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Caribbean's Leading Cultural Destination in 2024

By Benjamín MICERINOS

HAVANA.- Cuba again won the 2024 Caribbean's Leading Cultural Destination award, a prize the island has been granted since 2021 by World Travel Awards, considered the "Oscars of Tourism."

The nomination for the World Travel Awards' 2024 Caribbean's Leading Cultural Destination also included Barbados, Bermuda, Jamaica, Martinique, Puerto Rico, St. Kitts and Trinidad.

The awards were founded in 1993 and annually gather a jury of experts in lodging and associates, especially World Travel and Tourism Council.

Such recognitions are granted worldwide in eight international regional levels, in a wide range of categories.

Cuba was previously awarded as the World's Best Cultural Destination by the Travelers' Choice Awards Best of the Best 2024 in Tripadvisor, the largest and most popular travel and tourism platform.

Cuba's cultural achievements are famous and include, among others, the Cuban Film Institute, Casa de las Américas, the National Printing, the National Ballet, the Symphonic Orchestra and the Arts Instructors School.

The prizes the island has received include the Old Havana and its fortification

system, which the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) included in the category of Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Trinidad and Valle de los Ingenios (1988); the San Pedro de la Roca Castle, in Santiago de Cuba (1997); the Desembarco del Granma National Park

(1999), and the Viñales Valley (1999) have also been acknowledged.

The cultural scenery that combines the rich African-Cuban inheritance, the Spanish influence and the contemporary creativity is a fascinating attraction for visitors. The island is the scene of an explosion of artistic expressions that

can be seen in its streets, galleries and theaters, with a lot of attractions for its music and dances.

The Cuban culture is diverse and fascinating, with several influences throughout its history – European, U.S., African and others – and is famous for its peculiar national identity.



From 2021 Cuba has received the Caribbean's Leading Cultural Destination award by World Travel Awards. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Bartender Association Celebrates its 100th Anniversary with Awards

By Raquel DÍAZ

HAVANA.- The Cuban Bartender Association (ACC) celebrated its 100th anniversary with two important international awards that were won, this year, by women bartenders in Venice and Athens, commented the association's president Eddie Naranjo.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, Naranjo explained that Ana Carla Hernández, bartender at the Habana Libre Tryp Hotel, won the international Lady Drink 2024 Cocktail, held in Venice, Italy.

On the other hand, Kenia Borges, of the Meliá Internacional Varadero Hotel, won the prize of the first edition of the International Barlady Cocktail Championship among 16 competitors.

Naranjo added that the ACC was the only Latin American bartender association that was invited to participate in the

Barlady event and said that winning that prize allowed them to bring to Cuba, in 2025, the second edition of that world contest. One of ACC's main objectives is to raise the level of all bartenders and improve their preparation, their professionalism and the knowledge they offer clients from the bar.

In relation to the ACC affiliation, he commented that they have 1,582 members distributed in 19 grassroots bodies all over the country, who need to constantly grow.

"We have to grow and increase the affiliation of the tourist sector in order to improve that service to the people who visit us and then, on that direction, address our strategies," he stressed.

Naranjo pointed out that on June 27, the ACC celebrated its 100th anniversary with more dreams ahead and stressed that "for us, it is an accomplishment and a success to be the first in the world to celebrate the 100th anniversary."



The main objectives of ACC is to raise the level of all bartenders and improve their preparation and professionalism. PHOTO: Panchito González

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Chief Graphic Editor: Francisco González
Circulation: Commercial Department
Printing: Prensa Latina

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
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Unity in the face of U.S. Aggression



During the sessions, Parliament members discussed and approved legislations on unprecedented topics in the country. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

By Melissa KING

HAVANA.- Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel highlighted the people's unity as the main weapon to resist and defeat the complex economic situation the country faces, aggravated by the strengthening of Washington's blockade.

In his speech at the closing of the recent Third Ordinary Period of Sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP, Parliament), the head of State urged to reproduce the best economic and social practices in order to boost the country's comprehensive growth.

Díaz-Canel added that encouraging economic managing and social development experiences are boosted all over the nation, which shows how much it can be done, even in the most difficult situations.

He highlighted the sustained and marked effort of management groups that know how to impose themselves boldly on problems, focus on solutions and "have banished the word "route" from everyday philosophy".

The president commented that the new six laws approved at the meeting, which concluded on July 19, respond to public interest demands and increase Cuban citizens' rights.

Those norms are highly important for the society, develop constitutional precepts and three of them are present, for the first time, in the islands' legal universe, he said.

During the ANPP sessions, Parliament members discussed and approved legislations on unprecedented topics in the country, such as the Transparency and Access to Information Law, a regulation that shows the State and the Government's political will to make its management transparent, in an economic and media war scenario.

The Decoration and Honorary Titles Law, a legal instrument that updates the methodology and organization of that field, and the Administrative Procedure Law, a legislation without normative precedents in the country, were also approved.

MPs also adopted the Migration, Citizenship and Immigration Laws, which will allow updating the Cuban migratory system and strengthening ties with Cubans residing abroad.

At the sessions, the parliamentarians were updated on the progress made in the implementation of the Government's projections to correct distortions and boost the economy again in 2024.

As Prime Minister Manuel Marrero explained, Cuba's main priorities in the second semester will include the price and fiscal monetary control policy and the promotion of national production and offer to the population. Increase of the foreign currencies' incomes; diversification of exports, and improvement of the socialist state company, are also included.

Migration, Citizenship and Immigration

By Rafael ARZUEGA

HAVANA.- With the approval of the Migration, Citizenship and Immigration Laws by the National Assembly of People's Power (Cuban Parliament), the Cuban government completes a process directed at strengthening ties with its emigrants.

The three legal norms state the government's will to build greater trust with residents abroad and include them in national economic and comprehensive-growth processes.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, General Director for Consular Issues and Attention to Cubans Residing Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ana Teresita González, stresses that determination.

We want them to participate in our actions to build a fairer and more humanist socialism; Cuba "is open to welcome those who defend and love their homeland," she said.

We hope to count on them to contribute to national development, noted González, who added that the country even wants to help the Cubans abroad to attain stability in their countries of residency.

Her statement is not different from the Ministry of Interior (MININT) discourse, an entity that is more involved in these norms.

Head of the MININT Identification, Migration and Immigration Department Mario Méndez affirmed that the legislations are comprehensive and are in tune with international practices.

They not only include Cubans living in other nations but also provisions for those residing in the country, for foreigners and several bodies, he explained.

The official added that these legislations are the result of four years of work and will enter into force in 2025.

The amendments include eliminating the limit of 24 months as the authorized length of stay abroad, stopping the increase in the emigrant status - held by those who left the country before 2013 - and ensuring that such persons do not lose housing, car or other property.

Their patrimonial right was one of the topics discussed the most since the publication of the bills, in addition to entrance and departure from the country; investors' stay in the national territory; effective residency, and citizenship's loss. In relation to the rest of the topics, he commented that the gaining of another citizenship does not mean the loss of the Cuban citizenship, although while in the island, a foreign citizenship cannot be used.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez affirmed that the new laws do not restrict rights and are directed at continuing strengthening Cubans' unity, following the high complexity of current migratory phenomena.

In 1972, Cuba promulgated the Migration Law, which was published in 1978 and was one of the most relevant changes on that policy in the country. Four decades later, an updating process started, with the introduction of several decrees and amendments in 2015, 2017 and 2019.



The legislations are comprehensive and are in tune with international practices.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Pacemakers for Cuba, a Unique Effort to Save Lives

Text and Photo: Elizabeth **BORREGO**

UNITED NATIONS.- Over 300 pacemakers will be sent to Cuban health institutions thanks to a campaign launched in the United States and Europe to support the Cuban health system in its most urgent needs.

The initiative, coordinated by the Global Health Partners (GHP) and MediCuba Europa non-profit organizations, is a unique effort, according to GHP vice-president Bob Schwartz, who has long provided his solidarity work to the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP).

In an interview granted to The Havana Reporter, Schwartz described the project as one of the most valuable promoted by GHP in three decades of work in Cuba.

At the beginning of May, both organizations announced the intention of collecting 150,000 dollars to send 300 pacemakers to five hospital centers in Cuba within a period of four months, but the goal was met in half that time. In the second month, the amount exceeded 187,000 dollars. During the pandemic of COVID-19, Global Health Partners launched a similar initiative to support immunization with Cuban vaccines and managed to gather six million syringes in a few months.

However, both projects had to avoid the restrictions imposed by the United States that limit access to a good part of the market and prevent sending equipment with more than ten percent of U.S. components to Cuba.

The campaign takes place at a particularly sensitive time for the Cuban health system. According to figures published by GHP, about 70 Cuban elderly cannot leave their hospital beds until they get a pacemaker, while the country's general demands are estimated at about 2,000 patients in need.

The idea is to deal with the most serious cases of patients with heart conditions that need a pacemaker in the country and acquire equipment in Europe with the support of MediCuba Europa and the saving-lives coalition that

gathers dozens of organizations in the United States that oppose the blockade, Schwartz added.

The inclusion of Cuba in the U.S. list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism particularly prevents the nation to access the international bank system and severely limits its foreign currency offer.

The elimination of Cuba from that list would be a big relief for Global Health Partners' work and the very Ministry of Health.

During the campaign to send syringes, the organization paid about four times the price in the United States because

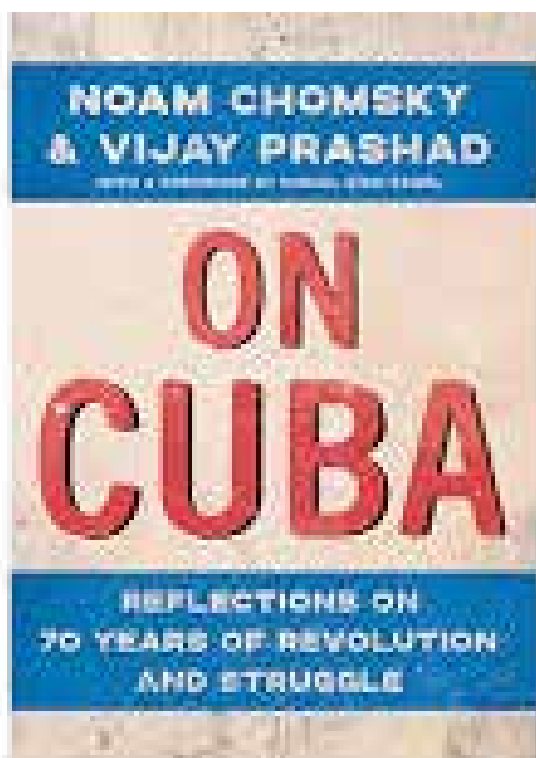
of vendors' fear when knowing they would be sent to the island, Schwartz stated.

Without such designation, the bank system would be opened to Cuba; transportation costs would drastically reduce, and access to markets would be possible, he added. "The truth is that there is no rational reason to maintain Cuba in the terrorist list. To begin with, there was no reason to include it again. The Trump administration did it out of revenge and here we are, three years later," he affirmed.



Vice-president of the Global Health Partners (GHP) Bob Schwartz.

Chomsky and Prashad Publish Book on Cuba



On Cuba traces Cuban history from the early days of the 1950s revolution to the present. PHOTO: Internet.

By Deisy **FRANCIS**

WASHINGTON.- *On Cuba*, a text on the history of the Cuban Revolution, from the early days, is the title of the four-handed book written by famous U.S. philosopher and political scientist Noam Chomsky and journalist Vijay Prashad.

The above was announced by Prashad in his X social networks, where he wrote a phrase: "On Cuba. It is out."

The volume includes a foreword by Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel and an introduction by founder and co-director of The People's Forum project, Manolo de los Santos.

"Through an intimate conversation between two of the country's most astute observers of international politics, Noam Chomsky and Vijay Prashad, *On Cuba* traces Cuban history from the early days of the 1950s revolution to the present," stated a synopsis of the work in the website of The New Press.

Chomsky's heterodox approach to world affairs is on full display as he and Prashad grapple with Cuba's unique place on the international scene, the text added.

In a media landscape saturated with half-truths and fake news, the authors seek to shed light on the truth of a small nation that, so close to the world's most powerful empire, knew how to guide its own destiny.

Chomsky, the author of numerous books, an Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), is one of the 20th century towering figures, thanks to his works on linguistic theory and cognitive sciences.

He is also admired for his political activism, characterized by a fierce criticism of contemporary capitalism and the United States' foreign policy.

The New York Times described him as "the most important intellectual alive today."

Prashad, an Indian historian, also the author of numerous books, a journalist and a political commentator, is the director of Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, editor of LeftWord Books and chief correspondent for Globetrotter (Independent Media Institute).

Solidarity Pregnancy

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba does everything necessary to ensure that each pregnancy is desired, each delivery is safe and each birth is a full life, which ratifies that there is no surrogate mother in the country and that legal, medical and penal controls protect solidarity pregnancy.

As approved in the new Cuban Families Code, surrogacies, in addition to being excluded, are sanctioned in the Penal Code.

Solidarity pregnancy, on the contrary, is an assisted reproduction technique directed at different or same-sex couples and single people who have any infertility problem that prevents them from conceiving pregnancy in a natural way.

The very Families Code states that this procedure should only be conducted for altruist and human solidarity reasons, far from any fees, just with the objective of socializing this practice as a reproduction opportunity for the Cuban families.

In this regard, vice-president of the Cuban National Jurist Union Yamila González recently clarified that solidarity pregnancy cannot be mediated by any payment or economic interest of any type and is totally protected by medical, legal, judicial and criminal controls.

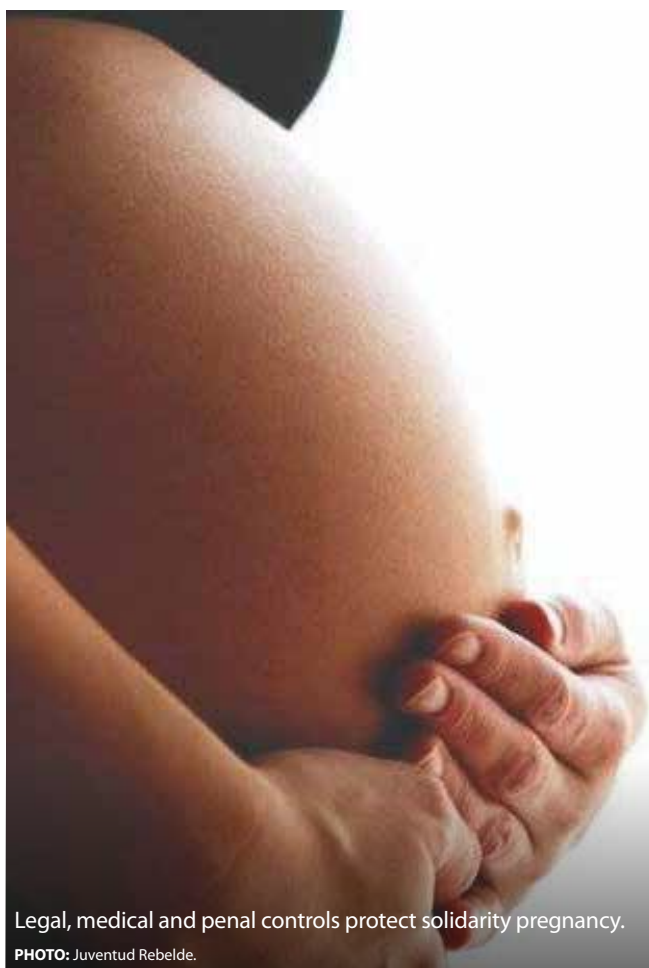
"Those legal and medical controls prevent any possibility of surrogacy in our country" and "any exploitation of women's body," she affirmed.

Such a modality could only happen between people with family bonds or affectionately close, proven and long-standing, over the age of 25, as long as other assisted reproduction techniques have been exhausted and have failed, and just once.

In solidarity pregnancy, the expectant woman does not provide the ovule, and if this were the case, it is no longer considered a solidarity pregnancy. In addition, acceptance on the part of the expectant woman does not eliminate her constitutional right to terminate pregnancy, freely and safely, explained González, who is also a member of the Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

In relation to opinions and even fake news on the practice of surrogacies in Cuba, González denied any possibility on the grounds that, in the Cuban context, health is exclusively public and state, and assisted reproduction services are part of the public health system. Thus, medical and legal controls have total guarantees.

It is a new method in the primary health care and a possibility to complete the reproductive function of all families, thus preparing individuals involved in the process and the community at large, to put it into practice in the Cuban society, is a must.



Legal, medical and penal controls protect solidarity pregnancy.

PHOTO: Juventud Rebelde.

Enormous Potential for Wind Parks

By Lourdes **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- Researchers confirmed the existence of 21 zones with potential to install wind parks in Cuba, which would allow less dependence on the use of fossil fuels for electricity generation and to attain sovereignty in this strategic sector.

Areas with favorable conditions for the use of wind energy – which, produced by the movement of a wind-driven generator's sails, becomes electric energy – were mostly identified in the north, central-eastern coast of the Cuban archipelago.

The area goes from the Camagüey to the Holguín provinces, the south-eastern region and the southern part of Cuba's westernmost province, Pinar del Río.

The potential that can be technically installed for electricity generation in the country, based on the wind, is about 1,100 megawatts, stated coordinator of the Renewable Energy Sources Group of the Meteorology Institute, MSc Alfredo Rodríguez.

However, the severe financial limitations Cuba faces because of the blockade imposed by the government of the United States and the unfair inclusion of the island in the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism significantly slow down the progress of this renewable source.

In light of this unfavorable economic scenario, viable options are needed to use the wind energy, thus the convenience of using medium-power wind-driven generators instead of planning the

construction of big parks in the immediate future.

"As these machines are smaller, they need a smaller investment and managed by public or non-state entities, can contribute a lot to the expansion of the energy produced by the wind," affirmed titular professor of the Study Center on Renewable Energy Technologies Conrado Moreno.

"When I speak about this type of wind-driven generator I refer to those whose power go from 100 to 1,000 kilowatts (kw). All wind turbines installed in Cuba are

included today in the medium-power level," he said.

The biggest installed in the national territory, for example, are 850 kw and are located at the Gibara 1 Wind Park, in the Holguín province, although projections for the future Herradura 1 and Herradura 2 parks, in the Las Tunas province, will be 1,500 and 2,500 kw, respectively and the two of them together will have 54 machines.

He added that those wind-driven generators are easy to install, operate,

transport and maintain, while causing less environmental and visual impact than bigger machines, and especially need less space.

They can also operate connected to the distribution network, weak networks, in isolated systems that are not connected to an electric network, being part of a micro-network or smart electric network, or working in hybrid systems with other technologies, Moreno commented.

In the case of the Mariel Special Development Zone, the expert explained that the location of small wind parks with medium-power equipment could meet the electricity demand of industrial facilities and other entities settled in the area.



Areas with favorable conditions were mostly identified in the north and central-eastern coast of the Cuban archipelago. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Rutas y Andares with Alejo Carpentier

By: Daimarelys **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- Rutas y Andares, the traditional walking tour program organized by the Havana City's Historian Office (OHCH), started this summer with a tribute to the 120th anniversary of the birth of Cuban intellectual Alejo Carpentier (December 26, 1904), who immortalized this city in his essay *La ciudad de las columnas* (The city of columns).

The 24th edition of this program, to be extended until August 31, welcomes different proposals inspired by the life and work of this Cuban writer, journalist and diplomat who defined Havana's architecture as a "style without style, which in the long run, because of a process of symbiosis, is mixed (...) into a peculiar baroque style."

Andares is also dedicated to the 505th anniversary of the foundation of the San Cristóbal de La Habana village,

a prelude to that celebration, next November 16.

The agenda of the program includes neighborhood projects, tour of museums, visits to historic and recreational sites

for different audiences, all with a single objective: getting together to discover, in family, what the city offers.

According to the OHCH program, on Tuesdays and as part of the museum section,

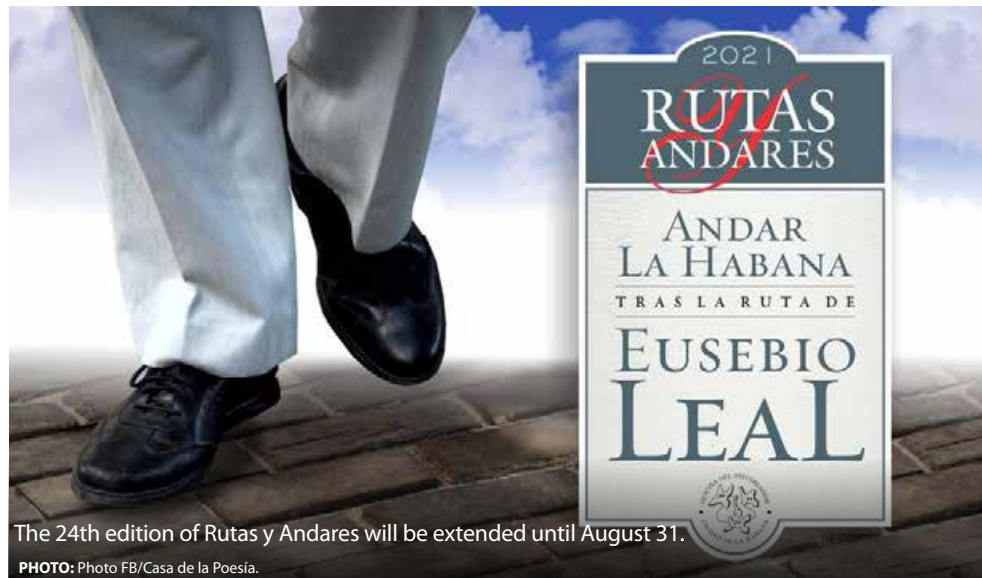
Rutas offers the "Colonial Environments. Havana and its furniture" plan, which includes tours of the Colonial Art, Napoleonic and Sacred Art museums – the latter, at the San Francisco de Asis convent.

A tempting offer includes, this month of August, the Cuban Contemporary Ceramics Museum, which invites visitors to the Tomando forma (Taking shape) Ceramic Festival, dedicated on this occasion to chocolate.

As in previous editions, Special Tours are also planned, with visits to recreational, art school and science centers, including La Quinta de los Molinos and the Spanish-American Culture Center.

From Wednesdays to Saturdays, Andares are also planned, with initiatives such as Andar con los Andantes, a tour of Carpentier's Havana and the city's birthday.

Other virtual options are included as part of this program, as well as activities for children, adolescents and youngsters and the traditional summer workshops.



Transcultural Program: Authentic, Educational and Innovative

By Adis **MORERA**

HAVANA.- With an authentic and innovative approach, Transcultural, the largest United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) program in Latin America and the Caribbean, promotes professionalization in cultural and creative industries, facilitating communication between the region's artistic forces.

This initiative launched the Business Angels scheme, a personalized entrepreneurial mentorship project directed at entrepreneurs which is opened until October 2024 to culture professionals aged between 18 and 35 and living in any of the 17 beneficiary countries of the Transcultural program.

Such countries include Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Granada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Dominican Republic, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, San Vicente & the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad & Tobago.

Funded by the European Union (EU), the four-year initiative was granted the United Nations 2024 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) Partnerships Award in the social category.

Business planning, networking and branding, marketing, communication and fundraising, are some of the topics

for counseling, whose call can be accessed on the UNESCO website.

Transcultural aims to create professional opportunities for youth in sectors such as music, cinema, design, fashion, serigraphy, among others, for them to reach a solid level, stated director of the UNESCO Regional Bureau for Culture in Latin America and the Caribbean Anne Lemaistre.

It also opens the doors to knowledge on cultural entrepreneurial business and digital marketing, in addition to offering concrete opportunities of new markets in the Caribbean and Europe, such as scholarships and artistic residencies, participation in cultural festivals and contests, she said.

In her opinion, culture not only contributes to community spirit and social cohesion, but also to employment, economic growth and innovation.

All this time and with a great cultural impact on nations involved, over 1,500 Caribbean SIDS youth have benefitted from the initiative, about 50 percent of them women.

Through a combination of face-to-face and online courses, 600 culture professionals have already been trained thanks to this initiative.

The Transcultural: Integrating Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union through Culture and Creativity program has created a Caribbean Cultural Training Hub that boosts

cooperation between educational institutions in Cuba and the Caribbean.

Two courses were recently conducted: "Introduction to film sound mixing in stereo and multichannel formats" and "Soundtrack design. Multichannel music recording", at the International Film and Television School of San Antonio de los Baños (FICTV), a hub-member institution located at about 40 kilometers from Havana.



Voces del Sur Global
Voices of the Global South



Several Summer Activities to Enjoy

By Celeste**TORRES**

HAVANA.- In spite of the difficult situation the country faces, the Cuban family enjoys this summer with a varied program of activities, such as personal and collective exhibitions, film screenings and artistic crusades.

Ministries and organizations designed a program that prioritizes the strengthening of national identity, unity and the enjoyment of families, with the neighborhoods as the main scenario.

Proposals include central activities in capital municipalities and in each neighborhood, with their own offers, said first vice-president of the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education and Recreation Raúl Fornés.

“We have the intention of allowing the people not only to enjoy but also to be part of the conception of each activity,” he told the press.

The official acknowledged that this summer’s activities take place amidst a difficult economic situation, which causes limitations in offers, but there is a varied planning.

The challenge is to increase recreational offers and do it with quality, applying a rigorous institutional and popular control at all levels, in addition to working to promote offers at fair prices, he added.



Summer proposals are linked to local talents and resources.

PHOTO: Raúl García.

Summer proposals are linked to local talents and resources and an example of this is how territories promoted sun-and-beach activities combined with participation games, parades, stage performances and gastronomic options. Planning for this summer time includes over 125,000 activities in all artistic expressions, in squares, theaters and streets. Of these, over 80 events were summoned at the institutional, municipal, provincial and national

level, and are addressed at rural, vulnerable or mountainous communities, to meet emotional needs through art.

Libraries, galleries, cultural centers, museums and art schools prepared 121 summer courses, while the Cuban radio and television joined the festivities with different premieres, with the objective of entertaining and educating the people.

On weekends, the Sábado del Libro (Saturdays for Books) space, which was extended to all corners of the Cuban geography, is a usual occasion for book launches.

Concerts at squares are also common this season in all the provinces, in addition to cultural events such as the Cocalambeana, the CirCuba International and the National Changüí festivals.

Other activities include the 6th edition of the Timbalaye Festival; the Ruta de la Rumba event; the International Clown Festival, in the Granma province; the 5th edition of the Varadero-Josone: Rumba, Jazz y Son Festival; the Arte en la Rampa Fair; the Summer Film Festival, and the Gibara International Film Festival.

The Young Communist Union planned initiatives such as summer camps, workshops, sport events, access to places of historical interest, ascent of the country’s main mountain ranges and language courses.



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Worldwide rejection of Cuba's inclusion in U.S. list increases

By Ernesto **VERA**

HAVANA.- Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently stated that about fifty governments from all over the world have rejected the inclusion of Cuba in the Department of State's list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

Parliaments, movements, organizations, institutions, activists and international personalities have also joined calls to reject such inclusion, described as unfair

and arbitrary, and have denounced their consequences for the nation and the Cuban families.

This coercive measure creates additional obstacles to commercial relations and restricts the arrival of humanitarian aid to the island, at a time in which the nation faces shortages of basic products and medical supplies, a situation aggravated by the strengthening of the U.S. blockade.

Ironically, while the United States maintains Cuba in that list, groups that organize, finance and conduct terrorist actions to

subvert the revolutionary process, are given shelter in U.S. soil.

A few days ago, the Cuban Ministry of Interior (MININT) revealed details of an infiltration operation conducted on December 2023 with the intention of carrying out attempts against economic, social and military objectives, which was frustrated by that body's specialized forces. Some of the people involved in the organization, planning and financing of that action are included in the national list of people involved in terrorist actions

against Cuba, including Willy González, head of the Nueva Nación Cubana en Armas (New Cuban Nation in Arms) paramilitary group, settled in Florida.

On that occasion, Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel described the inclusion of his country in that unilateral Department of State's list as imperial cynicism and recalled that Cuba has long alerted the United States about terrorists operating in Florida.

However, he said that they continue acting with impunity. "That actually is being a State sponsor of terrorism," he stressed.

When offering details of the failed infiltration attempt, Colonel Víctor Álvarez, second head of the MININT Specialized Body of the General Criminal Investigation Department, confirmed that actions such as this have been repeatedly informed to the U.S. authorities and no measure has been taken in this regard.

He added that since 1996, his country has had contacts with the United States and has collaborated in the topic with its security bodies since long before; however, people residing in that nation and identified as responsible persons for violent actions are still free and active in the preparation of terrorist actions against Cuba.

According to analysts, the Government of the United States' double standard to face a sensitive topic such as terrorism shows the real essence of the policy based on which successive U.S. administrations have tried, for over 60 years, to overthrow the Cuban Revolution.



The inclusion of Cuba in that list creates additional obstacles to commercial relations and the arrival of humanitarian aid. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

China and Cuba Strengthen Multi-Sectorial Cooperation

Text and Photos Isaura **DIEZ**

BEIJING.-Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Jorge Luis Tapia spoke to **The Havana Reporter** (THR) about cooperation possibilities with China, particularly in the agricultural sector, during his five-day visit to this Asian nation.

The leader arrived in this capital with the purpose to participate in the Second High-Level Conference of the Forum on Global Action for Shared Development, held from July 11 to 13, in which he met Chinese authorities, business executives and experts.

During a meeting with secretary of the Chinese Communist party group of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Issues, Han Jun, the Cuban official said that leaders of both nations "have paid special attention to the development of bilateral relations and political dialogue."

He explained that at present, those bonds show "full maturity" and reach several sectors, "which means that we are in the right path to the construction of the community of shared future presidents Xi Jinping and Miguel Díaz-Canel agreed upon."

Tapia reiterated appreciation for the assistance received from the Asian giant, which he described as a "sign of top leaders' understanding and sensibility on relations with Cuba and to support our country in difficult times."

As part of his agenda, the Cuban Deputy Prime Minister and president of the Chinese International Cooperation Agency for Development, Luo Zhaohui, signed a

cooperation agreement that increases multi-sectorial collaboration.

At a meeting with Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Ding Xuexiang, Tapia affirmed that even in the complex inflationary scenario, Cuba is one of the nations that invests the most in social security and assistance in the Latin American region.

"However, the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States against our country is the main obstacle to our development and thus, to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda," he warned.

Tapia also had meetings with Chinese International Trade representative and Deputy Minister of Trade, Wang Shouwen and had talks with experts of the Vegetables

and Flowers Institute of the Chinese Agricultural Sciences Academy.

This is the most important institution of its type in the country, which has agreements with 30 nations, joint laboratories with 17 and the fourth bank with more germplasm resources in the world. In statements to THR, the Cuban leader talked about possibilities of new spaces for training and technical assistance from China, for the obtaining of seeds with high productive potential and for access to new technologies.

"In light of the special relations between our countries, the Chinese party has been willing to share its experiences with the Cuban experts, on which we will work in the immediate future," he stressed.



The Cuban Deputy Prime Minister visited the Vegetables and Flowers Institute of the Chinese Agricultural Sciences Academy.

Jazz Vilá Returns with his Piece Farándula

By Ariana **ARAUJO**

HAVANA.- The Cuban theater company Jazz Vilá Projects returned this summer with its piece Farándula on occasion of its 10th anniversary, with shows this month thanks to the support received by the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) and the Caricatos Agency.

Since August 9, at the 23 y 12 Movie Theater, in the Vedado neighborhood of Havana, the new season of this comedy will be on the stage with the performance of actor Enrique Bueno as photographer Lorenzo; actress Beatriz Viñas as doctor Helena, and the debut of Raiza DeBeche as the nurse.

The revival of this work includes a new feature: the performance of Jazz Vilá, the project director and founder, in the role of a curator.

The play tells the story of the opening of a gallery called Farándula which will cause an explosive meeting between four individuals whose lives are in conflict and are sexually united.

After more than 200 shows and winning thousands of people, Farándula is Jazz Vilá Projects' most successful work and the Cuban theater's biggest box-office hit in the last three decades.

Turned into a socio-cultural phenomenon, the work made it to the big screen as a full-length film and soon as a television series.

On March 2023, it was staged on occasion of the 64th anniversary of the ICAIC and in September the same year, it was premiered in New York as part of the program of the Repertorio Español Theater.

Farándula, la película, featuring Spanish Mike Fajardo, Cubans Alina Robert and Sian Chiong and Venezuelan star Scarlet Ortiz, will be on screening in the over 100

Cuban movie theaters in the next weeks, on a version that takes place in a more cosmopolitan environment.

After its successful premiere last year at the Charles Chaplin movie theater, in Havana, the film was screened in different festivals in the United States and Mexico.

The 73-minute work, produced by Mabel Toledo and Tony Cortés, introduces new characters that highlight the story's humor.

On his work, Vilá told **The Havana Reporter** that as a director, he uses all resources at hand to entertain the audience: "That is my main premise, because as Bertolt Brecht said, the theater's function, beyond teaching, is entertaining."

Asked about what he enjoys the most, directing or acting, he said: "I enjoy a lot when I direct, because I feel I leave an imprint in the Cuban theater of which I am a part, but especially because through art, I give something which is important for human beings."

Founded in 2014, Jazz Vilá Projects was officially established as a Havana Theater Center group on January 2015. Since then, the company has acted in national and international festivals, with the commitment of promoting Cuba's stage arts. Candela, Farándula, Eclipse and Rascacielos are part of the works of this company, which wins ovations and successes after each staging.



Audiovisual Producer Roberto Chile Announces Photographic Exhibit

By Zeus **NAYA**

GUATEMALA CITY.-Renowned Cuban audiovisual producer, cameraman and cultural promoter Roberto Chile announced that he is preparing a photographic exhibit entitled Convergencia (Convergence) on the occasion of his 70th birthday, next September.

I did not find a better way to celebrate, the scriptwriter, documentary, story and short film director of works on Cuba's history, culture and current events told **The Havana Reporter** in this capital.

Each set of works, because there will be single images, four and even 10 together, will include verses by Cuban improviser Alexis Díaz Pimienta, said the author of Desafío (Challenge), En mis ojos brillas tú (You shine in my eyes) or Elogio de la Virtud (Praise for virtue).

We have already worked a lot on that and I am committed to do it, affirmed Chile, who has exhibited his photographs – including Afrodescendientes y Guanabacoa-Cuba (African descendants and Guanabacoa-Cuba) – in the United States, Germany, Spain and Belgium.

I will invite my friends, all the people interested in what I also do with the camera, to the El Reino de Este Mundo Gallery, at the National Library, in Havana, he commented.

Born on September 27, 1954 and recipient of different distinctions, Chile confessed

that the two main missions he has at present are sowing love, affection and confidence wherever he goes. "That is a difficult task but I have the intention of leaving a trail of affection wherever I am, with my work, the way I treat other human beings, either in Cuba or abroad," he stressed.

The artist's objectives also include "supporting my children" (Daniel and Yanelis).

Chile, a José Martí National Journalism awardee (2019) and recipient of the Replica of the Machete Mambí of General Máximo Gómez (1998), stated that he is proud that

his son Daniel has followed the path of the audiovisual production.

"It is gratifying," he stressed after saying that they have worked together; "I have taught him everything I have been able to, but I have learnt from him."

When assessing Chile's work, late Cuban historian Eusebio Leal (1942-2020) stated that the artist "has known how to forge a unique image of Cuba, always decent and bright."

His images create a universe of faith and spirituality, perceptible for those who, like him, are capable of loving, the intellectual affirmed.



Roberto Chile will celebrate his 70th birthday, next September, with a photographic exhibition in Guatemala. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

FAO Supports Livestock Project

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**



Agropaisajes sostenibles (Sustainable agri-landscapes) project promotes practices and technologies that allow cattle farmers to adapt to climate challenges. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) informed that it supports the development of a livestock project in the Cuba's eastern region. In a communiqué, the body indicated that fostering sustainable cattle farming development in Cuba's eastern region is one of the objectives of the Agropaisajes sostenibles (Sustainable agri-landscapes) project.

The program is conducted by the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG), with FAO technical advice and the financing of the World Environment Fund.

The initiative promotes the adoption of practices and technologies that allow cattle farmers to adapt to climate challenges, while contributing to mitigate such problems and reduce the environmental impact in the municipalities of Guisa, Bartolomé Masó, Buey Arriba (Granma); Guamá (Santiago de Cuba), and Baracoa and Maisí (Guantánamo). As part of the approach on a climate-smart cattle farming, the project promotes pastures' management; the implementation of silvopastoral systems, and animals' health and wellbeing through adequate

management and care practices that reduce animal stress and improve their productive efficiency.

In this regards, the implementation of practices aimed at mules' reproduction is strengthened through the provision of different supplies for artificial insemination and the improvement of the wellbeing and the handling of animal used for the transfer of coffee productions in mountainous regions.

Other actions include the handling of animal waste for soils' fertilization, in order to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses.

Climate-smart cattle farming will allow producers and cattle farmers of the region to transform cattle production systems and turned them into more sustainable, resilient and environment-friendly models, reads the FAO message.

Agropaisajes Sostenibles aims to reduce pressure on natural resources, by integrating biodiversity preservation in coffee and cacao plantations' production and cattle farming in Cuba's eastern region, which will directly benefit 15,000 people – over 3,300 of them, women.

UNIDO Helps Industrial Development

By Mirna **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- One of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) most important Country Programs in Latin America is developed at present in Cuba, the only this body conducts in the Caribbean.

The above was stated by Program associate at the Latin American and Caribbean Division, Marta Peláez, who, in an interview to **The Havana Reporter** during the Cubaindustria 2024 Fair, stressed the importance of that event. Cubaindustria is included in UNIDO's Sustainable Development Objectives, particularly innovation, industrial development and infrastructure, the official affirmed.

Peláez added that her organization participated in this event with exhibitions on projects implemented in Cuba, such as the energy efficiency initiative that is currently at an advanced stage, with several physical demonstration purposes to be followed up in September, during the Renewable Energy Fair. This project is one of the most active since the beginning of the Country Program (CP) for Cuba, a guiding document without which UNIDO's present involvement in the island would be impossible, she stressed.

The official also pointed out that there are other projects that monitor activities such as the one held on machinery for agriculture (phase 1), which is undergoing preparation for phase 2, with potential to be

implemented in 2024 with Russia's financial support.

Other initiatives that that UN body conducts in Cuba involve the World Health Organization, particularly the BioCubafarma entrepreneurial group, and is focused on endorsing international accreditation of Cuban vaccines, she said.

Peláez recalled that UNIDO general director Gerd Müller recently reaffirmed that international organization's commitment to the island during a recent visit to the country, and stressed that attendance to Cubaindustria 2024 is part of UNIDO's commitment to Cuba.

On the Country Program for Cuba, she commented that the methodology UNIDO uses involves evaluating previous programs and, based on that, adopting learning and introducing them to the new proposal.

The first CP for Cuba included the 2016-2020 period and from that moment on, the Cuban Government stated its interest in adopting others, in which lessons learnt in the first program were assimilated, although priorities changed and were adapted to the new national context, she affirmed.

Peláez explained that the 2021-2025 program was drafted in close cooperation with the Cuban Government and is totally aligned to the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2020-2024 and UNIDO's regional approach for Latin America and the Caribbean.

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Cuba's Oldest House

Text and Photos Roberto F. CAMPOS

SANTIAGO DE CUBA- Cuba's oldest house, a cultural and historic attraction located in the country's east, shows its charms to all its visitors. The facility, situated in this city, is practically a must-see among tourists from all over the world because of its beauty and perfect state of preservation.

The house, owned by Spanish explorer Diego Velázquez, stands out for its wonderful environment, full of local music and color.

It is located in the city's historic center, next to Céspedes Park, an open square on the upper part of the sea terraces, where the village was founded in 1515.

The facility is bounded by the Metropolitan Cathedral, to the east; the beautiful Casa

Granda Hotel and San Carlos Club, to the north, and the Government Palace, to the west.

The Diego Velázquez house, built in the 16th century and considered the oldest in Cuba and Latin America, has a Mudejar influence in its architecture, which can be easily identified in its outside design due to its hermetic masonry construction, with lattice-framework windows.

The mansion, in the Aguilera and Santo Tomás streets, was the property of Diego Velázquez, a dashing conqueror who came to the Americas in 1493 – during Christopher Columbus' second trip – and lived there until his death, in 1524.

At present, the building is the seat of the Cuban Environment Historic Museum, which displays furniture from the colonial time.



Panamá: Promises and Realities

By Mario **GARRIDO**



President José Raúl Mulino acknowledged the huge challenges he will have to face to take Panama out of the difficult situation in which it was left. PHOTO: Internet.

PANAMA CITY.- Economic reactivation and employment, investments, confidence and tourism are some of the commitments of the new president of Panama, José Raúl Mulino, for the 2024-2029 term, the question for analysts is which routes he will use.

In his first message to the country after taking up the post, Mulino acknowledged the huge challenges he will have to face to take Panama out of the difficult situation in which it was left, and added that in light of the worrying state of the public finances, he will make a good use of the money, redefining priorities.

"We will not start management from zero. We will have to start with a debt of less than 50 billion dollars", he stressed.

The president, 65, said that he gets an economy down in the dumps because of excesses, irresponsibility and bad decisions of an absent Government and stated that the nation not only lost the investment grade according to the Ficht Ratings' risk scale, but also thousands of jobs and investment confidence.

He also acknowledged that since 2019 and up to the present, the nation's budget doubled but the Panamanians' quality of life decreased. This simple reasoning shows how poor the management was, how wrong priorities were established and how bad national resources were used, he said.

In his opinion, the heavy inheritance he receives creates impotence and anger. His strategy comes down to having a Government mainly focused on solving the problems of most of the Panamanians, which does not mean putting an end to wealth but fighting poverty.

PROMISES

The head of State referred to some projects he spoke about during his campaign, which will now be given priority under a clear slogan: less expenses in politics and more investment in the people.

His plans include the program Mi primer empleo para mil jóvenes (My first employment for thousand youngsters); road reconstruction;

attention to the new Oncological Hospital tender; changes in garbage recollection and treatment; construction of social housing, and the closing of the border with Colombia to stop the increasing, irregular migration to the United States.

Other promises are linked to the construction of the Ciudad Universitaria (University City); the granting of titles to small producers; the efficient handling of drinking water distribution; the opening of bank accounts as a universal right, and the urgent reactivation of national tourism.

In the meantime, experts such as René Quevedo refer to the huge economic challenges the new Executive will face, which beyond meeting payment commitments, will have to look for the money to create the works promised, when the question that remains unanswered is the how.

Quevedo, a labor consultant, commented that the economy faces a severe liquidity crisis and an important consumption contracting; thus, in light of the scarce public finances, capacity to foster job creation will determine the Government's effectiveness to channel resources.

Economist Juan Jované indicated that in order to make progress in public work projects, Mulino will face a problem, because the budget he will receive this year will be the half, and in order to meet his objectives, he would need 2.6 billion dollars.

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New Economic Development Plan of Action

By María **ACOSTA**

HAVANA.- The Cuban government announced a set of actions and measures that will establish the country's economic guidelines.

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero reiterated in his speech to the recent sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power (Cuban Parliament) that the nation is facing

a "war economy" scenario, which intensifies the socioeconomic situation resulting from the U.S. blockade, that has gotten worse.

The global crisis caused by the pandemic, with its subsequent economic impact and the strengthening of global conflicts that influence the world's economy and trade, are part of the scenario that affects the country, he said.

However, he stated his dissatisfaction with the fact that not enough progress has been made

in reducing the impact of foreign phenomena, and added that even though these do influence, there are still subjective problems and insufficiencies that affect capacity to implement economic recovery-related plans, programs and projections, issues to be resolutely faced in 2024, he affirmed.

When talking about the government projections to correct distortions and boost the economy again in 2024, Marrero first made reference to the need of restoring macro-economic balances, recovering tourism and controlling the foreign exchange market and access to foreign currencies.

In addition, he mentioned issues such as the renegotiation of debts and higher levels of foreign investment; incentivizing national production; recovering the sugarcane industry; attaining a food balance at the municipal level, and compensating imports with exports.

Other urgent topics to be solved include reduction of the budget deficit; subsidizing people instead of products; updating fuel prices; discouraging electricity and water waste, and implementing a price policy that allows sustaining activities, he added.

Although there is a program for the de-dollarization of the economy, the head of Government stressed that in order to reach

that goal, it is essential to adopt partial measures that allow collecting or increasing foreign currencies level, such as remittances or incomes from abroad.

He also made reference to "speculative and abusive" prices, as well as to the need of avoiding tax evasion; generating new jobs, and reducing labor informality, in addition to transforming the socialist state company. On the non-state economic actors, he stressed the need for cooperatives' growth, as these are the form of management that are closer to the socialist concept, where "everyone takes part in the outcome, everyone benefits, not only the owner."

The path for changes this 2024 includes the updating of non-authorized activities; amendments to tax exemptions; strategic management of territorial development, and progress in bancarization.

An austere and more rational government, a better selection and formation of officials, will also be included among the new changes, Marrero affirmed.

On the new actions, the Prime Minister pointed out that these include the battle against illegalities, corruption and indiscipline, with emphasis on social prevention, and topics such as the demographic dynamics, housing and rurality.



Prime Minister Manuel Marrero stated his dissatisfaction with the fact that not enough progress has been made in reducing the impact of foreign phenomena. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

Angolan Agricultural Business Executives Show Interest in Cuba

By Karina **MARRÓN**

LUANDA.- Angolan agricultural business executives showed interest in Cuban products and services during a business forum held by the Cuban embassy in this capital and the Antex Company.

Training courses, technical advice, Cuban biotechnology products, certification of new lines and assembly of mini-industries to make the most of crops, were included among the topics that aroused higher interest.

Antex Angola development and new businesses director, Yacelín Lancella, explained that projects and services are adapted to clients' needs and can go from field studies to design custom-made products to the delivery of a facility ready for functioning.

She added that even though they presented a work line linked to the agricultural sector, it is possible to foster other fields, such as aquaculture.

Antex Angola director, Ernesto Gutiérrez, highlighted that the proposals are addressed at improving Angolan productions' quality and food security, especially those produced by country families and cooperatives, which support most of the sector's productions.

At present, Antex has implemented projects in Angola in the agricultural field, mostly linked to the production of high-quality honey and cattle vaccination, whose experiences are positive, specialist Lázaro Díaz commented.

Businessman Matheus Mendoca described the meeting as positive and stressed that Cuba's expertise and the good practice training in agriculture, among other aspects, will be beneficial for rural men and women.



Antex Angola development and businesses director, Yacelín Lancella explained that projects and services are adapted to clients' needs. PHOTO: Antex.

Retail Price Caps on Imported Products

By TeyunéDÍAZ

HAVANA.- The Cuban Ministry of Finances and Prices (MFP) announced the entry into force of a regulation that establishes retail price caps on imported products, to be met by all economic actors.

In this regards, minister Vladimir Regueiro explained that the norm is a general-nature regulation and should be applied to those who retail those products in national currency (Cuban peso).

Such entities include MIPYMES, self-employed workers and shopping and gastronomic center, the minister added.

According to reports, Resolution 225/2024 of the Ministry regulates top retail prices of products in great demand – such as chicken parts, cooking oil (except olive oil), powdered detergent, pasta, sausages and powdered milk.

“It is binding on all economic actors. There is no discriminatory treatment for one or another actor of the economy, but all should contribute to maintain a fixed level of price for those products that are essential for the population,” Regueiro stressed.

One of the main objectives of this norm is to cap price rise and for its implementation, markets, origins of the main suppliers, financing conditions, presence in the markets, the sale network and all logistic expenses involved, were evaluated, the minister explained.

The measure is aimed at limiting inflation and in recent days, meetings were held with representatives of the new forms of managements, the territories and government officials, according to the Agencia Cubana de Noticias news agency.

One of the population’s concerns is whether the State will be able to duly control the regulation approved, on which general Foreign Trade director Vivian Herrera explained

the supervision role of that body, in coordination with Price inspectors.

Herrera acknowledged that after the COVID-19, prices of fuel and freight rose, as well as containers’ congestion; however, there is a stable behavior in the international

prices of a group of basic lines of consumption among the population, and that is the starting point of the cost bills. If we are able to buy them in the region, in near markets and at competitive prices, that will no doubts have an impact on the maximum trade profit margin, the official stressed.

Popular control will also be essential; thus, through the websites of those bodies and entities, the people can send their doubts and denounce irregularities in retail sales, it was said at the press conference.



Minister Vladimir Regueiro explained that the norm should be applied to those who retail those products in national currency (Cuban peso). PHOTO: José M. Correa/Granma.

Cuban Light Industry on the Road to Advance

By TeyunéDÍAZ

HAVANA.- The Cuban Light Industry Entrepreneurial Group (GEMPIL) is focused on its development and the search for new ways of financing, the entity’s Investment and Business director Ladyth García affirmed.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, García commented that GEMPIL bets for new business models that allow guaranteeing productions to be visible in the local market, in addition to continue promoting its products in the international market as a way to get financing and thus manufacture its items.

GEMPIL is linked to 15 sectors of the Light Industry associated to cosmetics, leather and textile productions. In addition to plain weaving and knitted textile productions, furnishing, graphics, equipment and sport wear productions are also included, among others.

For its distribution tasks, GEMPIL has 39 companies; 16 international economic association contracts, 11 of which are joint ventures – three of them, at the Mariel Special Development Zone – and five productive administration contracts, the official explained.

The Group is experienced in foreign capital use and is one of the first to be involved in foreign investment, a field in which the Suchel Camacho Company stands out, with more than 25 years in the national market, during which it has accompanied the Cubans with its perfumes and other productions, García explained.

Given the variety of productions, GEMPIL promotes productive connections between its companies and all its products include boxes, packages and labels, she affirmed. Productive connections not only happen between GEMPIL companies but also with state companies and joint entities and have gradually started with non-state management forms that acknowledge the quality of the Group’s productions.

Those economic actors, in turn, try to benefit from the productive capacities we have installed at present, the director added.

We are urged to foster the connection of those forms of management, which today import their raw materials, with GEMPIL, in order to offer many of the products that are manufactured at present in the country through the wholesale trade. It is a way to give fresh air to the national industry and guarantee the substitution of imports, García stressed.

The official also pointed out that the IV edition of the recent Cubaindustria 2024 Fair was an opportunity for GEMPIL to do new businesses, with the signing of letters of intent, memorandums of understanding, strategic alliances and even contracts for the export of the industry’s products.

Most relevant results included the signing of a letter of intent to create a joint venture between Industrias Nexus – a GEMPIL trading company – and a Chinese company associated to the China-Latin American Industrial Park (PICLA) for the development of footwear, García affirmed.



GEMPIL’s Investment and Business director Ladyth García. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Paris 2024 Olympic Games

By Fausto **TRIANA**, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

PARIS.- City, theater, museum, literature, dance, opera, cinema, a symbiosis of musical genres, and at the impassive Seine river, 206 countries paraded on boats at the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games.

Astonishment, surprise, Zinedine Zidane takes the torch and passes it to (...) Rafael

Nadal, who disappears in front of the Eiffel Tower, the main protagonist until Nadal appears again at the Seine. Now, the Spanish tennis player is accompanied by Serena Williams, Nadia Comanecchi and Carl Lewis.

Music and suspense. On the Seine, four big world sport legends. Tony Parker, another torch bearer; Paralympic athletes around the Louvre Pyramid. The Arch of Triumph

du Carrousel, jogging by the Gardens of the Tuileries, French legends of different sport disciplines and finally, Teddy Riner and Marie Jose Perec and an extraordinary cauldron, a base with a balloon rising through the Paris sky.

As closing, the "Hymne à l'Amour," Celine Dion, what else (...).

Nothing was as it seemed to be; nothing will ever be the same after this incredible and stunning opening ceremony of the world's main sport event.

Paris raised the bar enormously and from now on, matching it will be a dream for future organizers.

From the flashes to render tribute to the artisans who created the protective chests to the medals to be granted at these Games; a solo ballet performance on the dome of the Palais Garnier rooftop, or the jumps of

Quasimodo de Notre Dame marking the torch tour by an anonymous figure.

Boats in movement. Greece leading the parade and in the meantime, Lady Gaga performing an excellently-made "Variété," playing at the piano the notes of the famous "La vie en rose," Edith Piaf and Charles Aznavour's indispensable souls, in an authentic and diverse France.

To stress the moment, the national anthem "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité;" accordionists and cancan dancers, to give the authentic sound of France; rock, pop and other classics, with Ravel among the guests; literature's most famous writers; Versailles' jewels, and an opening party designed by stage director laureate Thomas Jolly, with 3,500 artists on the stage.

A more dynamic athletes' parade, at the very beginning of the ceremony, that started at the Austerlitz Bridge, beside the Jardin des Plantes and continued along several Olympic venues such as the La Concorde Urban Park (basketball 3x3, breaking, freestyle BMX, skate), Les Invalides (archery, the marathon finishing line, road cycling and time trial cycling start), and the Grand Palais de Paris (fencing and taekwondo).

The Théâtre du Chatelet, the National Library, the Seine docks, a lavish water explosion to show the colors of the French flag – red, white and blue – and the mysterious torchbearer, comedian Jamel Debbouze, from whom the torch was passed to former footballer Zinedine Zidane and some children.

The Musée d'Orsay, one of the most beautiful in the City of Love; the Mona Lisa, and to show all kinds of muscles, the funny Minions, the French-origin cartoons, sailing in the Nautilus, an obliged reference to Jules Verne.



Paris raised the bar enormously and from now on, matching it will be a dream for future organizers. PHOTO: Internet.

Latin America Stands Out in Olympic Race Walk

By Waldo **MEDILUZA**

PARIS.- Ecuadorian Brian Pintado's gold medal, Brazilian Caio Bonfim's silver and several Olympic diplomas (eight first in each competition) were the outstanding result Latin America reached in the race walk last August 1, which marked the start of athletics in Paris 2024.

The Parisian rain scared walkers a bit, but the sun won the morning challenge and with the complicity of the Eiffel Tower and the Seine River, athletes from all five continents waged a battle the audience enjoyed along the 20km circuit, with glory going to Pintado, among men and Chinese Jiayu Yang, among women.



Brian Pintado caused madness among his fellow country people, with a historic medal. PHOTO: Internet.

A party was lived in the streets along a part of the tour, with flags, cries of encouragement and a friendly audience that made room for people to take their photos.

In the men's 20km walk, Pintado caused madness among his fellow country people, with a historic medal – the fourth Ecuador wins under the five rings and the second in this discipline, after the one Jefferson Pérez won in Atlanta 1996.

Also outstanding was the silver medal Brazilian Bonfim won, in a competition in which no other Latin American athlete was included among the eight first. Spanish Álvaro Martín finished third.

The women's race, though, was quite different, with four representatives of the region winning an Olympic diploma, in an event led by China, with Spanish María Pérez and Australian Jemima Montag

winning silver and bronze medals, respectively.

Colombian Lorena Arenas got close to the podium, with national record, followed by Mexican Alegna González and Ecuadorian Glenda Morejón, while Peruvian Evelyn Inga finished eighth.

A good start in Paris 2024 Olympic athletics for Latin America, which hopes to win more medals in the so-called King of Sport.

Caribbean Festival, a Cultural Bridge

Text and Photos YugdanisVICET

SANTIAGO DE CUBA.- The 43rd edition of the Caribbean Festival, popularly known as the Fire Festival, was celebrated as a cultural bridge from this eastern Cuban city and the Caribbean nations.

The event, held last July, was a meeting point of ethnic groups; ancestral, magic-religious practice bearers; languages; dances, and sounds, where knowledge and projects were exchanged, with the common objective of preserving and guaranteeing legacies' continuity.

Santiago de Cuba, the most Caribbean city in the island, was the natural stage where over 300 foreign participants from 16 countries and about 30 national groups danced, sang, played the drums and the trumpets, to flood the city with colors, sounds and movements that turned it into a more lively place.

This year, for the second occasion, Brazil was the guest country of honor and the State of Salvador de Bahía, its main representative, which was praised in the theoretical event El Caribe que nos une (The Caribbean that unites us) with the opening lecture conducted by Architect Omar López, who



Santiago de Cuba was the natural stage where groups danced, sang, played the drums and the trumpets.

made reference to the points in common between that Brazilian state and Santiago de Cuba.

López described in words and images Bahía's musical, religious and architectonic heritage from its very origins and emphasized the elements that turned that territory into a worldwide famous place, such as the Samba, Capoeira and

Candomblé rhythms and the culinary arts.

In relation to Santiago de Cuba, the host city, the specialist referred to the origins of its architecture and music and described it as a stage that shows its popular culture, murals, folklore, patrimonial fortresses, congas and musical genres such as the Son and the Boleros.

Two international Casa del Caribe awards were granted as part of this edition of the Fire Festival: first, to José Ángel García, director of the JJ Son band, created during Casa del Caribe and this Festival's creative whirl and one of the main exponents of the Son rhythm in Cuba.

The second award, which had been previously awarded in 2009, was granted to Armando Crisanto Meléndez, leader of the Garífuna de Honduras Folklore Ballet. This award was an acknowledgement to the Garífuna ethnic group's musical-dance and linguistic culture as a mechanism of inclusion, given the historic problem of racism.

The exponents of the Garífuna de Honduras Folklore Ballet could not receive this award 15 years ago because of the coup-d'état against the then president Manuel Zelaya.

The holding of 12 theoretical events, workshops and exhibitions allowed interaction between national and foreign scholars and practitioners on topics such as popular religiousness, young creators, Caribbean film industry, music, dance, visual arts, poetry, tattoos and piercings, archeology, theater and popular education. Different locations in the city of Santiago de Cuba welcomed artistic performances, magic-religious ceremonies and events, including the Heredia Theater, Casa del Caribe, the City's Historian Office, the Provincial Visual Arts and Design Center, among others.



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