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Plans to Recover the Tourism Industry

By Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- The Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) announced a wide-ranging number of activities to make progress in and rescue the travel industry, in order to support the national economy.

Official sources from the ministry recalled that the country is an exceptional tourist destination that offers unique experiences, full of history, culture and tradition, in addition to being a competitive product in the Caribbean, for its outstanding historical and cultural heritage, which is different from that of other areas.

MINTUR communication director Yadira Ramírez highlighted that Cuba has eight national agencies experienced in designing tailor-made tourist packages, in addition to a renewed hotel infrastructure with more than 80,000 rooms – 75 percent of which are four and five-star hotels.

There are 18 foreign chains, internationally renowned, involved in the management of

hotels, including nine from Spanish and Vila Galé Hotéis, from Portugal, which recently added the group with a first resort in Cayo Paredón (central-northern region).

As informed, new hotel products are added to the present winter season (2024-2025), such as the Hotel Iberostar Selection La

Habana; Hotel Sierra Cristal, in Ramón de Antilla; Gran Muthu Ensenada and Starfish Guardalavaca, in the Holguín province, and Muthu II Frente, in Santiago de Cuba, among others.

Officials also spoke about the favorable reception of the extension of the tourist visa

validity, up to 90 days of stay in the national territory and extendable for a similar period, an action done with the purpose to foster long-stay tourism.

At present, 57 airlines from 32 countries operate in the island, and work is conducted in coordination with the Cuban Civil Aviation Corporation to recover the number of operations the country had in 2019, by fostering an incentive policy for airlines.

Analysts affirm that in 2024, Cuba received several international acknowledgments, including the designation as Leading Cultural Destination in the Caribbean.

A MINTUR communiqué indicated that an increase of operations from Spain is foreseen for the summer of 2025 through Iberojet, with the new Barcelona-Santa Clara route in July and August and a route from Madrid to that central Cuban city, from June 19 to September 11.

Up to the present, Cuba operates with 24 joint ventures set up in the national territory for the construction of new hotel and real estate developments associated to the tourism sector.



Cuba has a renewed hotel infrastructure with more than 80,000 rooms. PHOTO: Muthu hotels.

Pilar, One of the World's Best Beaches

By Neisa **MESA**

CIEGO DE ÁVILA.- Playa Pilar, located in Cayo Guillermo – north of this central Cuban province – is included among the world's best beaches, according to the Tripadvisor travel platform.

Pilar is placed eleventh among the world's best beaches in 2024 for its crystal-clear waters, white and fine sand and peaceful and warm environment, according to the opinions and comments of those who have visited this natural site, in the Ciego de Ávila northern keys.

A peculiar charm of this beach is that it is surrounded by the Insular Caribbean's highest sand dunes, which are 15 meters above sea level and are declared a Protected Area of Outstanding Natural Element.

The sea bottoms, surrounded by bright coral formations and a large variety of fishes of different colors, call the attention of tourists, as near that site, the world's second largest coral reef is located.

Sea grapes, coconut trees, mastic trees and other vegetable species endemic of the area go around the

wooden walking paths that lead tourists to the crystal-clear waters, to avoid damaging both, the dunes and the green, surrounding environment.

With over one kilometer of sand, low tides, soft hills and warm waters, Playa Pilar invites visitors to relax and peacefully enjoy swimming with the sensorial and magical rolling of the ocean.

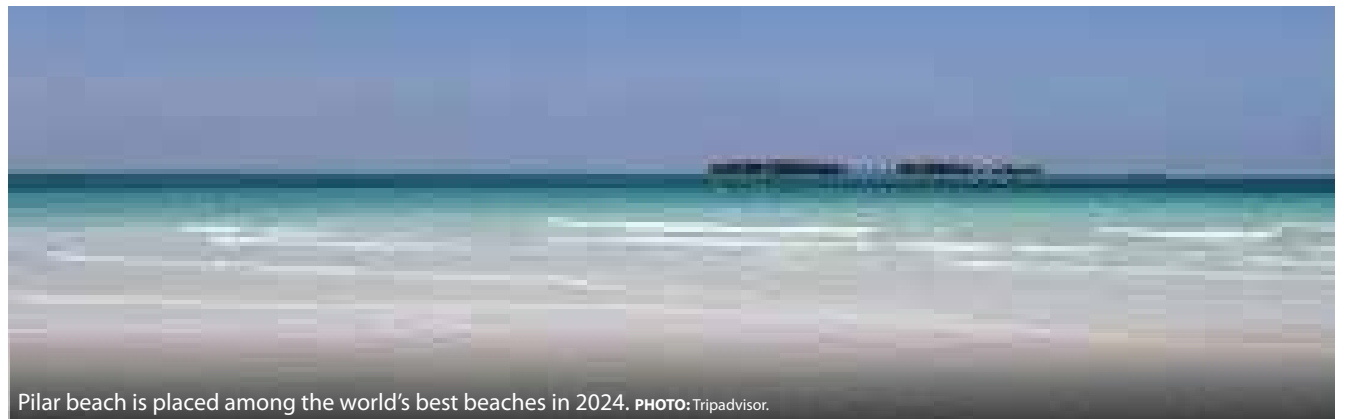
Its beautiful environment captivated Nobel Prize for Literature Ernest Hemingway during his tour of the seas that surround this Caribbean island in search of German submarines, during World War Two.

Pilar was the name chosen for this resort after the name of the yacht owned by that friend of Cuba, and because this beach inspired him to write his novel Islands in the Stream.

It is said that the writer used to go on fishing onboard his yacht El Pilar; for that reason, at the entrance to the Cayo Guillermo pier, a sculpture with a raised hand is erected, as if welcoming visitors who arrive in this wonderful spot.

Cayo Guillermo, an islet that covers about 13 square kilometers, is part of the Jardines del Rey tourist destination – about 500 kilometers east of Havana – whose beauties captivated the U.S. writer.

"See Guillermo how green and promising is... I have discovered where the ibis have come to eat," affirmed Hemingway after seeing the beauty of this piece of land that he so thoroughly described in his abovementioned book.



Pilar beach is placed among the world's best beaches in 2024. PHOTO: Tripadvisor.

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Facing the Ravages of Nature



Brigades worked on the recovery of bridges, roads, electricity lines and connections. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Melissa **KING**

HAVANA.- Cuba is immersed in the recovery from the damages caused by Rafael, a high-intensity hurricane that made landfall in the western territory of the island as a category 3 storm on the Saffir-Simpson scale.

In light of the meteor's impending passage, last November 5, authorities activated the National Defense Council, responsible for running the country in exceptional situations and during the occurrence of disasters.

Rafael hit Cuba's west with winds of over 100 kilometers per hour, causing serious damages in the Artemisa, Mayabeque and Havana provinces, where agriculture, houses, the health infrastructure and the electricity systems were highly affected.

Unlike hurricane Oscar, the previous meteor that affected the island, Rafael did not cause any deaths nor injured, and work is conscientiously conducted to repair the damages caused in Artemisa, the territory affected the most.

Until the present, the province has been able to restore more than 80 percent of the electricity service and about the same percent of the water supply service.

Just two weeks before the passage of Rafael, the eastern region suffered the lash of Oscar – the first hurricane to make landfall in the Cuban territory in the present Atlantic cyclone season – that hit the island on October 20 as a category 1 storm through an area near the Baracoa city, in the Guantánamo province.

Shortly before leaving the island, 25 hours later and through a point near the Gibara

city, in the Holguín province, it became a tropical storm.

The intensity of the rains and winds, in a region traditionally affected by droughts, caused severe flooding and the loss of eight human lives and first-need goods.

While brigades worked on the recovery of bridges, roads, electricity lines and connections, several actors of the society got together to organize numerous actions in solidarity with the people affected by the flooding.

Collective meals, direct delivery of food and clothes, handing in of money in cash and through digital transfer, were some of the actions organized by the people of Guantánamo and other provinces, who started to mobilize since the weather conditions allowed it.

Cuba's east has been historically affected by 14 tropical cyclone events, of which three hurricanes have made landfall in the month of October: Flora (1963), Matthew (2016) and Oscar (2024).

Cuba suffered the damages of Oscar and Rafael amidst a tense energy situation caused by the collapse of the National Electricity System, which at present faces a complex state of weakness because of the lack of fuel.

In recent days, Cuba's eastern region, particularly the Granma province, was also affected by two tremors – of 6.0 and 6.8 degrees on the Richter magnitudes – and several aftershocks that damaged the infrastructure, including partial collapse of houses and cracks in the walls.

Quality Education in Spite of Adversities

By Lisván **LESCAILLE**

HAVANA.- The Cuban educational system currently shows resilience and guarantees the continuity of the 2024-2025 academic year in spite of the damages its teaching facilities suffered as a result of the two hurricanes and similar number of tremors that affected the island in less than 15 days.

With renewed spirit, activities restarted in most of the national educational centers, severely affected by hurricanes Oscar (October 21, Guantánamo, east) and Rafael (November 5, Artemisa, Mayabeque and Havana, west).

In this difficult scenario, head of the Higher Education Ministry (MES) Walter Baluja acknowledged the discipline and organization shown by the university centers, which safeguarded students, professors and the rest of the staff, from Cuba or abroad, during the passage of hurricane Rafael.

The minister also highlighted that during the recovery actions, students and professors participated in the restoration of buildings and cleaning of rubble in the universities and the communities that so needed.

Baluja also noted that from their future positions as professionals, students of medicine and psychology contributed to mitigating the anguish of those who today mourn the loss of human lives (San Antonio del Sur, Guantánamo, east) and material goods.

Most of the academic institutions progressively restarted the academic

year, as recovery actions in outdoors areas made progress and the electricity, water and food services were recovered, in addition to the academic infrastructure. According to officials of the sector, the colleges that last restarted their academic activities included the Havana's Technological University and the Information Sciences University, both in the capital city.

General education, for its part, received most of the students, whose provinces went back to normal and retook their daily activities.

In the Havana, Artemisa and Mayabeque provinces, the centers located in the areas affected restarted activities later on, stated head of the Ministry of Education Naima Trujillo.

In addition to the damages caused by both hurricanes, houses, schools and services infrastructures were also affected by two tremors (6.0 and 6.7 on the Richter scale) with epicenter in Cuba's south-central eastern region.

In view of the psychological and material damages caused by the tremors, authorities of the country and the people mobilized as part of a common effort, which in a few days helped the territories affected by the seismic activities to go back to normal.

After such events, the island's educational system again received in its classrooms over 1,600,000 children and adolescents determined to use their teachers' knowledge, even in spite of adversities.



Higher Education Ministry, Walter Baluja. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

I will Never Give up my Friendship with Cuba

Text and Photo DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- U.S. congresswoman Maxine Waters affirmed that she will never give up her friendship with Cuba and reiterated her commitment to continue demanding the lifting of the blockade, which today causes suffering to the people.

"I started demanding the lifting of the embargo (blockade) years ago and I know we have not been able to achieve it, but we can never stop trying," the Democrat legislator from California told **The Havana Reporter** in this capital.

I am a friend of Cuba and I have been there many times, stated Waters by the end of a meeting at the Cuban embassy in Washington with members of the U.S. Agriculture Coalition for Cuba.

I think we have to focus on what we could do in favor of relations between both countries, added the member of the House of Representatives.

We must ensure that we can make U.S. agricultural products reach Cuba, said the former chairwoman of the Congressional Black Caucus from 1997 to 1999. "So, I will never give up my friendship with Cuba and impatiently look forward to my next visit," she affirmed.

During the meeting with the Agriculture Coalition members, chargé d'affaires Lianys Torres, commented that Washington's policy to Havana "is still based on regular trade prohibition between both countries."

"The economic, commercial and financial blockade, Title III of the Helms-Burton Act and the inclusion of Cuba in the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism, not only affect our economy but also have a direct impact on the daily life of the Cuban people," Torres said.

The diplomat also explained that the Trade Sanction Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 allowed the Caribbean island, for the first time since the 1960s, to make purchases in the United States;" however, "the



U.S. congresswoman Maxine Waters.

burdensome condition of having to pay in cash and in advanced, which prevents Cuba to access credits," is still in place, she stressed.

The official stated that "it is not fair nor beneficial for any of us to continue having a comprehensive system of measures directed at depriving the Cuban economy, and consequently its people, of basic resources."

"Cuba could share its experience in the field of organic and urban agriculture, while the United States could provide technology and know-how on the intensive production of food," she added.

President of the Agriculture Coalition Paul Johnson is confident that they can continue working to improve relations in the field with the neighbor nation.

UN Endorses Sustainable Development

Text and Photo ElizabethBORREGO

UNITED NATIONS.- The recent launch of a million-worth plan resulting from the damage hurricane Oscar caused in Cuba's east confirms the United Nations (UN) will to support the country in the most difficult circumstances.

The body's representation in the island launched the initiative in coordination with

other agencies and partners, with the purpose to collect 33 million dollars to support about 150,000 people from the San Antonio del Sur, Imías, Maisí and Baracoa municipalities, the most affected by the hurricane.

According to UN resident coordinator in Cuba, Francisco Pichón, the project focuses on six key sectors: water, cleaning and hygiene; temporary shelters, housing and early recovery; education; logistics; health, and food security and nutrition.



U.N. resident coordinator in Cuba, Francisco Pichón.

The plan will endorse efforts to meet the urgent needs of the people affected the most, in addition to reactivating basic services and moving forward toward the recovery of the territories and their inhabitants' means of living.

The project, announced recently in Havana and launched in New York on November 5, reaffirms the coordinated work the United Nations conducts in the small Caribbean island, used to deal with challenges such as Oscar but not alien to its consequences.

Beyond the urgency resulting from the hurricane, the UN Office in Cuba also fosters the progress of the Sustainable Development Objectives, a priority the country also outlined and which were ratified in the Future Pact approved last September.

The document, presented to world leaders during the General Assembly's recent session, includes key topics such as security and peace; transition and digital cooperation; science, technology and innovation, and the need to give more space to the youth and younger generations.

Those strategic lines are also included in the framework plan of cooperation between the Cuban government and the UN, which goes from the economic and productive transformation to the strengthening of local food systems and the biotechnology field.

The future Cuba-UN joint program, to run from 2026 to 2030, focuses on responding to social transformations and the challenges sectors such as health or education face.

It is a cooperation framework for sustainable development, where the economy plays a fundamental role in that process, stated Pichón in an interview with **The Havana Reporter**.

"Cuba is a country with leadership, especially with the countries of the global South, that has endorsed the principles of the United Nations Charter and multilateralism, and with an important role in the transformation of world governance," acknowledged the official.

To the resident coordinator, exchange with Cuba has also been adapted to the economic restrictions that influence financing for development.

"Someone said that our cooperation was an anti-coercive measure cooperation, in the sense that without a doubt, much of the work we do in the economic field tries to accompany the country to adapt itself to restrictions."

COP29: Insufficient Results

By Germán **FERRÁS**

BAKU.- Cuba regretted the insufficient results reached in relation to climate finance at the 29th session of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP29) held in this capital, in Azerbaijan.

The Cuban delegation, headed by minister of Science, Technology and Environment Armando Rodríguez, acknowledged the value of the agreements reached on certain topics but stated its disagreement about the arrangement proposed in relation to the new climate finance quantified goal. When commenting on the speech delivered by his home delegation, Cuban ambassador to Azerbaijan Carlos Valdés said that in relation to climate finances, his country considers that there is lack of commitment on the part of developed countries to the global action to face climate change.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, the diplomat affirmed that such action is a sign of the clear intention of giving up to their historical and legal responsibilities, as acknowledged in the Framework Convention and the Paris Agreement.

A finance goal which, in certain way, directly or indirectly pretends to turn developing countries into taxpayers to the finance developed countries should provide, stated the declaration of the Cuban delegation.

With such action, the already huge flow of resources from the South to the North increases, as a kind of environmental



Minister Armando Rodríguez said that Cuba considers that there is lack of commitment on the part of developed countries. PHOTO: Internet.

colonialism, which they also pretend us to “forget the lessons of the unfulfilled goal of 100 trillion dollars,” the delegation stressed. The new financial goal, as stated, does not respond to the minimum needs demanded and leave no room for its improvement and adaptation in a reasonable period of time.

The COP29 text recalls that developing nations, in spite of their low contribution to climate change, have devised ambitious plans to mitigate climate change, “however, we are facing the limitations an unequal and unfair international economic order imposes,” highlighted the Cuban delegation.

Cuba reaffirms its commitment to climate action in accordance with the agreements reached, but rejects developed countries’ intentions of imposing emission reduction standards that are not in line with the principles of the Convention and the Paris Agreement.

Minimize HIV-Related Deaths

By Ana Laura **ARBESÚ**

HAVANA.- Cuban health authorities make efforts to minimize the deaths of people living with HIV, one of the objectives of the National Health System.

According to official statistics, 182 persons died in 2023 because of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), with emphasis on men who have sex with other men (MSM) and the trans community.

Head of the Cuban National HIV Control and Prevention Program, Manuel Romero, explained in a press conference held on occasion of the World Day in Response to HIV-AIDS, that the highest mortality rate was linked to non-communicable chronic diseases.

Because of that, the island has a project headed by the National Hygiene Institute in coordination with the Health Promotion

and Disease Prevention Unit (PROSALUD) to study the causes of incidence and focused on a strategy to revert such problems.

The official explained that work is conducted to identify the highest number of people living with HIV, in addition to their contacts, in order to include them in the strategy, present in 41 health services in all Cuban provinces, where other tests are conducted in a personalized way to identify the disease.

When revealing the data on the behavior of this disease, he stressed that there is a 0.4 percent of prevalence of this sexually transmitted disease among the population, of which 0.61 percent are men and 0.18 are women.

As part of the strategy, the people will receive protection, advice on the use of condoms, on what to do when symptoms appear and legal attention focused on the

trans community, MSM, pregnant women and other vulnerable populations. Romero highlighted that for 2030, they expect people living with HIV-AIDS to

acknowledge so, receive antiretroviral treatment and also detect the disease at an early stage, in order to avoid transmission.



For 2030 is expected that people living with HIV detect the disease at an early stage, in order to avoid transmission. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Attractions of the 28th International Ballet Festival of Havana

By Martha **SÁNCHEZ**

HAVANA.- Not even the landing of the hurricane in Cuba's west casted a shadow over the 28th edition of the Alicia Alonso International Ballet Festival of Havana, an event that gathered artists from five continents from October 28 to November 10. The level of each of the galas held reaffirmed its high quality and the respect dancers, choreographers and directors from all over the world feel for this capital and for the imprint of the Cuban National Ballet, the company that organized a dance party which has already become a legend.

Russians Irina Perren and Marat Shemiunov, from the Mijailovsky Theater of Saint Petersburg, captivated the audience with superb performances of Spring Waters and Spartacus.

We did not save lives but we can perhaps change some if we make a great performance at the stage, affirmed U.S. artist Emily Bromberg.

Something that characterized this edition of the Festival was the large diversity of styles, and although eminent Carlos Acosta could not make it to his homeland on this occasion, his name was idolized by many of the foreign participants, while director of the Birmingham Royal Ballet presented here an amazing work.

Artistic groups such as Anajnu Veatem-Jewish Dance Company of Mexico and Colombian Incolballet acted with several Cuban groups, showing their own peculiarities.

In the meantime, Mathilde Froustey and Riku Ota, from the Bordeaux Ballet of France, captivated the audience with Delibes Suite, by José Martínez (current director of the Paris Opera Ballet), showing the inheritance of the French school, with its composure and refined technique, including some touches of humor.

French Verity Jacobsen and Antoine Dubois made poetry in the romantic duet Le Parc, with choreography of Angelin Preljocaj on a Mozart music, whose iconic kiss was used as publicity by the Air France airline.

Invited by the organizers of the Festival, stage stars and prestigious maestros such as British Maina Gielgud, Russian Azari Plisetski, Argentinean Julio Bocca and Cubans Víctor Gilí and José Manuel Carreño arrived in Havana in their capacity as rehearse experts. The landing of hurricane Rafael in the country's west forced to suspend three days of activity and perform several pieces postponed on the two final days. Even without electricity and water in several neighborhoods of the capital, it was amazing to see how the audience filled the Nacional and Martí theaters willing to dream of other universes through the excellence of dance.

In spite of the circumstances, 20 shows were offered in 10 days, showing 36 new works, six of them premieres and 30 shown for the first time in Cuba, either partially or totally.

Once again, the Cuban capital became a showcase of the world dance and a point of reference for dance professionals and lovers, a range of styles, arts and emotions.



Russians Irina Perren and Marat Shemiunov, from the Mijailovsky Theater of Saint Petersburg, captivated the audience. PHOTO: Panchito González.

Malcolm X and his Mural in Havana

By Adis **MORERA**

HAVANA.- A mural in honor of Malcolm X (1925-1965), a human rights activist and an advocate of African-American civil rights adorns one of the Casa de las Américas walls, in Havana, the product of U.S. artist Jasmine Nicole's feeling and creativity.

Nicole and other artists from Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, Uruguay and Cuba participated in the V "Casa Tomada 2024" Meeting of Young Thought and Creation, which again fostered the exchange of knowledge and brotherhood in the capital of this Caribbean island.

According to Casa de las Américas, the U.S. visual artist stands out, from Atlanta (Georgia), as a powerful voice in the world of art and culture.

As an African-American cultural promoter, she uses her art to explore her own experience as a black woman of the south; she also tries to inspire the working class and the oppressed, through engraving and murals, to stand up and fight for their freedom.

Her work, deeply influenced by iconic figures such as Elizabeth Catlett and Emory Douglas, highlights the transforming power of portrait and public art, the publication states.

"Jasmine's murals not only decorates U.S. streets but also cross borders to get to Mexico, taking her message of

resistance and hope to different communities," published the prestigious Cuban cultural institution.

In addition to her artistic practice, she is also a strong organizer of events in organizations such as "Artists against Apartheid" and the Party for Socialism and Liberation, thus showing that art and activism go hand in hand, the text states.

"Jasmine made a Malcolm X mural in Casa (de las Américas), a work that shows her commitment to the fight for social justice," it reads.

Music, talks, tributes and common interests such as the fight for the defense of a free Palestine characterized the event, held at an institution that daily opens its doors to thought and cultural integration in the continent.



U.S. artist Jasmine Nicole with President of Casa de las Américas, Abel Prieto, ante Minister of Culture, Alpidio Alonso. PHOTO: Casa de las Américas.



Voces del Sur Global
Voices of the Global South



Sake, World Heritage

By Nicholas VALDÉS

HAVANA.- Thanks to the export of the Japanese cultural industry, the rest of the world is not alien to the key elements of that nation's everyday life.

Artistic expressions such as Manga and Anime have long crossed national and even regional borders and are widely seen in the West. The globalization of Karate or Judo, ancient Japanese martial arts that at present have found in France the highest number of practitioners, are other important examples.

In the case of the gastronomy sector, a similar phenomenon is found. Sushi is one of the most international dishes; others like Teriyaki, gain ground, while Sake is famous even among non-drinkers.

An advising panel of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommended the inclusion of the Japanese knowledge and traditional techniques for the preparation of Sake and Shochu distilled spirits in its Intangible Cultural Heritage list.

With its approval, this month, during the UNESCO intergovernmental committee meeting in Asunción,

Paraguay, Sake will become Japan's 23rd entry in the abovementioned list.

In Japanese, Sake simply means alcoholic beverage, a word that can refer to different liquors, depending on the region; however, in western countries, the term refers to a specific type of beverage prepared from the fermentation of rice and other ingredients, using *koji* fungus.

Its traditional preparation includes a technique with an uncommon production method – known as *Nihonshu* – in which multiple, simultaneous fermentations occur in a container. The resulting elixir can reach 15 to 20 percent of alcohol.

In the West, Sake is usually considered as the rice wine, although other beverages with the same name are also known, but different from *nihonshu*.

There are several theories about its creation, one of them with origin in China, around 4800 B.C., before its export to Japan. Other researchers believe that the Sake preparation started in the 3rd century in the Japanese archipelago, when humid cultivation of rice arrived.

In the 7th century, Sake became very popular and an organization was created to prepare that beverage in the Kyoto Imperial Palace, the then capital of Japan. The result of that support led to a fast development of the production techniques.

In the 20th century, the technology used for the preparation of this beverage made significant progress and in 1904, the Japanese government set up the Research Institute for Sake Preparation and in 1907, the first governmental tasting test was conducted.



Sake will become Japan's 23rd entry in the Intangible Cultural Heritage list OF UNESCO. PHOTO: Internet.



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A Brainstorming Project

By Norys **GARRIDO**

HAVANA.- Retomando el Son Bailando Casino (Retaking Son Dancing Salsa) is a brainstorming project, just as the videogame on the route of the son genre, promoted by artists from different disciplines.

In addition to musicians and critics, who were consulted to make this dream true, the project includes students and professors of the Information Sciences University (UCI), who were responsible for making this kind of sub-project accessible to the audience; a sub-project headed by its founder, Luis Llamo.

The initiative, headed by a man who is also known as The Son Ambassador, was also created to join the world's son lovers and contribute to local and foreign development by saving the Cuban son.

The videogame La Ruta del Son (The Son Route) can be a good way to bring technologies and its interactive experiences closer to culture in general, stated director of the UCI Interactive Technologies Center Omar Correa.

Technologies, dance and culture not always get closer the best way, Correa told **The Havana Reporter**; however, this videogame can be a good example of how to handle both elements at the same time, he added.

With this initiative, we particularly want to join all that wide interactive spectrum with the cultural values of the son that identify us, commented Correa, who is also a doctor of Sciences.

At present, the idea includes two games: the first, La isla del Son (The Son's island), with a tour of the country, connecting younger generations with the history of the genre and its main figures, Correa explained.

In its first phase, the videogame includes rhythms, a question-answer section (on historical topics) and the identification of musical instruments per region, as part of a work developed a long time ago, he added.

In this musical-dancing journey from West to East, players learn about the Cuban music and culture and get immediately involved, he said.

Correa also noted that in the case of dancing, taking it to a videogame is a more complex process; however, they are currently making an effort to finish it.

We have a game called Baile Cubano (Cuban dance), which we try to do with more difficult techniques because the Cuban dancing steps are complicated, he stressed.

We recently had an exchange with an expert and he told us that "our dancing is round, because when we dance, we do it at an angle of 360 degrees," and if there is something

difficult from the technical point of view, that is capturing movement from that angle, he explained.

For that reason, we are currently in the phase in which we are trying to capture that rotation, and later on, we will do a mini-videogame with couples, the UCI expert affirmed.

In the meantime, the rueda de casino (salsa music dance) continues to captivate dancers of all ages and from all over the world, as the recent Mega-Meeting which included the participation of 660 dancers from Havana and other countries via online, such as Spain, Italy, Sweden and Mexico, a present to the 505th anniversary of the Cuban capital.



The initiative includes a game called Baile Cubano (Cuban dance). PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Dominican Hall of Fame Praises Mijaín López

By Mariela **PÉREZ**

SANTO DOMINGO.-Dominican Sport Hall of Fame acknowledged Cuban Greco-Roman wrestling giant Mijaín López in its 58th induction ceremony for his matchless feat in the Olympic Games.

The five-time Olympic champion appreciated the acknowledgement of his sport career after getting the ovation of the people present at the ceremony, where 11 Dominican athletes who won glory for Quisqueya in different international events were extolled.

López recalled that it was in the Dominican Republic where he won the gold medal of the 2003 Pan-American Games, and affirmed that from now on, he wants to do something he can feel proud of, especially passing on his knowledge and experience in sport to the younger generations of athletes.

A few minutes before the beginning of the ceremony, dozens of athletes – including those to be honored – authorities of the sport sector in the Dominican Republic and other people, took a photo of them with López, also a five-time world champion in his discipline.

President of the Sport Union at the Monte Plata province and Dominican Sport legend, Isaac Ogando, told **The Havana Reporter** (THR) that López's presence is a high honor.

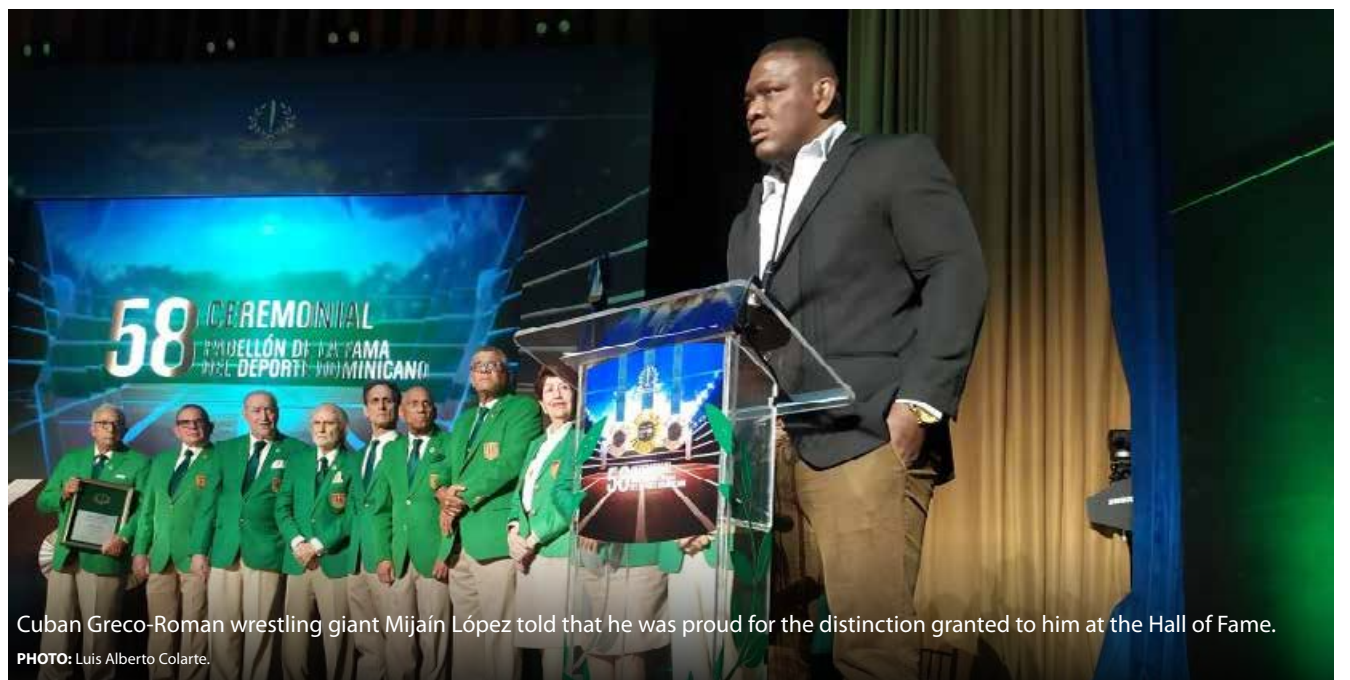
"We have the honor in this country to have in the Induction Ceremony, for the first time, one of the greatest athletes of the 21st century," he said.

López, for his part, told THR that he was proud for the distinction granted to him at the Hall of Fame, and also for the signs of love and admiration received those days.

He added that after his retirement, after winning the fifth Olympic medal in Paris 2024, he still has not had much time to meditate on his life throughout so many years dedicated to sport.

"I met my objective and I now want to enjoy every moment, every second, with my family and friends," he stressed.

He also told this publication that he wishes to do better in each of the things life has for him, "a life that without a doubt will be a model, as my career in sport."



Cuban Greco-Roman wrestling giant Mijaín López told that he was proud for the distinction granted to him at the Hall of Fame.

PHOTO: Luis Alberto Colarte.

Visual Arts Biennial Festival: Shared Horizons

By DaiLIEM

HAVANA.- With the invitation to embrace art in every space, under the premise of Shared Horizons, the 15th edition of the Havana's Visual Arts Biennial Festival takes place in Cuba from November 15 to February 28, 2025.

Nelson Ramírez, director of this famous event that celebrates 40 years in this edition, commented that the program includes exhibitions of Cuban art pieces and in commemoration of different events.

The festival includes the participation of 172 Cuban artists and 230 foreign guests, who are responsible for research projects and artistic and special exploration actions, such

as the theoretical event conducted at the National Fine Arts Museum.

The festival, also held in the Pinar del Río, Matanzas and Holguín provinces, includes different projects and the participation of local creators.

The opening ceremony took place at the Wilfredo Lam Contemporary Art Cultural Center, the seat of the event, while the inauguration of the Detrás del Muro (Behind the wall) major project was held at the Havana Malecón (seawall) on November 24.

The program also includes workshops, performances, concerts and public activities, in addition to the installation of works in emblematic sites of the host city, which recently celebrated the 505th anniversary of its foundation.

All artistic actions invite the audience to actively engage in the festival and share horizons with creators from all over the world.

The Havana Biennial Festival is defined as a voice from the Global South whose essential purpose is to contribute to spread and share knowledge on visual arts from Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean.

The event organizers also consider the festival a decolonization act, a loud voice freed from the pressures of international financial powers to demand the value of our peoples' visual creations.

The event also includes 76 collateral exhibitions by 490 artists.

The main venues include the Wilfredo Lam Center, the Visual Arts Development Center, the Cuban Photographic Library, Casa de las Américas and the Línea y 18 Cultural Station, in addition to other places of the Havana city's Historian Office.

In the case of the capital, works and exchanges between artists and the audience will take place at the El Fanguito, Casablanca, Los Sitios and Regla towns, in addition to the Malecón.

With each edition, the Visual Arts Festival grows stronger as a space of meeting and analysis on the challenges and opportunities contemporary art has in a globalized world.

The present edition includes creators from Mexico, Venezuela, Cuba, Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Mongolia, Turkey, Iran, Germany, Austria, Japan, among others.



The 15th edition of the Havana's Visual Arts Biennial Festival includes the participation of 172 Cuban artists and 230 foreign guests.

PHOTO: Jorge Pérez.

Party of the Russian Culture

By MarioMUÑOZ

HAVANA.-President of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) Alexis Triana highlighted the strengthening of cultural ties with Russia at a meeting held in this capital with filmmakers from that country, after the shooting of the binational film *Guantanamera*.

Triana stressed that those ties grew stronger during the shooting of the abovementioned work, which faced huge challenges such as the energy failure that caused a total blackout in the island for several days and the damages resulting from hurricane Rafael.

In this regard, the feature film director, Serguey Mokritskiy, said that they will remember a lot, but stressed that bad things disappear from memory while good ones remain.

He added that the film goes beyond the production itself, "it is a lot bigger," he commented. I hope that *Guantanamera* can become something similar to what Soy Cuba (Soviet

film from 1964) meant, which at the time was essential in the history of cultural relations between both nations.

For his part, Triana commented that amidst the celebrations for the 65th anniversary of ICAIC, the new production is an important tribute to the Russian and Cuban people who joined together for the first time to make cinema.

On the film plot, the director indicated that it is a love story narrated in two moments: the first takes place in 1959 and the second one, in 2023, adorned with espionage, kidnapping and action scenes.

The leading role is played by theater and television actress Darianis Palenzuela and the cast includes famous actress Eslinda Núñez, National Film awardee, and actors Carlos Enrique Almirante, Caleb Casas, Lisván Marino and Ariel Zamora.

The premiere of *Guantanamera* in Havana took place on occasion of the Russian Spiritual Culture Days in Cuba, an event that included exchange among animation specialists from

both countries in master classes, meetings and workshops for professionals and children. In a press conference, director of the ICAIC Animation Studios Esther Hirtzel stated that she is confident that the Russian and Cuban filmmakers will be able to share joint work projects in the near future.

We are dreamers; projects came up from the recent meetings, which could be materialized through internships of Cubans in Russia or vice versa, she said.

Director of the Soyuzmultfilm Studios Boris Mashkovtsev highlighted the

warm welcome received in Cuba and the exchange with Cuban creators.

"And as we are dreamers, I would like to get to the same point of *Guantanamera*, to achieve a coproduction," he said in reference to the film recently shot in Cuba between both countries.

The initiative is part of the "Russian Seasons," an international cultural project of the Russian Government and Culture Ministry to foster knowledge on their country through concerts, film festivals, art exhibitions and educational projects.



Director Serguey Mokritskiy hopes that *Guantanamera* can become something similar to what Soy Cuba film meant. PHOTO: ICAIC

Europeans Condemn the Blockade

By Waldo MENDILUZA

PARIS.- Representatives of dozens of solidarity organizations, parties and trade unions from Europe stated their support to Cuba and rejection to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States in a public event held in this capital.

At the emblematic Place du Trocadéro, in Paris, with the Eiffel Tower as witness, over 200 delegates from about 30 countries ratified their support to the island at the conclusion of the 19th European Continental Meeting of Solidarity with Cuba, held at the end of November at the headquarters of the French Communist Party.

The gathering was colorful because of the presence of flags and posters, as well as for the diversity of languages spoken by the participants, whose cries of "Cuba yes, blockade no" and "Long live Cuba" resounded in the busy square, a must-visit for those who tour the City of Light.

Several speeches were delivered in

this moving event, including that of International Relations secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, Manu Pineda and France Cuba president, Fabrice Leclerc, who condemned the blockade, denounced their impact and acknowledged Cuba's resistance.

Cuban ambassador to France Otto Vaillant appreciated the support and large participation of people at the 19th European Continental Meeting of Solidarity with the island.

During the event, participants proposed activities to strengthen support to the island in the political and communicational fields, based on the unity of action in the continent.

In the first day of activities, Pineda urged to appeal to a battle of ideas in the common agenda to spread the reality of Cuba and the consequences of the U.S. blockade.

We must adapt our solidarity work to the new technologies, reach the youth and be attractive with our messages on the situation of the Cuban people, which suffers the most violent, aggressive and criminal blockade, he told **The Havana Reporter**.

European coordinator of the Europe for Cuba channel, José Antonio Toledo, urged to join efforts in the field of communication to denounce the blockade and support the island.

Toledo announced the summon of a meeting in Seville, Spain, in March, to articulate alternative media from different continents committed to the fair causes, particularly support to Cuba and its Revolution.

For his part, secretary of the Belgian Committee for the Lifting of the Blockade on Cuba, Win Leysens, proposed to focus efforts on a specific activity with impact on Europe and mentioned the issue of the European banks that refuse to work with Cuba for fear of reprisals by the United States.

In his speech at the commission on economic cooperation, Dutch doctor Paul Jonas proposed to foster the network for academic exchange with Cuba, already in place, as a way to hit the blockade.



At the emblematic Place du Trocadéro over 200 delegates from about 30 countries ratified their support to the island. PHOTO: Ileana Piñero.

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Havana, Real, Wonderful and Eclectic

By Daimarelys PÉREZ

HAVANA.- The former Village that became the Cuban capital is celebrating its 505th anniversary with a campaign entitled Leales a La Habana (Loyal to Havana), a restoration movement undertaken by the Historian's Office to give the city its beauty and splendor back.

As every year, all efforts to recovery the city are dedicated to Havana's major enthusiast, Eusebio Leal, who is still the city's main lover, the most loyal person to walk its streets and avenues. Emblematic buildings of Havana have been restored, and without a doubt, Leal inspires tooth and nail to rescue the patrimonial, historical and cultural values treasured here in the most ancient sites.

On occasion of the present anniversary, several buildings were restored, including the Santa Clara Convent – founded in 1644 and with great patrimonial value – one of the most important actions of the Architecture Biennial, while the Casa de Asia and the Plaza Vieja undergo refurbish actions.

In the case of Plaza Vieja, a public square, attention was given to the buildings' portals, including the elimination of architectonic barriers.

The Leales a La Habana campaign was launched at the city's Historical Center and one of the major expectations was seen at the 15th edition of the Havana's Visual Arts Biennial Festival, which started last November 15 and will be extended until February 28 next year.

Havana is not only celebrating its anniversary and recalling its historian (Eusebio Leal Spengler), but is also rendering tribute, through its own existence, to the 120th anniversary of birth of one of its dearest sons, Alejo Carpentier (who was born in Switzerland, according to documents and died in France), who arrived in this Caribbean city with his family when he was a small child. Critic and journalist Fernando Rodríguez Sosa, the host of the literary space El elogio oportuno (Timely praise), made reference these days to those two outstanding figures of the Cuban intelligentsia when he affirmed: "They both loved and cared for Havana from their own fronts. Carpentier and Leal were joined by their deep love for this city."

The Historian's Office of the City of Havana also summoned this year the 20th edition of the Patrimonial Cities Management Meeting, an event that tries to seek consensus among different actors with the purpose to plan and develop a comprehensive way of handling those assets.

The Boloñas Publishing House, with the Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring's historical notes; Ocean Sur and Ocean Press, also supported that biography linked to our heritage and other actions.

Celebrations for the 505th anniversary of the city also included the Online Salsa Dancers Mega-Meeting, an international event that joined the festivities for the birthday of the capital, a city as royal as the palm trees, as wonderful as its spirit and as eclectic as the society itself.

Cuba's Most Beautiful Gazebo

Text and Photos Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

MANZANILLO. The Manzanillo Gazebo, in Granma province, is famous for being a beautiful, unique scenario and a cultural environment peculiar of this eastern Cuban city. Gazebos do not follow the general rule of priority to the right, as those inside already have it.

We make this clear as people also consider these places a temple or music stand or festive construction, typical of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, which stand out by a circular or semicircular structure located in the center of a park, garden or jetty and designed to accommodate bands' musical performance in outdoors concerts.

The above seems to be the most appropriate description of the topic in question, which is related to the beauty of the Manzanillo Gazebo, no matter the term used (Gazebo or Temple).

The abovementioned emblematic site is erected not only as a witness to the passage of time but also as a beacon of history, culture and resistance. Its construction started in 1918 and finished in 1924.

The Moorish Gazebo, an architectonic jewel and a symbol of the Manzanillo people's

identity, is honored by its inhabitants every year. Its architecture is inspired by the famous Patio de los Leones at the Alhambra Palace, in the Spanish city of Granada and evokes a glorious past, where art and culture created beautiful and harmonious places.

Throughout its history of more than one hundred years, the site has witnessed endless changes, historic events and social transformations. Its constant presence reminds us of the importance of collective memory, the need of protecting our cultural heritage and the strength of a people that has loved it and protected it, local historians affirm.

More than a monument, the site became a meeting place for the inhabitants of the city, where families, friends and visitors get together to enjoy unforgettable moments, cultural events and the beauty of the surrounding environment.

The Moorish Gazebo is not only an architectonic legacy but also a symbol of a people's resistance in their fight for the preservation of their identity and their heritage. The preservation of the Gazebo is a common commitment, as authorities of the city indicate.

Its eclectic and Moorish-art construction, erected thanks to the interest and material contribution of the city dwellers, has a great architectonic value.



Mexican Government's Clear Message

By Lianet **ARIAS**

MEXICO CITY.- Mexico's most recent results in the field of security send a clear message on the strategy the government implements to face criminal groups and organized crime. The data speak for themselves: in the first 39 days of the administration headed by president Claudia Sheinbaum, authorities arrested 3,015 individuals for high-impact crimes and confiscated 1,334 firearms.

In addition, they also seized 42 tons of drug, of which there were 20,075 kilograms of cocaine and 390,740 fentanyl pills "that will not get to the streets and will not affect the health nor the development of thousands of youngsters," noted secretary of Security, Omar García Harfuch.

In the states of Sinaloa and Baja California alone, authorities dismantled in that period of time 15 illegal labs for the manufacture of synthetic drugs, in which 40,185 liters and 5,156 kg of chemical substances were also seized.

On top of that, Zhi Dong "N", considered an important money laundering dealer at the international level and the person responsible for making connections with

other cartels for the transfer of fentanyl coming from China, was also arrested.

The destinations of the narcotic drugs were Central and South America, Europe and the United States, where that substance – a synthetic opioid much powerful that

heroin – caused a crisis resulting in over 112,000 deaths in 2023.

"Since the very first day of the government, we have acted with determination to stop those who cause violence, which threatens families' peace", García Harfuch affirmed

when referring to these and other actions conducted against criminals.

And no wonder. According to a study conducted in March and April by the National Statistics and Geography Institute, 60.7 percent of the population over the age of 18 stated that insecurity is the most serious problem.

In another survey, conducted this time by QM Estudios de Opinión and Heraldo Media Group, more than half of those polled pointed out at this issue as the one president Sheinbaum should immediately face.

The current strategy to fight crime, whose first results are already seen, is a follow-up to the one implemented by former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador (2018-2024) in what regards several aspects.

In essence, it includes four points: attention to the structural causes of violence; strengthening and consolidation of the National Guard; promotion of intelligence and research, and coordination between the Security Cabinet and the states.

In order to build a lasting peace in the country, authorities agreed on several objectives, including reduction of criminal incidence, mostly fraudulent homicides and high-impact crimes such as extortion.



President Claudia Sheinbaum and secretary of Security, Omar García Harfuch. PHOTO: Internet.

 An advertisement for Esicuba travel insurance. It features a woman from behind, wearing a white t-shirt, blue jeans, and a brown hat, holding a black suitcase. She is looking at a map of Cuba with a red dashed line indicating a travel route. The text "INSURANCE TRAVEL" is prominently displayed in a box, followed by "JUST TO CUBA". The Esicuba logo and "Seguros Internacionales de Cuba, S.A." are at the bottom.

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Cuba Updates Investment Portfolio

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The updated Portfolio of Investment Opportunities in Cuba includes 607 projects distributed nationwide, the majority of which are concentrated in the food sector, with 145 proposals.

Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment Oscar Pérez-Oliva stated that key sectors include the energy field, tourism, sugarcane agribusiness and its by-products, transportation and logistics, efficient trade, construction, culture, telecommunications and information technology, pharmaceutical industry and biotechnology.

The official made the announcement on occasion of the 40th edition of the Havana's International Trade Fair (FIHAV 2024),

which had to be suspended because of the powerful hurricane.

Pérez-Oliva stressed that the country expects to finish 2024 with about 30 new businesses, 12 less in comparison to 2023, although 23 projects are undergoing an advanced stage of negotiation with important strategic partners – most of them, with conditions to be materialized following some concepts for their approval.

The head of the Foreign Trade ministry also highlighted the approval of three new projects with the involvement of Cubans living abroad and said that 328 businesses with foreign capital are in force in Cuba.

Those businesses include 112 joint ventures, 184 international economic association contracts, 62 businesses with one hundred-percent foreign capital and three reinvestments for a total of about 119 million dollars.

The official added that work is conducted to reorganize foreign trade with insertion in the economy and the functioning in the country of the new economic actors, though adapted to an environment totally different to the one prevailing before.

Cuba offers investors different advantages that go beyond the approval of Law No. 118 and its additional norms, which allowed creating a safe and transparent legal framework in a favorable entrepreneurial environment. The country also offers investors political, social and legal stability and an environment of safety for foreign staff.

Some of the most important benefits include fiscal incentives, the drafting of sectorial policies to identify opportunities of investment with foreign capital that favor access to the Cuban market and its consumers.

In addition to that, the country's geographical location in the center of an expanding market, high education, social security and health indicators, and a highly-qualified workforce, are also included.

Other benefits are the existence of institutions at the service of investors, in addition to a government policy that gives priority to research and technological innovation.

On top of that, Cuba has signed several international agreements with the Latin American Integration Association, the Caribbean Community, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America, the Southern Common Market, the European Union and the World Trade Organization, among others.



Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Oscar Pérez-Oliva. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Sugarcane agribusiness and its by-products are among the key sectors for foreign investment.

Digital Fraud on the Rise in the World

By TheHavanaReporter **EDITORIALSTAFF**

GENEVA.- For the first time, digital document forgery in the world overtook physical counterfeits as the foremost fraud method in 2024, revealed a report by the U.S. company Entrust Cybersecurity Institute.

Signs indicate that every five minutes, a fraud attempt involving deepfake (fake or manipulated videos and audios) is committed, stated the U.S. company, responsible for processing millions of identity verification in 195 countries. According to the source, digital document forgeries make up 57% of all document fraud registered in 2024, which represents a 244% increase in comparison to the previous year and a 1,600% spike since 2021, "when almost all fake documents were physical forgeries."

With the development of artificial intelligence (AI), document attacks are more and more sophisticated, particularly DNI

attacks, which represent 40.8% of incidents worldwide, the study revealed.

According to the institute, there is a proliferation of AI-powered hyper realistic synthetic identities made with the purpose to endorse fraud: the rise of digital face swap apps

and Gen AI tools allow fraudsters to mount more credible biometric fraud attacks.

Malicious practices are highly extended and include opening of fake accounts, appropriation of accounts, phishing frauds and misinformation campaigns.

Entrust Cybersecurity Institute estimates that the main targets of these attacks are the financial services sector, cryptocurrency platforms, lending and mortgage and traditional banks.



Digital document forgeries make up 57% of all document fraud registered in 2024. PHOTO: Internet.

Export of Vegetable Charcoal Increases

By Raúl GARCÍA

SANCTI SPIRITUS.- One of the export items this central Cuban province promotes is vegetable charcoal, an important source of raw material present in this territory that contributes to the country's economy.

From 2023 to the present year, the production of this item has exceeded four thousand tons – a figure higher to that of previous periods – according to specialists of the Ministry of Agriculture.

In the last five years, several agricultural companies and entities of the private and cooperative sectors have joined this activity, among which the Sur del Jíbaro Agribusiness Grains Company (EAIG), from La Sierpe and the Flora and Fauna Company stand out, whose products are already present in Europe.

Ignacio Pérez, specialist of the Provincial Foreign Trade, Investment, International Collaboration and Relations department, an entity attached to the government, talked about the results this important activity has to raise foreign currencies and attract new partners abroad.

The Havana Reporter knew that foreign currencies collected are an important contribution to the development of entities' equipment and the acquisition of essential goods the country cannot acquire because of the strong and unfair blockade imposed by the United States. Thanks to those incomes, the Sur del Jíbaro Company has been able to modernize its machineries, including rice combine harvesters, which have also been acquired by producers, in addition to urea and other fertilizers.

Since 2021, EAIG has the faculty to import and export products and act as an intermediary entity, benefiting

non-state management forms, including self-employed workers of different territories of the province.

Labor Heroine of the Republic of Cuba María Elvira Dávila, director of the Sancti Spíritus Flora and Fauna Company, affirmed that local and national interest for that production increases.

The company's Base Entrepreneurial Units that stand out for their charcoal results include Rancho Condado, in Trinidad, which allocates more than 10 tons of this product monthly to export.

In addition to its quality and being an important source of foreign currencies, it has several uses as fuel in both the

industry and housing and gastronomic sectors, for the peculiar taste it passes onto food, she said.

Main clients of this product include Spain and Portugal, but we have also sold our products to Belgium and the Tropical Contramaestre company, and we are looking for other clients, as the range has opened, Dávila affirmed.

This new endeavor is developed without giving up our specific tasks, such as nature, adventure and rural tourism, while we are joining other economic activities such as cattle raising, agricultural production and the promotion of a new way of life in the Plan Turquino zone.



Several agricultural companies and entities of the private and cooperative sectors have joined the export of vegetable charcoal. PHOTO: ACN.

Hydraulic Investments Make Progress

By Yunier SIFONTE

SANTA CLARA.- President of the National Hydraulic Resources Institute (INRH) Antonio Rodríguez checked the progress made in the sector's investment area in the central province of Villa Clara.

As part of his agenda in this territory, the official evaluated the program directed at changing the energy matrix in the pumping systems, in addition to the execution of a credit from Saudi Arabia focused on the cleaning and water supply sectors in the Santa Clara city.

The INRH president commented that both lines of work are essential to guarantee energy saving efficiency and increase stations' operational security, as well as to contribute to resources saving and increase the quality of life of the inhabitants of this city, the most populated in Cuba's central region.

As part of the visit, Rodríguez and those who accompanied him went to the Minerva pumping station, where works are conducted to recover essential infrastructures, install two new turbines and retake the pumping capacity of a

system designed to benefit over 89,000 persons.

Governor of the Villa Clara province, Milaxy Sánchez, explained that the sector's strategies in this central zone

include the installation of new pumping equipment, the repair of lines, works to minimize leaks in the distribution networks and to take the water to remote communities of the Escambray mountain

region and neighborhoods in high areas of the city.

Villa Clara province is one of the Cuban territories that faces main problems in the supply of water to the population, a reality that is gradually changing thanks to the execution of investments in the sector.



The president of INRH (center) stressed the need to ensure efficiency and increase operational safety of pumping stations. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Cuban Basketball to Make a Comeback in the Region

By Lemay **PADRÓN**

HAVANA.- The Cuban men's basketball team concluded the second elimination round of the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) for the Americas 2025 Cup with one victory and one defeat, which left them in a good position.

An important victory against the Bahamas and a tight defeat against Puerto Rico allowed the Cuban squad to finish second in Group D, tied with the Puerto Rican team, both with two victories and loses, only behind the United States (3-1).

However, for the moment, this position is not enough to reach one of the three quotas available to the Americas Cup, to be held in Nicaragua next year.

Technical coach of the Cuban team, Onel Planas, particularly praised the defensive work that allowed players to finish in this privileged position.

"We have a good team; there is good chemistry and group unity. We have worked hard from the tactical point of view. They already know my game philosophy, we have studied opponents carefully, because they are all tough."

"We have particularly worked on defense in the perimeter, because at present most of the teams make 30 to 40 long distance shot attempts and we have to minimize

that by closing spaces and with constant assistance."

These were difficult games because Cuba had important players on the sidelines, such as captain and leader Jasiel Rivero, who is injured; winger Karel Guzmán, who also has physical problems and pivot Yoel Cubillas, who could not make it to the court because of migratory issues.

However, those present were able to manage pressure well, to assume key roles and Planas was

even able to send all top players to the bench to rest in the match against the Bahamas, so that they were fresh against the Puerto Ricans.

"We have great players; they are confident and I hope things go well for us. Based on the plan we made, if the strategy is met, we could achieve our objective, no matter who the opponent is," he concluded.

The Cubans ratified the improvement shown last February in the free and long distance shots, two important elements considering

that they do not play together all year and understanding each other on the court is always going to be difficult.

Yoanki Mencía returned with the strong will of proving his worth and finished being the best in the court of the Ciudad Deportiva sport center, supported by Pedro Bombino, Reynaldo García, Marcos Chacón and Howard Saint Roos. The sending-off of the latter was another element that made the team stumbled against the Puerto Ricans.



Cuban squad finished second in Group D, tied with the Puerto Rican team. PHOTO: Panchito González.

Marabana 2024 and Its Surprises

By Julio **MEJÍAS**

HAVANA.- Francisco Ronnei Estévez and Anisleidis Ochoa were the first to be surprised by the time scored that let them win the half marathon of the Marabana 2024 International Race.

Estévez, 27 and a native of the western Mayabeque province, showed his usual composure and tenacity, which let him winning the 21,097 km race with 1:06:51 hours – four seconds less that the score he made in the 2023 edition, when he also became the winner.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, the Mayabeque runner showed his happiness as he had been unable to run for about two weeks because of an injury. As soon as pain started to ease, he felt he could not miss the 38th edition of the main long-distance event organized in Cuba outside stadiums.

"I ran with care; I cannot deny that. My coach told me not to force myself and follow a pace according to what I felt in each lap. I did it; I let myself go. The nice temperature and

breeze along the circuit helped me and I am surprised to see that in spite of setbacks, I scored a better time", he said.

Also winner of the Varadero International Marathon this year, Ronnei – as everyone



Francisco Ronnei Estévez won the 21,097 km race with 1:06:51 hours, four seconds less that the chrono he made in the 2023 edition. PHOTOS: Panchito González.

knows him – commented that he will continue with his recovery work because he still has some pain and has the intention of improving his mark in the next season, and also be ready for any invitation to foreign marathons.

For her part, Anisleidis, a native of the Guantánamo province, was also surprised

with her record (1:15:21 hours), as after the pedagogical tests conducted by her coach, they both thought that her record could be around one hour and 17 minutes.

"I felt great; I did not expect this time, the best I have scored. I am happy and dedicate this victory to my family, my coach, to all those who have supported me. This result inspires me to work harder in my preparation. My main disciplines are in the track and I hope to have other achievements in the next season, I am working hard," she said with enthusiasm.

In relation to the race, she stressed that her main opponent is always the clock: "the result of each competition is important; I can win or finish fourth, fifth, not reach the podium, but if I improve my score, then I feel pleased, like now. My opponent is the clock; he is the one I face to try to have a better score every time I compete."

The 10 km race was won by Alejandro Manuel Rodríguez (31:50 minutes) and Pan-American runner-up in 1500 m and Olympic finalist in 800 m Dayli Cooper (personal best with 35:37); while the marathon race (42,195 km) was won by Dairan Suárez and Milena Pérez, with 2:37:28 and 3:03:37 hours, respectively.



Anisleidis Ochoa was another of the surprises of this edition of Marabana.

Summit of Leaders without Leaders nor Consensus

By Adriana **ROBREÑO**

QUITO.-With a call to strengthen cooperation relations and overcome differences, but without final consensus, the 29th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government finished in Cuenca, Ecuador, marked by the absence of leaders.

The event was attended by representatives from 19 nations, but few leaders were present, including the King of Spain, Felipe VI; the Portuguese president, Marcelo Rebelo; the Head of the Andorra government, Xavier Espot, and the host president, Daniel Noboa – the only from Latin America.

This was the Ibero-American Summit with the smallest presence of leaders since the start of these meetings in 1991.

“A summit is defined by the presence of heads of State. Without them, it is called a meeting. This shameful situation is the result of our foreign policy’s absolute disaster, and of a president that has become the laughing stock of the international community,” said former Ecuadorian minister of Foreign Affairs Guillaume Long. In his opinion, the mass absence of leaders is the result of the assault on the Mexican



embassy last April, in addition to the multidimensional crisis Ecuador suffers, with prolonged power cuts, insecurity and unemployment, among other problems.

Amidst the absences, the Ibero-American forum reached a final declaration, but without the consensus of all the participating countries. In a press conference, Ecuadorian minister of Foreign Affairs Gabriela Sommerfeld

stated: “There is a declaration in the framework of the Summit but not within the Summit, because there were different positions among some countries.”

All the delegations present, except Argentina, endorsed a document that includes agreements in the field of gender equality; actions to fight climate change, foster the 2030 Agenda, and rejection to

the U.S. blockade on Cuba, among other topics.

The text, endorsed by 18 of the participating nations, condemns the application of unilateral coercive measures that violate the International Law and the United Nations Charter and hinder States’ capacity to face their needs and priorities.

In this sense, the declaration urges to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba and rejects the inclusion of the island in the unilateral list of State sponsors of terrorism. In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, general director for Multilateral Issues and International Law at the Cuban ministry of Foreign Affairs, Rodolfo Benítez, highlighted that “no country supported Argentina’s stance” in its attempt to prevent stating condemnation of the economic war the U.S. government launches on Cuba.

“The current occupants of the Casa Rosada (Pink House), who strive to make it look like the White House more and more, try at all cost to win Washington’s approval pat,” stated the Cuban official.

Ecuador finally passed on the pro-tempore presidency of the Ibero-American Secretariat to Spain, which is already planning the 30th edition of the Summit, in 2026.

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