



Defending Fair Causes



P. 3

Culture

Drum Festival in Havana



P. 6

Caribbean

Violence in Port au Prince



P. 12

Economy

Russia and Cuba negotiations



P. 13

Regional Tourism Meeting to be held in Varadero

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- UN Tourism Regional Director for the Americas Gustavo Santos informed that the Cuban Varadero resort will host an important event of the travel sector.

It is the 69th Meeting of the Regional Commission for the Americas (CAM) and the Seminar "Fostering tourist development through innovation in community tourism," the official told the European Travel Trade Caribbean publication.

The event, to take place on April 29 & 30, will gather representatives of the 26 member countries and two associates of the UN Tourism Regional Commission for the Americas, in addition to delegates of the private sector.

Santos commented that even though it is a statutory meeting, it is the time to work on the priorities identified and linked to connectivity, sustainability, women and youth empowerment and the development of products such as gastronomy or rural tourism.

The second Amadeus report on travel tendencies in 2024 in the Americas region will be presented at the meeting.

He also noted that the seminar "Fostering tourist development through innovation in community tourism" will be an opportunity to know good practices in the field of innovation and investments in local communities, human capital, biodiversity and infrastructure.

It will also allow looking for sustainable alternatives to strengthen community tourism and entrepreneurial tourist experiences development. According to the official, all human activities should be rethought at present upon the basis of sustainability.

He explained that Cuba particularly offers a wonderful sea that can be enjoyed all year round, in addition to colonial cities with a unique charm, a capital whose historical center is a World Heritage Site and where music invades all the Old Havana streets and the people is warm and kind.

Santos explained that the Americas region is potentially one of the areas that can grow the

most in terms of tourism in the next years, but added that it needs better connectivity.

In that sense, he noted that it is essential to work in order to consolidate an aero-commercial connectivity network so that more airlines join destinations with more frequencies.

The UN Tourism Regional Director for the Americas stated that in coordination with The International Air Transport Association, work is conducted to promote the improvement of the region's connectivity and increase routes in order to favor multiple destination tourism and intraregional movement.

In the meantime, the setting-up of that regional body's Office in Río de Janeiro, Brazil, is expected to strengthen the promotion of investments, especially by boosting green investment and the development of a strategy on the formation and training of the staff, particularly the youth.

Santos indicated that several objectives have already been attained, such as the creation of the region's First Tourism Law Observatory, while the Tourist Investment Guidelines, which promote opportunities and incentives, are developed with the endorsement of the Latin American and Caribbean Development Bank.



Varadero resort will host the 69th Meeting of the Regional Commission for the Americas. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

New Madrid-Havana Tourist Flight

By Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- The Spanish Enjoy Travel Group (ETG) presented at the Meliá Cohiba Hotel, in the capital, a new Madrid-Havana flight that will start operating next June 29.

ETG is a Spanish, major vertical tour operator with more than 20 years of experience and is passionate about Cuba and travels, with presence in Latin America and Europe. At present, the group operates over 15 weekly air routes, connecting the island and the Caribbean.

The group mostly dedicates itself to providing travel and tourism facilities to differently-abled people, guaranteeing safety and friendly environments.

During the meeting held at the Havana Café Hall, in the abovementioned hotel, sales director of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), Giana Galindo, praised these efforts and highlighted the importance such an Iberian flight has to the island.

She said that Cuba's goal this year is to attract 100,000 visitors from Spain and added that next summer, 18 weekly frequencies are expected from airlines such as Plus Ultra, Cubana de Aviación and Iberia, among others.

The director explained that at present, Spain is listed ten among the tourist issuing markets to Cuba.

Enjoy Travel Cuba Deputy Sales President Anai Gutiérrez commented that the group's operations started in 2000, while that the company's director in Cuba, Jorge Luis Fando, said that they are pleased with this new flight.

Enjoy Travel Group has 19 offices worldwide, with a highly-qualified staff. Under their slogan, #viajar nos une (traveling unites us), they offer clients a personalized treatment, with tailor-made programs, to please most demanding tourists. The executives reiterated that the new Madrid-Havana-Madrid air route, to begin on June and to be extended until September 7, will be operated by an A330-200 aircraft of the Plus Ultra airline, with 288 seats – 24 of them, for the business class.

Departure to Havana will be on Saturdays, in the afternoon, which will allow travelers from other Spanish

provinces – such as Asturias, Valencia, Galicia, Cataluña and Andalucía – to connect with the flight using high-speed trains.

In order to guarantee this operation, ETG signed a contract with high-speed train transportation companies such as Renfe and Iryo, the two most important in Spain.

This company has excellent working ties with the main hotel chains settled in Cuba, such as Iberostar, Blue Diamond Resorts, Meliá Hotels International and Kempinski, among others.

Authorities of both parties affirmed that this new route is doomed to success, as it has the full support of all entities involved and is focused on increasing the flow of tourists to Cuba every day.



The new Madrid-Havana-Madrid air route will be operated by an A330-200 aircraft of the Plus Ultra airline. PHOTO: ETG.

THE Havana Reporter
YOUR SOURCE OF NEWS & MORE

President: Luis Enrique González
Editorial Vice President: Edilberto F. Méndez
Editorial Director: Ariel Barredo Coya
Art Direction: Anathais Rodríguez
Chief Editor: Ilsa Rodríguez Santana
English Editor: Isabel García

Translation: Yanely Interián
Graphic Designers: Fernando Fernández Tito
Chief Graphic Editor: Francisco González
Assistant Staff: Yaimara Portuondo
Circulation: Commercial Department
Printing: Prensa Latina

SOCIETY • HEALTH & SCIENCE • POLITICS • CULTURE
ENTERTAINMENT • PHOTO FEATURE • ECONOMY
SPORTS • AND MORE

Publisher: Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana
Prensa Latina, S.A.
Calle E, esq. 19 No. 454, Vedado, La Habana-4, Cuba
Telephone: (53)7838-3496 / 7832-3578
Fax: (53)7833-3068 E-mail: thr@prensa-latina.cu

Diplomacy Will Continue Defending Fair Causes



Foreign minister Bruno Rodríguez explained the ministry's work projections. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Milagros **PICHARDO**

HAVANA.- The defense of just causes has been a historical principle of Cuba's revolutionary diplomacy and will continue to be so, stressed the island's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez.

When talking about the ministry's work projections, he affirmed that the island's foreign policy priorities include contributing to national efforts in favor of the economy's recovery and dealing with the strong measures imposed as a result of the U.S. blockade.

The blockade is applied with an unprecedented rigor, Rodríguez stated, while referring to the continuity of the strangulation policy by both Democratic and Republican administrations.

He highlighted that the Cuban diplomatic missions abroad, in addition to having the fundamental mission of defending the principles of the Cuban Revolution, also work in the search for additional sources of financing.

The minister commented that they tirelessly work to guarantee the import of food and fuel and in the materialization of economic options for export and import in better conditions.

The ministry also plays an important role in the promotion of local development projects in Cuba and participation in solidarity events, which are frequent because of the affection Cuba arouses worldwide.

He stressed the country's commitment to continue strengthening ties with Cubans resident abroad and denounced that the main obstacle to this endeavor is the United States, which imposes limitations

and unilateral coercive measures that cause a complex economic situation and foster migration.

Rodríguez highlighted Havana's condemnation of the genocide against the people of Palestine by the Israeli regime.

He also ratified the permanent work the country's leadership conducts to have all the information on the situation of Cuban doctors Assel Herrera and Landy Rodríguez, who were kidnapped during the fulfillment of their health mission in the city of Mandera (Kenya) by the Al-Shabab Jihadist militia in 2019 and whose alleged death was recently spread.

Rodríguez explained that the Cuban foreign policy's *raison d'être* is its people and insisted on the importance of necessary exchange with the citizenship to establish a communication based on feedback.

He spoke about the commitment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with transparency and loyalty to the people and the National Assembly of People's Power, through an effective and safe use of technological tools. He referred to that body's actions to speed up documents' authentication, which include modernization of this process and evaluation to include the country in the Apostille Convention.

The minister described the present international situation as difficult and changing, which causes threats to peace and security. He also referred to increasing polarization and inequalities in the world, particularly as a result of U.S. imperialism, the proliferation of conflicts and economic instability and inflation.

Bay of Pigs: First Defeat of the U.S. Imperialism in Latin America

By Melissa **KING**

HAVANA.- Cuba's victory over the Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) mercenary invasion was the first, major military defeat the United States suffered in Latin America, a symbol of the will of the Cuban people to decide, by themselves, their destiny.

On April 17, 1961, mercenaries who hoped to defeat the rising Cuban Revolution, started to disembark in the proximities of Zapata Swamp, in the southern coast of the western Matanzas province, as part of Operation Pluto endorsed by President Dwight D. Eisenhower the previous year.

The invaders arrived from Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, in five armed merchant ships, two LCI warfare units, three LCU barges for transporting and landing heavy equipment, and four LCVP boats for loading and transferring personnel.

Only 72 hours of fight were needed to defeat the aggression, planned from Washington and executed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

According to historical research, the purpose of the military adventure, in which 1,500 mercenaries participated, was to establish a beachhead in order to form a provisional government that would request recognition and the intervention of the United States and the Organization of American States.

The event was preceded by simultaneous bombings to three airbases in Cuba.

On April 16, 1961, at the burial of the victims of such aggressions, historical leader Fidel Castro proclaimed the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution and warned about a potential military invasion.

From that moment, members of the Ejército Rebelde (Rebel Army), the Managua tank unit, the working, rural and student militias, went to their trenches to defend the country, in addition to the Police Battalion, members of the Militia Directors School and the Revolutionary Air Force.

The bloody battles, which ended up on April 19, resulted in what's considered the U.S. imperialism's first major defeat in Latin America.

The attacking force suffered the loss of 88 people and 1,197 prisoners, while the Cuban side lost 155 combatants, with an undetermined number of injured people.

On April 24, 1961, U.S. President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) was forced to acknowledge the participation of its government in such acts. After that failure, the U.S. presidents continued designing new strategies to overthrow the Revolution that emerged victorious 90 miles away of their coasts.

On November 30, 1961, Kennedy approved Operation Mongoose, the biggest subversive plan orchestrated against Cuba that included five thousand sabotage actions and terrorist acts, which were committed in less than 10 months.

More than 60 years after such event, Washington continues financing actions to destabilize the nation and strengthens its economic, commercial and financial blockade, whose main victim is the Cuban family.

The Cuban government recently denounced that groups of terrorists settled in the United States encourage actions against the country's domestic order, availing of the difficult situation the island faces.



Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) is a symbol of the will of the Cuban people to decide, by themselves, their destiny. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Hope for Good Relations

Text and Photo Deisy **FRANCIS**

MONTGOMERY, U.S.A.- For John McMillan, Alabama state treasurer (2019-2021), the possibilities between the United States and Cuba are enormous, especially in the sector that most attracts him: agriculture.

During a talk with **The Havana Reporter** in Montgomery, capital of that southeast state, McMillan recalled that visiting rural areas was one of the highlights of his trips to Cuba, because he was able to meet some of the tobacco growers and see "how cigars are made." If most people in the U.S. had the opportunity to gain more exposure with visits to the U.S., they would be more likely to be exposed to closer economic and commercial relations and import and export opportunities, I think it would be good for both parties, we are neighbors, he said.

We have to work together as neighbors; I believe and hope for that to happen, because I am personally interested in the agricultural sector, but I think there are great opportunities there.

However, the blockade imposed for over 60 years by the government of the United States hinders McMillan's present hopes.

In relation to the political scenario in the present electoral year, he commented that there are many uncertainties so as to make predictions on the electoral result; however, he thinks that this will be ultimately determined by the economy.

There are still a few months to go for the electoral campaign to fully begin, but everything indicates that "president (Joe) Biden will probably be the candidate for the Democratic Party and former president (Donald) Trump will definitely be the nominee of the Republican Party," McMillan affirmed.

He commented that different issues will be included in the presidential race, but in the end, the economy is voters' main reference when going to the polls.

"Actually, we still have economic problems and if you pay attention to the surveys and to what we see in the television, the immigration issue is perhaps the biggest problem we have right now," McMillan stressed.

I think that "if inflation continues being relatively high and it is harder for families to eat and have fuel, especially gas for cars, because we are too dependent on vehicles in the United States, that will determine who wins the elections," he said.



John McMillan, Alabama state treasurer (2019-2021).

He explained that the public opinion means nothing "because our elections are decided by the Electoral College (composed of 538 voters from all states of the Union) and the popular vote does not really mean much, especially when elections are tough, a process he described as complex and which some critics consider unfair and antidemocratic.

He recalled that in 2016, figures showed that the then democratic candidate Hillary Clinton had won the popular vote, although Trump, her Republican rival, won after reaching 304 votes of the Electoral College: 34 more than the 270 needed to win the presidency – although she surpassed him by more than 2.8 million supporters.

Small Island Developing States



Antigua & Barbuda will host the fourth Summit of SIDS in May. PHOTO: Internet.

By Elizabeth **BORREGO**

UNITED NATIONS.- The fourth Summit of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), to be held in May in Antigua & Barbuda, will insist on the need of supporting those nations in the search for a more resilient and sustainable future.

The event will reintroduce debate on the multiple crisis these countries face, particularly climate change, COVID-19 economic and social repercussions and the debt crisis.

The event is in harmony with the urgent calls the United Nations (UN) make in favor of unity and the strengthening of multilateralism, and to attend the climate crisis at a time the global context poses other urgent challenges, such as armed conflicts; displacements as a result of wars; hunger or the arms development.

However, Antigua & Barbuda deputy permanent representative to the UN, Tumasie Blair, considered that the forthcoming conference has higher support than any other held before.

"This is an important year," the Caribbean diplomat told **The Havana Reporter**. "I think that there is real awareness now on the fact that this is the last decade to obtain results," he warned.

For that reason, the event is aimed at revising SIDS sustainable development progress and presenting a new decade of associations and solutions to foster their transit to a resilient prosperity.

CLIMATE CHANGE, FINANCING AND HEALTH

Small Island Developing States, which gather 38 UN member nations and 20 territories, are acknowledged by the body as a priority group because of their size, remoteness and limited resources.

In light of the event, the body ratified its commitment to attend challenges such as vulnerability to the impact of climate change and natural disasters, which are expected to be more frequent and intense in the future.

"They might be geographically remote but their problems are not exclusive to them," UN deputy secretary general for Economic and Social Issues, Li Junhua, affirmed.

According to Antigua & Barbuda deputy permanent representative, the UN acknowledges that a deviation of attention from the SIDS problems could mean the end of these States.

"We are the front line in relation to climate. For that reason, it is acknowledged that our needs should be faced while those of other nations of the world are faced. That will eventually benefit survival in the long term," he explained.

The event will focus on three issues considered essential for these island nations in the present context: climate change, financing to development and health.

Those objectives acknowledge that although climate change has worsened worldwide, its impact is higher in the small island developing states.

Cuba Makes Progress in Digitalization and Cellphone Use

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- Digital transformation has to be an evolutionary process, a strength of the strategy designed by the country's top authorities, who give priority to technologies, stated Cuban minister of Communications Mayra Arevich.

In the 19th edition of the Informatics 2024 International Convention and Fair, held from March 18 to 22, the minister stressed that the progress reached in the sector include the use of cellphones by 7.8 million Cubans – of which, 6.6 million access the Internet through that way and use 7.7 megabytes on average.

Arevich highlighted that the second optical fiber cable started operating in 2023 and progress was made in digital television, after finishing partial transfer from analogical to digital connection in the country's western region – which reaches 77 percent of the standard signal and 50 percent of high definition, a service that will improve as a result of China's collaboration. She added that there are 263 government digital portals at present; computer services increase in areas such as tax on document payment through digital stamps, and basic services charge, such as water, electricity, gas and telephone, through the Transfermóvil and En Zona platforms.

The minister explained that the Cuban software industry has responded to the main technological development challenges through 31 state entities

and 290 micro, small and medium-sized companies (88 of them private), in addition to the Havana and Matanzas Technological Parks, which consolidate themselves



During Informatics 2024 was stressed the use of cellphones by 7.8 million Cubans of which, 6.6 million access the Internet through that way. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

as entities that revitalize science and innovation.

She urged to pay attention to cybersecurity, which means a safe use of the information and communication technologies (IT) and the protection of citizens' personal data and information against the constant information blockade the country suffers.

"New technological platforms and applications for the health, culture, education, tourism, trade and government management sectors are included among the achievements resulting from national capacities and creative professional talent to make progress in the computerization of the Cuban society," she stressed.

"We are not at all pleased with the results reached; reality is linked to challenges not to results, to what we are able to contribute to the population's wellbeing in spite of the limitations imposed the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade, which in this sector has an influence on its technological and professional development," the minister commented.

"Implementation of the comprehensive computerization policy in Cuba allows assuming transit to digital transformation as a process that enriches and updates the development strategy, based on the intensive use of digital technologies," Arevich affirmed.

To do that, alliances with the country's universities and international cooperation will be essential, in order to make a better use of the benefits of technology and put it at the disposal of every person, she concluded.

Japan Endorses Health Services

By Miriam **CÉSAR**

HAVANA.- To the Japanese government and its diplomatic representation in Cuba, public health is one of the priorities of the collaboration programs with the island, which has enormous potential for development, Japanese ambassador Hirata Kenji affirmed.

In 2021, Japan and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) implemented the project 'Strengthening health capacities for the COVID-19 crisis,' at a time in which that disease strongly affected the island.

On such cooperation, in an exclusive interview with **The Havana Reporter**, the Asian diplomat stated his satisfaction of the positive results of this assistance to the National Health System.

The ambassador noted that his country has conducted several projects and made donations of equipment to Cuban hospitals and policlinics through the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

He stressed that an imagery digitization program for diagnosis is implemented at present and work will continue to be conducted with the Public Health Ministry

and its authorities to try to find an answer to the sector's needs and in close coordination with the Cuban government, which is the one that makes decisions on priorities.

The project 'Strengthening health capacities for the COVID-19 crisis' endorsed the mass immunization campaign Cuba conducted against SARS-CoV-2, the agent responsible for COVID-19. Such campaign allowed strengthening the national health system to successfully face other emergencies, particularly the mother-child program.

Japan donated one ambulance; 46 prequalified fridges for vaccines preservation; 1,400 constant-record thermometers and 1,200 special vacuum flasks for doses transportation.

In addition, modern ultrasound and diagnosis equipment benefitted 255 primary care centers, 13 hospitals, the Finlay Institute of Vaccines and the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center.

Over 96,000 pregnant women and mothers who have just given birth were also benefitted, as well as over 722,000 female adolescents and 13,150 health staff linked to childbirth and puerperium attention and the treatment of perinatal asphyxia in the post-pandemic period.

According to the Japanese diplomat, this was just a small investment, whose main value is having reached the Cuban population in any corner of the country, thanks to the project's good design and its management by UNICEF, in addition to the excellent performance of the health professionals and staff.

UNICEF representative to Cuba, Alejandra Trossero, commented that the project had a positive progress thanks to confidence in

their managers and protagonists, which in turn allowed updating the indicators reached by the island in the mother-child care and health.

In addition to the granting of equipment and supplies, the project also included workshops on mothers' health in the COVID-19 context and the recovery period, in which doctors and nursing staff from all over the country participated, given the aftereffects of that disease.



Japanese ambassador Hirata Kenji stated his satisfaction of the positive results of this assistance to the Cuban Health System. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Drum Festival: The Essence of Cuban Identity

By Ariana **ARAUJO**

HAVANA.- The 21st edition of the Cuban Drum Festival had a major impact on each of the neighborhoods and stages that hosted the event, where rumba exploded like a bomb making everyone dance.

A busy musical agenda was displayed from March 5 to 10 in downtown Havana, but Galiano avenue, in Centro Habana municipality, was the protagonist of most of the shows.

One of the main venues of the Guillermo Barreto in Memoriam Rhythm and Dance Festival in Havana was the emblematic Teatro América, which hosted important bands and was the place where winners of the rumba contest and its Cuban variants – yambú, columbia and guaguancó - were announced.

The casino dance, which has seized upon our dance floors, parks and neighborhoods for years, was also part of the competition, just as the drums and kettledrums event, which honored the high-level percussion contest and whose participants were also awarded.

Rumba took over the Havana streets for a few days, while percussionist women and jazz also had a space in the Drum Festival.

Talking about rumba in Havana means taking the genre to all the Cuban corners, where music and its deeply-rooted traditions are felt.

The worldwide famous Tropicana Cabaret and the Salón Rosado de la Tropical, an emblematic place in Havana for salsa bands' performances, presented attractive dance proposals, including the "Women in Cuban percussion" event, as part of the celebrations for International Women's Day, on March 8.

A special jazz concert was conducted at the National Fine Arts Museum by pianist Roberto Fonseca and La Gran Diversion, while a tribute was paid to the Piloto-Vera duo,

an essential couple in the traditional music and the so-called 'filin' movement.

The Klimax band, directed by Giraldo Piloto – the Festival's president – also embellished one of the gala nights at the Teatro América, as well as other evenings, such as the one given in honor of the Adalberto y su Son orchestra, especially of its founder, Adalberto (aka the Son Gentleman).

Music from other countries also vibrated in Havana those days through the hands of Chilean drummer

Rodrigo Íter, in addition to Wonders of Burundi, who, as a verse of a popular theme by Adalberto Álvarez says, "desde el África vinieron" (Came from Africa) to the Cuban capital.

The closing ceremony included a special occasion, with Alexander Abreu y Havana D Primera, the climax of an event that next year will conduct its 22nd edition and will continue paying tribute to rumba, a genre declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2016.



Teatro América, in Havana, hosted important bands and was the place where winners of the rumba contest. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Casa de las Américas 2024 Musicology Award

By Liem **ARMENTEROS**

HAVANA.- The 19th edition of the Casa de las Américas Musicology Award concluded last March 15 with the awarding of the book Lanugi Garawoun (Corazón Tambor): Música, espiritualidad y etnicidad en las garífunas de Livingston, Guatemala, by Argentinean author Augusto Pérez Gaurnieri.

On this occasion, a jury composed of Natalia Bieletto (Mexico-Chile), Omar Morales Abril (Guatemala-Mexico) and María Elena Vinueza (Ecuador-Cuba) was pleased to have selected as the winner a work as solid in its academic aspects as it is entertaining in its style.

In addition to other views stated, the decision was based on the fact that the piece offers new knowledge on musical practices closely linked to the identity of an ethnic group that has been marginalized from the cultural and socio-political point of view, and for the efficient application of the ethnographic method and a prolonged immersion in the musicology field.

To take the final decision, 18 works from nine Latin American countries were analyzed.

The casa de las Américas Musicology Award is considered an emblematic event and a beacon of musicology in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The present edition marked the 45 years of the event's foundation by outstanding

Cuban figures such as Argeliers León and Haydée Santamaría, in 1979.

The 65th anniversary of Casa de las Américas, an institution that is permanently committed to the promotion and development of the region's musical knowledge, was also celebrated.

This year's event stood out for its large international participation, with over one

hundred musicologists and researchers from over 20 Latin American, European and African nations.

The granting of the Casa de las Américas 2024 Musicology Award to Argentinean Augusto Pérez Gaurnieri marked the end of the activities held from March 11 to 15.

As part of the event, the 3rd Symposium of the ICTMD LAT CAR Study Group, "Knowledge, sound and movement as a way of resistance and permanence in Latin America and the Caribbean," was conducted, as well as the 3rd International Workshop on Music Historic-Documental Heritage in Spanish America.

The workshop was coordinated by the Esteban Salas Musical Heritage Cabinet of the San Gerónimo de La Habana University College (University of Havana/ City Historian's Office), two institutions joined by a long history of work and collaborations.

In this context, the work "Lo más gracioso que se pueda. Teatralidad en villancicos hispanoamericanos de los siglos XVII y XVIII", by 2023 Musicology awardee Omar Morales, was also presented.



Argentinean author Augusto Pérez Gaurnieri received the Casa de las Américas Musicology Award. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Pinar del Río: A Perfect Image of Colors

By Benjamín MICERINOS

PINAR DEL RÍO. The Cuban province of Pinar del Río is a magical and perfect region for nature trips; an area where the green of the environment stands out among the rest of the colors.

For the Cubans, in addition to being the westernmost province, it is the land of the best tobacco plantations, where the leaves of the cigars are cultivated and where this crop is a passion among farmers.

This region also has other charms, particularly three sceneries which compose a special map that has been designed following adventure-seekers' likes.

The first of these is Cayo Levisa, 27 kilometers off the city of La Palma and about three nautical miles from the mainland; a place that has four kilometers of virgin beaches and fine and white sand.

The diversity of species found in the waters of the key include the small manta rays – levisa in Spanish, after which the key is named.

Another scenery is located in the Guanahacabibes peninsula, which gives access to Cuba's westernmost point:

La Bajada, a small community of about 100 inhabitants who mainly do agroforestry works and are experienced in nature preservation.

In that region, visitors can tour the Guanahacabibes National Park, a 39,400-hectare area declared a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1987.

That site is home to over 670 species of plants – 15 of them endemic to the region – and small beaches linked to stories about pirates and hidden treasures. It also stands out for its fauna, with a large number of birds that include the Cuban Trogon, the Cuban Tody, the Bee Hummingbird, Indigo Buntings, Butterflies, Mockingbirds, Woodpeckers, in addition to several reptiles, amphibians and mammals.

The over 60-km long road that leads to the San Antonio Key includes semi-naked but green forests, coastal bushes, rocky and sandy areas and lake, swamp and mangrove vegetation.

An important place in this environment includes María La Gorda, one of the best International Diving Centers in Cuba, a unique and peaceful site ideal for adventurers, especially for those who want to dive in the sea.

The center, a perfect option for ecotourism, is in the surrounding area of Cabo Corrientes, about 143 kilometers southwest of the Pinar del Río city. Its waters treasure over 100 sunken Spanish galleons connected to fabulous legends about hidden treasures.



Pinar del Río is the land of the best tobacco plantations, where the leaves of the cigars are cultivated. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



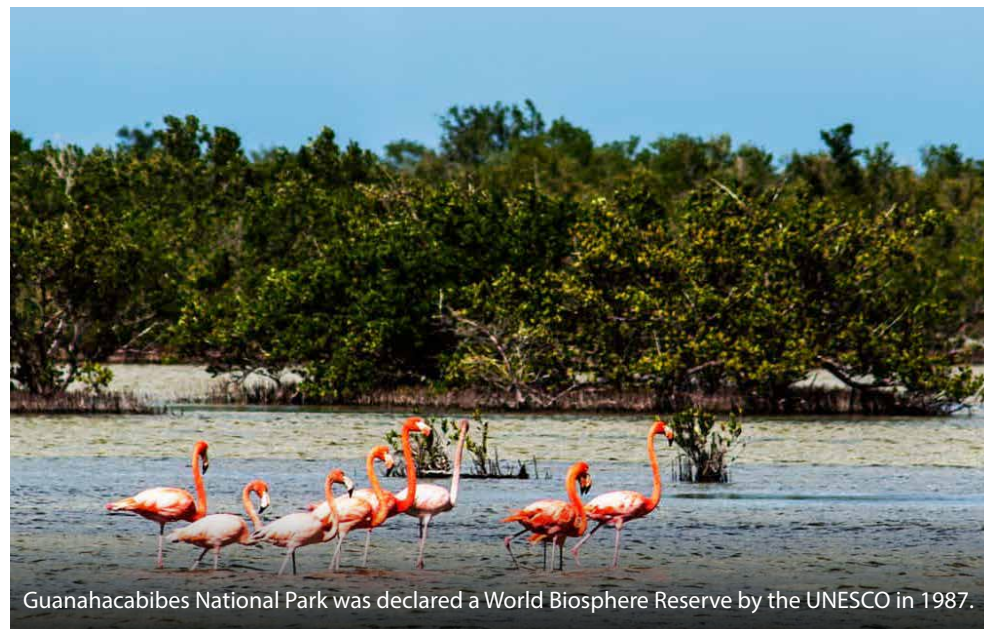
THE GETAWAY CAPITAL
MODERN AND EXCLUSIVE

For the enjoyment of all customer segments, **38** hotel products with more than **11,000** rooms in the country's most important tourist destinations.

www.bluediamondresorts.com



Cayo Levisa has four kilometers of virgin beaches and fine and white sand. PHOTO: Cubanacan Hotels.



Guanahacabibes National Park was declared a World Biosphere Reserve by the UNESCO in 1987.

Creative Women

By Diony **SANABRIA**

HAVANA.- The participation, drive and leadership of Cuban women in various spheres of society were praised at the closing of an event in which they played a leading role, which took place in this capital city.

The performance of our fellow countrywomen is a winning formula to face current challenges, affirmed member of the Communist Party Central Committee Secretariat Joel Queipo at the closing of the VI National Creative Women Meeting.

Any task the Cuban women perform, especially in the economy, is well done; they stand out for their efficiency, saving, adequate use of resources, the leader said in the presence of about 80 delegates.

Held for two days at Havana's Palco Hotel, the participants talked about the main achievements and creations made in recent times at the meeting organized by the National Innovators and Rationalists Association (ANIR).

One of the ways for us to go on lies on everyone's creative capacity and with women at the front, stressed Queipo, who also congratulated the participants for the results of their innovations.

All 78 lectures presented, in addition to the over three thousand initiatives that included grassroots level proposals, dealt with public health, education, communications, environment protection, rational use of water and the substitution of imports, among other topics.

Although all deserve special acknowledgement and give an impetus to new creations, ANIR National president Lidier Águila stated that 21 proposals won the first prize – three in each of the working commissions.

The meeting, held 30 years after its first edition, met its purposes and generally speaking, we are really pleased, Águila said before praising the organizational details and

the positive solutions reached in spite of the different obstacles.

First degree Cardiology specialist at the Havana's Medical-Surgical Research Center, Daniela Martínez, told **The Havana Reporter** that the event was very important and outstanding women from all over the country were able to show their work.



Any task the Cuban women perform is well done. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Interesting papers were presented and many results can be applied nationwide, affirmed author of the 'Assessment of ventricular depolarization and repolarization in patients subjected to anti-cancer therapy.'

Such lecture was Martínez's specialization thesis, for which she won the 2023 Annual Health Award.

Other creators shared the doctor's criterion, stated their happiness for the meeting and reiterated the importance to continue making a contribution to the country's development. According to official data, by the closing of last January, ANIR has 170,416 members, of which 68,638 are women.

Havana Club Cocktail Maestros Closes its Doors

By Mirna **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.-The Havana Club Cocktail Maestros competition concluded its Cuban edition and winners will now be able to attend the world event, reaffirming the nation as an essential host of international cocktail-making.

At the Capablanca Hall, in the emblematic Hotel Nacional, the duets of the three finalist teams – 10 semifinalists – showed their skills and proposals based on the large range of products included in the Havana Club portfolio.

Bar Moon Restobar, La Guarida and Bar Galería Taller Mederos had 15 minutes each to present a new evolution of the three winning drinks, at the competition held in the morning.

The real challenge, though, was that each duet selected the preparation to be made at random, a new evolution without losing the essence of the original cocktail.

Havana Club Cocktail Maestros is an international event that paves the way for a new era in the world of mixology,

a pioneering initiative that celebrates team vision, art and skill in cocktail-making, as well as the brand's versatility. A space designed to celebrate the community of bartenders, whose grand finale will take place from April 15 to 18 in Havana.

The competition is the result of an extensive collaboration between Havana Club International and the bartenders with which it has collaborated for years. A sign of this is the Havana Club Grand Prix, an international cocktail contest that started in 1996.

Havana Club International S.A. is a joint venture created in 1993 by the Cuba Ron S.A. Company and the French Pernod Ricard Group with the aimed of developing the Havana Club brand internationally.

At present, the company exports to over 125 countries, except the United States – because of the blockade consequences. Its main markets are Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Chile, Canada, Argentina and Mexico. By June 2023, the company sold 4.3 million boxes.



The winners of Havana Club Cocktail Maestros competition will be able to attend the world event. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

Writer López Sacha Captures his Time in a New Novel

By DaiLAFÁ

HAVANA.- "Voy a escribir la eternidad" (I am going to write eternity) is the title of famous Cuban narrator Francisco López Sacha's most recent novel, a book full of experiences, affections and symbols, whose starting point is his natal city of Manzanillo.

In a personalized way, Sacha (1950) captures the time he has lived in words, through remembrances, hopes that can be common to his peers, fellow country people and human beings of all times.

As he described, in the text he expresses the view that "we are eternity, simply because nobody will repeat our lives, not even ourselves."

Life entails a change, an unrepeatable singularity, as Spanish poet Federico García Lorca said in his work "Muerte de Antoñico el Camborio: Viva moneda que nunca se volverá a repetir" ("Death of Antoñico el Camborio," A living coin which never will be struck again), he affirmed.

In an exclusive interview with **The Havana Reporter**, López Sacha shared his impressions of this creation, for which he was granted the 2023 Alejo Carpentier novel award. He affirmed that "Voy a escribir la eternidad" is the most ambitious work he has ever written and the one that in his view can live in time when he is already gone.

He revealed that all or almost all the spiritual and musical symbols of his life appear in these pages, which were written by a man to whom "writing is a strong pain that one has to express" and eternity "cannot be written."

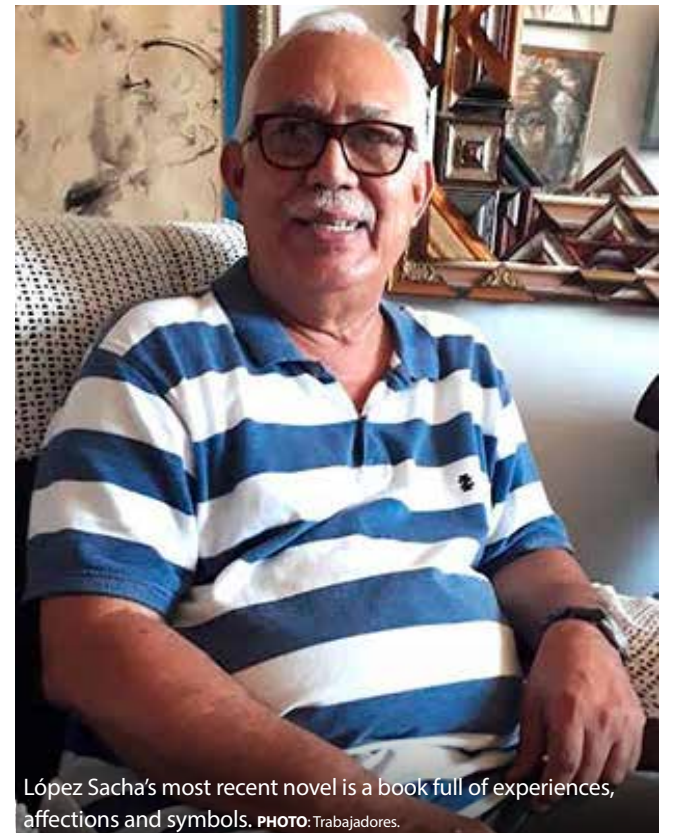
Music "is also everything, the basis, art and literature comes from that," stressed this Beatles maniac.

On the insights of this novel, the author recently said at the International Book Fair that he tried to describe Manzanillo from its origin and until the present, but also his life, from the origin and until now.

It took almost 30 years to the essayist and professor to finish this work, but the stop caused by the pandemic in 2020 forced him to work on it and finally finish it, recalling what Pablo Neruda said: I only wrote not to die.

According to intellectual Alberto Marrero, jury of the Alejo Carpentier award, everything flows in a veil of remembrances in *Voy a escribir la eternidad*, where nothing escapes from the kaleidoscope of memory in which the author displays his narrative skill and an ecumenical culture nourished by study and an agitated existence, as Marrero wrote in the book cover.

López Sacha's bibliography includes titles such as "La división de las aguas," "El cumpleaños del fuego," "Análisis de la ternura," "Dorado mundo," "Pastel flamante," "El más suave de todos los veranos," "El que va con la luz," "Prisioneros del rock and roll," among others.



López Sacha's most recent novel is a book full of experiences, affections and symbols. PHOTO: Trabajadores.

Jazz without Rhythm would not Exist

By DamarelysPÉREZ

HAVANA.- Cuban pianist Roberto Fonseca affirms that jazz represents a perfect combination between melody and rhythm; without those components, this genre could not exist, the musician and composer stressed.

In an interview with *The Havana Reporter*, Fonseca stated that that rhythm is the distinctive feature of Latin jazz, particularly Cuban jazz, "which makes us different from other styles."

To us, that rhythmic order is really important, said Fonseca, who also talked about the current state of the Cuban music in general. In that sense, he said that it is in good condition, either in terms of jazz, rumba, son or percussion in particular.

I have always said that one of Cuba's mysteries lies on the fact that it is a music factory and super-talented musicians will continue existing, with really interesting works, and they will continue graduating from our school, the pianist commented.

In this regards, Fonseca made reference to classical music teaching centers, which provide a solid basis to new students.

Enrolling any of these academies gives us a solid ground; it is the chance of playing the classics which can then be combined with Afro-Cuban

rhythms, with all the complex world of rumba, son montuno, guaracha or more traditional rhythms. "It is a huge exposure," he affirmed.

That is where all these worldwide famous creators come from and that is the reason why I say that the health of the Cuban music and culture is solid. The people of this island is highly cultivated and knowledgeable about rhythms and melodies, such as boleros and 'filin.'

Fonseca also talked about the festivals held in Cuba, which he considers should be open.

To me, there is only one music; codes change, just as aesthetic elements change, and if you can make a contribution respecting certain styles and forms, then it will be better for music, he stressed.

In this sense, he mentioned that this element is present in the Jazz Festival, in which, up to the present, musicians from different genres come together and share their music in Cuba.

Having those exchanges is really beautiful and that is what I recommend other events to include, an opening, because music is to be enjoyed, he noted.

What will Roberto Fonseca do in 2024? A lot of music, he highlighted; that is what we have the most, I always say so, because without music we would not be here but somewhere else; so, new projects, international tours, the young and experienced pianist said.

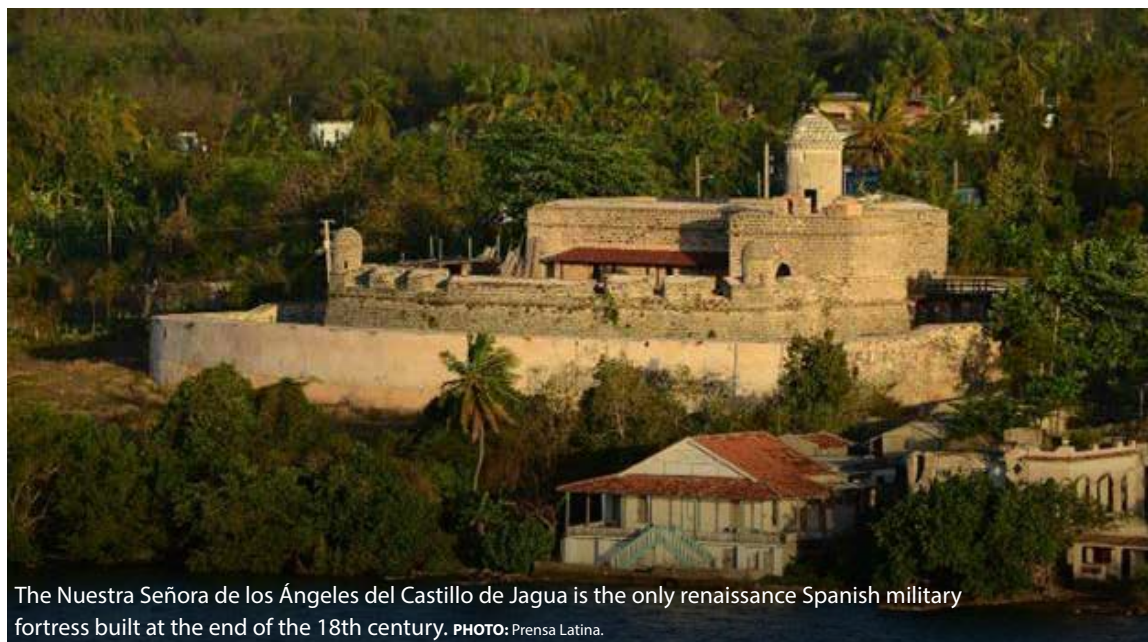


Fonseca stated that Latin jazz, particularly Cuban jazz, "makes us different from other styles."

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Jagua Fortress: Years of History

By Sabdiel **BATISTA**



The Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles del Castillo de Jagua is the only renaissance Spanish military fortress built at the end of the 18th century. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

CIENFUEGOS.- The Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles del Castillo de Jagua Fortress, a military construction built at the entrance of the Cienfuegos Bay, in Cuba's south-central region, was opened on March 12, 1745.

It is the only renaissance Spanish military fortress built at the end of the 18th century.

The work's architectonic features come from the European Middle Ages, including its vaulted naves and the surrounding moat; however, its adaptation to the field and its geometrical structure turn it into a typical American fortification.

The fortress was built with the objective of defending the bay and a large part of the island's southern coast, in addition to the San Pedro de la Roca Castle, in the Santiago de Cuba province.

The project of this important military construction was made by military engineer José Tantete Dubruller, who erected this solid, cube-shaped stone work with two levels, one drawbridge and a vaulted sentry box.

Years before its construction, the area was frequented by pirates and corsairs. Jacques de Sores (1554), Jean el Temerario (1557) and Francis Drake (1586), in addition to Henry Morgan and Gilberto Girón, were included among the famous buccaneers who visited the Jagua Bay.

Historians say that the Castillo de Jagua Fortress was on many occasions the stage of naval combats against pirate ships. In most of the actions, the fortress rejected the enemy attack and avoided the entrance of unwanted ships and crews.

In 1762, this symbol of the Cienfuegos province played an important role in the history of Cuba by being the headquarters of the Spanish military command against the brief English occupation of Cuba.

Troops were sent from there to the rescue of the capital, during the storming of Havana in 1763.

This construction was declared a National Monument on October 1978 and two decades later, on March 24, 1998, it was opened to the public as a museum, as it is seen at present.

Scientists Try to Preserve Giant Saurian Fossil

By Alfredo **BOADA**



Vice-president of the Cuban Speleological Society Esteban Rubén Grau. PHOTO: Internet.

HAVANA.- Cuban scientists work in one of the most important paleontology discoveries in the country: the preservation of a giant saurian fossil found a few months ago in a cave in Viñales Valley.

In statements to the press, doctor of Geological Sciences Manuel Iturralde Vinent explained that they concluded the 3D photogrammetry of the site where a fossilized skeleton of a four-meter long ichthyosaurus (a marine reptile similar to a dolphin but with a longer mouth and sharp teeth) was found.

He added that they also conducted the overall cartography of the cave, known as the basin of the Novillo river.

The rock where the fossil is found is a limestone with a structure similar to overlaid plates, which have come loose due to humidity and temperature changes, the expert explained.

That allowed the exposure of the skeleton, originally inside the rock, but because of the permanence of this condition, experts fear that the ichthyosaurus remains start coming loose and get lost.

Iturralde commented that the photogrammetry work was the first step taken, as it is the first time this is done on a fossil remain in Cuba, which is a breakthrough for national science.

Vice-president of the Cuban Speleological Society Esteban Rubén Grau stated that this

is a novel technique and one of the most used at present to obtain high-resolution tridimensional images of spaces such as caves, tombs, constructions, landscapes and objects of special interest.

In the case of the Viñales ichthyosaurus, the photogrammetry work allowed having a digital reproduction of the discovery site – in the Pinar del Río – which in turn allows studying each bone and the skeleton in general, without the need of getting inside the dangerous cave.

Experts determined that the fossilized skeleton, found at the end of 2023, is an ichthyosaurus, probably of the Ophthalmosaurus type, which lived in the primitive Caribbean Sea at the end of the Jurassic period, from 145 to 150 million years ago – an age never found before in another identifiable remain of this type of marine reptiles in Cuba.

It is the first skeleton of a large-size saurian in which several articulated bones were preserved, as smaller skeletons were found before, especially of fishes and of a pterosaur without the skull, as well as isolated bones.

In addition to doing research, experts try to stop the natural process that is happening in the rock that contains the fossil remains, from which small fragments are getting loose, which will eventually lead to the specimen's loss.

Chocolate, Rum and Cigars

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

Photos José **MERIÑO**

HAVANA.- The pairing of Cuban chocolate, cigar and rum is unique and special; an occasion to enjoy the country's tradition, culture and identity, affirmed president of the Chocolatera Habana company Carlos Menéndez.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, the official explained that those products' pairing complements each other and recreates a time that speaks about Cuba, in addition to allowing enjoying those tastes and the different chocolate flavors; that is what we call new ways of pleasing the palate.

He added that the main objective of Chocolatera Habana is to defend Cuba's fine traditional chocolates in a country that has excellent products, such as cacao beans, whose fusion with our rums, our coffee and our tropical fruits, gives a touch of distinction. Cigar and chocolate pairing is a perfect combination, as shown in the 24th edition of the Havana's Cigar Festival, recently held in Cuba.

According to Menéndez, it is necessary to create a culture on the inclusion of chocolate in pairings; in Cuba, for example, these are related to candies but they have a rather gourmet side.

The question then would be: how would a cigar and chocolate pairing be? To answer this question, Menéndez suggests that in order to attain a higher sensorial pleasure during tasting, the center of the chocolate should be bitten first and then let melt in the mouth, without chewing it.

Then, the cigar should be puffed on for this to blend in the mouth and have the other piece of chocolate. After that, people can continue smoking the cigar, because the Cuban cocoa beans have the peculiarity that their taste lasts for a long time.

Each cigar has its own feature, just as every chocolate, as cocoa beans, like other crops, have different varieties, such as criollo, trinitario and forastero, and their mixture recreates different tastes.



Haiti: Two Outlooks on a Single Country

By Joel MICHEL

PORT-AU-PRINCE.- Many news reports generalize and show a Haiti in total chaos, but the reality is different, as one part of the country is paralyzed by the actions of the gangs and another maintains its vitality.

In provinces, schools of different educational levels are already receiving their students as normal as always, even those that are taken by their parents from the capital for being unable to attend classes as a result of gangs' violence.

Outside Port-au-Prince, public and private transportation is functioning normally. In fact, busses that cover highway routes can also be seen.

Commercial banks continue operating at a slower pace and long lines of people are seen outside money transfer offices.

The city of Jérémie is calm again. Schools, banks, gas stations and buying and selling activities returned to normal.

The same thing happens in Cap-Haitien, where vitality of large-scale trade, informal market, schools, public institutions and passengers' transportation is notable.

Port-au-Prince shows a different scenario, as gangs' actions continue here and cannot be stopped.

Criminals launched an attack against a power plant and four sub-stations. Such facilities, located in the capital's metropolitan area, were partially destroyed and cannot provide services. Bandits took important documents, cables, investors, batteries as well as computer and office equipment.

With their actions, gangs prevent the supply of medications to pharmacies and hospitals, and there is even a severe lack of medicinal oxygen.

They also attacked the Bank of the Republic of Haiti, a bold action that was thwarted by the institution's security forces and the police. Attackers arrived in the place, in Port-au-Prince, carrying automatic weapons and opened fire against the facility, where the abovementioned entity is located.

Until now, criminal gangs had only attacked several commercial bank branches, which were plundered and even burned down, as a result of which they will not be operable for a long time.

Attack on the Bank of the Republic of Haiti was preceded by armed actions against the port, power plants, police stations, prisons,

airports and ministries, including the Interior and Local Government ministries; even the

home of the National Police director general was set on fire.



Criminal gangs had attacked several commercial bank branches and markets.

PHOTO: Internet.

**INSURANCE
TRAVEL**

JUST TO CUBA

ESICUBA
Seguros Internacionales de Cuba, S.A.

www.esicuba.cu esicuba.clientes@esicuba.cu

Follow us

Russia Gives Priority to Oil, Wheat and Fertilizers Supply

By Odette **DÍAZ**

MOSCOW.- Russia gives priority to hydrocarbons, wheat and fertilizers supply to Cuba, affirmed Deputy Prime Minister Dmitri Chernyshenko at the bilateral Intergovernmental Commission meeting on Economic-Commercial and Scientific-Technical Collaboration, recently held in this capital.

"We are giving priority to guaranteeing the stable supply of oil, oil products, wheat and fertilizers, a highly important issue for the Cuban side," stated the official after saying that a new loan has been given to Havana with that purpose in mind.

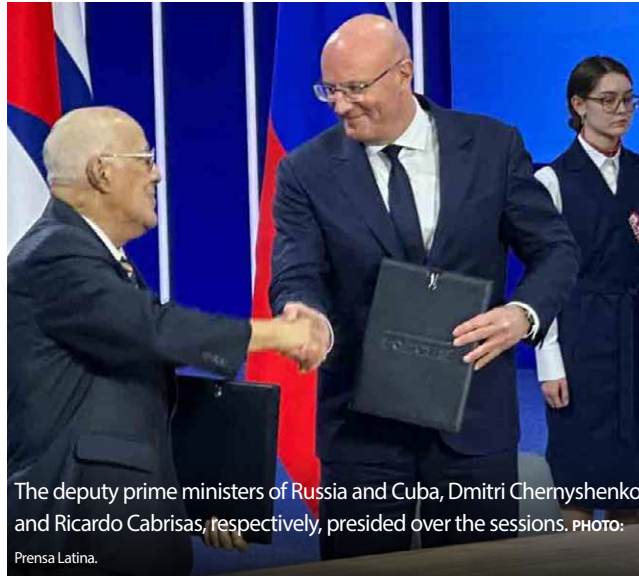
At the 21st session of the bilateral cooperation mechanism, held on March 15 in Moscow, the governmental representative of the Eurasian nation highlighted that at least 100 Russian companies started working in the island in the last year.

He added that entities interested the most in investing in Cuba represent different sectors of the economy in the Russian territory, such as heavy industry, energy, bank, agriculture, information sciences and tourism.

Chernyshenko also commented that they trust in the positive impact the functioning of the Russian companies in Cuba will have in the bilateral trade indicators in the near future.

"At the same time, several Russian banks consider the possibility of opening their representation offices in Cuba in the near future," he affirmed.

In this regard, he added that Moscow and Havana agreed to take interaction in the field of interbank cooperation to a qualitative new level, "with the generalized introduction of the MIR payment system in Cuba in 2023 as a particularly important event," he said.



The deputy prime ministers of Russia and Cuba, Dmitri Chernyshenko and Ricardo Cabrisas, respectively, presided over the sessions. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

In that sense, director of the Russian Bank National Payment System department, Alla Bákina, explained that both nations created a liquidation infrastructure that allows providing service to the current bilateral trade volumes.

"The liquidation infrastructure between both countries is created and allows attending the current, bilateral trade volumes. We consider that the main task we now have is to provide all participants in the foreign trade activities with an independent, comfortable and safe infrastructure for cross-border liquidation," she stressed.

The official also noted that this mechanism must include both, correspondent accounts in national currencies and independent channels for financial information exchange.

"We believe that one of the key factors to attain financial sovereignty is the use of national currencies in liquidations between our States. In this issue, we have reached a full understanding with the Cuban side. We now see how the Russian and Cuban banks open accounts in ruble, Chinese yuan and transactions are made in these accounts."

The 21st session of the Cuba-Russia Intergovernmental Commission meeting on Economic-Commercial and Scientific-Technical Collaboration was headed, from the Cuban side, by Deputy Prime Minister and minister of Foreign Trade, Ricardo Cabrisas.

The Cuban delegation was also composed of Tourism minister, Juan Carlos García and minister-president of the Cuban Central Bank Juana Lilia Delgado, in addition to other deputy ministers and officials responsible for the working groups and Cuban ambassador to Russia, Julio Garmendía.

Own Solutions to Alleviate the Electric Energy System

By Raquel **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The Cuban electric energy system faces difficulties because of the lack of fuel; however, work is conducted upon the basis of our own solutions to make progress in crude oil, gas and renewable energies use in the country.

In a meeting with the press, minister of Energy and Mines (MINEM) Vicente de la O explained that in spite of the positive results of the strategy adopted to conduct

planned maintenance in power plants, availability of fuel failed and this led to power cuts.

In spite of the present delicate situation, Cuba's course of action is directed at making progress with our own resources and looking for independence from the import of fuel, the official stressed.

De la O announced the execution of two contracts with Chinese companies, which will gradually supply over 2,000 megawatts (MW) to the national electric system – the equivalent to the import of 750 tons of fuel.

Such agreements foresee the installation of 46 solar parks – about three in each province of the country – for a total of 92, scheduled to conclude by May 2025 and 2028.

The minister explained that as part of the first project – to supply about 1,000 MW – 200 containers will arrive each week with the necessary equipment.

De la O also commented that the technology involved in these projects will allow making rapid progress in the execution of the work, by avoiding slow and expensive construction processes such

as concrete casting or formwork for solar panels' bases.

He added that three small photovoltaic parks were finished last March, after a test process directed at their synchronization with the national electric energy system.

According to the MINEM minister, this strategy will allow making progress in the policy aimed at reaching 24 percent of renewable energy by 2030, and even before, as the installation of those clean sources was around 100 to 200 MW – actually lower than the 2,000 MW foreseen for 2028.



Cuba will install 46 solar parks, which will be ready in 2025 and 2028, to reach 92 throughout the country. PHOTO: Venceremos.

Foreign Financing Supports Agricultural Projects on Gender

By MaríaACOSTA

HAVANA.- The introduction of the international 'Agrofrutales' (fruits & agriculture) collaboration project in the Cuban province of Artemisa had an impact on local economy by creating jobs, especially for women, and helping reduce gender gap.

The objectives of this project, implemented since 2018 in five municipalities of the country – Caimito, Alquizar, Artemisa, Contramaestre and Santiago de Cuba – are directed at contributing to food security through the management of mango, guava and papaya fruits and agriculture chains.

In an interview with **The Havana Reporter**, Deputy Governor of the Artemisa Municipal Administration, Lázaro Yadier Pérez, explained that the municipality takes part in implementation of the project, managed by the United Nations Development Program through a Canadian donation.

This foreign financing allowed developing territorial economy thanks to the setting-up of new technologies, such as the Badon mini-industry, which has a fruit processing capacity of 12 tons per hour and whose added value is part of a gender project – as this productive line is managed by women.

Although the mini-industry was initially foreseen to be concluded in 2024, an extension was requested with a new financing that will allow changing the energy matrix, in order to follow up the productive process.

A few months after its installation, Badon has already made a major contribution and is considered one of the main projects inserted in the territorial development strategy of

a place that is essentially an agricultural area, whose fruit production yields are large, the official affirmed.

Another important benefit of this project was the installation of a group of irrigation systems in the fields of producers who are leaders in fruit production in the area, in addition to the supply of agricultural equipment, he added.

The sale of juice in a community that is out of the city center – also included in the gender project – is also underway, a small development action for this area and a source of job for local women, the Artemisa Deputy Governor commented.

All these projects are a source of jobs, especially the mini-industry, which created capacities for women in activities

that start with the arrival of the raw material and include their classification, benefit, wash, selection, monitoring, pulp removing, cooking, canning and labeling, in addition to their storage.

They also fostered the reincorporation of women in work activities in the communities, especially of those included in the 30 and 40 age group, Pérez said.

The official stressed that based on the Badon's potential, work is conducted on the mini-industry's articulation to the economy, its productive supply chain and its link to other economic actors, which will allow increasing production levels and improving salary, as long as the entity is able to produce, add value to their products and have connections with other niches.



The objectives of this project, implemented are directed at contributing to food security. PHOTO: Artemiseño.

EFG International, the Penultimate Victim

By DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- A private Swiss bank is perhaps the penultimate victim of the extraterritorial economic, commercial and financial blockade the Government of the United States imposes with full rigor on Cuba.

EFG International agreed to pay an approximate sum of 3.7 million dollars to settle the allegations that the Swiss bank institution had violated the coercive measures imposed by Washington against Cuba and individuals from other nations that, according to them, are part of a unilateral black list.

The United States Department of the Treasury informed about the so-called violation. It says that from 2014 to 2018, EFG, based in Zurich, allegedly processed 868 security transactions for customers in Cuba and for a Chinese citizen included in that list.

A report published by The Wall Street Journal indicated that EFG, which has around 40 global subsidiaries, also processed five payments last year for another person blocked under the sanctions imposed on Russia abroad.

The allegedly-illicit transactions amounted to 30.4 million dollars, stated the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).

Until June last year, EFG had about 146,500 million Swiss francs (165,700 million dollars) in assets under management. The entity offers a range of financial services, including banking, investment, asset management and securities brokering to institutional customers and individuals worldwide.

A spokesperson for the bank institution explained in an e-mail that the company made the disclosures to OFAC in 2017 and 2023.

For the moment, EFG also restricted the accounts of customers blacklisted under the U.S. sanctions. Now, it will require approval from its compliance department for any account activity of other customers.

In calculating the fine, OFAC took into account EFG's disclosure of "the alleged violations and its substantial cooperation, including through an internal probe to identify exposure to clients facing U.S. sanctions," the journal said.

The case highlights the risks faced by banks that have global clients and hold omnibus accounts in the United States, OFAC said.

It is not the first time that a Swiss bank appears in a retaliation case for violating the laws of the U.S. blockade that, for over six decades, puts the boot in Cuba's neck.

A number of Swiss banks have paid fines worth millions because of that cause.

Unfortunately, this is another irrefutable example of how the United States imposes its extraterritorial laws and tries to control with whom institutions in different parts of the world can or cannot have operations if they are subjected to the effect of their coercive measures.

EFG  Bank

Paris 2024 in Sight

By JulioMEJÍAS

HAVANA.- Difficult for some, easier for others, the truth is that the Cuban athletes continue participating in the main events included in the International Judo Federation calendar, the most recent of these the Upper Austria Grand Slam, held in the city of Linz, in that central European nation.

On the one hand, Cuba's main representatives have their presence in the summer games practically guaranteed thanks to their comfortable, current position in the Olympic ranking, although that is not the case of the middle and light weight players.

Iván Silva (90 kg), a judoka from Matanzas province who was the world runner-up six years ago, took a major step forward by becoming a champion in Linz and adding 700 points, as a result of which he is now placed 14th with 3,198 points.

His fellow countryman Andy Granda (+100 kg) is in an unbeatable position, as he is placed fifth in the Olympic ranking with 3,904 points – ahead of Russians Inal Tasoev (5,700) and Tamerlan Bashaev

(4,020); South Korean Kim Minjong (4,115) and Tajik Temur Rakhimov (3,950).

In the Austrian tournament, the Cuban super-heavy weight judoka added 490 points after reaching the silver medal, only beaten in the final by Czech Lukas Krpalek, who is placed ninth in the ranking with 3,347 points.

Multiple Olympic and world medalist Idalys Ortíz (+78 kg) showed a good performance in the tatami, where she was only beaten by Brazilian Beatriz Souza – third in the Olympic ranking (5,050).

Ortíz defeated the rest of her opponents by ippon, including two judokas currently placed in the Olympic ranking: Turkish Hilal Ozturk (ninth, 3,505) and Dutch Karen Stevenson (18). Both judokas are placed ahead of the Artemisa player, who is currently ranked 24 (1,903) and is thus qualified for the Olympic event.

Maylín del Toro (63 kg), however, did not have a good performance neither in Austria – where she lost her only fight – nor in the Tashkent Grand Slam (Uzbekistan). Nevertheless, the seventh places reached in February in Baku, Azerbaijan and Paris, made her score 260 points in both cases and she now has 2,306 points, valid to be

placed 21 – which if she is able to maintain, will provide her a direct ticket, but she cannot be overconfident.

Magdiel Estrada (73 kg) also left the central European territory head bowed, but the 420 points scored in Paris, Baku and Tashkent keep him in place 22 (2,135), which allows him to access at least one of the continental quotas of his division – a position he still can and must improve.

The rest of the team members who hope to fight under the five rings face a different scenario to those mentioned before and their chances to go Paris 2024 hang by a threat.

They are Idelannis Gómez (70 kg), Jonathan Charon (60 kg) and Orlando Polanco (66 kg), ranked 47 (757 points), 48 (817) and 44 (1,108), respectively. Qualifying is an uphill struggle for all three.



Iván Silva (90 kg) became a champion in the Upper Austria Grand Slam, held in the city of Linz. PHOTO: Internet.

By LemayPADRÓN

Another Olympic Ticket in Boxing

HAVANA.- Boxer Alejandro Claro (51 kg) has just joined the Cuban delegation that will participate in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, after winning his ticket in the first world qualifying tournament held in the Italian city of Busto Arsizio.

The national champion had a good performance in the tournament, rounded up with his victory over Colombian boxer Yuberjen Martínez, Olympic runner-up in Río de Janeiro 2016 and one of the best in the world in this category.

Legnis Cala (57 kg) and Yakelín Estornell (66 kg) tried to go down in history as the first Cuban female boxers to attend an Olympic event, but as known, their mission was difficult because of their opponents' outstanding quality and the fact that they have barely gotten on the ring for the last couple of months.

A lot more was expected from the rest of the boxers: Jorge Cuéllar (71), Erislandy Álvarez (63.5) and Fernando Arzola

(+92), particularly from the two latter – medal holders in the Tashkent World Championship.

In the case of Erislandy, his defeat was the result of a cut in an eyebrow, an area where most of the blows are given and that needs time for healing so it does not open up again in a competition as demanding as this, where boxers almost compete every day.

Unlike professional boxing, in Olympic boxing, this type of injuries brings bouts

to a stop and finish with the injured boxer's defeat, either in that very bout or in the next fight.

That is the reason why this situation is so worrying, because the Cienfuegos boxer will not have time to heal and three-time world champion Lázaro Álvarez, who is also included in his division, is waiting for his right time, which could be this.

Both boxers have shown themselves unstable and the technical staff will soon have to make a decision on the boxers they will send to the next pre-Olympic tournament, to be held in Bangkok, Thailand, from May 23 to June 3.

In relation to Arzola, blood was also on the way, but in this case from his opponent; however, the result was not in his favor. He actually faced a demanding opponent but there are chances for him to reach his ticket in another event.

Boxing, Cuba's emblematic sport, is not supposed to change its delegation much for the Thailand tournament, except for the change between Erislandy and Lázaro Álvarez, if needed.

For the time being, continental champions Julio César La Cruz and Arlen López, in addition to Saidel Horta and Alejandro Claro, have already qualified for the City of Light.

In relation to our continent, Brazil heads the list, with 10 of the 13 tickets possible, both genders included.



Alejandro Claro (51 kg) won his ticket to Paris 2024 in the first world qualifying tournament held in the Italian city of Busto Arsizio. PHOTO: J.T.

United States' Lack of Will to Change its Policies on Cuba

Text and Photo Deisy FRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- In order not to admit the lack of will to change its policy on Cuba, the Government of the United States continues appealing to demagogic reasons, distortion and deceitful manipulation of pretexts.

The above was stated in an interview with **The Havana Reporter** by Deputy General Director of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department on U.S.A. Issues, Johana Tablada, who carried out a work visit to Washington DC.

The official said that at present, the U.S.A. government and the most conservative or anti-Cuban sectors of the society use pretexts such as the one that says that there are military bases of foreign countries in Cuba, or that the Government of Havana is part of a program to send soldiers to Ukraine.

"It is absolutely false and it has been denied, just like the allegation of Chinese bases that The Wall Street Journal publishes every week with total impunity and without any evidence," she stressed.

The diplomat made reference to "permanent deceit in relation to the human

rights topic, in which the Government of the United States grants privileged treatment to those persons who have been the object or the target of their projects of financing for their programs of intervention in the Cuban domestic policy."

Tablada highlighted that by favoring those people, many of which not even live in Cuba, they try to justify the permanence and real violation of the human rights of millions of Cubans, children, women and senior adults, who are being deprived of their fundamental rights.

On the topic of bilateral relations, she explained that "the policy of the (Joe) Biden Government has essentially followed that of the (Donald) Trump Government."

She noted that this administration's (miserable) legacy "would be the largest migratory wave in the history of Cuba... highly regrettable for the Cuban population, for the Cuban family."

The truth is that every day, it is more difficult, if not impossible, to hide that there is a direct link between the impact of the maximum pressure measures Trump adopted and Biden has maintained and the migratory wave that has taken place since Cuba was unfairly included in

the list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism.

And it is true that the Government of the United States has not been successful in the application of that twisted logic that if the blockade is strengthened, an uprising, destabilization situation would be caused among our population, to then blame the Cuban government for the impact of the measures they have taken, Tablada added. The diplomat also affirmed that the U.S. people, due to electoral, political reasons and the corruption of the U.S. electoral system, would allow a small group to

take control of a topic as important as the foreign policy to preserve privileges.

That is what happens with the proposal of Republican congresswoman María Elvira Salazar, who wants to indefinitely maintain the designation of Cuba as a state that sponsors terrorism.

We do not know either who will be in power in January, nor who will control this highly polarized country, where there are emerging forces with a practically fascist slant and barbaric, anti-civilization values such as racism, xenophobia and discrimination are even fashionable.



Deputy General Director of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs Department on U.S.A. Issues, Johana Tablada. PHOTO: Internet.



International Health Center

EL YAREY

Opportunity for foreign investment in Cuba



www.smcsalud.cu
vpp.smc@smcsalud.cu