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Tourism Ministry Ratifies Service Capacity

By Raquel **DÍAZ** and Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- The Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR) ratified the will and the capacity to provide a safe and pleasant experience to all clients.

According to a press release, MINTUR implements measures to guarantee the quality and the continuity of the tourist services in light of the energy situation the country faces. At the same time, it affirms the industry is ready to face the present challenges and conduct tourist activities as normal as always. The communiqué indicates that destinations such as Cayo Largo, Cayo Santa María, Cayo Coco, Cayo Cruz and Cayo Paredón generate their own electricity apart from the National Electric System.

The text says that the hotel and extra-hotel facilities are equipped with power generators that guarantee a constant and reliable supply of electricity, and energy saving and efficiency practices are adopted to minimize impact on operations and clients.

Cuban researcher and academician José Luí Perelló analyzed the current situation of the tourism sector in the country and its relation to the United States in an article published in the digital publication Progreso Weekly based in the US.

Perelló stated that commercial relations between the United States and Cuba have gone, for over 60 years, through a path full of obstacles, restrictions, agreements and disagreements, of which the tourism sector is an example.

As a result, the travel industry and relations between both nations follow the footsteps of the policies the different U.S. governments, either Democrat or Republican, impose on Cuba.

He stressed that, as known, the United States played and continues to play an important role in Cuba's economy in spite of restrictions imposed and regulations by the government of Donald Trump, which his Democrat successor, Joe Biden, maintained in place.

Perelló recalled that in spite of the negative conditions, 2017 ended up with 4,689,000

visitors – 16.2 percent more in relation to the previous year – while 2018 concluded with 4,732,000 visitors – the best number recorded in Cuba since the tourist sector started to be developed.

He added that as of the second year of his term, Trump fostered a radical strengthening of sanctions against Cuba, with over 240 measures, including prohibition to cruise ship travels from the United States in June 2019, among others.

The academician highlighted that in 2019 and 2020, Cuba suffered the highest impacts of such sanctions and restrictions, including reactivation of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act; inclusion in the list of countries that do not fully cooperate with antiterrorist efforts, and inclusion of 211 companies in the List of Restricted Cuban Entities.

Perelló said that this short summary shows that several factors have an impact on the reduction of arrivals to Cuba, a situation that has happened for three years and that seems to be difficult to revert.



The tourism industry is ready to face the present challenges. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Havanatur Launches Catalog of 2025 Events

Text and Photos Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The Cuban Havanatur tourist group has already scheduled 49 events in 2025, although it has the intention to include about a dozen more, stated head of the event department Raidel Leyva.

In a ceremony held at the Hotel Parque Central, of the Spanish Iberostar chain, the official launched the Opportunities Portfolio of the 2025 Event Catalog in the presence of authorities from the Tourism Ministry, hotel managers, travel agencies and tour operators.

In an interview with **The Havana Reporter**, Leyva recalled that they started 2024 with about 20 events in the calendar and finished it with over 50, and stressed that he is optimistic about the possibility of holding about 80 events in 2025, considering that 49 are already included in the program.

At the launch of the catalog, the young executive explained that the program is made under the principle of promotion, coordination and facilitation, in order to attain higher efficiency and quality in their work.



Havanatur programas include ecotourism, nature, cultural and sport events among others. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Events already scheduled include the Habano 2025 International Festival; the International Telecommunication Union World Summit; the IV edition of the International Science and Conscience Convention; the XI Earth Sciences Convention, and the XIII Symposium on Forestry Resources Sustainable Management (SIMFOR 2025).

Havanatur has a program of tourist trips that includes four permanent circuits. Color Café (Coffee Color), one of such circuits, tours Havana, Viñales, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Topes de Collantes, Remedios, Cayo Santa María and Santa Clara, while Tierra Tabaco y Sol-Los Tesoros de Cuba (Land, Tobacco and Sun-Cuba's Treasures), offers visits to Havana, Viñales, Guamá, Cienfuegos, Trinidad, Villa Clara and Varadero.

The third of these circuits, Recorramos Cuba (Let's tour Cuba), offers stays in several Cuban cities, including Camagüey,

Bayamo, Santiago, Holguín and Cayo Cruz (east), in addition to other places, with emphasis on tours to patrimonial and historical sites and outstanding landscapes of the area.

Havanatur also focuses its work on the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) segment and every year, it organizes 50 major events, including FotoSub, the Ernest Hemingway International Marlin Tournament, Varadero Gourmet, El Ron de Cuba, Cuba Golf, Amigos de Partagás and ExpoCaribe.

Other events include corporate and business meetings, academic, ecotourism, nature, cultural and sport events.

In order to meet its objectives, the group has established alliances with operators from Central and South America, the Caribbean and other areas of the world, while fostering multiple destination.

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Popular march against Blockade



Army General Raúl Castro and President Miguel Díaz-Canel led the march of thousands of Cubans. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Ernesto **VERA**

HAVANA.- Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel rejected the U.S. blockade and demanded the removal of the island from the Department of State list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism.

In the presence of Army General Raúl Castro and thousands of people from Havana, gathered across from the U.S. embassy and in representation of the Cuban people, the head of State demanded respect to Cuba's right to build its future in peace.

The Cuban leader denounced that the current U.S. administration, to soon finish its term, did not change the policy of its predecessor, Donald Trump (2017-2021), who will again take on the presidency on January 20.

By implementing the 243 additional measures and maintaining Cuba in the state sponsors of terrorism list, Biden obediently and cruelly followed the policy Trump approved during his administration, Díaz-Canel stated in a speech in front of the embassy of the United States in Havana.

He stressed that pointing at Cuba as a country that allegedly sponsors terrorism is false and immoral, to say the least, wherever the accusation comes from, but especially when this comes from the U.S. territory.

Right now, paramilitary groups that organize, promote and finance terrorist actions against social and economic structures in Cuba are trained there, he denounced in front of thousands of Havana residents who went on a march to demand the end of the U.S. hostilities.

Cuba's permanence in that list and the strengthening of the blockade are actions against the Cuban people that must end now, he affirmed.

Díaz-Canel affirmed that this march is not against the U.S. people, against whom Cuba does not profess the slightest feeling of hatred or animosity, but against the determination of the government of that power to take away the island's sovereignty, independence and socialism, against which, he said, it will always find rebellion and intransigence.

The Cuban president also recalled that his country has extended its hand to all the U.S. governments since the triumph of the Revolution and until the present, always with the purpose of having a serious, respectful relation on equal terms.

Against the U.S. imperialism plan and its pretension of imposing itself by force or seduction, we will march today and always, stressed Díaz-Canel.

National Assembly Analyzes Economic Topics

By Melissa **KING**

HAVANA.- Cuban members of Parliament analyzed key topics for the country's development, particularly those related to the economy, at the fourth ordinary period of sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power, in its X Legislature.

Gathered at Havana's Conference Center, MPs received an update on the implementation of the Government projections to correct distortions and boost the economy by prime minister Manuel Marrero, who stated his dissatisfaction with the progress made in this regards.

According to the head of Government, there are several reasons that prevent a positive balance, including material causes, old-fashion inertia and distortion of resolutions and guidance.

During the Parliament session, minister of Economics and Planning Joaquín Alonso announced that in 2025, Cuba foresees a one percent increase of the Growth Domestic Product (GDP) at current prices. The minister explained that this forecast is based on the recovery of the tourism sector and the incomes from the main export items, in addition to reanimation of productive, agricultural and industrial activities and social services to the population.

Meanwhile, minister of Finances and Prices Vladimir Rugeiro informed that 71 percent of the State budget for 2025 will be allocated to education, public health, social security and assistance, culture and sport.

At the three-day parliament meeting, preceded by two days of working

commission meetings, MPs had an intense agenda that included the approval of the Notary Law and the Act for the practice of law and national organization of Collective Law Firms.

Legislators stressed the importance of strengthening the action plan of the Policy for the Comprehensive Attention to Children, Adolescents and Youth, a norm approved a year ago.

At the plenary meeting, Deputy prime minister Eduardo Martínez presented the achievements and challenges of the Government strategy, which includes 14 objectives focused on protection to that age group, that also highlights their participation in the construction of the socialist project.

MPs also received an update on the situation of the national electricity and energy system, with better projections for 2025.

The fourth ordinary period of session, held from December 18 to 20, took place amidst the complex situation the country faces because of the strengthening of the U.S. blockade and the inclusion of the island on the State sponsors of terrorism list.

In this regard, president Miguel Díaz-Canel highlighted the heroism of the Cuban people, "a colossal fighter who, as we have said, deserves a monument and that will never be enough."

He stated that overcoming the obstacles Washington's policy imposes on Cuba "depends on what we are capable of doing and promoting, with the heroism, intelligence and creativity that characterizes us as a people."



Prime minister Manuel Marrero presented the projections to correct distortions and boost the economy. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

A Decade after reestablishing Diplomatic Relations

By DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- On December 17, 2014, presidents Barack Obama and Raúl Castro announced that the United States and Cuba would restart diplomatic relations, but a decade later, far from progress, reversion has occurred.

"We have agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations," the Cuban president said, while his U.S. counterpart stated in a simultaneous speech that he had instructed his secretary of State, John Kerry, "to reestablish diplomatic relations that have been severed (because of Washington's unilateral decision) since January of 1961."

That day, the prediction historical leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro made, when he affirmed: The Five will Return – in reference to the Cuban antiterrorists fighters who served long and unfair sentences in federal prisons – turned out to be correct.

Cuba welcomed, on December 17, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino and Antonio Guerrero, who were released and returned to their homeland, joining their other two comrades-in-cause, Fernando González and René González, already in the country.

What not a few perhaps hoped in relation to a potential path without tensions and hostilities was barely a moment's respite that Republican Donald Trump immediately reverted when he took on the presidency of the United States in January 2017.

The Republican magnate had already anticipated it during his 2016 electoral campaign: if he made it to the White House, he would eliminate the "concessions" Obama (2009-2017) had made in relation to Cuba.

That is how he reduced U.S. people's visits to Cuba; prohibited cruise ships, flights, educational trips, and in February 2017, the then new administration accused the island, without any evidence, of an alleged acoustic attacks against their diplomats in Havana.



A Department of State annual report maintained Washington's criterion that Cuba sponsors terrorism. PHOTO: Internet.

Such pretext allowed him to successively adopt 243 coercive measures that tightened the economic, commercial and financial blockade that for over 60 years has tried to asphyxiate the Cuban people.

In his speech on December 17, Raúl Castro warned that the main obstacle to bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba is the blockade, which Obama implemented with all intensity, Trump tightened and Joe Biden followed to the letter.

Not long ago, secretary of State Antony Blinken affirmed that no change was anticipated in relation to the policy towards Cuba before the end of Biden's term.

He said the same thing when asked if the Biden government would be analyzing an eventual removal of Cuba from the state sponsors of terrorism list. "As I have said, I do not anticipate any change," he stressed.

In effect, on December 12, a Department of State annual report maintained Washington's criterion that Cuba sponsors terrorism, an arbitrary designation first applied in 1982 during the government of Ronald Reagan and until 2015, when Obama eliminated it.

But in January 2021, a few days before the end of his four-year term, Trump again included Cuba in that list, which Biden maintained unaltered.

A Solidarity Hand

By DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- The Los Angeles Hands Off Cuba Committee launched a campaign to collect medical supplies for Cuban hospitals, affected by the strengthening of the blockade imposed by the United States. According to the organization, affiliated with the large National Network on Cuba in the United States, efforts will be extended until the present month of January in Southern California and will be directed at collecting funds or the donation of painkillers and anti-inflammatory.

The drugs will be sent to healthcare centers such as the Calixto García hospital, Havana's main traumatology institution.

In the call, the friends of Cuba said that this situation is the result of the blockade – which lasts for more than six decades – and the U.S. government's decision of maintaining Cuba in the (unilateral) list of state sponsors of terrorism.

The initiative will be endorsed by Havana's Latin American School of Medicine graduates

in Los Angeles, local physicians, Not Just Tourists and Global Health Partners (GHP) – the latter will assume the shipping costs to Cuba.

"We have just received GHP news saying that the main trauma hospital in Havana, Calixto García, is completely out of any type of painkillers! A result of the blockade and SSOT (State Sponsors of Terrorism), the message said.

Global Health Partners, an NGO and the Saving Lives coalition also lead here a campaign to send vital devices cardiology patients need, such as pacemakers, which Cuba lacks because of the restrictions imposed by Washington's unilateral siege, which prevents and hinders their acquisition.

That is one of the several projects conducted to help the Cuban health system and endorsed by solidarity actions in the United States. Other initiatives include the Hatuey Project, which collects funds for

the acquisition of cytostatic drugs used in pediatrics rooms.

In December 12, the Department of State published its annual report on terrorism in 2023 and maintained Cuba in the arbitrary list of countries that sponsor that scourge, a designation that has tightened the unilateral siege against the island.

However, in January 2021, a few days after leaving the House White, Donald Trump again included Cuba in that list, which Biden did not change.

**U.S. HANDS OFF
CUBA COMMITTEE**



Friends from the United States expressed their solidarity during the Covid-19 pandemic. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

What did Recent Tremors Teach us?

By Lourdes **NAVARRO**

HAVANA.- Pílon municipality (Granma province) and its surrounding area is the zone where Cuba's strongest tremors have occurred in the last 90 years. Those that happened on November 2024 so show. Beyond scientific interest, what lessons did they teach us?

Specialists Enrique D. Arango Arias, of the National Seismological Research Center (CENAI), and Manuel A. Iturralde-Vinent, of the Cuban Academy of Sciences, analyzed the topic in an article published in the local media.

Recent activity started on November 10, when CENAI stations network registered two strong earthquakes located at about 40 kilometers southeast of Pílon.

The first happened at 10:50 local time, magnitude 6.0 and perceptible in the central-western region, with higher intensity in Granma and Santiago de Cuba provinces.

The second occurred at 11:46 am, magnitude 6.7 and was felt with higher intensity in Granma and Santiago de Cuba provinces.

Then, on November 25, 2024, a 4.3 magnitude event happened in the same zone.

A month after the occurrence of those primary events, about seven thousand aftershocks had been registered in the area near the epicenters – 132 of them, perceptible, magnitude higher than 2.5, including a 4.1 tremor.

Specialists stress that although aftershocks can or cannot be perceived by people, the truth is that those vibrations continue



People tend to forget about the danger of earthquakes and new works are built without taking tremor-resistant measures. PHOTO: Escambray.

happening on several territories, weakening the infrastructure, and can cause stones to fall and landslides in mountainsides.

Although destructive earthquakes have occurred in Cuba in the past, when non-perceptible events happen along the years, people tend to forget about the danger and thus, new works are built without taking in mind adequate, tremor-resistant measures.

Even though the danger of the Pílon zone and its surrounding area was known, actions were not taken to

reduce seismic risk in facilities damaged by previous events, and vulnerability increased when houses and other facilities were built without seismic-resistant criteria.

Damages in different infrastructure works included ceilings and walls' collapse, columns and walls and road cracks, among others.

Another topic of concern is that during the reconstruction processes, the urgent need of reestablishing life and mobility conditions often lead to

reproduction or increase of preexisting vulnerabilities.

Arango Arias and Iturralde-Vinent's recommendations to reduce seismic risk include making new constructions meet seismic-resistant criteria, according to the Cuban norms.

They also mention that all hospitals, factories, public and multifamily buildings located in areas of high seismic danger should have signs stating the guidelines to follow in case an event of this type occurs.

Biggest Dengue Epidemic in the Americas

By TheHavanaReporter **EDITORIALSTAFF**

HAVANA.- In 2024, the Latin American region faced the biggest dengue epidemic since records began in 1980, while Oropouche and avian influenza cases increased.

According to the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), last year, countries of the region reported over 12.6 million cases of dengue, nearly three times more than in 2023; of these, 21,000 were severe cases, while deaths exceeded 7,700.

Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico accounted for 90 percent of the cases and 88 percent of the deaths, most of which were reported in the giant South American nation. "Dengue is posing a higher-than-normal risk to children. In countries like Guatemala, 70 percent of dengue-related deaths have occurred in children," affirmed PAHO director, Dr Jarbas Barbosa.

In a press conference in Washington, the official stressed that children under 15 represent over a third of severe cases in countries like Costa Rica, Mexico and Paraguay.

He explained that the situation is linked to climate events favoring mosquito proliferation, as well as to unplanned urbanization, accumulation of water by the people and poor waste management, which create breeding grounds for the vector.

Dengue vaccines were introduced in countries like Brazil, Argentina and Peru, while Honduras plans to do so in 2025.

Barbosa commented that "the current vaccine will not stop the spread of the virus in the short or middle term and does not provide immediate relief during an outbreak." PAHO also observed an increase in the cases of Oropouche, a virus transmitted

by infected midges and some mosquito species.

In 2024, more than 11,600 cases were reported in 12 countries and territories in the region, mostly in Brazil.

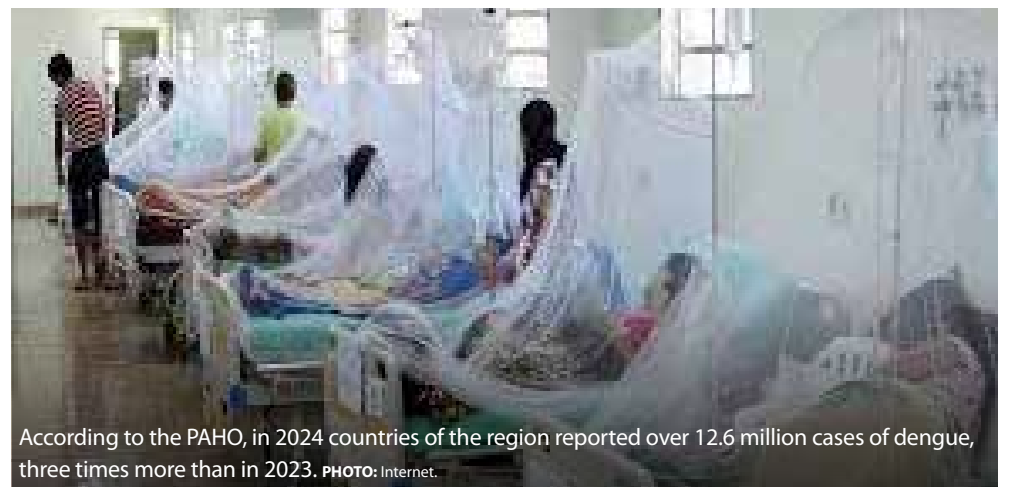
Regarding the H5N1 virus, also known as avian influenza, Barbosa reported that while the number of human cases is moderate, "the public health impact remains limited."

In 2024, 58 human cases were reported in the United States and one in Canada, which contrasts with the three cases reported in the

previous two years for the entire region, he said. H5N1 is a virus commonly found in birds, but it is now infecting other species as well, such as dairy cattle in the United States.

A total of 19 countries in the Americas reported H5N1 cases in animals this year and two of those countries confirmed human cases.

Barbosa urged to continue strengthening cooperation between human, animal and environmental health sectors to enable early detection and timely interventions in animals.



According to the PAHO, in 2024 countries of the region reported over 12.6 million cases of dengue, three times more than in 2023. PHOTO: Internet.

Nothing will Prevent Holding the Havana Film Festival

By DaiLIEM

HAVANA.- President of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), Alexis Triana, told **The Havana Reporter** that nothing will prevent holding the Havana's International Latin American New Film Festival.

In a summary on the event, held in Cuba from December 5 to 15, Triana affirmed that considering the difficulties the country faces, any other nation would have taken the decision of suspending the event, "but we have defended the Festival."

We have defended it in the belief that nothing will prevent welcoming in the Cuban capital our friends, and watching the most recent film productions made in the continent.

Also in the belief that, above all, this fabulous exchange that for 45 years has taken place in Havana continues to happen, he stressed.

They have written obituaries, have said that the Latin American cinema no longer exists, but these have been days to acknowledge how many producers from the continent continue

betting for this Festival and come here to share with the public, Triana stressed.

We have seen those producers' faces of happiness, and their urgencies and needs. Havana is still the place where diversity and plurality have room, he added.

The ICAIC president talked about the 38th anniversary of the San Antonio de los Baños International Film and Television School, where over one thousand students from 65 countries have graduated and over six thousand have taken courses and workshops.

He also stated that this Festival has defended the cause of the Palestinian people, its right to live in peace and against the Israeli genocide.

The Havana Festival concluded with the granting of the Coral awards and the invitation, to filmmakers from the world, to return to the Cuban capital in 2026.

The film *La cocina* (Mexico-United States), by Alonso Ruíz, was granted the best fiction feature film award at the closing ceremony, held at the Havana's Charles Chaplin Theater.

Over 250 films from 42 countries, selected among the 2017 works received as part of the contest, were screened those days, when masterly lectures and meetings with filmmakers, actors and producers were also held.

One of the attractions of the 45th edition of the Festival was the screening at the downtown Yara Theater, as part of Netflix's world premiere, of the first two chapters of the series *100 Años de Soledad* (One Hundred Years of Solitude), a TV adaptation of this master work written by Gabriel García Márquez.

A tribute to caricaturist and producer Juan Padrón, National Film awardee, was also paid with the launch of the book *De historietas y animaciones: La vida de Juan Padrón* (Comics and animations: Juan Padrón's life), by Aramis Acosta, which makes a chronological and critical tour of his work.

To the young public, the La Renga rock band filled the emblematic Havana corner of 23 y 12 with its music. In this site, hundreds of rock fans, national and foreign, enjoyed for hours a selection of the band's discs, unpublished themes and other songs included in its current tour.



ICAIC President said that nothing will prevent watching in Havana the most recent film productions made in the continent. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Rumba is Played at the Beating of the Drums

By DaimarelysPÉREZ

HAVANA.- Rumba defines a status and is part of the popular culture present in Cuba, where it emerged as a festive fusion of dance, music and all practices related to it.

The genre has African roots, due to the presence of the black, enslaved people who disembarked in this land with their music and deities; however, it also has distinctive features of the Cuban idiosyncrasy and the Spanish flamenco.

Rumba originated during the colonial period, in times of the sugarcane expansion, according to historical references that show that the origin of rumba goes back to the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century, in poor (and marginalized) neighborhoods of the Cuban archipelago.

At the beginning, it was mostly rooted in Havana and Matanzas provinces, including the proximities of some ports and chabolas – poor housing constructions in suburban zones – but it was then spread all over the country.

Its music and dance became popular in those rural areas inhabited by African communities, especially by freed slaves that were part of different ethnic groups that came from the continent, such as the lucumí, ganga, arará and the gangá-bantú, perhaps the most significant of all.

One of rumba's main exponents was percussionist Federico Arístides Soto (Tata Güines, 1930-2008), who followed the path of another big name – Chano Pozo – and stood out for



Even today Rumba was either played with a box, on a door, on the wardrobe, a suitcase. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

his contributions to the folklore music and the Afro-Cuban and Latin jazz.

Arturo Soto (Tata Güines Jr.), the son of that great rumba maestro and the heir to Tata Güines – a pen name with a large history – carries on his father's cultural legacy. In an interview with **The Havana Reporter**, he spoke from his capacity as the musician's closest relative and director of the band that carries his father's name.

Rumba is very large; there is no music without it, especially because of the claves (percussion instrument) and that is how it is identified in Cuba, but to mention it in the world means making a party, although it is here where people enjoy it the most with all those fusions, the musician proudly affirmed.

For many years, people have used the phrase "I am going to go rumba partying" to mean that they are going to "go party" and all of a sudden, a party involving that rhythm started, Tata Güines Jr. said.

Rumba was either played with a box, on a door, on the wardrobe, a suitcase – even today. The music that everyone identifies from the very first scores is played anywhere; a friendly gathering in an open place, some friends, some members of a rumba band or not, are enough to "make a rumba party," he affirmed.

Columbia is one of the rumba variants that was also born in the Matanzas province, where the danzón also emerged. Guaguancó, a rather playful rhythm with flirty movements among dancers, also comes from rumba.



Voces del Sur Global
Voices of the Global South



Notre-Dame Reopened its Doors

By **Waldo MENDILUZA**

PARIS.- Rejuvenated after more than eight centuries of history, the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral officially reopened its doors with essentially Gothic decorations in a ceremony that welcomed dignitaries and personalities from several continents last December 7.

More than five years passed by after that fateful day of April 15, 2019, when a fierce fire – whose causes are still unknown – almost destroyed the temple, declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991, a witness of events such as the French Revolution and Napoleon’s coronation.

Notre-Dame returns as an undeniable symbol of the City of Light and as part of its resurrection, it is worthwhile paying tribute to those tireless and heroic firefighters who saved it, and the artisans and other workers who gave its splendor back.

At the reopening of the Cathedral, almost bathed in the also patrimonial Seine River, a video presentation recalled the hard images of the flames that brought down the 93-meter tall spire designed by self-taught architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, and the subsequent reconstruction works.

Outside, a crowd of people defied the cold and rainy Parisian night to capture an instant of the prominent role the old Gothic-looking lady played, though a strong security mechanism kept them far away; even though, it was a privilege to be part of the over 40,000 people allowed to stay in the vicinity.

The sound of the bells and the restored Notre-Dame big organ, after more than five years of silence, marked a notable day, decorated with the presence of personalities used to make headlines, from U.S. Donald Trump and Elon Musk to heir to the British crown, Prince William.

In his speech to the over two thousand guests, president Emmanuel Macron stated his gratitude to the French nation, particularly those who saved and helped recover the temple. Stones, wooden pieces and stained-glass windows might have disappeared and we would have never again heard the cathedral’s bells, he stated.

One of the notable absentees in the reopening ceremony, Pope Francis, stressed in his message – read by top leader of the Archbishopric of Paris, Laurent Ulrich – the importance that the Notre-Dame doors are always generously and freely opened to the public.

Culture minister Rachida Dati (outgoing) caused controversy after suggesting charging an entrance fee to the famous cathedral.



Dignitaries and personalities from several continents attended the reopening of Notre Dame. PHOTO: Ileana Piñeiro.



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Signs of Recovery, in Spite of Economic War

By Lisván **LESCAILLE**

HAVANA.- President Miguel Díaz-Canel described in details the economic war scenario and how Cuba shows positive signs of recovery in vital indicators, with the highest sowing volumes of the spring season in the last decade.

At the closing of the IX Plenary Session of the Communist Party Central Committee, Díaz-Canel, first secretary of that organization, affirmed that after analyzing the Government's projections to correct distortions and boost the economy again, there are positive signs of recovery, although with a very limited impact.

He gave the example of food production, a sector in which even though levels needed are not met nor do their sale prices reduce, "this year, situation is more favorable in relation to previous periods."

Sowing volumes of the 2024 spring and winter seasons are the highest in the last 10 years, which was achieved with marked limitations of agricultural resources, the president stressed.

Díaz-Canel made reference to the investments the country makes in the National Electric and Energy System (SEN), which will help creating higher capacities of generation and making a better use of the fuels addressed to electricity generation.

Investment includes the whole country, with the installation of solar parks – two of which are currently executed with possibilities of generating 100 megawatts each – while actions are conducted to recover power in distributed generation and power plants, he added.

The president explained that the inclusion of Cuba in the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism makes payments through the internationally established financial mechanisms difficult, and on many occasions delays them for days and weeks.

He mentioned that due to difficulties in the materialization of payment of such goods, delays occurred in the unloading of a tanker with liquefied gas for domestic use, which had to overstay for over 15 days.

A direct impact to the people because of a measure taken by the government of the United States, something usual, he stressed.

Díaz-Canel affirmed that the non-state sector is also affected and must look for alternative mechanisms, assume risks and operate at the margin of legal financial and accounting mechanisms.

The country must eliminate dependence on imports, assuming those that are strictly necessary, such as raw materials and consumables for productive processes, highlighted the head of State.



Díaz-Canel said there are positive signs of recovery in the economy, although with a very limited impact. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Italy and Cuba Launch Zonas Creativas Program

By Marcelo **GARCÍA**

HAVANA.-In an effort to revitalize Cuba's cultural and creative economies, the Zonas Creativas (Creative Zone) program was launched with the purpose to transform the cultural panorama of this capital and that of the neighbor Matanzas city.

Endorsed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS), the project's main objective is to highlight the value of the Centro Habana, Habana Vieja, Habana del Este and Matanzas cities' historical heritage, according to a communiqué issued in this capital.

It also fosters the creation of new cultural enterprises and the strengthening of the region's cultural and creative industries. Zonas Creativas aims to improve the economic sustainability of the abovementioned territories, aligning its objectives with the local development strategies and the promotion of a dynamic and collaborative creative ecosystem between the private and public sectors.

This project's goal is to benefit over three thousand youth, entrepreneurial women, cultural promoters and project managers, with a special emphasis on inclusion, sustainability and the strengthening of local capacities, the note says.

It likewise fosters international collaboration through the involvement of different Cuban and Italian organizations and bodies, such as AICS, COSPE, ARCS, CISP, the Havana City's Historian Office (OHCH), among others, which

guarantees an efficient and effective management of the Cuban cultural heritage.

The proposal will be endorsed by different Cuban institutions, such as the Matanzas City's Preservationist Office, the Félix Varela Center and the Exchange and Reference-Community Initiatives Center, AICS indicated.

"Havana is a city full of history and culture and our goal is to use that heritage to foster sustainable development. Collaboration with Italy, which started in the 1990s, has been essential in that direction," stressed director of the OHCH Master Plan Patricia Rodríguez.

The specialist added that the intention of this new project is to highlight the value of the city's historical center as the mainstay of a more prosperous and inclusive future.

According to AICS director, Antonio Festa, Zonas Creativas is a clear example of how international cooperation can foster cultural and creative industries' development in Cuba.

"Through our investment of three million euros and a strategic alliance with Italian NGOs, we try to create a lasting impact on the creation of jobs, the formation and sustainability of cultural projects in Cuba," he said.



Creative Zone is endorsed by the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

More Books and Literature for 2025

By Mario **MUÑOZ**

HAVANA.- The year 2024 ended amidst the preparations for the 33rd edition of the Havana 2025 International Book Fair, to be held from February 13 to 23 and with South Africa as the guest country of honor.

"Under the slogan *Todo un país en libros*" (A whole country in books), on occasion of the 25 years of the creation of the Territorial Publications System, the fair will be dedicated to the 130th anniversary of the death in combat of Cuban National Hero José Martí.

In the present edition, researcher and professor Francisca López Civeria, National History awardee in 2008 and National Social and Humanistic Sciences awardee in 2022, and poet, essayist, researcher and literary critic Virgilio López Lemus, will be honored.

In a press conference, president of the Cuban Book Institute (ICL) Juan Rodríguez stressed the importance of dedicating this event – to be hosted at the San Carlos de la Cabaña fortress and other 17 venues in Havana – to South Africa, the third African country to deserve such a distinction, after Angola and Algeria.

Rodríguez added that the literary event will be held amidst the strong economic difficulties the country faces, which have become stronger as a result of the over 60 years of U.S. blockade. The event, however, will again be a present for the Cuban family.

In spite of such conditions, national authorities will give their full support to the holding of the fair, as well as the Havana government, the culture system institutions and friends from other countries, he said.

"We are working hard to make everything we have accessible to people," highlighted Rodríguez, who also mentioned that one week after its closing in Havana, the fair will tour the rest of the Cuban provinces.

The official also explained that several printed and digital books will be launched and sold at this event. In relation to the latter, "on which over 65 national publishing houses are working hard," over 1,200 will be sold.

For her part, South African ambassador to Havana, Yvonne Nkwenkwezi, said that it is an honor and a commitment that the fair is dedicated to her country.

She stated that the event will help strengthen cultural ties between both nations and will allow the Cuban audience to know more about her country's literature and authors.

Our writers will have the opportunity to show their works, which reflect South Africa's history and aspirations, and also to hold exchanges with the Cuban people and writers, she stressed.

With the Federal Republic of Brazil as guest country of honor in February 2024, over 450,000 people attended the 32nd edition of the Havana Fair, which received 435 publishing houses representatives and booksellers from 56 countries, a record of representation in Cuba's most important editorial and literary forum, the ICL president said.



The 33rd edition of the Havana 2025 International Book Fair will be hosted at the San Carlos de la Cabaña fortress and other 17 venues.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The Feelings of the Bolero

By Adis **MARLÉN**

HAVANA.- The style and creativity of Cuban musician José "Pepe" Sánchez were enough to write the history of a musical expression that comes from the soul and is played from the very feelings of great artists: the bolero.

The author, born in Santiago de Cuba province, perhaps did not imagine the dimension of his work when in 1883 he outlined the first strains of *Tristezas*, a piece that marks the origin of a harmonic practice that became a Cultural Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Thanks to that initial score, the beauty of the bolero conquered all corners of the world

and beyond, where this genre is promoted and treasured as if it were their own.

In Mexico, fidelity to this musical style endorses its binational registration in the Representative List of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

To analyze an expression that sympathizes with its environment and is an inspiration from the poetic point of view, **The Havana Reporter** spoke to musicologist Leannelis "Lea" Cárdenas, who advised on the preparation of the file "Bolero: identity, emotion and poetry turned into song," presented at the abovementioned international body in March 2022.

The bolero has been played since the end of the 19th century, with *Tristezas*, and until the present, undergoing style transformations according to the different times and fusions it assimilates, she said.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the bolero-son emerges and becomes popular thanks to classic pieces such as *Lágrimas negras*, composed by Miguel Matamoros in 1929. Then, the bolero-cha, whose most representative piece is *Quizás, quizás, quizás*, written in 1947 by Osvaldo Farrés and one of the most covered songs in history, also emerges.

"The emergence of filin and the arrival of the U.S. music to Cuba, of those melodies that were more complex, with thirteen, ninth and eleventh scores, resulted in the bolero-filin," immortalized in emblematic compositions: *La gloria eres tú*, by José Antonio Méndez, and *Contigo en la distancia*, by César Portillo de la Luz.

Higher development is then seen as of the 20th century thanks to the way it was played. If it was initially accompanied by a guitar, then we see an assimilation of the genre by different formats, such as trios, sextets, septets, bands, jazz bands and symphonic orchestras, Cárdenas affirmed.

On the question of why the bolero, the specialist commented that this is part of a generational cell, of an original topic that lies on the way of doing it from the textual, the lyrical point of view.

They are mostly romantic boleros, with a poetic language, made with certain elegance. All of them, no matter the genre they are combined with, adopt that feature, she affirmed.

That is the only Cuban song variant that is danced slowly, a feature that is also part of courtship, that romantic and seductive relationship, the expert concluded.



The bolero has been played since the end of the 19th century. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

2025 Work Priorities

By Mariana **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- Prime Minister Manuel Marrero announced at the parliament that Cuba's work priorities for 2025 include making progress in the recovery of the National Electricity and Energy System and the implementation of a mechanism for foreign currencies' assignation, management and control.

At the fourth ordinary period of session of the National Assembly of People's Power, Marrero explained that special attention will be given to the implementation of the actions foreseen for the partial dollarization of the economy; progress in the resizing of the foreign exchange market; increase of national production, including expansion and consolidation of state goods and services offers.

When presenting priorities to correct distortions and boost the economy again in 2025, he stressed that work will also be done to improve the state socialist company and the budgeted units, as well as to develop, lead and organize the participation of the

non-state sector in the country's economic and social life.

The minister stated that Cuba will focus actions on consolidating municipalities' strengthening; leaders' work; increase of social services' quality; protection of people, families and communities in situation of vulnerability, and making progress in subsidy to people and not to products.

He also highlighted that actions to prevent and face crime, corruption, illegalities and social indiscipline will remain in place, and others will be implemented to reduce social inequalities.

Government projections will include the implementation of a program for the recovery of the National Electricity and Energy System and science and innovation, social communication and digital transformation management, to boost development sectors and improve government management, the Prime Minister announced.

He also made reference to the development of the Comprehensive Children, Adolescents and Youth Policy; the Women Advance Program; revalorization of rurality,

and the program against racism and discrimination.

Government's projections "will continue being the driving force of our work, aware of the fact that it is the most viable

alternative to face the recovery challenges and boost the economy again, in conditions of economic war and strengthening of the economic and financial crisis worldwide," Marrero stressed.



Progress in the recovery of the National Electricity and Energy System are included in the priorities of 2025. PHOTO: Ileana Piñeiro.



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Cuban Doctors Carry Health to Remote Mexican Areas

By Lianet **ARIAS**

MEXICO CITY.- As part of an agreement with the Mexican government, in the Nayar Mountain Range – one of Nayarit's remotest zones – Cuban doctors guarantee the health of populations in areas where a specialist has never been before.

It is an area of difficult access, of native communities, where Cuban professionals have played a prominent role, have saved the lives of many newborn babies; follow-up to pregnant women has reached a high level and surgery indexes increased, Dr Barbiel Nápoles explained. Nápoles, coordinator of the Cuban medical brigade in that state – located in the Pacific coast – told **The Havana Reporter** that this was the first Cuban group to arrive in this country on July 22, 2022, with specialists in Internal Medicine, Surgery, Pediatrics and Gynecology and Obstetrics.

With 60 professionals at the beginning, the group now includes 164 specialists, among which cardiologists, ENT specialists, neurologists and colorectal specialists are included.

"Relations are wonderful. We have been lovely welcomed by the people here in Nayarit. The objective is to continue the mission of carrying health to remote places", affirmed Nápoles, who said that they will stay there as long as needed. He added that it is a challenge to head the brigade but stressed that all its members are trained specialists and have joined this nation's medicine very well.

"We have passed our experiences, the experiences gathered in other countries and

we have learnt a lot here", commented the head of the Cuban brigade in Nayarit, who also highlighted their brotherhood with the people and colleagues.

We always think on "the ideals, on our people, on the fact that we cannot let down the homeland where we were born and trained as doctors, which has instilled in us that spirit of brotherhood, of solidarity that we will never give up", he stressed.

During the interview, Nápoles referred to the ties between both countries and to several landmarks, such as the presence here in Mexico of Cuban National Hero José Martí and the Granma yacht expedition that set sail in 1956 from Tuxpan headed by historical leader of the Revolution Fidel Castro.

"In the most difficult moments of the present time, Mexico has always supported us like the brothers we are. And what would be best than us giving health to their people in appreciation of all the support this people has given us", he emphasized.

In his opinion, specialists can tell several anecdotes on their presence in remote areas.

"But the most important story is telling that we have tried to carry health to this people with love, affection and a high scientific level, with all our heart. Many lives have been saved by Cuban doctors", he affirmed.

As part of bilateral cooperation, there are more than three thousand Cuban specialists in Mexico, who on many occasions provide health assistance in remote places, but also support the upgrading of their Mexican colleagues.

Trinidad, a Mirror of Patrimonial Culture

By Mayra **PARDILLO**

Photos by Raúl **GARCÍA**

SANCTI SPÍRITUS.- In the last month of 2024, Trinidad proudly celebrated its status as Cultural Heritage of Humanity and "A Heaven's Gift", according to Cuban historian, researcher and essayist Alicia García.

In 1988, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) acknowledged the urban historical center of the southern Cuban city of Trinidad and the Valle de los Ingenios as a Cultural Heritage of Humanity for their historical and cultural values.

Known as the Caribbean's Museum City and the City of Meetings, Trinidad – the third of the seven villages Diego Velázquez founded in Cuba (1514) – preserves the beauty of its small palaces, squares, patios, paved streets, stained-glass windows and

red-tile roofs, in addition to the traditions that make it unique.

Preserving the beautiful and old handcrafted traditions has made the city deserve the conditions of Crafts City – an acknowledgement granted by the World Crafts Council – and Creative City of Crafts and Folk Art – by the UNESCO.

Famous for its canchánchara, a traditional beverage drunk from a clay jar, as well as for its music, painters and natural environment where the sea and the mountains come together, Trinidad was visited by famous personalities such as German wise man Alexander von Humboldt.

The Valle de los Ingenios, for its part, has over 73 archaeological sites linked to sugarcane production – an activity based on the exploitation of enslaved labor – which includes houses-estates, many of which recovered their ancient splendor.

Scholars describe Trinidad as one of Cuba's and Latin America's best preserved colonial cities and one of the most important tourist destinations in the island.



Another Year of Terror in Ecuador

By Adriana **ROBREÑO**

QUITO.- Ecuador lived the second most violent year in the country's history in 2024, with a fall of 16.5 percent in the number of homicides in relation to 2023, according to official data, although these figures are still alarming.

Although the Executive spreads the news that the country is safer, local media daily echo massacres, kidnaps and extortions.

On January 9, 2024, president Daniel Noboa decreed the existence of a domestic armed conflict and described criminal gangs linked to drug trafficking as terrorists.

Since that date, the head of State militarized prisons and decreed the state of emergency after a series of violent acts in several provinces of the country; the images of an attack on the TC Television channel in the middle of a live broadcast even toured the world.

According to a ruling of the Constitutional Court issued in November, the Ecuadorian population lived nine of the eleven first months of 2024 amidst the state of emergency as a measure specifically addressed at fighting the violence situation

the country faces and with suspension of rights.

In the most recent state of emergency, in force until now, Noboa included the capital, six provinces and the Camilo Ponce Enríquez municipality, a mining enclave located in Azuay.

The measures the Government adopted endorse the actions the military conduct in domestic operations against organized crime, although insecurity remains in

place and cause a profound impact on the society, affecting daily life and the country's economic development, with a decrease in the tourism and investment sectors.

Experts in the field of security warned that the declaration of the state of emergency is not the solution to violence; other measures are needed to eliminate the roots of the problem: inequalities, poverty, unemployment, lack of opportunities.

In light of the January 2024 events, the presence of the United States in connection with Ecuador's national security issues has become evident. In February, Noboa ratified two agreements with Washington in the field of security that were questioned by social organizations and experts, as they grant privileges and diplomatic immunity to military and civil Department of State staff and their contractors.

A resolution approved by the Government Council of the Galapagos province Special Regime even authorized the installation of ships, military staff, armaments, equipment and submarines in those Pacific islands, declared a World Heritage Site, with the purpose to face organized crime.

Coordinator for Peace, Sovereignty, Integration and Non-Interference affirmed that in 2024, the Ecuadorian society suffered a reversion in the field of civil and political rights because of the states of emergency and armed conflicts.

According to that body, 34,952 persons were arrested until May 2024 as part of the questionable security strategy, called Plan Félix, while the district attorney's office registered 226 reports of authority abuse on the part of the security forces until June and opened 12 investigations of potential extrajudicial executions.



The Ecuadorians lived nine of the eleven first months of 2024 amidst the state of emergency.

PHOTO: Internet.

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Tax System Strengthening Characterizes 2025 Budget

By Caridad**SMITH**

HAVANA.- Cuban minister of Finances and Prices Vladimir Regueiro stressed the importance of strengthening the tax system as a pillar of financial resources for the 2025 State budget.

When presenting Cuba's economic performance in 2024 and forecasts for 2025

at the fourth ordinary period of sessions of the National Assembly of People's Power (Cuban Parliament), Regueiro stated that in this regards, it is essential to improve income collection, evaluate the fulfillment of the contributions, timely collection and supervision of tax payment.

The minister said that efficiency must increase in relation to expenses' control, upon the principles of saving, rationality

and moderation, and recalled that in 2024, a fiscal deficit of 147,391,000,000 pesos was established as limit of the budget execution, after acknowledging net incomes of 333,316,000,000 pesos and total expenses of 480,707,000,000.

He announced that in 2025, better results are predicted, considering the income growth dynamics that exceeds that of the expenses, in addition to the intensification

of fiscal control actions and the application of tax amendments.

In this sense, he informed that a current account surplus of 6,799,000,000 pesos is forecast this year, a sign of recovery that favors the State budget structure.

On the priority programs and basic services, he noted that they forecast 315,620,000,000 pesos, higher to the estimate (16,370,000,000).

The Public Health sector in particular will be allocated 76,037,000,000 pesos – 24 percent of the budgeted activity expenses – which will allow providing 111 million medical consultations in the primary healthcare.

The minister highlighted that this economic contribution exceeds the 2024 estimate and will endorse the Basic Medication Program.

The official added that the educational sector will receive 71,309,000,000 pesos, to endorse a registration of 1,396,000 students, while social assistance will be allocated 6,513,000,000 pesos and sectorial programs for the development of sport will be guaranteed, with the allocation of 7,106,000,000 pesos.

"The budget allocated to Public Administration, communal services and defense is essential to guarantee the correct functioning of government institutions and national security protection, to which 93,237,000,000 will be allocated," the minister affirmed.



Minister of Finances and Prices presented Cuba's economic performance in 2024 and forecasts for 2025. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

By TheHavanaReporter**EDITORIALSTAFF**

Signing of Renewable Energy Investment Project

HAVANA.- Cuba and China formalized a renewable energy investment project that foresees the installation of seven photovoltaic parks of five megawatts each in six Cuban provinces.

The signing of an agreement between the parties, in this capital, was done by Chinese ambassador to Cuba Hua Xin and Cuban first deputy minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Carlos Luís Jorge.

At the ceremony, Jorge appreciated the support of the Giant Asian nation to Cuba "in a special moment (because of the difficult economic situation the island faces), which is a sign of solidarity, brotherhood and accompaniment of the Chinese government and people to Cuba's economic and social development," he said.

For his part, Hua stressed the features that characterize bilateral relations, which are an example of solidarity and mutual assistance between developing, socialist countries, he affirmed.

The diplomat stated his hope that, with this project, "we can contribute with the Chinese force to Cuba's efforts to guarantee energy security and promote transition" in this sector.

The arrival of the first components for the parks' assembly, by sea, is foreseen to happen in a period of seven months, the agreement indicated.

The future operation of such photovoltaic parks will represent an annual saving of 18,000 tons of fuel for Cuba, which is equivalent to seven million dollars, authorities of the Cuban energy sector affirm.



The future operation of such photovoltaic parks will represent an annual saving of 18, 000 tons of fuel for Cuba. PHOTO: Venceremos.

Program for the Recovery of the Electricity and Energy System

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- Minister of Energy and Mines Vicente de la O explained that the country foresees recovering coordination of the National Electricity and Energy System (SEN) in the shortest period of time possible, in addition to achieving a fast growth and sustainability to meet the demands of the economy and the population.

The minister talked about this topic at the fourth ordinary period of sessions of the National Assembly (Cuban parliament), which concluded last December 20.

De la O stressed that the program focuses on transition and energy sovereignty, as well as its efficient and rational use. He added that the main objectives of this program include the recovery of 850 megawatts (MW) of distributed generation in power plants that use national fuel, to have an availability of 1,400 MW on average, and to propose a financial scheme to settle the debt with the Turkish company.

The minister also explained that there are plans to rehabilitate the electricity networks, foster energy transition and guarantee a stable supply with the purpose to meet the demands of eight million tons of fuel.

Other actions include the implementation of a strategy for the rational use of energy among consumers and paying more attention to workers of the electricity sector and the recovery of the Emergency Generation Plants.

De la O affirmed that main results attained in the sector include the start of the distributed generation recovery and the maintenance of Unit Two of the Felton Power Plant, while progress is made on the management of alternatives to pay foreign investors.

Special emphasis was made on the project to install 120 MW in solar photovoltaic parks, the process of acquisition

of 30,000 domestic solar systems, and arrangements related to the execution of the minimum scheme of the Herradura 1 wind park, located in the eastern province of Holguín.

The minister also made reference to the start of actions to recover all four tanks of the Matanzas Supertanker Base that burned down in August 2022, because of the importance they have for fuel storage.

When talking about the Ministry's projections, he stated that there are plans to cover the energy demand in the

early morning schedule from the last days of December and until February 2025, while there are estimates to cover the daytime schedule in June and thus gradually reduce difficulties in maximum demand.

De la O reiterated that the Government program to recover SEN is part of a constant work system that establishes the path to electricity generation and fuel supply, not only to meet the current demand but also to allow "the development of our economy and our people's access, 24 hours a day, to the electricity service".



Minister of Energy and Mines Vicente de la O explained the program for the recovery of the electricity and energy system. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.

FAO Supports Organic Wastes Efficient Management

By TheHavanaReporter **EDITORIAL STAFF**

HAVANA.- The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) informed that it supports organic wastes efficient management with the purpose to protect the environment in Cuba.

To conduct this work, the UN body has the support of the European Union (EU) and the Cuban Ministry of Agriculture (MINAG), according to a communiqué revealed in this capital.

The municipalities of Martí and Venezuela, in Matanzas and Ciego de Ávila provinces, respectively, will benefit from the acquisition of a new technology for organic wastes' efficient management, the note indicates.

The initiative is part of the Modelos pilotos, horizontales de gestión del

conocimiento y transferencia de tecnologías en Agroecología (MAS) (Pilot studies, knowledge management and technology transfer in Agro-ecology), financed by the EU through the DeSIRA Program and conducted by FAO and MINAG.

Known as membrane biodigestors, this technology is essential in the process of pork and ranching wastes' transformation into biogas and organic fertilizers.

This action not only contribute to sustainability but also reduces dependence on fossil fuels, a critical element in the battle against the degradation of the environment and climate change.



Best Latin American and Caribbean Athletes in 2024

By JuióMEJÍAS

HAVANA.- Wrestler Mijaín López, Paralympic sprinter Omara Durand – both from Cuba – and the Argentinean soccer team, won the 60th edition of the Prensa Latina News Agency Annual Sports Survey. López, aka the Giant of Herradura – a town located in Pinar del Río, Cuba’s westernmost province – won his second nomination as Latin America and the Caribbean’s best male athlete (he previously won the 2021 edition), practically walking off with the votes casted by 105 news media that participated in the Survey.

This year, Mijaín became the first athlete in the history of the Olympic Games to win the summer Olympic title in the same event in five consecutive games; for that reason, he received the vote of 87 news media, much higher than the five Salvadorian tennis player Marcelo Arévalo received.

In the meantime, Durand won the female category with 40 votes, almost twice as much as that of Olympic champions Marileidy Paulino (Dominican Republic, sprinter) and Rebeca Andrade (Brazil, gymnast), both with 19 votes.

The Cuban Paralympic athlete ended a dream sport career, after winning three Olympic titles in Paris 2024 (100, 200 and 400 meters) and raising her number of Olympic medals to 11, in addition to 13 gold in Para-Pan-American Games and 14 in world championships.

Meanwhile, the “White and Sky Blue” team won 49 votes in the present edition of this Poll, having a practically unassailable lead over its follower, the Cuban Baseball5 team (35 votes), which became the champion of the Hong Kong 2024 World Championship. In this category, other 10 teams won at least one vote.

The Argentinean squad had previously won this survey in the 1986, 1991, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2021 and 2022 editions.

The main result this team achieved in 2024 was the title of the Americas Cup, held in the United States by the middle of the year, when the squad finished undefeated after beating Colombia in the final match in extra time.

That was the second, consecutive title the team headed by star Lionel Messi – the best player in the history of this sport, according to many – won in the continent’s main soccer tournament; a team whose roster includes most of the winners of the Qatar 2022 World Cup.

With the conclusion of this 60th edition, historical list of winners is still headed by Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt among the men (six nominations), followed by



Mijaín López is the first athlete in the history of the Olympic Games to win the title in the same event in five consecutive games.

PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Durand ended a dream sport career, after winning three Olympic titles in Paris 2024.



The Argentinean football team had previously won this Poll in the 1986, 1991, 2001, 2008, 2014, 2021 and 2022 editions.

Cuban Javier Sotomayor, aka the “Prince of Heights” (5). In the case of women, the list is headed by Colombian Caterine Ibargüen and Venezuelan Yulimar Rojas (five each), followed by Cuban Ana Fidelia Quirot (4).

Bolt, current world record holder in 100 (9.58 seconds) and 200-meter sprint (19.19 seconds), won the 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013,

2015 and 2016 editions of this Poll, while Ibargüen did it in 2011, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2018 and Rojas in 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

In the case of the team category, the main winner has been the Brazilian soccer squad, which has won the survey on nine occasions, followed by the Argentinean team (8) and the Brazilian

men and Cuban women volleyball teams (four each).

The Prensa Latina Latin American News Agency Survey started in 1964, when Cuban sprinter Enrique Figuerola became the first winner. In 1980, the Best Team of the Year category was included and since 1988, best male and female athletes have been chosen separately.

ALBA-TCP, New Agreements and Commitments

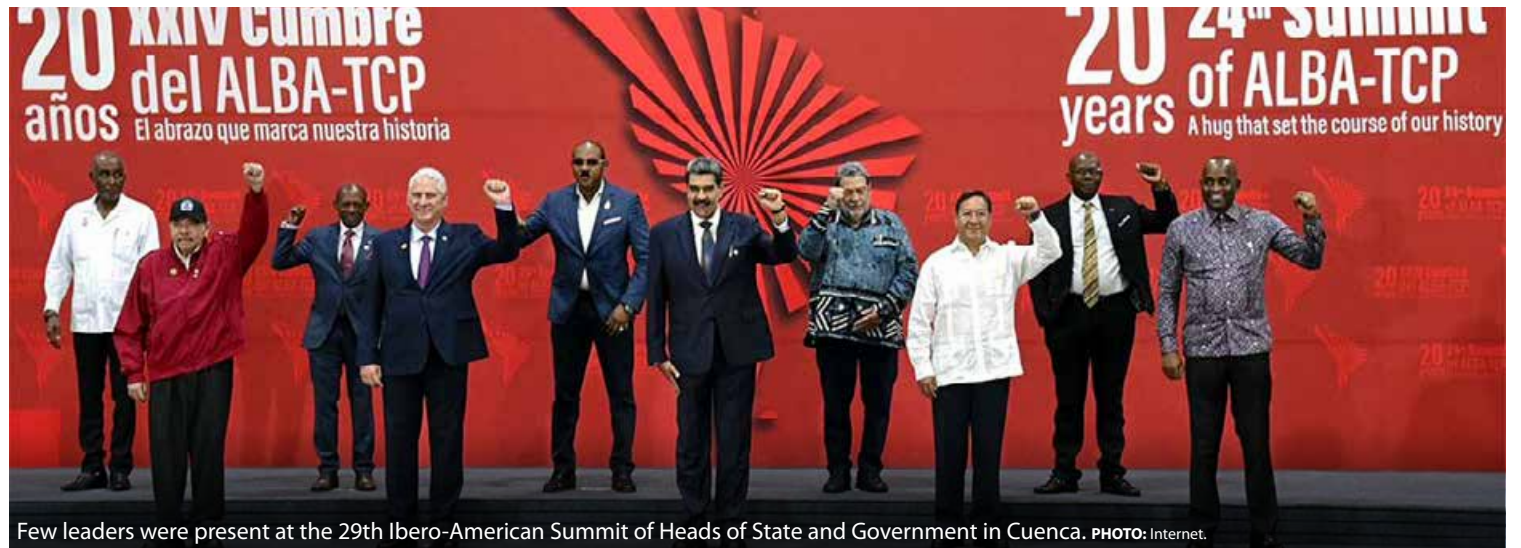
By Juan Carlos **DÍAZ**

CARACAS.- The XXIV Summit of Heads of State and Government of the ALBA-TCP reaffirmed the principles, objectives, commitments and battle flags of that body, created 20 years ago.

The meeting of presidents of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP), held in this capital on occasion of the 20 years of its creation, paid tribute to the founders of this strategic group: commanders Hugo Chávez (1954-2013) and Fidel Castro (1926-2016).

Presidents, prime ministers and other authorities approved several documents, including a special declaration of "reaffirmation of the principles" which, according to Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, ratify the path that started two decades ago.

At the closing ceremony, Maduro also made reference to the final declaration on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the ALBA-TCP foundation, which he described as a "hug that sets the course for our history." The document reaffirms "an important number of historical positions in the spirit of the founding fathers," he said.



Few leaders were present at the 29th Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in Cuenca. PHOTO: Internet.

The head of State also mentioned that a special communiqué was approved on the occasion of the Bicentenary of the Ayacucho Battle, which concluded with the speech "Gran Mariscal" Antonio José de Sucre gave to the troops fell in at the field on December 9, 1824. Another text adopted is linked to the birth of the important AgroAlba economic productive project to produce organic and health food "for all the peoples of Latin America, the Caribbean, African and beyond."

The AgroAlba project has the intention of recovering the land and making it productive for our region's food security and sovereignty, Maduro affirmed.

Until the present, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Antigua & Barbuda and Sao Tome & Principe signed with Venezuela their incorporation to this initiative, which sets the grounds for an inclusive and sustainable economic development for the benefit of all the region.

The meeting also approved a special declaration that invites the State of Palestine

to permanently attend meetings of the integration bloc, whose members also stressed their determination to support Haiti to reach stability, peace and democracy.

Other announcements were related to the creation of a Science, Technology and Innovation Center, with scientific and technological priorities focused on Artificial Intelligence-related capacities and management of social media, in addition to reactivation of the ALBA-TCP Council of Ministers as of the present month of January.

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