Tourism in Northern Keys

By Neisa **MESA**

CIEGO DE ÁVILA.- The Jardines del Rey resort, in the northern keys of this central Cuban province, promotes health tourism as a way to increase the arrival of foreign and national vacationers.

With that objective in mind, a specialized medical attention program is developed at the Cayo Guillermo dolphinarium, which includes animal-assisted therapies and other services addressed at the wellbeing and the improvement of tourists' quality of life.

Director of the Cuban Medical Services Marketing Company (SMC) at the Ciego de Ávila province, Dr Agnerys Cruz, indicated that the consumption of healthy food and beverages, the use of ancestral energies and specialized advice by experts on different medicine-related areas, is promoted in the hotel facilities.

She added that as part of the scheme, attention to people with social disorders, including autism, is also provided.

This year, 14 and 21-day travel packages directed at providing oriental, occidental and dolphin-assisted therapies are offered, for which highly-qualified medical staff and trainers are available, she noted.

This offer also includes visits to cities and rural areas, such as agricultural farms and local development projects, where ecological trips, local dish lunches, traditional Cuban drinks, tropical fruits and fresh vegetables can be enjoyed, said Cruz.

The specialist also commented that the initiative has already made progress at the Starfish Cayo Guillermo Hotel and will be extended to the rest of the hotels in the Coco, Guillermo and Paredón Grande keys, following negotiations between SMC and the Blue Diamond Resorts tourist company.

Jardines del Rey, one of Cuba's most important sun-and-beach destinations, stands out for its rich and varied flora and fauna, its excellent shores with crystal-clear waters and fine sand, and other well-preserved natural resources.



The Cayo Guillermo dolphinarium includes animal-assisted therapies. PHOTO: Onlines Tours.

Enjoy Travel, Confidence in Doing Businesses with Cuba

By Tom **MIX**

HAVANA.- The Spanish Enjoy Travel Group (ETG) Company recently highlighted their confidence in doing businesses with Cuba and increasing possibilities of tours to the island, their representatives said in Havana.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, they stressed that during their participation in the 44th edition of FITUR, held from January 24 to 28 at the IFEMA exhibition site, in Madrid, ETG had a strong presence in the event and strengthened relations with Havana.

Enjoy Travel Group, a vertical wholesale operator with over 20 years of experience and commercial offices in Europe and Latin America, presented its projects and programs in the event, including those linked to Cuba.

The ETG delegation that participated in the Madrid fair was headed by its main global officers and conducted intense days of work, product presentation and networking.

At the event, the company announced the closing of an important agreement with airlines to flight to Cuba, which will favor travels to the island.

Specialized in the Cuban and Caribbean destinations, ETG strongly fosters the development of tours among multiple destinations in the region, including unique experiences, accessible tourism and the MICE segment (business meetings and events), among others. Enjoy Travel Group has a team of highly qualified professionals who constantly work to offer the best service and attention in each destination.

Initiatives of Bartender Club in 2024

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The Bartender Club of the Republic of Cuba (CCRC) announced a varied program of activities in 2024, including celebrations for its 100th anniversary, to take place from June 23 to 28.

Chairman of the Cuban Bartender Association, Eddis Naranjo, commented that activities will start on June 23 with a classic cocktail welcome toast, in a place still to be determined.

The presentation and tasting of new author cocktails, created and made by International Champions of the Cuban Association, will also be conducted.

Other activities include the opening of the Bartender Association venue, in the Vedado neighborhood (Havana) and the placing of a Commemorative Plaque in the façade of the CCRC foundation site, in Paseo del Prado, in Old Havana.

The program includes a lecture on mixology, on June 25, by chairman of the Madrid Bartender Association Sergio

Freile and presentations of free and flair bartending. Naranjo affirmed that as part of that day's activities, Cuban and foreign participants will be able to taste the Classic Saoco Cocktail and the famous Guarajil Cocktail.

On June 26, the qualification rounds of the 2024 Fabio Delgado in Memoriam National Cocktail Competition will be conducted, as well as a lecture on Tiki Cocktail Culture in Cuba.

The following day, Cuban and foreign members will be able to participate in the International Cocktail Competition.

As Hilario Alonso Sánchez (1951) wrote in *Memorias 25 Años de Labor del Club de Cantineros* (Memories, 25 years of the Bartender Club work), this is the oldest bartender association in the world, according to official records.

The Cuban association was officially founded on June 27, 1924, on the City Governor's approval and following a meeting of a group of interested people who endorsed the creation of an exclusive sport and social association of bartenders, one month earlier.

The Club was first domiciled in the upper floor of a building located in the Bernaza and Obrapia corner, in Old Havana and was then moved to Malecón No. 15 (upper floor) and afterwards to the Avenida de la República street (San Lázaro) No. 69 (ground floor).

As Cuban researcher and writer José Alfonso Castro wrote in his book *Ron, cocteles y cantineros de Cuba* (Rum, cocktails and Cuban bartenders), published in 2009, the Club carries on its history under the form of an association, which was officially registered as such on February 6, 1998.



New author cocktails will be presented during the event. PHOTO: Prensa Latina

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Council of State Analyzes Economic Measures

By Lisvan **LESCAILLE**

HAVANA.- The Council of State (CE) of the Republic of Cuba analyzed measures to correct distortions and boost the economy in the context the country lives, a meeting attended by president Miguel Díaz-Canel.

At the Cuban State's governing body meeting, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero explained the details of the political logistics and communicational plan related to the decisions taken.

Marrero informed that measures announced last December in relation to agriculture and commerce were adapted, and changes are made on the legal norms of the local development projects.

According to the information provided, the head of the Government ratified that none of the provisions included in the adjustment and economic reactivation plan will enter into force until conditions for their implementation are ready and protection to people living in vulnerable situation is guaranteed.

He stressed that government authorities will keep the population duly informed



and will systematically evaluate the impact of each decision, under the principle that no citizen will be unprotected.

For his part, president of both, the CE and the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP, Parliament), Esteban Lazo, urged to explain this process, which requires the

participation of all actors of the Cuban society.

He also noted that CE has the responsibility of systematically evaluating the impact of these decisions on the population, in tune with the mandate granted to that state body by the Constitution and the national laws.

Lazo emphasized that the People's Power system must contribute to raising awareness among the population on the need of implementing those corrective measures in the Cuban economy, which also seek to maintain and strengthen the main conquests of the Revolution.

In his speech at the meeting, the President of the Republic urged to turn exceptions into a rule, based on the positive production connection experiences he saw during his tours of the country.

Those positive examples in several municipalities should be spread nationwide, Díaz-Canel stressed.

As part of its agenda, CE passed the decree-law on the National Protected Areas System, which implements measures on species preservation based on biological corridors, in addition to a Cuban mountain development plan known as Plan Turquino.

The body also analyzed the fulfillment of the agreements resulting from the rendering of accounts of the Communications Ministry to the ANPP on December 2022, in addition to other topics included in the agenda.

Management Experience based on Science and Innovation

By Vanli **DURAND**

HAVANA.- At the recent World Governments Summit, held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Cuba confirmed that its future is closely linked to the development of science, technology and innovation.

The Cuban delegation, headed by Prime Minister Manuel Marrero, confirmed at the 10th edition of this

event, held from February 12 to 14, the successes of its government management policy, based on science and innovation and in harmony with the protection of the environment.

Such an approach was in line with the vision of creating a resilient and prosperous global future, which was endorsed by governments from over 120 nations, representatives of 85 international organizations, personalities and about four thousand experts.

Endorsed by its famous scientific capital, Cuba ratified at the UAE summit its policy in favor of solidarity, coordinated actions, cooperation and dialogue among the peoples in order to reach that future.

In that sense, the Cuban official invited world leaders to work for world peace to attain societies' full development and establish a more democratic, equitable and fair international economic order.

At the opening ceremony, Marrero recalled the serious threat the current multidimensional crisis poses to human survival, a situation aggravated by geopolitical conflicts and wars for the control of natural resources.

He also urged that science, technology and innovation should be essential components of the political debate, associated to development – the main topic of the Group of 77 and China Summit held last September in Havana.

Marrero added that that event, held as part of Cuba's pro tempore presidency of the G77 and China, had important points in common with the Dubai Summit, which should be exploited and fostered.

On the other hand, Cuban Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Environment, Armando Rodríguez, highlighted the benefits new technologies provide in favor of a more efficient exercise on the part of the Government, which is consistent with what the country does.

In statements to the Cuban press accredited to the Summit, Rodríguez praised from Dubai the Cuban innovation system, which he described as inclusive, because it includes universities, research centers, companies and different social actors.

"Science in Cuba is a bastion of public policies, and our Government management system, based on science and innovation, proved its efficacy during the successful battle against the pandemic of COVID-19," stressed the Cuban official.

In that sense, head of the Department for Attention to Local Administrations at the Cuban National Assembly of People's Power, Nancy Acosta, highlighted the importance the meeting granted to local governments' role.



Cuban Prime Minister confirmed the successes of its government management policy, based on science and innovation, in harmony with the protection of the environment. PHOTO: Internet.

Mobile Mayor Calls for Improving Bilateral Relations

Text and Photo Deisy **FRANCIS**

MOBILE, U.S.A.- Mayor of the city of Mobile (Alabama), Sandy Stimpson, ratified his desire to improve relations between the United States and Cuba, an opportunity in which "we will all win."

In an interview with **The Havana Reporter**, Stimpson said that when he thinks about the current relations between both nations, the same question always comes to his mind in relation to why this abnormal situation continues. "We are so close to Cuba!" He mentioned that there are stories that link both sides and "I realized that there are

tremendous economic opportunities that are probably slipping through our fingers." According to Stimpson, it is necessary to "find the way to bridge this gap, so that we can do business together; I believe it would be a situation in which everyone would win." He affirmed that he already knows Cuba as a tourist; that he knew about the people and the culture of the island and although he does not have immediate plans to come again, he stressed that he would certainly come back to Havana, especially as part of an effort to foster rapprochement between both countries.

He recalls that his parents had their honeymoon in Cuba (1948) and when he was a child, he saw those pictures. "I had the chance of travelling to Cuba in 2016, and it was fascinating..."

"I was amazed at the streets, the buildings, some of them restored. I simply realized that at the time of its peak, it should have been simply great. I have favorable feelings, warm feelings for Cuba."

The interview took place at the Exploreum Science Center, a popular science facility for interactive activities, educational programs and films, where an exhibition that praises the values of the Cuban culture will be on display until next July.

Stimpson, who holds the position of mayor since 2013, visited the Cuban capital in 2016; on that occasion, he referred to the great opportunities for exchange with Cuba and demanded the end of the restrictions that prevent a higher flow.

Alabama has been one of the pioneering states in favor of trade with Cuba since this possibility was opened at the beginning of the 2000s and is one of the main suppliers of chicken for national consumption.

The sale of food and certain agricultural products to Cuba from the United States was authorized following a legislative provision; however, it had a highly discriminatory treatment because those sales have to be paid in cash and in advance, with the prohibition of getting commercial credits.

That, of course, is the result of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed against Cuba by successive White House governments for over 60 years.

With a population of about 200,000 inhabitants, Mobile is Alabama's main port and one of the most active in the United States, especially because it is a door to trade with South America.

Normal relations would allow, for example, developing exchanges in the field of mining and scientific research.



Stimpson said that there are tremendous economic opportunities that are probably "slipping through our fingers".

U.S.A Agricultural Sector Interested in Business

By Valentina **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- Representatives of the U.S. National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) stressed their interest in increasing cooperation with Cuba in this sector after their stay in the island, for several days.

NASDA Executive Secretary Ted A. McKinney affirmed that they will share with the Federal Government the experiences the Association officials gained after this first meeting to the island, aimed at exploring possibilities of exchange.

McKinney added that NASDA does not have the power to do business, but due to the contracts it has, it can open the path to mutual export and import, in addition to foster production processes.

He reiterated their will to share with the competent authorities and the rest of the States that did not participate in this visit, the work Cuba conducts in the agricultural sector.

He pointed out how valuable the exchange with Cuban authorities, scientists related to the sector and producers was to confirm the island's potential, especially with the extensive development of small and medium-sized enterprises.

In this sense, he highlighted the exchange the delegation members had with president of the Republic Miguel Díaz-Canel, in which the long-standing bilateral relation was acknowledged.

Louisiana Secretary of Agriculture Michael Strain, for his part, referred to the blockade his government has imposed on Cuba, which he described as a complex topic between both nations.

In this regards, Strain commented that these constant visits are also a way of moving the needle to improve relations.

Meanwhile, U.S.A Poultry and Egg Export Council representative for Central America, South America and the Caribbean, Ernesto Barón, stated that this sector is already present in the Cuban market and makes significant exports of low-cost and high-quality poultry.

He added that they would not only like their production exports to increase, but also bilateral commercial relations. As part of this visit, commissioners of Agriculture of the states of Indiana, Connecticut, Montana, Louisiana, Maine and South Carolina came to Cuba and made reference to their states' main items, as well as to possibilities for cooperation, especially in the production of meat, grains and food processing.

On the other hand, Cuban and U.S. scientists also had exchanges in Havana on readiness to face pandemic situations and the progress made in health and biomedical technologies. According to the Cuban Ministry of Health, the scientific meeting – held from February 14 to 16 – dealt with the challenges global health faces in relation to Scientific Innovation and Biomedical Research.

The work and contribution to Science of doctors Christopher Manuel Gómez and Stephen Whitehead, outstanding U.S.A scientists and researchers who were granted the category of Academics of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, were acknowledged at the meeting.



U.S. Agricultural Sector delegation will share with the Federal Government the experiences gained after this first meeting to the island, aimed at exploring possibilities of exchange. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

Biotechnology at the Service of Health



CIM Clinical Research and doctor of Sciences, Tania Crombet. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- Biotechnology has provided endless progress and results in Cuba, especially for the health of its population and the benefit of other nations, as in this Caribbean island, the essence and the priority of this scientific field lies on saving human beings and improving their quality of life.

In this regards, scientists, researchers, technicians and staff of the Molecular Immunology Center (CIM) – an entity founded on December 5, 1994 with a small group of professionals focused on curing cancer – have a lot to show.

The center was created as part of a strategy aimed at fostering biotechnology and providing new pharmaceutical products and diagnosis-treatment to Cuba and the rest of the world during the difficult years of the economic crisis the country faced in the 1990s, a decade known as Special Period.

At present, CIM is a high-technology company attached to the BioCubaFarma Entrepreneurial Group, which operates under the closed-circuit principle (research-development, production and commercialization) and has three productive plants, in addition to four joint companies in China, Thailand, Singapore and the United States.

CIM's major contributions at present include the immunotherapeutic drugs created by passionate professionals who believe that the immune system is a tool for cancer control in the most advanced stages.

The Havana Reporter spoke to CIM Clinical Research and doctor of Sciences, Tania Crombet, who affirmed that work is conducted to transform cancer into a chronic disease, and even though it cannot be cured at present, it can be controlled with quality of life and not very toxic treatments, compatible with a long survival, without affecting patients.

With the merit of having done research on immunotherapy for over 20 years, we cannot think of a treatment for cancer control without such a procedure, considering the progress made in the world in this field, Crombet said.

"We have the merit of having produced and registered three medications

for such purposes: Nimotuzumab (CIMAher), a humanized, therapeutic, monoclonal antibody for advanced head, nasopharyngeal, esophagus and pancreas cancer," the doctor added.

The medication, registered in 25 countries, is also registered in Pediatrics to treat children's brain cancer, the most common type of cancer in addition to lymphomas and other blood tumors and one of the most aggressive in the infant population that can be controlled for prolonged times, an unprecedented result, she stressed.

Racotumumab, another monoclonal antibody used as vaccine, works on lung carcinoma and is ideal for large-cell lung cancer immunotherapy, with a proven survival in patients, in comparison to other therapies.

The other product is Cimavax, a therapeutic vaccine diagnosed for large-cell lung cancer patients in an advanced state.

Crombet commented that all products created by the Cuban biopharmaceutical industry are new and have their own patents: "they are all unique, have no referent in the world and although there are some similar to ours, they are safer and better in their class. They are our scientists and researchers' real contributions."

Prestigious Orthopedists Improve Children's Quality of Life

By Miriam **CÉSAR**

HAVANA.- For the first time, the Cuban capital welcomed prestigious orthopedics and traumatology experts at the II International Obstetrical Brachial Palsy (OBP) Surgical Event, held at the William Soler Pediatric Hospital.

The event started with the presentation and discussion of five cases of children suffering from that disease – preceded by the evaluation of candidates for surgery – and scientific lectures on children nerve microsurgery.

Head of the Orthopedics Service at the abovementioned center, Dr Ismaray de Ávila, told **The Havana Reporter** that the event was again enhanced by the presence of Spanish Francisco Soldado, an expert who is famous in the world for his knowledge and experience in pediatric hand, upper limb and microsurgery.

She added that on this occasion, other renowned Orthopedics and Traumatology experts joined the event, such as Jaime Bertely, one of the world's most famous microsurgery specialists and Scott Kozin, a referent in the treatment of children brachial plexus and spinal cord injuries and congenital diseases.

Other outstanding Orthopedics and Traumatology specialists from Mexico,

Egypt, the Netherlands, Argentina, Finland, the United States, Bolivia, Venezuela and Germany, among other countries, attended the event, which allowed operating 25 OBP children, De Ávila commented.

The specialist highlighted that this was the first time these famous orthopedists got together in an international event, which is an honor for Cuba, not only for welcoming them but also for the opportunity of completing and acquiring OBP concepts, diagnosis and treatments that are practically unknown for the Cuban pediatric orthopedics.

De Ávila recalled that in the first edition of this event, held in 2023, Soldado operated 14 children whose recovery and evolution is very positive and added that this process can last up to two years, as it includes rehabilitation and specific techniques that were very limited before. OBP is a damage caused during childbirth, generally associated to fetal macrosomia, in which the arms' nerves that grow in the neck stretch and lose mobility, causing an arm palsy.

Medical literature describes it and defines it as a peripheral nerve injury, specifically of the brachial plexus, which causes loss of mobility or sensation in the upper limb (arms, forearm or hand) in a newborn baby.

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Amistur Cuba S.A. is the receptive specialized tourism travel agency with more than 20 years of experience, belonging to the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) that promotes, organizes and markets tourist products and services that guarantee the enjoyment and knowledge of the Cuban reality through direct contact with its people.

International Book Fair with pages from Brazil

By DaiLIEM

HAVANA.- The 32nd edition of the Havana's International Book Fair, a literary party, took place at its usual venue in the La Cabaña fortress and other 17 sub-venues, with Brazil as guest of honor.

Conducted under the José Martí's premise that "Reading is growing in knowledge" and the theme "Reading means building identity," the event – held from February 15 to 25 – gathered in Cuba over 45 nations of the world.

The Cuban Book Institute (ICL) put at the disposal of the audience over three million printed volumes and other digital materials, while Brazil brought six thousand titles edited in Spanish and publishing companies exceeded one thousand volumes.

The giant South American nation also brought a large delegation of famous writers and musicians, headed by Culture minister Margareth Menezes, who extended the fraternal greetings of Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula Da Silva.

The event was dedicated to Cuban philosopher, researcher, intellectual and National Social and Humanistic Sciences awardee (1998) Isabel Monal and writer and art professor Francisco López Sacha.

In the context of the fair, important awards were granted, such as the National Literature Award, to María Elena

Llana; the Editing award, to Enrique Pérez; the Social and Humanistic Sciences award, to Juan Jesús Guanche, and the History award, to Rodolfo Sarracino.

The event's theoretical and cultural program included different spaces, such as the Book Professional Hall, in which the National Bookseller Workshop and the Editors and Literary Translators Meeting were conducted.



The Fair had a pavilion for children's books called Paper Treasures. PHOTO: Laura Borges

The Historian Meeting and the Social Sciences and Human Health and Environment colloquiums were also held, in addition to the Serial Publications and Digital Media Event and the Ibero-American Young Writers and Poetry Promoters meetings.

Other spaces included the Tesoro de Papel (Paper Treasure) Children Pavilion; the II Business Forum and the Cuba Digital project – the latter, with technology as a means to enjoy literature differently.

Tributes in the form of poetry were also conducted, on this occasion to Colombian writer Laura Restrepo and the Palestinian people, a territory under the aggression of the Zionist government of Israel that maintains the Palestinian inhabitants under constant danger and humanitarian crisis.

Once again, the Book Fair was enhanced by the presence of renowned intellectuals such as Frei Betto, Atilio Borón, Beto Almeida and Ignacio Ramonet, among others.

Facilities given to the audience included the possibility of acquiring, for the first time, books and access tickets either in cash or electronically.

A new feature of this fair was the setting-up of reading classrooms with the participation of students, aimed at fostering the Cuban national reading program.

After its closing in Havana, the Book Fair will tour this March every Cuban corner.

La Colmenita Brightens Children's Soul through Literature

By AdisMARLÉN

HAVANA.- Children and adults were wrapped by a sweet taste during the launch of the book La Colmenita, ¡Mi vida! (La Colmenita, My Life!), by Carlos Alberto "Tin" Cremata, a work that named the same as a play, celebrates the rich history of that children company.

In the presence of Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel, the founder and director of the La Colmenita company talked about several of the topics included in the volume which, published by the Ocean Sur publishing house, gathers 34 years of a work made with talent and good heart in 107 pages of images and texts.

Different stories are presented to readers, such as that day in 2011 when Army General Raúl Castro, then head of the Cuban State, invited members of the Political Bureau and the Council of State and Ministers to enjoy a show by the famous company.

On that occasion, the revolutionary leader went on the stage and pointing at children's

smile, told his comrades: that is why we climbed the mountains of the Sierra Maestra and we would climb them again if necessary, which according to Cremata is one of the most beautiful things they have ever been told.

In addition to that wonderful experience, the volume includes other outstanding moments, such as the meetings they had with Fidel Castro, including those in which they celebrated his 70th and 90th birthdays.

Those memories deserve a literary tribute, as well as others lived with great personalities such as the Cuban leader; the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez; historian Eusebio Leal and singer and songwriter Silvio Rodríguez.

At the launch of the book, chairman of the publishing company, David Deutschmann, highlighted that: it is a special book and "one of the most important we have edited in almost four decades."



La Colmenita has been my life, said Carlos Alberto "Tin" Cremata. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

Next year, it will be 40 years since I first visited Cuba and started collaborating in editorial projects; throughout these years, I have witnessed many noble projects in this Revolution and La Colmenita is one of them, he stressed.

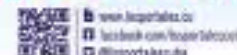
The launch, conducted on February 10, ended up with a company's performance and the handing-in of the first copy of the book to Raúl Castro, with a dedication by Cremata that read: "for sowing the way with Fidel, so that joy and tenderness may continue to grow".

A UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador, the children's company was founded on February 14, 1990 and since then, it has taken its art to countries such as Argentina, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Haiti, Japan, Mexico, Panama, Portugal, Russia, Spain, the United States, Venezuela and Vietnam, among others.

At a recent interview, Tin said: La Colmenita has been my life; when I feel I start losing virtues, this is the space that brings them back to me. There are actions that are only produced by children or parents under the influence of these.



from nature
to your hands



Ancient Guatemala and its Flower Festival

Text and Photo ZeusNAYA

GUATEMALA CITY.- The Flower Festival, a tribute to creativity and beauty in historical and colonial Ancient Guatemala, is one of the most iconic or emblematic activities of this nation. Since the holding of its first edition, in 2017, the event tries to rescue one of the treasures of this Central American territory by adorning streets and avenues that invite local and foreign people to enjoy concerts, artistic performances and workshops.

The most recent edition of this festival, entitled "Guatemala: the Never-ending spring country," again included talks, floral arrangement contests and the setting-up of a flower sale market, which turned this tourist city into a giant work of art.

One of the main attractions of this event was the giant peacock located in front of the local city hall, while the famous Arco de Santa Catalina street exhibited amazing initiatives of different colors and shades.

The Fuente de las Sirenas was also full of beautiful flowers, while balconies, streets, doors, windows, automobiles, bicycles and restaurants were decorated and joined the celebration.

Thousands of families came to the city during the flower month to take unforgettable pictures in Ancient Guatemala, a place that captivates the people.

Access to the colonial city was marked by long lines of visitors who particularly praised the beauty of the place, the people's floral skills and the matchless environment.

The Flower Festival annually attracts about 500,000 visitors, according to data provided by the Guatemalan Tourism Institute.

Many joined walks in different fields, in which they had the opportunity of knowing the history of flowers in the country and attended the culinary contest "Cooking with Flowers," in which some edible flowers are used in different categories. The number of artists who have participated in the seven editions held until the present exceed 2,000, in over 100 workshops and 30 exhibitions – including florists, musicians, exhibitors, painters, photographers and sculptors.

Devised in 2016 by a group of culture and art lover entrepreneurs, the festival is considered a historical legacy for the community. According to official information, the initiative was created by Andrea Contreras, founder and president, who was inspired by her grandmother's stories.

"She told me that the predominant rose in the gardens of Ancient Guatemala was the queen, which was beautiful, big and white. That inspired me and I wanted to bring the flower culture and art to the city again," she said.

In 2019, on the initiative of the Festival Committee and through a municipal agreement, November was declared as the month of the flowers in Ancient Guatemala.

With the passing of the years, the event has grown exponentially and has become one of the largest cultural platforms in the country.

Ancient Guatemala is romantically called the City of Perpetual Roses, because that is the predominant flower in the colonial city's gardens and roads.



The event has grown exponentially and has become one of the largest cultural platforms in the country.



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Strategic Association Endures the Test of Time

By Antonio **RONDÓN**

HAVANA.- Russia and Cuba test at all times their strategic association, focused on strengthening their commercial cooperation and taking it to the level their political ties have reached, amidst a convulsed and challenging international scenario.

Russian Foreign Affairs Minister Serguei Lavrov's recent visit to Havana marked the rhythm of the historical ties between both countries, as stated by the Russian side after a meeting with head of the Cuban diplomacy, Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla.

"Cuba is our traditional partner, our most important ally in Latin America and the Caribbean," said Lavrov, who referred to the constant exchanges he has had with his Cuban counterpart.

The Russian foreign minister affirmed that Russia and Cuba have the intention of holding a meeting of the bilateral intergovernmental commission in the next two or three months.

We have witnessed the constant and even increasing interest our Cuban friends have in interaction with the BRICS group. Russia, the country that heads the group this year, will support this spirit, commented the head of the Russian diplomacy.

Lavrov also denounced the European Union's (EU) anti-Russian hysteria in response to a question by **The Havana Reporter** on the preparation of a thirteenth package of unilateral, punitive measures against his country by that bloc. The United States seems to have been beaten by the EU in relation to the Russophobia campaign. History will put everything in its place and the EU citizens will understand who they put in power, he stressed.

At the same time, he witnessed bilateral coordination in the framework of the Group of Friends in Defense of the

United Nations Charter, "especially in fields such as the fight against neocolonial dictates, practices and unilateral sanctions," he noted.

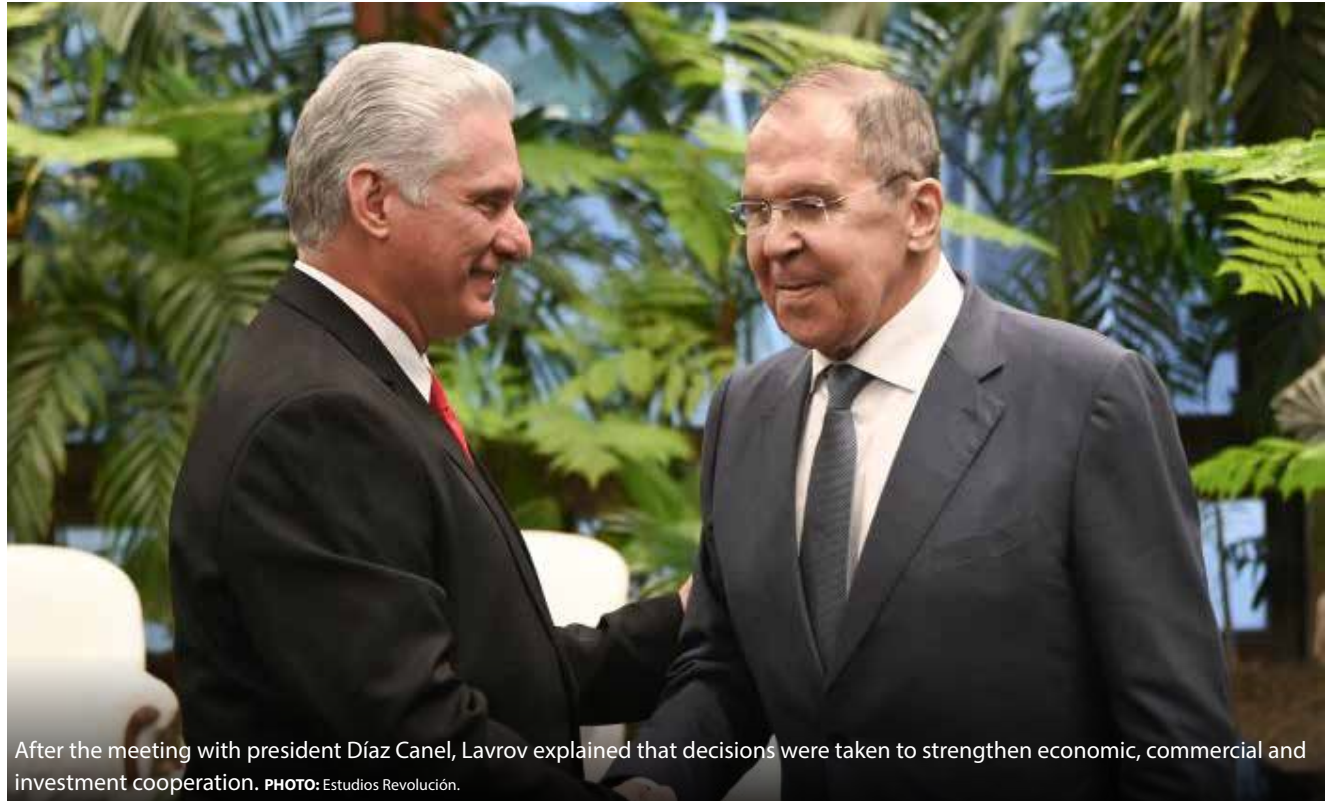
The Russian Foreign Affairs minister reiterated his country's condemnation of the illegal economic and commercial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba and demanded this nation to put an end to that shameful policy.

In relation to commercial ties, the minister affirmed that his country will maintain the supply of oil to the island, to

which a credit was met last year and another one is being given this year.

Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel welcomed Lavrov, who, after an hour-long meeting, explained that decisions were taken to strengthen economic, commercial and investment cooperation, while related legal aspects were revised.

Lavrov's visit reviewed a strategic relation that endured the test of time and finds new tools for a higher development and expansion.



After the meeting with president Díaz Canel, Lavrov explained that decisions were taken to strengthen economic, commercial and investment cooperation. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Cuban Women Turn Everyday Effort into Feat

By Elizabeth **BELLO**

HAVANA.- About 400 women analyze these days key topics on the country's socioeconomic and cultural agenda, of great interest and impact for Cuban women. Such analyses take place as part of the XI Congress of the Cuban Women Federation (FMC), an organization created more than 60 years ago that represents women's interests and promote their social participation.

Cuban women are life weavers who have turned everyday effort into a feat, with leadership and example, affirmed Teresa Amarelle, secretary general of the FMC, an organization created in 1960 that gathers over four million women.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, when announcing details on this important event, the official highlighted the essential role this sector has played in the country by "joining, taking part in and working in search for solutions to the problems of each place."

In relation to their participation in the creation of a more prosperous, inclusive and fair society, she added that if there is anyone doing a lot for this country at present, those



FMC represents women's interests and promote their social participation. PHOTO: Roberto Morejón.

are the majority of the women, who assume the role they have to play in this complex, historical time with responsibility.

It is in the communities that the strengths of the Revolution and women's work is seen, stressed Amarelle.

The secretary general also noted that the congress' main objective is to evaluate the results of the organization's work in

the last five years, with emphasis on their achievements and challenges in light of the strengthening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

The event, held on March 7 & 8, is dedicated to the legacy of historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro and to FMC founder, Vilma Espín and Mother

of the Homeland, Mariana Grajales, on the 130th anniversary of her death.

Amarelle commented that the XI Congress will be a space for critical, respectful and strong debate in four working commissions and plenary sessions on topics linked to Cuba's socioeconomic development and of women's interest, such as the incorporation of women to agricultural production, employment in the private sector and teenage pregnancy, among others.

It will also foster an in-depth approach to the organization's functioning and evolution; young females participation in actions and responsibilities within the organization, and the preventive work, social attention and integration at the community level, she added.

The main event of the Cuban women, in which men also play an important role, is the result of a meeting process held at all levels that started in the neighborhood.

The event's program also includes collateral activities such as acknowledgment to founding women; the issuing of the XI Congress commemorative stamp, in coordination with Correos de Cuba and cultural and sport activities, among others.

Zaida, the River, the Flowers and Nature

By Daimarelys **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- If one family name could embrace all natural creation, Cuban painter Zaida del Río could be named "Zaida de la Naturaleza Castro." This woman places today the human body and the environment in a priority place. Nature motifs also have a special place for the artist, who was recently granted the National Visual Arts Award, "better late than never," as Cuban ethnologist and researcher Miguel Barnet affirmed.

At the granting ceremony, Barnet said that "he who awaits much can expect little" and "Zaida del Río awaited much, but with pleasure."

To Zaida, who is also an engraver, a drawer, a poet and a set designer, it is not difficult to sing, dance or act in a stage; she moves in a large world, where she can be herself and can freely look around, as she told **The Havana Reporter** in an exclusive interview.

Through that outer universe, I paint naked men and women, in their purest essence, and the shapes of each environment are always represented in the backgrounds, in the vegetation, the trees, the flowers, the animals, the birds, everything I show, she said.

With so many acknowledgements to her credit and a solid career, Zaida del Río received Cuba's most important visual arts award, not as one more, but with a special love, something similar to when you have a family and each member is loved differently.

I feel honored because this is the highest distinction granted in our country to artists of this field, Del Río said deeply moved.

It is a challenge to me, for which I have to keep working and increasing my knowledge to be worthy of this trophy, she commented.



For Zaida del Río, who is also an engraver, a drawer, a poet and a set designer, it is not difficult to sing, dance or act in a stage. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

In relation to a question about a particular topic she has not dealt with in her work and would like to portray in a canvas, she stressed that "until now, I have portrayed everything I have felt, but I do not know what will come as of now; that remains unknown."

The multifaceted and restless artist made reference to love and marriage, key elements in human existence, which in her case, are not an exception.

Love in all senses is essential to me and marriage is part of that feeling and I do not reject it; love to animals, friends, work, children, everything is an important part in this long journey that is called life, she affirmed.

Several periods are recognized in the work of this famous artist, an essential figure in the Cuban contemporary art.

The first was the field, with its tobacco houses, the kids, the landscape; then, the horses, the circus and its colorful characters. Afterwards, women birds; triptychs on the Afro-Cuban religion; peacocks, and finally La danza cósmica de Shiva (Shiva's cosmic dance) (2010), in which the artist, moved by the Hindu philosophy, expresses the great passion she has for that eastern culture.

On Zaida, Barnet added: S/he who does not live life as a right and wrong theater is lost and Zaida is one of those artists who teach us how to live creating.

New Generation of the Acosta Danza Company

By Ariana **ARAUJO**

HAVANA.- Acosta Dance Yuniór, the new subdivision of the Acosta Danza Company, recently gave its first performances a Havana's Teatro Martí with the debut of a new generation of dancers.

With the première of choreographies by Norge Cedeño, Susana Pous and Rapul Reinoso, the audience was able to enjoy the show "Green Shoots," which included maestro Carlos Acosta's usual style and showed his group's projection in contemporary dance and classical ballet.

A fusion of both expressions was also seen in the world première of "Fuga," choreographed by Pous, with original music by Pepe Gavilondo and performed by young dancers.

"Nosotros," a piece that tells the story of a couple's inner journey and in which choreographers free their experiences to reflect on relationship's intermittence, was another work performed.

This creation shows love's agreements and disagreements, frustrations and luminescence. The third piece, "Híbrido," is a universe in which reality and unreality blur their limits to reach chimeras, an approach to sensitive truths and imaginations of a country and its people, a

story told from the strength of its culture and dance.

"Green Shoots" was another example of what the strength of dance can do, especially a company of young talents such as Acosta Dance Yuniór, as per the style of this maestro.

The new generation of dancers of the Carlos Acosta company sealed with its first three premières in Havana a luxury show that left a sweet taste on the stage.

The audience described the gala as excellent, as proven by their hearty ovation, their positive comments and the hope of watching them again in Havana.

The company's repertoire includes the most important traditional and contemporary ballet roles and has allowed showing the creation of outstanding choreographers.

It is a company directed by one of the world's most famous dancers, an artist in every sense of the word: a Cuban actor, writer and choreographer, honored with the title of Commander of the Order of the British Empire and National Dance Award in 2017.

Carlos Acosta performed as first dancer in companies such as the London Royal Ballet, the Cuban National Ballet, the Houston Ballet, the American Ballet Theater, the Bolshoi Ballet, the Paris Ballet, the English National Ballet and the Australian Ballet.



The new generation of dancers of the Carlos Acosta company sealed with its first three premières in Havana. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Universidad 2024: A Door to Education's Future

By Melissa **KING**



Cuban Higher Education minister Walter Baluja said that the event provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge and collaboration. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- The XIV Universidad 2024 International Higher Education Congress gathered in Cuba about two thousand academicians who held debates about higher education's main challenges in the future and its role in social transformation.

The event, held virtually and in person, allowed the exchange of experiences in the educational field, with emphasis on the provision of quality and adequate education in universities.

Hosted at the Havana's Conference Center, the congress welcomed 797 foreign participants from 45 countries, being Brazil, the United States, Russia, Mexico, Hungary and Ecuador the most represented nations.

Cuban Higher Education minister Walter Baluja described the event as a landmark for higher education in Cuba, as it provided a platform for the exchange of knowledge, collaboration and the consolidation of quality education.

The minister stressed that the Congress reaffirmed Cuba's commitment to improve the quality of education, strengthen research and development and promote an adequate higher education, in tune with the transformation of the society.

Baluja told **The Havana Reporter** that the mass attendance at the forum is a point of inflexion in the strengthening of international relations in higher education.

"After the pandemic, it is essential to us to strengthen international relations, because that allows the exchange of students, professors and researchers with the different countries we have ties with," he said.

Universidad 2024 was honored to receive associations of university rectors and experts of the region and other continents, who raised their voices in the different forums, such as the ones held on Higher Education and the Sustainable Development Goals and Knowledge, Innovation and Territorial Development.

One of the most important moments of the event was the Forum of Higher Education Ministers and Authorities, which fostered honest debate on the importance of internationalization of education.

Such debates led to specific opportunities of collaboration and exchange in key areas such as industry, agriculture, transportation, public health and economy.

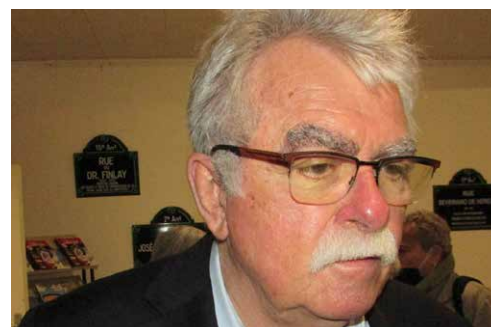
As part of the congress, over one hundred agreements were signed with foreign universities and organizations, the minister added.

The event went beyond its main venue to include educational centers in Cuba, in which meetings directed at fostering undergraduate and postgraduate formation were conducted, noted Baluja.

The importance of the congress lies on the fact that it is a space to strengthen internationalization of higher education, the right to shared knowledge and the constant improvement of education, he stressed.

French People to Continue Fostering Solidarity with Cuba

By Waldo **MENDILUZA**



operating in the island that have reached good results in spite of the obstacles the U.S. hostility represents.

Chairman of the abovementioned group, MP André Chassigne, told **The Havana Reporter** that facing the blockade's extraterritorial component should be a priority of the joint work, as it takes Cuba away from banks and entities for fear of sanctions.

In this sense, he referred to the intention of pressuring the government for this to act in its national and European capacity for sovereignty to be respected and interests protected against the application of laws passed thousands of kilometers away.

Associations also foresee an intense year, with actions in support of the Cuban athletes that will participate in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games; Cubans participation in 'La Fête de l'Humanité,' a political-cultural festival to be organized in September, and the holding of the European meeting of solidarity with Cuba, to take place in this capital at the end of November.

Cuba Coopération France (CubaCoop) arranges the project that guarantees Cuban athletes already qualified for the summer games to join training camps in about 20 cities and communes. On the other hand, the Cuba Linda organization told **The Havana Reporter** that it foresees sending over twenty groups of tourists to different cities at the beginning of the spring season as part of the so-called "After the imprints of the Cuban Revolution" project, which foresees stays in the island for 16 days and participation in the traditional May 1st parade at the Revolution Square, in Havana.

PARIS.- Social organizations, trade unions and parliament members have played a key role in France in their fight against the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for over 60 years, a sign of solidarity that seems to be intense in 2024. Several initiatives have been or will be announced, including the campaign the French Communist Party launched last year to conduct actions in favor of Cuba's economic development and against Washington's siege, in addition to traditional political activities such as lectures, demonstrations and denunciations in the social media.

Such actions hope to join efforts among associations, trade unions, companies and citizens at large to send containers to areas of the economy affected by the blockade and to promote projects of local development and foster businesses and investments.

In this regard, the France-Cuba Friendship Group of the National Assembly conducted a colloquium at the end of January to explore French business executives interest in approaching Cuba based on the experiences of companies already

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Emilio Bacardí Museum: 125 Years of History and Culture

Text and Photos: Yugdani**VICET**

SANTIAGO DE CUBA.- On February 12, 1899 a Museum-Municipal Library was founded in this eastern Cuban city, the first public institution of its type in Cuba created on the initiative of the city's first mayor: Emilio Bacardí Moreau.

His idea was initially directed at preserving relics, objects and weapons used by heroes who had fought for Cuba's independence. However, with the passing of the years and as a result of the actions of many intellectuals, the museum came to treasure one of the richest collections in the island. Since then and until the present, 21 generations of directors have continued Emilio Bacardí's work, including famous personalities from Santiago de Cuba and the rest of country, such as José Bofill, Fernando Boytel and Antonio Ferrer Cabello, who contributed to preserving and developing an extensive historical, artistic, archaeological and documentary collection of inestimable value.

THE MUSEUM'S HALLS

Touring the Emilio Bacardí Museum under specialist and museologist Damiana Palma Monterde's guidance allows visitors appreciating 12 paintings from the Prado

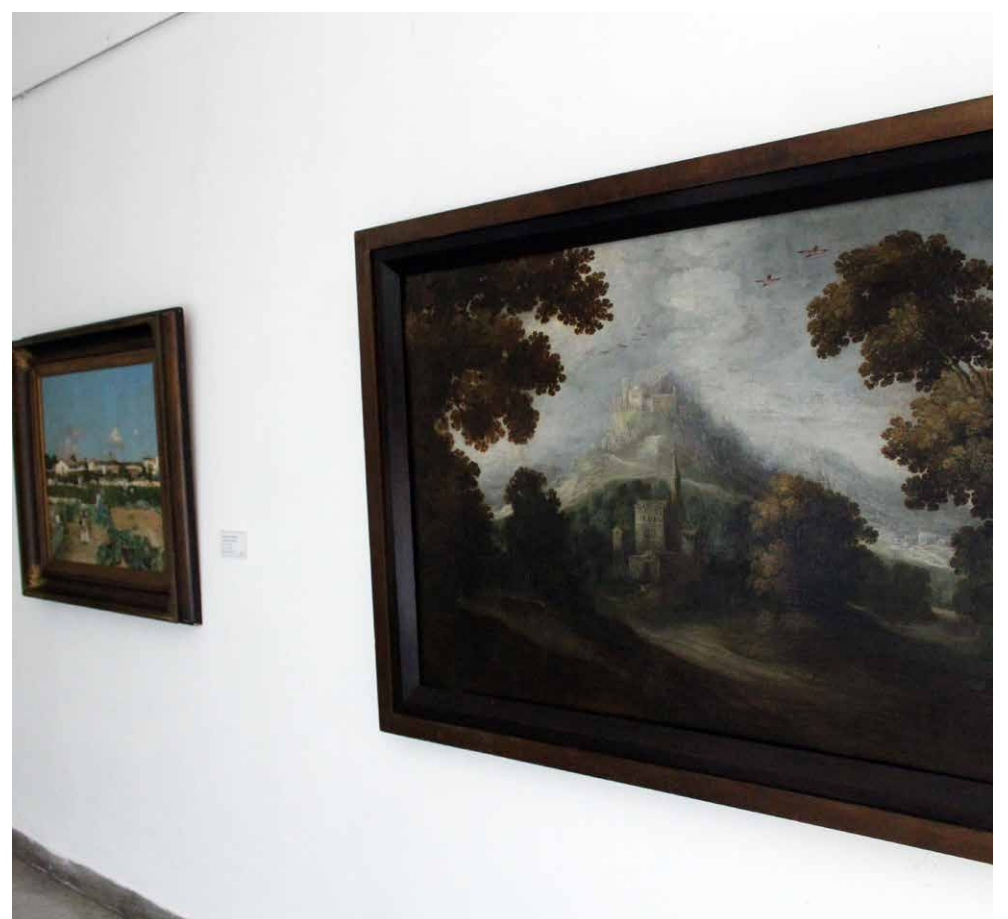
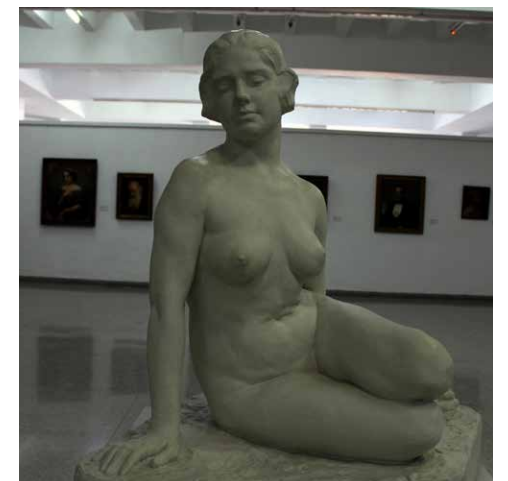
Museum (Madrid) that were donated and sent to Cuba in 1899 – the very same year the museum was founded – by the then Governor Leonardo Wood.

The emblematic Santiago Apóstol, donated by Emilio Bacardí himself, and a work commented by Cuban National Hero José Martí Pérez, can also be appreciated.

Located in the city's Patrimonial Historical Site, in a building made by prominent local architect Carlos Segrera Fernández, the museum exhibits Cuba's second largest collection, after that of the Havana's National Fine Arts Museum. Artists represented in this place include European painters Joaquín Miró and José de Madrazo and iconic Cuban artists Leopoldo Romañach and Antonio Rodríguez Morey, Monterde commented.

The institution also treasures works by Cuba's first female painter, Baldomera Fuente Segura, a self-taught artist who worked watercolor-based miniatures in ivory boards.

Visitors can also find a unique piece in Cuba: an Egyptian mummy of more than 2000 years of existence that was brought to this city by Emilio Bacardí and his wife Elvira Cape in 1912.



El Salvador and Bukele's Victory

By Luis **BEATÓN**

SAN SALVADOR.- Like in many Latin American countries, security has become an electoral tool in San Salvador.

Nayib Bukele, the 42-year old advertising executive who will run the country for an additional five-year term, based his campaign strategy in a well-articulated promotion plan on the topic of security and the fight against gangs.

The achievements resulting from his so-called Territorial Control Plan and the state of emergency declared in the nation were the trump card to sweep the board in the elections.

Although the economy is the Salvadoran's main concern at present, according to over 40 percent of the people, security and life made a big difference.

The number of votes Bukele won in the elections held on February 4, 2024 is similar to the number of electors the Nationalist Republic Alliance (ARENA) and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) won in 2009, when both groups shared power in the country.

The success of the Nuevas Ideas party candidate was resounding and foreseeable according to surveys, including the one CID GALLUP conducted, which gave him the victory with the support of nine out of ten of his fellow country people.

The policies the government applied allowed him to reach the minimum homicide rates and the nation began heading Latin America in this topic after reducing the assassination rate from 106

dead people per 100,000 inhabitants in 2015 to 2.4 in 2023.

With a rate of 1.6 murders per 100,000 inhabitants, at the beginning of 2024, El Salvador became the nation with the lowest rate in the western hemisphere; if this tendency continues to consolidate, at the end of the year, it would be the safest country in the region, even ahead of Canada, the area's referent on the topic.

Situation is more complex in Latin America where, without the chance of solving the structural problems of inequality and institutional weakness in the short or medium terms, governments and parties apply "firm hand" policies, with discourses and practices that sometimes get to violate constitutional rights and on many occasions, some of its citizens' human rights.

El Salvador is a clear example of a nation in which citizens' insecurity, dissatisfaction with the functioning of the democracy, ended up adding support to this form of government.

In the elections recently held in the so-called Tom Thumb of the Americas, Bukele won reelection with the support of 84.65 percent of voters, against candidates of other five political groups, who all together barely won 15.35 percent of the votes.

In his next term of office, the president looks forward to consolidating the achievements reached in the field of security while fighting against economic and social challenges, as according to international agencies, 1.8 million Salvadorans still live in abject poverty, without access to the basic food needs. The abject poverty rate increased during the pandemic and has not been reduced.



The 42-year old advertising executive based his campaign strategy on the topic of security and the fight against gangs. PHOTO: Internet.

An advertisement for Esicuba travel insurance. It features a woman from behind, wearing a white t-shirt, blue jeans, and a brown hat, standing next to a black suitcase. The background is a stylized blue and white illustration of a cityscape with a red dashed line and an airplane icon. The text "INSURANCE TRAVEL" is prominently displayed in a red-bordered box, followed by "JUST TO CUBA". At the bottom, the Esicuba logo and name "Seguros Internacionales de Cuba, S.A." are shown, along with contact information: "www.esicuba.cu" and "esicuba.clientes@esicuba.cu".

An Important Business Market

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.-The President of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce (CCC) Antonio Carricarte stressed the need of joint work among actors of the entrepreneurial ecosystem to show that the country is an important business market. At the CCC Associates Assembly, held at the Havana's Conference Center, Carricarte recalled that in 2023 the country faced huge difficulties because of the strengthening of the economic,

commercial and financial blockade imposed by the U.S. administration, whose levels are comparable to an economic war against our country. On top of that, the island faced the challenge of changing the CCC work styles in order to direct entrepreneurial actions to a strategy based on the implementation of sector-support (cluster) programs and goal and complement markets.

Clusters are a form of entrepreneurial organization in which companies work together in the search for common solutions upon the basis of science, technology and innovation and endorsed by the objectives defined for each priority sector, which includes agribusiness, information and communication technologies, industries, health, biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry.

Other sectors are culture, construction, transportation and logistics, science, technology and environment, trade,

tourism, renewable energies, mining, sport, sugarcane industry, electronics, consultancy services, hydraulic resources, education and the Mariel Special Development Zone, Carricarte commented. The official stated that CCC affiliation reached 1,226 companies – 303 of them, micro, small and medium-sized companies (MIPYMES) – and main objectives include the incorporation of new economic actors. However, he acknowledged that MIPYMES dynamics, which is to complement the economy by providing strength to the entrepreneurial fabric as a living system, is still insufficient.

Our actions should be addressed at the main objectives of the National Development Plan and the commercial policy, in addition to strengthening work in the territories, especially those projects included in the territorial and local development strategy, he said.

Another important topic dealt with the youth, as they are entrepreneurs by nature, take up challenges with more strength, are innovative and creative and the Chamber is specially interested in driving them through the channels established internationally.

Deputy Prime Minister and minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Ricardo Cabrisas, referred to the three lines established by the country's leadership to foster economic and social development.

The need to increase the export of goods and services as a way to solve one of the most pressing problems; access to foreign currencies; the substitution of imports, and the role of the foreign capital, were also dealt with.



The President of CCC recalled that in 2023 the country faced huge difficulties because of the strengthening of the blockade imposed by the U.S. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Gran Caribe Announces Reopening of the Deauville Hotel

By Milagros **PICHARDO**

HAVANA.- The Gran Caribe hotel group announced the reopening of the Deauville Hotel, an emblematic facility located in the Cuban capital that will celebrate its anniversary next August 1st.

The hotel is located in a 14-story building in the corner of the Galiano and Malecón streets.

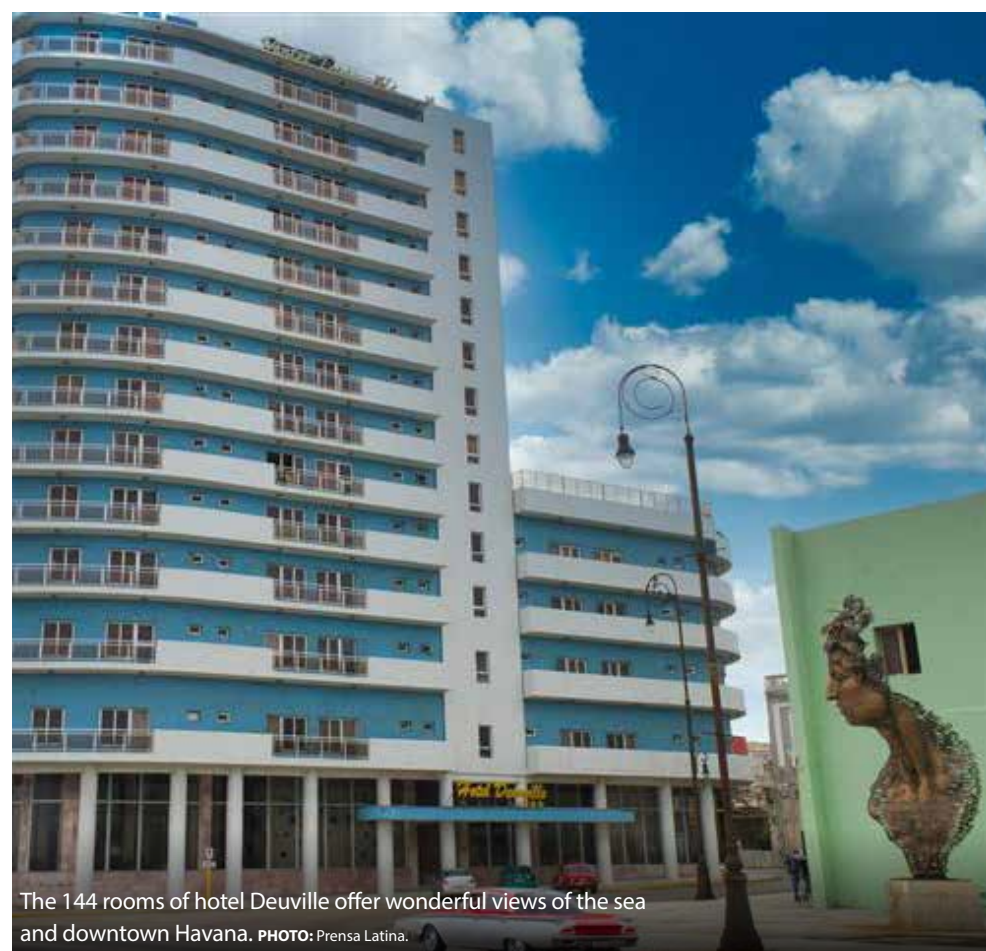
Its 144 rooms afford wonderful views of the sea and downtown Havana, and after the renovations conducted, they will offer higher comfort and better equipment, as per current standards.

Inaugurated in 1957, it is one of the most classical hotels located in the famous Havana Malecón (seawall) – in addition to

the Riviera and National hotels – and its bright blue façade identifies this area of the Wonder City.

Built at a cost of \$2.3 million, its original owners were the head of the Trafficante criminal family, Santo Trafficante Jr. and Cuban Evaristo García Jr., while Joe Silesi (aka Joe Rivers), a member of the Gambino criminal family, was its manager.

The Deauville Hotel was nationalized on October 24, 1960, when the Cuban Official Gazette spread a resolution that endorsed the confiscation of U.S. investors hotels and businesses – one of the measures the recently triumphant Revolution headed by Fidel Castro adopted.



The 144 rooms of hotel Deuville offer wonderful views of the sea and downtown Havana. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Havana Club International Increases Portfolio

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The Havana Club International S.A. Company (HCI) included new products in its portfolio in Cuba with the inclusion of the Jameson Black Barrel whisky and two liqueurs of the Ruavieja brand.

HCI Marketing and Communication director for the Cuban market, Yuniel Delgado, told **The Havana Reporter** that that whisky joins the large range of products included in the Pernord Ricard (foreign partner) portfolio.

Jameson Black Barrel, launched two years ago, is an Irish whisky with an interesting story of production and aging that is addressed at refined consumers.

Its features include a specific and complex production method that turns it into a unique product, which is part of the ultra-Premium segment.

Delgado recalled that the Jameson brand has been present in the Cuban market for the last couple of years

and has captivated consumers for its taste similar to that of the Cuban rums, although in the Black Barrel case, it has a higher complexity.

This whisky is distilled in two different ways on a distinct malt base and is stored in two barrels of different type, which are then mixed to obtain that smoothness, that aromatic complexity and long-lasting flavor in the mouth, he added.

In addition to the Jameson Back Barrel, the Havana Club company included a crème de chocolate and a rice pudding crème to its offer of products in Cuba that are part of the Ruavieja brand, a company founded in Galicia in 1889.

Ruavieja is a brand of liqueurs and eau-de-vie that has a long history in the manufacture of quality products, which according to HCI general director Christian Barré, is a pleasure to include in the Cuban catalogue.

During the launch of those liqueurs, Delgado told THR that Ruavieja has been present in Cuba for over five years with its typical crème de vie, which has special touches because

of its alcoholic base of eau-de-vie (a liqueur produced from the fermentation and distillation of grape residue).

He added that that company started with an herbal liqueur used mostly as after-dinner drink according to the Spanish cuisine, but with the passing of the years the brand renovated itself and now offers unique and modern tastes, such as those of these crèmes.

The eau-de-vie crème first; then the unique rice crème which, as it is vegan, also allows consumption among lactose-intolerant people, and now, it offers the crème de chocolate, a limited edition that is present in the Cuban market since last February.

The rice pudding crème is inspired by the classical rice pudding dessert – very popular in Spain and Cuba – and its taste recalls the dessert our grandmothers used to make, combined with the eau-de-vie fruit taste, the specialist said. He added that when tasting the chocolate drink you will feel the grape base, dark chocolate notes, nuts and other dried fruits.



The Havana Club company included a crème de chocolate and a rice pudding crème to its offer of products in Cuba. PHOTO: Internet.

New Parranda Beer

By Benjamín **MICERINOS**

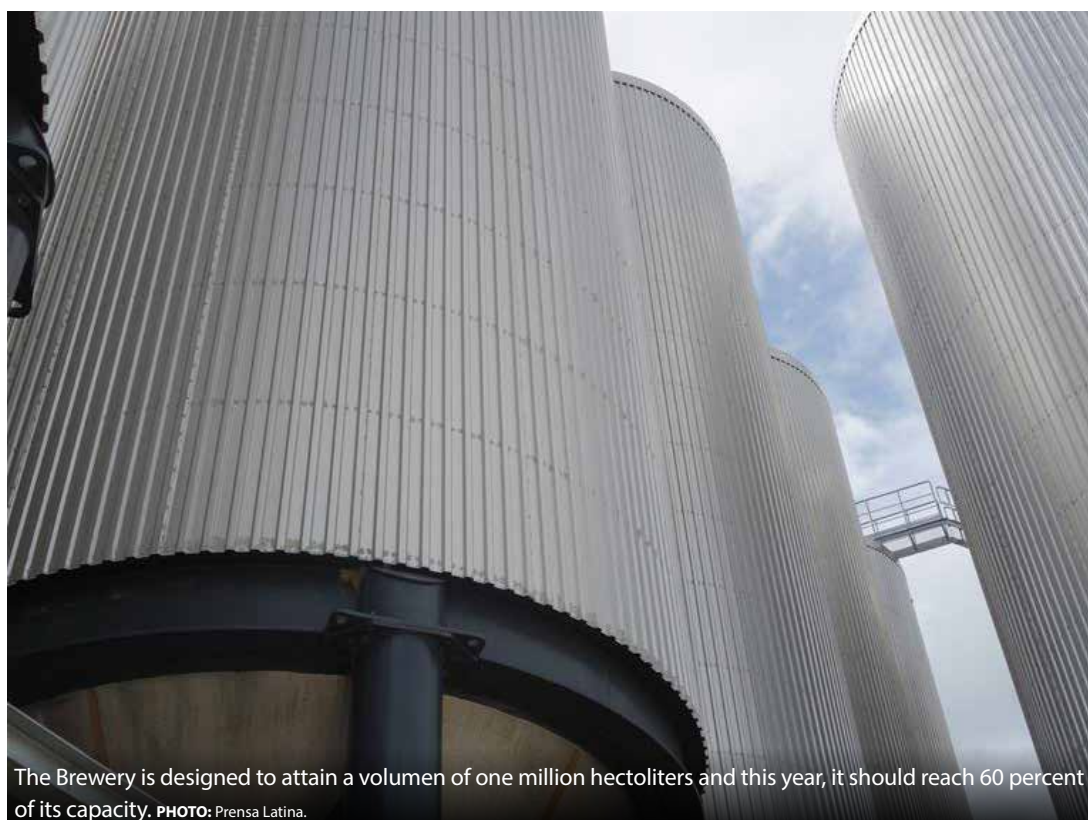
HAVANA.- Sustainability is the key word for producers of the new Cuban beer: Parranda. Such a strategy was recently reaffirmed by Cervecería Cubana S.A. head of production, José Zapatero, who stressed that circular economy prevails in this product's productive process. This is the reason why **The Havana Reporter** visited this industry.

Zapatero explained that in order to minimize the environmental impact they are adopting several strategies, including wastewater treatment, using the solid embers for pig feed, and the use of heat, which saves 400 liters of diesel fuel per day. All of this is accompanied by a system for recycling plastic bottles.

Since the conception of the project, the joint-capital Cuban Ron and Swinkels Family Brewery Spain S.L. companies – the latter, a Spanish subsidiary of the Swinkels Family Brewers group – agreed on the environmental and recycling principle.

Located in the Mariel Special Development Zone, the Brewery, whose production started on June 2023, is designed to attain a volume of one million hectoliters and this year, it should reach 60 percent of its capacity.

In addition, the brewery has a bottling capacity of about 36,000 bottles per hour, in the case of the half-liter Parranda format, and 18,000 in the case of the one-and-a-half liter format.



The Brewery is designed to attain a volumen of one million hectoliters and this year, it should reach 60 percent of its capacity. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Yarisleidis Cirilo is Hopeful of a Successful 2024

By Ángel **SANTA CRUZ**

MATANZAS.- This year I will struggle to be successful and experience again Olympic glory, but this time with greater goals in mind, said the world canoeing champion Yarisleidis Cirilo.

Winner of the world title in C-1 200 meters in Duisburg, Germany, she dreams of the Olympic medal in Paris and living again a year full of medals in international events, to remain among the world's elite in this discipline.

In life, it does not matter if you are an athlete or not; the important thing is to wake up every day and have a goal in mind, though in order to reach it, you have to be disciplined, because that is what determines the place you will reach, the canoeist said.

A native of the eastern Guantánamo province, Cirilo stated the excitement she feels at present about competing in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, an event in which she starts as clear favorite and for which she works hard.

To Cirilo, the more results an athlete reaches, the humbler s/he has to be. I learnt that from Serguey Torres, Tokyo 2020 Olympic champion and national team member, because I think that humbleness is important in life.

Chosen as Cuba's best female athlete in 2022 and 2023, she stressed that Cuban canoeists are like a family, as they train together and "feel pleased to share happiness and sorrows, particularly to enjoy sport achievements."

According to the world champion, who initially started playing chess and volleyball, coach Nelson Perales has played an important role in her sport

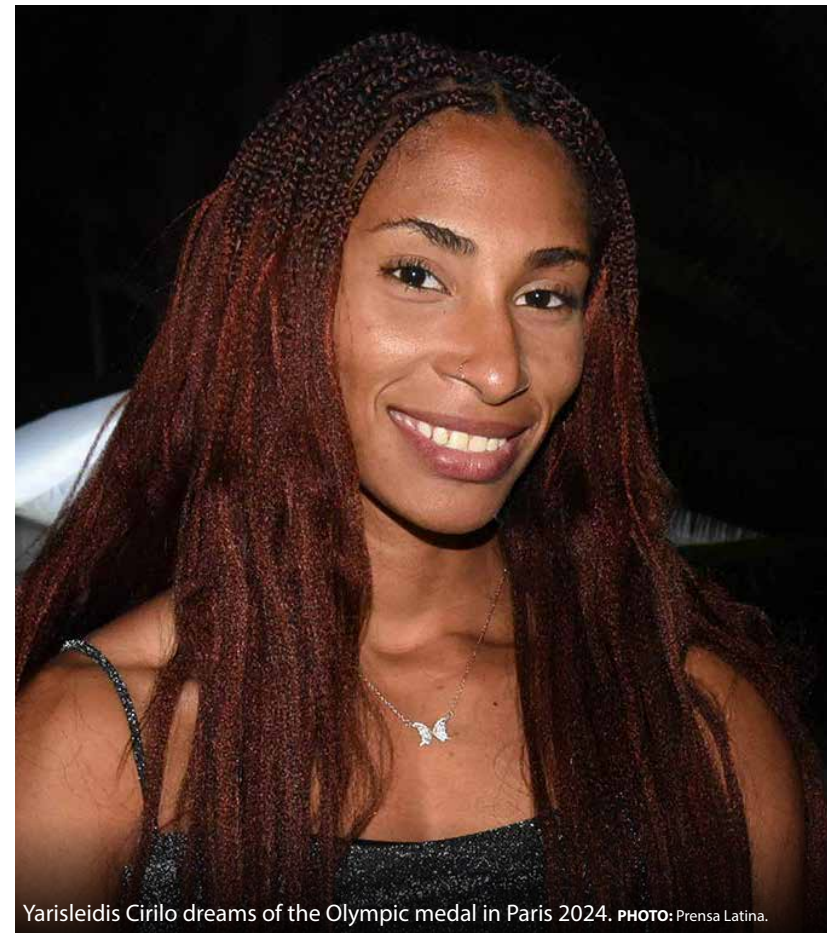
career. "The two of us have shared good experiences and we still have many years ahead to be together and improve details and obtain new achievements," she added.

Yurisleidis admitted that it is really exciting to get to the top of the podium, as that gives her a huge personal pleasure, while being an opportunity to represent her flag and country. She also appreciated the support of all the people who contribute to those crucial occasions in an athlete's sports life.

In 2023, in addition to winning the title in Duisburg, she became champion in the San Salvador and Santiago de Chile Central American and Pan-American games, respectively. This outstanding canoeist is also one of Cuba's main hopes to achieve a gold medal in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games.



The canoeist was chosen as Cuba's best female athlete in 2022 and 2023. PHOTO: Cubadebate.



Yarisleidis Cirilo dreams of the Olympic medal in Paris 2024. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Chess New National Champion

By Julio César **MEJÍAS**

HAVANA.- GM Luis Ernesto Quesada had the merit of reaching the peak of Cuban chess after winning his first national title in the Absolute Championship, held in the eastern province of Holguín.

At the end of the 10 rounds of the competitive calendar, there was a triple tie between grand masters (GM) Omar Almeida, Carlos Daniel Albornoz and Quesada – all with seven points – and the winner had to be defined in double matches between each of them.

Quesada, a native of the central Ciego de Ávila province, scored a tie and victory

against Almeida (Havana) and won the title with victory over Albornoz (Camagüey) in the last match of the event, held at the Holguín Sport Museum.

Almeida finished second, ahead of Albornoz, while Lelys Martínez (6.5), Dylan Berdayes (6.0), Kemel Gallo (6.0), Michel Alejandro (6.0) and Jorge Roberto Elías (6.0) completed the first eight positions in the medal table.

Quesada, Almeida and Albornoz are the main figures to compose the Cuban team that will participate in the 2024 World Chess Olympiads, to take place in September in Budapest, Hungary.



GM Luis Ernesto Quesada won his first national title in the Absolute Championship, held in the eastern province of Holguín. PHOTO: JT.

Chile Suffers its worst Catastrophe after 2010 Earthquake

Text and Photo Carmen **ESQUIVEL**

CHILE.- The recent forest fires at the Chilean region of Valparaíso are considered today the worst catastrophe since the 2010 earthquake, inflicting the death of more than 130 people, about 18,000 victims and economic damages worth millions.

The fire affected about 9,500 hectares, including urban, agricultural and forest sectors, in the Viña del Mar, Quilpué, Villa Alemana and Limache communes and devastated homes, industrial areas and small and medium-sized businesses.

The panorama is worst in the disaster areas. Entire towns were gutted by the fire and only rubble and sheets of aluminum remained standing. Families lost everything.

"What we are living is a tragedy, the closest to a war scenario," said Savitri Beegoo, a medical student of the Andrés Bello University.

Although not as violent as this year, the Chilean territory is affected by fires every summer, a multiple-cause phenomenon that is highly associated to human influence, Santiago de Chile University (USACH) researcher, Alberto Alaniz, told **The Havana Reporter**.

Alaniz referred to reports by the National Forest Corporation, according to which



The fire affected about 9,500 hectares, including urban, agricultural and forest sectors. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

about 99 percent of these disasters are caused by negligence, mistakes or even intentionally.

In recent years, all the central region of the country experienced a strong reduction in rainfall and a temperature rise, up to about 40 degrees, said Alaniz, a geographer and doctor of biological sciences specialized in ecology.

In the specific case of Valparaíso and Viña del Mar, there is a large population that, in search

of a place to live in, has built houses in areas that are really closed to native vegetation or pine or eucalyptus plantations.

These sites have a complex topography, are located in steep and difficult to access areas in which, on many occasions, there are dumps where fires start, he said.

One of the most widespread hypothesis is that the disaster was intentional. "That thesis seems real to me because the emergence of different sources in a short

period of time is really strange; however, inspections have to be made to confirm that, for example, if chemical elements or accelerants are present," he affirmed.

Other issues also debated include the link between fires and real estate businesses, which later on use those areas for building, Alaniz explained, while recalling that a thesis on the topic was made years ago and is still unpublished.

One of the problems the country faces is the large surface of adaptation of pine or eucalyptus forest plantations, which usually turn the territory into deserts and reduce water, in addition to being prone to spread fires.

In light of these phenomena, the researcher considers urgent passing a law on fires that allows having a tool to improve territorial planning and make landscapes more resilient. Native forests, which are less prone to fires, have to be promoted, as well as fire lines and plans linked to risks of disaster, he said.

Increasing prison sentences for those who make out-of-season agricultural burning or intentionally spread fires, are also a must. A legislation project on the topic was submitted to the Congress several years ago, which is expected to receive priority attention in order to avoid catastrophes such as these, whose economic cost exceeds one billion dollars.



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