

# TheHavanaReporter<sup>®</sup>



YEAR XI  
**#12**

DIC 5, 2025  
HAVANA,  
CUBA

**YOUR SOURCE OF NEWS & MORE**

A Monthly Newspaper of the Prensa Latina News Agency

ISSN 2224-5707

Price: 1.00 USD / 1.20 CAN



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New Campaign

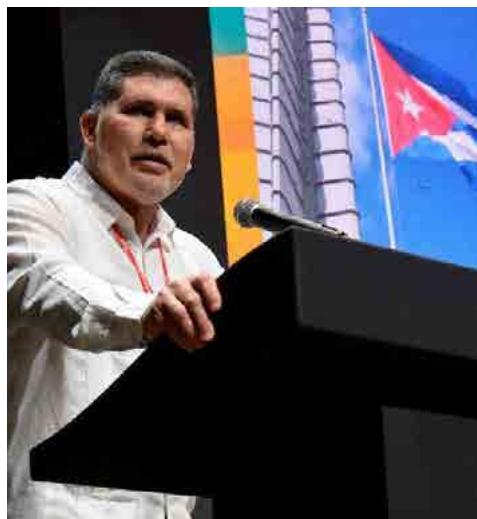
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# Iberostar Cuba Launches New Tourist Campaign

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The Iberostar Cuba Hotels & Resorts Company launched in this capital its new tourist campaign, *Siente sus ritmos* (Feel its rhythms), in reference to the musical attractions of this nation.

It is a new brand of the Spanish hotel chain on the island, and a vibrant initiative that invites rediscovering the country, said the company's marketing director in Cuba, Alexis Torres.

The proposal aims to captivate guests through cultural, musical, and natural expressions, said Iberostar Cuba's representative, Alejandro Barrios.

The campaign is inspired by Cuba's recent recognition as the Caribbean's Leading Cultural Destination for the fifth consecutive time at the World Travel Awards, which reaffirmed the value of its deep cultural roots as the driving force of the tourism industry.

*Siente sus ritmos* is the result of a strategic alliance between Iberostar Cuba and the prestigious Liza Alfonso Dance Cuba (LADC) company, whose director attended the meeting held at the Iberostar Selection

La Habana hotel (better known as Torre K, after the street where it is located, in the Vedado neighborhood).

The dance company, internationally renowned for its artistic excellence, assumes a dual role as co-producer of the audiovisual content and brand ambassador, while also providing a creative vision that translates the Cuban rhythm into a powerful visual language.



Iberostar initiative invites rediscovering the country through cultural, musical, and natural expressions. PHOTO: Panchito González.

The proposal is endorsed by the Cuban Ministry of Tourism (MINTUR), its institutional partner, which strengthens the initiative's visibility through its official communication channels.

The campaign's primary objective is to position Cuba as the most complete and emotionally authentic destination in the Caribbean.

In this context, strategic alliances are being developed with key tour operators such as Transat, which plays a prominent role in activating the campaign in the Canadian market, according to Iberostar documents released at the event.

The initiative recognizes and celebrates travelers who have contributed to a deep emotional connection with Cuba over the years, offering them exclusive benefits such as differentiated packages, superior accommodation levels, personalized experiences, and preferential rates.

Launched last month and running until the end of 2026, *Siente sus ritmos* is emerging as an emblematic campaign that redefines Cuba as a vibrant space of culture, connection, and transformative experiences.

The campaign will be relaunched during the 2026-2027 tourist season, coinciding with the Liza Alfonso Dance Cuba's international tour, a perfect occasion to renew its impact and keep the connection alive.

Iberostar Cuba Hotels & Resorts has approximately 20 four- and five-star hotels in Cuba's main tourist destinations, offering its guests four properties in the heart of Havana and 13 along idyllic beaches.

## Cuba and its Intangible Cultural Heritage Receive Award

By Isaura **DIEZ**

HANGZHOU, CHINA.- The Meadin Research Institute of China awarded Cuba the "2025 Intangible Cultural Heritage Activation Partner Destination" prize in recognition of the island's work in the preservation and revitalization of these resources.

The award was received by Cuban Tourism Counselor for Asia, Elizabeth Vela, at the opening of the Meadin 2025 Culture and Tourism Festival held in this city, the capital of the eastern province of Zhejiang.

In the acceptance speech, the diplomat affirmed that her country is one of the most unique and fascinating destinations in the Caribbean, whose geographical location enhances its role as a leading multi-destination in the region. Vela recalled that Cuba was declared China's top tourist destination in Latin America in 2003 and emphasized that the nation not only offers beautiful beaches but also the best tobacco in the world, high-quality coffee, exquisite rum, and an internationally recognized tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

She noted that the resumption of Air China's direct flights to Cuba, along with the visa waiver for Chinese citizens, facilitates travel and promotes multi-destination tourism to Latin America.

The new Cuba Única (Unique Cuba) campaign highlights national identity, the kindness of the Cuban people and the achievements of the Revolution in all social spheres, she added.

According to the organizers, the Meadin Research Institute of China (MITD) uses an international tourist destination evaluation system based on a unique data model that assesses engagement (market penetration), experience (in innovation), ecosystem (ecological synergy) and sustainability.

Based on Chinese tourists' travel preferences and a multidimensional analysis of global destinations' competitiveness, MITD identifies and recognizes those destinations that stand out in the Chinese market.

Cuban ambassador to China, Alberto Blanco, recently highlighted three unique elements favoring cooperation in tourism: reciprocal relations between two socialist nations without conflicts of interest; Cuba's stability and security,

and the special affection and historical admiration the Cuban people feel for the Asian nation.



The Meadin Prize recognizes Cuba's work in preserving its heritage.

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

Publisher: Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana Prensa Latina, S.A.  
Calle E, esq. 19 No. 454, Vedado, La Habana-4, Cuba  
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# Lives Saved Amid Hurricane Melissa's Trail of Devastation



More than 735,000 people were rescued by Civil Defense system. PHOTO: Granma.

By LisvánLESCAILLE

HAVANA.- Hurricane Melissa, a Category 3 storm, unleashed its fury on Cuba's east, leaving a trail of destruction damaging roofs, crops and utility networks. However, amid the disaster, the country managed to avoid loss of lives.

This outcome was not a matter of chance, but the product of a robust Civil Defense system, rooted in a deep-seated culture of prevention and citizen participation. This foundation was proven by the evacuation of over 735,000 people before the storm hit, a clear demonstration that saving lives was the paramount objective.

The response began before the cyclone made landfall. Early warnings, tree pruning, drains cleaning and resources mobilization marked the first 48 hours. The population, trained over decades, acted with discipline and collective responsibility.

One month after the storm, Cuba is moving forward with intensive reconstruction efforts. Provinces such as Holguín, Granma, Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo still bears the scars of the storm, but also a spirit of resistance that defies adversity.

The restoration of electricity is progressing house by house. In the province of Las Tunas, the service is now fully restored, while in other areas, crews are working tirelessly. The telephone service has recovered more than 80% of its coverage, reactivating communication in affected communities.

Drinking water remains a challenge. Although the rains filled reservoirs, many towns depend on water trucks and mobile purification plants. Generators allow water to

be pumped into buildings without electricity, mitigating a critical need.

More than 76,000 homes were damaged and only about 2,000 have been repaired. Volunteers, construction workers and technicians are working amidst rubble and mud. Each roof replaced is an act of dignity and hope in the face of devastation. In rural areas, the loss of crops such as coffee and vegetables was severe, with serious implications for food security. However, seeds are already being distributed and emergency plantings are being organized to revive agricultural production.

Urban cleanup is key to preventing epidemics. Fallen trees and hazardous waste are being removed while health campaigns are being intensified. The increase in respiratory illnesses and arboviruses reinforces the importance of sanitation.

Roads, affected by landslides and floods, are being rehabilitated. Heavy machinery is traveling along the Central Highway and strategic routes to reconnect isolated towns and facilitate access for humanitarian aid.

International solidarity has been essential. Venezuela, Colombia, India and nearly 30 other nations have sent medicine, food, field hospitals and construction materials, channeled transparently to the hardest-hit areas.

Despite the economic blockade imposed by the United States, the Cuban State has mobilized all possible resources. Recovery is not only measured in infrastructure but also in the people's capacity to organize and resist together.

# U.S. Policy Damages Cubans' Human Rights

By ErnestoVERA

HAVANA.- UN Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur, Alena Douhan, affirmed in this capital that the United States' unilateral measures against Cuba lack legitimacy and affect the population's human rights.

When presenting the preliminary findings of her investigations on the island to the national and international press, the official stated that such coercive actions affect all spheres of national life and directly harm its inhabitants especially the most vulnerable groups.

She pointed out that these measures are particularly damaging amidst the problems the Caribbean nation faces due to, international crisis, the impact of climate events and internal economic difficulties.

At the end of her visit to Cuba, Douhan emphasized that the harmful effects of these measures are exacerbated by the politically motivated inclusion of the island on the U.S. State Department's list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism. "The diplomat recalled that Cuba has suffered under the U.S. blockade since 1962, and noted that this year, the U.S. government further intensified the pressure by including Cuba on its list of state sponsors of terrorism, a move which causes serious economic hardship and significantly hinders the island's efforts

to guarantee basic services and develop social policies.

During the visits and exchanges held since November 11 with various sectors of the country's economic, political and social life, including organizations, institutions and projects, the rapporteur witnessed firsthand the real impact of the blockade on the Cubans' human rights.

Such measures limit the State's capacity to develop public policies; violate the rights to food and a decent life; obstruct academic exchanges; affect the supply of energy, drinking water and medicines, and violate the right to life in general, she noted.

In this regard, the report on the subject to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council on September 2026 will urge the United States to cease this unilateral policy, "without international legal basis," including secondary sanctions and the overreach of their enforcement.

It will also call on states and international organizations to adopt measures to guarantee the full enjoyment of the rights of the Cuban people and to allow the development of programs that benefit other countries.

In her remarks, Douhan thanked the Cuban government for the facilities provided for her meetings with leaders, civil society representatives, specialists, academics, international organizations, and other prominent figures from Cuba's economic, political, and social spheres.



The Special Rapporteur noted that this year, the U.S. government further intensified the pressure against Cuba. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina.



# Getting Visas for Cuban Athletes for Los Angeles 2028

By Deisy **FRANCIS**

WASHINGTON.- Solidarity is already being mobilized to support Cuba's right to participate in the 2028 Olympic Games, which will be held in Los Angeles, US.

The Trump administration aims to prevent this by hindering the Cuban athletes' presence in qualifying events for the Summer Games through a series of political maneuvers.

Official data shows that, since the beginning of 2025, the current Republican administration has denied nearly one hundred visas to Cuban athletes, coaches and sports officials for events guaranteeing Olympic quotas.

Entire delegations have been unable to attend competitions and even technical meetings that are part of the path to the summer games.

That is the reason why the international campaign Déjenlos Jugar (Let Them Play) was launched, to defend Cuban athletes' right to compete, develop and represent their homeland on equal terms.

"When a country denies an athlete the fundamental right to compete, it not only disrupts the sporting calendar but also harms careers, individual efforts, collective dreams and the possibility of representing an entire nation with dignity," said First Secretary of the Cuban Embassy in Washington D.C, Yasser Ibarra.

And yes, these obstacles are part of a broader policy of pressures and hostilities that is also evident in the sports arena. This is another expression of the pressure exerted on the Cuban people, the diplomat added during a recent virtual meeting, the first international gathering that included activists not only from the United States but also from Africa, Latin America, Europe and Canada.

That is why this new campaign is so important. Déjenlos Jugar is not a slogan; it is a fundamental call for justice, he stressed.

We want our athletes to have access to qualifying competitions, and even when they get an Olympic quota, we want to make sure they do not face further excuses or obstacles, he emphasized.

The 'Hands Off Cuba' Committee in Los Angeles promoted the initiative, which is now expanding.

According to the solidarity group, current maneuvers contradict decades of previous practices by Washington and the rules agreed upon by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which "strongly opposes the denial of visas to athletes on the grounds of discrimination, including nationality."

The IOC considers these actions a violation of the Olympic Charter, which promotes the right of all eligible athletes to compete without political interference.



Cubans must compete on equal terms with the rest of their counterparts around the world. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The 'Hands Off Cuba' Committee in Los Angeles proposes sending messages to IOC members and securing the support of prominent figures, celebrities and sports legends for this campaign, among other actions.

"This will be a broad international crusade open to everyone on every continent," Mark Friedman, one of the Committee's

coordinators, told The Havana Reporter.

"Friedman noted that this truly international effort will create new avenues in the fight for visas and provide a better understanding of the impact of the U.S. embargo on Cuba." To this end, we will boost communications on social media through Instagram, Facebook and TikTok, the activist said while insisting that

the goal is to exert maximum influence on IOC members "so that they pressure the U.S. government to grant visas to Cuban athletes."

The 2028 Olympic Games will take place in Los Angeles from July 14 to 30, marking the third time the city of California will host the event (previously in 1932 and 1984).



# Biotechnology to Face Chikungunya

By Alfredo **BOADA**

HAVANA.- Cuban health authorities defined a strategy to address the increase in Chikungunya cases, which includes a clinical trial of the Jusvinza drug, a product developed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center (CIGB).

Spokespersons of the Biocubafarma Group stated that this initiative shows how Cuban biotechnology offers its own solutions to the population's health problems.

Residual polyarthritis, which causes pain and inflammation in the joints, is one of the most debilitating aftereffects of this disease, a symptom that can persist for months or even years after the acute phase. It is in this particular area that the potential of the Jusvinza synthetic immunoregulatory peptide is seen.

The selection of this drug, obtained using bioinformatics tools, is based on a solid scientific record, as it was developed as an innovative therapeutic treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, a chronic autoimmune and inflammatory disease.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this product, whose active principle is a 27-aminoacid peptide, was successfully used in Cuba to control hyperinflammation in severely and critically ill patients, demonstrating its efficacy in a different clinical setting and saving lives.

The new trial, approved by the Ministry of Public Health and the Health Innovation Committee, represents the materialization of this strategy, whose main objective is to evaluate the efficacy of Jusvinza in the treatment of residual polyarthritis in patients undergoing the chronic phase of Chikungunya.

The research will take place in four hospitals in the provinces of Matanzas and Havana.

This is the first study of its kind in Cuba focused on the aftereffects of Chikungunya and is part of a broader national plan to control arboviruses, which includes strengthening the control on the mosquito vector and improving clinical protocols. In a complex health context, the implementation of this trial is not simply about testing a new use for an existing drug, but rather an example of scientific sovereignty and a sign of the capacity to research, develop and offer a concrete and hopeful response to a public health problem using the talent and products created by Cuban scientists.

This medication is the result of over a decade of continuous research and development at the CIGB, one of the most prestigious scientific institutions in the country, and was incorporated into the Cuban health system as an effective treatment for rheumatoid arthritis, one of the diseases with the highest rate of job abandonment nationwide.



Scientists evaluate the efficacy of Jusvinza in patients undergoing the chronic phase of Chikungunya. PHOTO: CIGB.

## Progress and Tensions at COP30

By Esteban **C.ARES**

BELEM (BRAZIL).- The 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP30), held in the capital of the northern Amazonian state of Pará, revealed from the very beginning a landscape of encouraging achievements, but also tensions that could define the course of global climate action. The nearly 200 countries in attendance approved the negotiation agenda in record time, an unprecedented event that generated an initial atmosphere of cooperation and cautious optimism.

However, while the media spotlight highlighted this step, the most critical discussions, such as climate finance and reduction emission targets, continued to be subject to heated debate.

One of the most significant announcements at COP30, held from November 10 to 21, was the creation of the Tropical Forest Conservation Fund, backed by 53 nations, with an initial capital of more than \$5 billion (500 million US dollars).

Climate adaptation was the central topic, with particular attention to vulnerable sectors like agriculture, water supply, and urban health. At the same time, experts emphasized that success will depend on the implementation of clear measures and tangible results.

Brazil, the forum's host, caused surprise after announcing it will quadruple its

production of sustainable fuels, while reaffirming its commitment to achieving zero illegal deforestation by 2030.

Another key issue on the agenda was the fight against climate misinformation, and more than a dozen countries signed a joint declaration seeking to ensure that scientific communication reaches the public with rigor and transparency, preventing the obstruction of effective policies by rumors or misleading campaigns.

However, climate finance, especially the balance between developed and developing countries' commitments, remains the main obstacle to achieving a robust global agreement.

Nationally Determined Contributions were under intense scrutiny, as some countries still show insufficient or inconsistent targets compared to climate science.

Energy transition remains a critical challenge, as several economies' dependence on fossil fuels contrasts with the urgent need for green initiatives. This situation highlights how voluntary commitments often clash with strategic and economic interests.

The world watched COP30, hoping the forum would leave a concrete legacy for global action, while also acknowledging the persistent challenges that have permeated climate conferences and the objectives of the 2015 Paris Agreement for three decades.



The agenda also included the fight against climate misinformation. PHOTO: Internet.



# Cinema is the Mirror in which a Society Learns to see itself

By Osvaldo **CARDOSA**

BRASILIA.- In December, when the winds from the Malecón (seawall) carry the smell of salt and celluloid, Havana again becomes the beacon of Latin American movies.

Among the names that will cross the luminous threshold of the 47th Latin American New Film Festival, one resounds with the rhythm of two worlds: Francisco "Chico" Díaz Rocha, an artist born in Mexico and trained in Brazil who, above all, is an inhabitant of that borderless territory called art.

Chico Díaz, 66, still has the calmness and the fervor of a person who has seen a lot and is still searching for more.

An actor in over 80 films, from *O Sonho não Acabou* to author jewels in which he openly shows himself, Díaz will arrive in Havana not as a star but as an art traveler "interested in participating in the Latin American film-related discussions and environment, for greater reflection and a better understanding of the moment," he affirms.

The artist, who once studied architecture but preferred to build characters rather than buildings, speaks of the movies with a mixture of trade and faith. Cinema is a fundamental tool for countries' reflection

on their own culture, he said in an interview with **The Havana Reporter**.

"A nation must examine itself across its diverse geographies and latitudes, as this is fundamental. And for that, it's important to train and decentralize production centers throughout the country," he points out.

This idea of a nation looking at itself, recognizing itself amidst its light and shadows, is present throughout his entire conversation. Chico is not a film theorist but rather a man who lives and breathes the cinema. He knows that in spite of adversities, the Latin American movies preserve a rebellious spirit.

We are a vast continent, an exuberant land with many stories to tell, and we will tell them in whatever way we choose.

Having control of the narrative is important for the future," he highlights.

Between Mexico and Brazil, his two beloved homelands, Díaz finds paths that cross each other, while some still wait for a bridge to be built. "Mexico is a strong representative of the Latin American cinema. In relation to integration, it is difficult because countries lack the political will to do so," he admits.

It is not a pessimistic idea but rather a lucid thought: he knows that screens, like borders, are also managed by those in power.

As an actor, he says he is interested in "being a legitimate representative of the South American people in their struggle for liberation and consciousness. It is not a learned phrase, but a creed: that of an artist who does not evade history or commitment" He states that the Havana Festival, with its history of engagement and humanistic mission, inspires him as a

forum for dialogue. However, he does not idealize it. We have two possible discourses there and their corresponding supports. One is the narrative through the cinema, with its themes and problems, the other is the politics that allows films to reach the movie theaters and thus the people. That is also a political and economic issue," he stresses.



The 66-year-old actor has more than 80 films to his credit. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## Jazz Plaza Festival in Sight

By Dylan **LASTRES**



The Festival poster was a special request to Maestro Alfredo Sosabravo.

HAVANA.- The 41st International Jazz Plaza Festival will be held in Cuba from January 25 to February 1, 2026, featuring 220 international artists and young Cubans living abroad.

Renowned musicians Frank Fernández, Harold López-Nussa, Héctor Quintana, Nachito Herrera, Rolando Luna, the Pacheco brothers, and the National Symphony Orchestra are among the local guests, in addition to other names the organizing committee has not yet revealed.

Youth will be the central focus of this edition, which for the first time will include the eastern province of Holguín as a sub-venue, announced the festival's president, Víctor Rodríguez.

Meeting the expectations of the eastern region's audience is very important due to the damage caused by Hurricane Melissa, which devastated the area's provinces, Rodríguez acknowledged.

The present edition's main surprises include its distinctive image, inspired by the work *Guateque* by prestigious

Cuban visual artist Alfredo Sosabravo, who celebrated his 95th birthday last October.

"The poster was a special request to Maestro Sosabravo, and we wanted it to express the joy of the Jazz Plaza," Rodríguez affirmed during a press conference at the 1930 Hall of the Hotel Nacional.

Likewise, the event's musical theme, 'La Rumba Me Llama' (The Rumba Calls Me), was premiered, featuring pianist Roberto Fonseca alongside the renowned artists Bobby Carcassés, Alain Pérez, Isaac Delgado, Los Muñequitos de Matanzas, and young art students honoring their educational institutions.

Fonseca affirmed that choosing guest musicians is the most difficult thing as he would like to share the stage with all the national talent representatives.

While another press conference with all the program details is planned for the near future, Rodríguez announced that around 60 percent of the artists have confirmed their attendance.

The event will also celebrate the 50th anniversary of the *Síntesis* band, an emblematic group led by Carlos Alfonso, which is recognized, both in Cuba and abroad, for its originality in combining Afro-Cuban ritual and contemporary music.





# The First Country to use Railways in Hispanic America

By Pedro **RIOSECO**

HAVANA.- Eleven years before Spain and seventh in the world, Cuba was the first Latin American country to use the railroad as a passenger and freight transportation system, after inaugurating the Havana-Bejucal section on November 19, 1837.

This service was initially used for economic purposes and later to facilitate the mass transportation of passengers within the national territory. More than two thousand workers died during the construction of its first lines, many of them under slavery conditions.

This type of transportation was founded in the United Kingdom in 1825, followed by France, Germany, Belgium, and Russia. Twelve years later, it was introduced in Cuba, the first in Spanish America and the second in the Americas, after the United States.

Claudio Martínez de Pinillo, Count of Villanueva, was the promoter of the island's first railroad. Born in Havana in 1832, he chaired the Junta de Fomento (Development Board) that presented the

project to Queen Isabel II, who approved it on October 12, 1834.

British banks financed the construction of the railroad with a loan of two million gold pesos. The first eight British locomotives, manufactured by Braithwaite and Reanis, arrived in the country in 1837, along with the necessary rails and the technicians hired in the United States.



The Junta de Fomento locomotive is the oldest preserved in Cuba. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

After the first section, Havana-Bejucal (27.3 kilometers long and opened on November 19, 1837), the Bejucal-Güines line was built (46 kilometer). The construction of this was easier because it crossed flatter terrain.

The second railroad to receive a concession for its construction in Cuba was that of Camagüey, then called Puerto Príncipe, which reached the Nuevitas port on the

northern coast. The construction of this 72-kilometer track began in 1836 and was finished in 1851.

Its headquarters and workshops were located in the city of Camagüey. They included several branches connecting the eastern region's local lines to establish a single network that reached 935 km in length by 1911.

Cárdenas was the second city to have a railroad, after Havana, with the opening of its first line in 1840, which extended until Jovellanos.

The Junta de Fomento locomotive, the oldest preserved in Cuba, was declared a National Monument in 2002 and was named in honor of the Count of Villanueva. The idea of having a central railroad that would reach the entire island, from Havana to Santiago de Cuba, dates back to 1853. This track was rebuilt in the 1970s and 1980s.

The magnitude of this work included the repair of 1,291 kilometers of track, 1,888 kilometers of leveling, 229 bridges, 909 structures and all passenger stations and technical buildings between the two cities.



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# Havana, an Enchanting City

By Adis**MARLÉN**

HAVANA.- The Cuban capital, an enchanting city, pride and joy of its inhabitants, celebrated its 506th anniversary. In this city, tradition becomes an accomplice of everyday life.

On November 16th, the celebrations began with a series of initiatives throughout the city's Historic Center, honoring heritage

rich in cultural expressions, traditions, and majestic fortifications.

Within the framework of the celebrations for a new anniversary of the former village of San Cristóbal de La Habana, those who love and found it received with pleasure the result of the constant effort to preserve it for new and future generations.

Such endeavors bore their fruits in the rescue of the history safeguarded in three facilities of high cultural value: the Museo

Casa de África, the Casa de los Árabes, and the Museo Casa de la Obra Pía.

The reopening of the latter two, on November 13, shows the continuity of works to preserve the capital's tangible heritage and the validity of the legacy inherited from late Havana city historian Eusebio Leal.

As he said: "Havana is not just a city; it is a state of the soul," the Patrimonial Assets Preservation and Restoration Cabinet recalled in its Facebook account.

This good news also includes the Havana City Historian Office (OHCH) cultural proposals, led by the promotional campaign entitled

Fidelidad y Lealtad (Fidelity and Loyalty), in honor of Commander in Chief, Fidel Castro, on his centennial anniversary, and Eusebio Leal.

Other activities included the 21st edition of the International Patrimonial Cities' Management Meeting, the Japanese Culture Week, held until November 29, and the 27th Italian Culture Week, until December 6.

These were some of the initiatives that evoked the foundation of Havana, a lady who opens her arms to all those who visit her, admire her, and contribute to the development and rescue of her patrimonial spaces and treasures.



Havana celebrated its 506th anniversary with the motto of Fidelity and Loyalty. PHOTO: Tribuna.

## Museum Linked to Ernesto Guevara under Restoration

By Yunier**CIFONTES**



Restoration teams are working simultaneously in different areas of this National Monument. FOTO: Prensa Latina.

SANTA CLARA.-The restoration process of the museum located at the place the Armored Train was captured and derailed is making progress in this central Cuban city, which preserves the legacy of Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Restoration teams are working simultaneously in different areas of this site, declared a National Monument in 1990 and the only of its type in the country. Main efforts, though, are focused on repairing train coaches and building a wall to contain the force of a nearby river.

The museum's director, Lilian Laura Rodríguez, referred to the support received from various local organizations, such as Cuban Railroads, the Institute of Hydraulic Resources and the Provincial Culture Department, which contribute to deal with the main problems identified in a comprehensive way. Designed by renowned Cuban architect José Delarra, the site

commemorates the derailment and capture of the armored train by Che's troops in December 1958, during the Santa Clara Battle, a key action in securing the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

The military convoy, loaded with soldiers and weapons, was intended to reinforce the troops of the dictatorship who were then fighting their last battles against the Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro in Cuba's east. But Che Guevara's troops in this city thwarted that plan.

According to the current restoration program, the first two coaches of that train should be ready by December 29, the day that marks the 67th anniversary of the event, while work will continue in other areas.

The museum remains open to the public amidst the work to restore planters, paving stones and other elements of the sculptural ensemble, such as columns and pedestals, to their original state.



# Cinema Starts Rolling in Havana

By Daimarelys **PÉREZ**



HAVANA.- Under the slogan Rodando cine (Shooting films), spotlights have been turned on the Latin American New Film Festival of Havana, the most important Seventh Art event in Cuba organized this year to go beyond Latin America.

A special section is dedicated on this occasion to the BRICS countries, represented by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, with one film from each of these nations, stated the festival's director Tania Delgado.

Geographically, the 46th edition of the Festival comprises 42 countries spanning different latitudes, including Europe, Asia, and countries of our region.

France, Spain, Italy and Norway represent Europe. At the same time, the festival will also showcase an important selection dedicated to the 80th anniversary of Estudios Churubusco, one of the oldest film studios in Latin America, which is located in its homonymous neighborhood in Mexico City. Churubusco Studios will be honored this year with one of the festival's Coral Awards, the director commented. Furthermore, Mexico will be the FOCUS Country, and the MECLA "Open Island" Latin American Film Market Fair will be held again from December 7 to 11, featuring national producers along with those from various Latin American countries and representatives from Russia, China, and Indonesia.

The festival's official selection includes 222 works, of which 114 compete, while the rest form part

of the event's various sections, such as Latin America in Perspective, International Panorama, Other Latitudes, Environments, and Special Presentations.

The theoretical forum will be dedicated to honoring the festival's founding president, Alfredo Guevara, on his centennial anniversary. For this reason, an entire day will be devoted to remembering him as an indispensable figure in Cuban cinema.

The program also includes the traditional theoretical events and the screenings of restored films. In this regard, an Argentinean film directed by Hugo del Carril, which has never been seen in Cuba, will be shown.

Lectures, exhibitions, films in competition and tributes will be the highlights of the event, which will also feature the launch of a filmmaking grant for women over the age of 50, supported by the United Nations Population Fund.

Another important moment of this year's event is the Third "Juan Padrón in Memoriam" Latin American and Caribbean Animation Forum, from December 8 to 11, with the aim of fostering reflection, learning and cooperation among film specialists and scholars.

Experts believe that the Latin American International New Film Festival of Havana no longer belongs to Cuba but to the rest of the world too, and that's the path it has followed to diversify the reason for its existence.

The Festival includes in this edition a special section dedicated to the BRICS countries. PHOTO: Cubainformación.

## Artist Michel Mirabal Exhibits his Talent

By Verónica **NÚÑEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuban visual artist Michel Mirabal, known as the flag's painter, is exhibiting in this capital his personal show, Tú no me conoces (You don't know me), after a 15-year absence from national galleries.

"I wanted to demonstrate my work goes beyond flags, as there are 14 series spanning 30 years of my career," the artist told **The Havana Reporter** regarding the title.

Until January 15, 2026, the Luz y Oficio Provincial Visual Arts and Design Center, in the city's historic center, will host some 50 pieces. The works, organized across three levels, speak to the Cuban context.

Mirabal displays his talent in various media, with two-dimensional and three-dimensional works and everyday objects transformed into symbols. Visitors will see pressure cookers, machetes, balloons, an 18th-century carriage, and an image of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre.

Curated by Nelson Herrera Ysla and Andrés Santana, Tú no me conoces includes pieces such as Escapando (Escaping), El reto (The Challenge), Día a día (Day by Day), Rebelión (Rebellion), Dependientes (Dependents), and El asalto (The Assault).

"It is not easy to find such a multifaceted artist in Cuba, with an exhibition free of

prejudice where there are no differences between trends," curator Herrera Ysla said.

"It is an exercise of statement and liberation, because Mirabal can free himself from those stereotypes of flag artist and shows in his work his capacity to generate a corpus of symbols, metaphors, and grammatical articulations," Andrés Santana pointed out.

"This exhibition will set a precedent as how

to construct a curatorial narrative and how this is organized around a museographic framework that validates these same starting points," the curator affirmed.

Michel Mirabal, who has exhibited personal and collective presentations abroad over the past 15 years, did not hesitate when the Luz y Oficio center accepted the idea of exhibiting his work.

"I believe that the homeland always deserves to come first," added the artist, who is originally from the Cayo Hueso neighborhood in the Havana municipality of Centro Habana.

Tú no me conoces will also be a community project, featuring parallel activities, meetings with art students, and the publication of a catalog documenting the exhibition's creation process.



The Mirabal exhibition will be open to the public until January 2026. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



# Authorities Highlight Importance of Commercial Exchanges

By Benjamín **MICERINOS**

HAVANA.- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Oscar Pérez-Oliva, emphasized the importance of trade to the Cuban economy at the opening of the 41st edition of the Havana's International Trade Fair (FIHAV 2025).

The opening of the event, held from November 26 to 29 at the Expocuba fairgrounds, was attended by Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and officials, executives and other representatives of the island's economy, including Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz.

Pérez-Oliva stated that Hurricane Melissa, which recent hit the country's east, and the intensification of the U.S. blockade are factors that currently hinder the economic development of the Caribbean nation.

He recalled that the Fair is more than just a commercial meeting point; it is a space for sharing perspectives, when the 65th anniversary of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment is celebrated.

The minister stressed that the event focuses on key sectors and activities of Cuba's economic transformation, in spite of the complex energy situation the island faces. He also affirmed that local professionals are leveraging the potentials of artificial intelligence in view of the country's economic and social development.

Pérez-Oliva stated that FIHAV 2025 was dedicated to the tourism sector and its objective is to promote new alliances and joint ventures. These thematic areas connect with opportunities currently included on the agenda.

During the fair, the eighth Investment Forum was inaugurated, an event in which government decisions to promote business development in Cuba were announced, highlighting new opportunities across a range of open sectors and partnerships. Business sessions, meetings and forums were also held.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment, Oscar Pérez-Oliva. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## First AI Stand in Cuba Opened

By Mirna **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- The first Artificial Intelligence (AI) stand in Cuba was opened at the 41st edition of the Havana's International Trade Fair (FIHAV 2025), a project that includes national solutions and a unique digital ecosystem.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, president of the Havana's Scientific-Technology Park, Rafael Luis Torralba, explained that as a result of coordination with the Ministry of Communications and a group of state and non-state organizations, they created an AI space that integrates most of the solutions being developed in Cuba.

He stated that the idea originated from a proposal by the country's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, who attended the stand's inauguration at FIHAV, an event held in the Pabexpo fairgrounds.

The presentation included four ecosystems: smart city, health, art and education, and industry, along with a conceptualization of what an AI ecosystem in Cuba could look like, he said.

Other special features are a small robot developed by the Universidad Tecnológica de La Habana (CUJAE), and a virtual assistant software developed in collaboration with Datis.

Torralba added that different project ideas and participatory competitions were presented at FIHAV.

In this regards, he mentioned Cuba Digital, a repository that centralizes all AI solutions from both academia and industry, as well as the Cuban AI Consortium, an organization founded with 22 members.

The latter will be dedicated to promoting these topics in the island, and will operate internationally when applying for collaborative projects and participating in regional or global artificial intelligence forums.

This is undoubtedly a strength that will allow working together, since sometimes isolated efforts go in the same direction, and "a platform like this will help everyone involved in the field to learn about the solutions that others are developing, which can shorten the process," he added.

We hope the organization to grow as others interested in the topic become motivated and apply for the consortium membership, Torralba highlighted.

In his opinion, the next major challenge will be the 2026 Computer Science Fair and Convention, as they will have to better the presentation made at FIHAV, which involved an effort to prove that in Cuba, both academia and the business sector are working on AI topics with a unique perspective.

The expert also pointed out that Cuba has been working for several years on its own algorithms and technological solutions, which would contribute to technological sovereignty and would allow for the possibility of supporting its own developments on these technologies.



President of the Havana's Scientific-Technology Park, Rafael Luis Torralba. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



# El Templete, Birthplace of the Cuban Capital

Text and Photos Roberto F. CAMPOS

HAVANA.- El Templete is a unique monument marking the birthplace of Havana, and a current attraction for tourists interested in the island's history and culture.

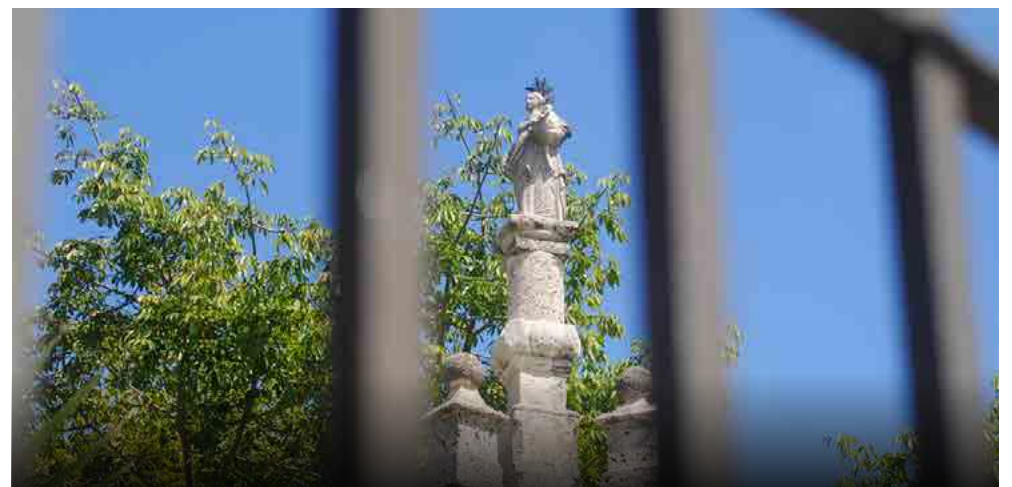
It is also a beautiful spot where passersby take lots of photos, and each year, on the city's foundational date (November 16, 1519), people go around the ceiba tree (silk tree or silk cotton tree) in its yard as part of a traditional religious ceremony.

El Templete, a building of notable historical importance, is located in the Plaza de Armas, in Old Havana, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its construction dates back to 1827, following the plans of Colonel Antonio de

la Torre, under the direction of Alderman Francisco Rodríguez y Cabrera.

It was erected at the suggestion of then Governor and General Captain of Cuba, Francisco Dionisio Vives, on the site believed to be where the Villa de San Cristóbal de La Habana was founded, in 1519.

The original town of San Cristóbal de La Habana was founded in 1514, initially on the banks of the Mayabeque River (the exact location of the settlement is still unknown). Later on, the town was permanently established on the northern coast, in the Carenas Bay, today Havana Bay. According to experts, El Templete was the first neoclassical building in Havana and one of the civil works that most influenced Cuban architecture.





# Summit of the Americas Postponed due to Notorious Failure

By Mariela **PÉREZ**

SANTO DOMINGO.- A month before its celebration, the Dominican Republic decided to postpone the 10th Summit of the Americas until 2026, in light of what was already being anticipated as a political failure for its promoters, including the United States.

Scheduled for Punta Cana on December 4th and 5th, the foreign ministry announced the postponement of the meeting, citing "profound disagreements which hinder productive dialogue in the Americas." The ministry stated that after consulting with its various partners, including the US government led by Republican Donald Trump, it made the decision to delay the event.

According to the statement, the decision was reached by "consensus" after a "careful analysis of the regional situation," without directly mentioning the U.S. military operations that have resulted in more than 60 deaths in the Caribbean under the pretext of fighting drug trafficking.

The note added that the impact of recent weather events, which have severely

affected several Caribbean countries, is also contributing to this situation.

Experts believe the hosts' position was compromised by the White House's aggressive actions, on the one hand, and the exclusion of Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua, on the other, to "prioritize the success of the meeting."

In other words, from a promised inclusive gathering, the Dominican decision showed that reaching any significant

political consensus among the attendees would be extremely difficult, as the Summit would be incomplete due to the absence of three nations that have demonstrated their sovereignty facing U.S. aggressions.

Reactions to the omission were strong: Dominican political and social organizations raised their voices against the decision taken by the government of Luis Abinader, while Colombian and Mexican presidents, Gustavo

Petro and Claudia Sheinbaum, respectively, declined to attend.

The Communist Labor Party (PCT), the Frente Amplio, and other local movements warned that the exclusion of three sister nations betrayed the historic solidarity of the Dominican people with Latin America and the Caribbean..

## DONALD TRUMP'S POLICIES

At the heart of this crisis are Trump's regional policies: tariff threats, unilateral sanctions, pressure on countries to accept mass deportations, and diplomatic blackmail at the UN to alter traditional votes in favor of the lifting of the blockade on Cuba.

Military threats to Latin America, especially Venezuela, remain latent with the presence of part of its naval fleet in the Caribbean – aiming at Caracas – under the pretext that the world's largest drug consumers are waging war on drug trafficking.

Faced with this environment, social organizations and leftist movements convened the People's Summit in Santo Domingo, concurrently, with the aim of demonstrating that the true Latin American integration is not built on imposition, but on mutual respect.



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# Unequal Exchange and Underdevelopment

By Frank **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- When speaking as president of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the UN General Assembly held on October 12, 1979, Fidel Castro accused unequal exchange of turning international trade into "a profitable vehicle for the further plundering of our wealth." Almost half a century later, the problem persists under even less favorable conditions for countries of the Global South, which are generally exporters of primary goods at relatively low and unstable prices. Meanwhile, they pay increasingly higher prices for manufactured goods, other products, and services from industrialized nations. In that relationship, there is a transfer of value from underdeveloped countries to developed nations through an equal profit rate at the international level, as pointed out by the Greco-French economist Arghiri Emmanuel, who developed his theory of unequal exchange in the 1960s and 1970s. A crucial element in developing this concept is the disparity in salaries, as defined by each party, which are significantly lower in the South compared to those in the North.. According to Emmanuel, unequal exchange is an inherent condition of the capitalist system, attributed to a relationship between underdeveloped and developed countries, regardless of the product or service exchanged. Other experts on the topic, such as Raúl Prebisch and Hans Singer, attributed the imbalances in international trade to the

deterioration of the terms of exchange between primary and manufactured products.

Productivity differential among the actors was also present in the debate about unequal exchange and its insertion in a broader context concerning the causes and consequences of underdevelopment, addressed by notions such as dependence theory and the world-system approach. U.S. sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein considers the modern world-system concept as "an intricately constructed and complex group of institutions that has operated smoothly and effectively over the past 500 years." In this network of mediations, inequalities between regions and countries emerged and continue to grow, exacerbated by the legacies of the colonial past and scourges such as external debt, protectionism, low foreign direct investment and the decline of international cooperation, among other factors.

The North-South dependence reaches alarming levels in the fields of technology, science and innovation, with U.S. corporations leading the development and commercialization of products and services in this sector worldwide. Meanwhile, digital platforms dominated the global economy, taking market capitalization or the value of each economy's outstanding shares as points of reference, according to a report by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development published last July.



Growing inequalities are deepening poverty in countries of the Global South. PHOTO: U.N

## Agroecology and Food Sovereignty



The meeting discussed the need to promote more resilient models in harmony with nature. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Rafael **AZUAGA**

HAVANA.-Delegates from Cuba and other 15 countries attended the 9th International Meeting on Agroecology, Food Sovereignty, Nutritional Education and Cooperativism, which for six days discussed these topics and organized visits to farms and cooperatives in three provinces.

Representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Indonesia, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Sri Lanka and Uruguay also exchanged ideas about agricultural and ecological practices in Cuba and the rest of the world.

Opened at the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) Comprehensive Center, in Artemisa, attendees learned about producers' experiences during a tour to farms and agricultural cooperatives in that province, as well as in Havana and Mayabeque, also in the country's west.

Likewise, they analyzed the need to promote more resilient models, in harmony with nature and advocated for transforming existing food systems and disseminating good agroecological practices.

The meeting concluded its sessions at the Havana's Convention Center with a speech by president of the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP),

Félix Duarte, who affirmed that the hostility of the United States government is the main obstacle to promoting Cuba's development and growth.

In this regard, he noted that such policies prevent the island from achieving its economic and social projections, while facing global challenges in a complex context.

Duarte criticized the extraterritorial effects of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by successive U.S. administrations for over 60 years, as well as the arbitrary inclusion of the Caribbean nation on the list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism. "All of this becomes the main obstacle to the country's development, causing serious limitations and difficulties in the economic, political, social and productive spheres, and forces us to operate in a real "war economy" scenario, he added.

The president of the farmers' association highlighted that Cuba is facing a widespread media campaign dominated by lies, disinformation, hatred, double standard and actions against the economy and the society at large, with the purpose to destabilize the constitutional order.

The meeting was held a few days after Hurricane Melissa struck Cuba's east, causing severe damages in several provinces.

In light of this situation, attendees from all participating nations made a donation to those affected by the powerful cyclone, sources indicated.



# Involving Cuban Business People Living Abroad

By TeyunéDÍAZ

HAVANA.- Cuba reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining economic relations with Cuban business people residing abroad and integrating them into the country's development.

During a meeting with those Cuban nationals at the Havana's International Trade Fair (FIHAV 2025), Director of Consular Affairs and Attention to Cubans Residing Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ana Teresita González, stated that this meeting was the last in a series of eight held throughout the year.

These type of exchanges conveyed a clear message of unity, patriotism and openness to those interested in contributing to the construction of our society.

When addressing more than fifty attendees gathered at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba, she noted the evident awareness of the island's significant potential for negotiating and implementing projects.

González emphasized that the production of goods and services is essential for advancing towards Cuba's economic development, and recalled that the country has industrial capacities paralyzed due to the lack of supplies and raw materials, which could be used in

cooperative production.

The director urged participants to submit their proposals on how to strengthen the economy, foster innovation and create opportunities for all Cubans, despite the significant current challenges.

She also referred to the complex national situation, characterized by a combined global multidimensional crisis, the set of unilateral coercive measures against Cuba by the ongoing United States administration and the arbitrary inclusion of the Caribbean nation on the list of states that allegedly sponsor terrorism.

Also speaking, deputy minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment (MINCEX), Deborah Rivas, commented on the additional incentives for foreign investment announced at FIHAV by Deputy Prime Minister and head of MINCEX, Oscar Pérez-Oliva.

These decisions are applicable to businesses with Cuban entrepreneurs living abroad, she stressed.

Other topics addressed included business opportunities in various regions, a portfolio that includes 38 proposals aimed at boosting production, services and local foreign direct investment. Of these, 18 are from the food sector, 11 from industry, eight from tourism, and one from trade.



Deputy minister of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment, Deborah Rivas. PHOTO: Tito Meriño.

## Guamuhaya, Cuba's Third Geopark, Approved

By TeyunéDÍAZ

HAVANA.-The Cuban Council of Ministers approved the country's third Geopark, Guamuhaya, located in the provinces of Sancti Spíritus, Villa Clara and Cienfuegos, as informed by Geology Director at the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MINEM) Enrique Castellanos.

The decision was announced during a session of the National Geoparks Committee, and in this way, Guamuhaya joins those of: Viñales, in Pinar del Rio and Gran Piedra, in Santiago de Cuba.

Castellanos explained that reaching this point involved more than two years' in-depth geological study to define and review the area and its geosites.

During the meeting, specialists explained that Guamuhaya has high geological and ecological value due to its remarkable diversity of geological formations, unique ecosystems, and endemic species, whose conservation is essential to preserve the natural processes that have shaped the Cuban landscape over millions of years.

In relation to its cultural and historical heritage, they highlighted that the region has a rich legacy comprising rural traditions, coffee-growing architecture, folk knowledge, and historical sites reflecting the interaction between humankind and its natural environment.

When addressing its tourist and educational potential, the experts noted that the newly designated Guamuhaya Geopark offers opportunities for developing sustainable, natural,

and cultural tourism, and space for environmental education, scientific research, and community participation.

The region covers an area of 2,143 square kilometers and has 50 identified geosites: seven of international value, nine of national value, 22 of regional value, and 12 of local value.

The approval of the Guamuhaya Geopark consolidates the recognition of a region with high geological, ecological, cultural, and historical values, which deserve to be protected and promoted sustainably with institutional and community commitment.

In addition, it is a maintainable development model projected as an engine of local growth, as it integrates environmental conservation, education, responsible tourism, and job creation, in line with the strategic pillars of the 2030 National Economic Program.

Castellanos also mentioned that on November 20, Cuba submitted the candidacy of the Viñales Geopark (approved in 2021) for the UNESCO Global Geopark status.

He explained that if Viñales achieves this distinction, it would be the first in Cuba and the Caribbean. To be considered for this designation, UNESCO takes into account a minimum of two years of visibility, which is why the process began in 2024 based on a technical assessment endorsed by the Geology and Paleontology Institute, he affirmed.

The geology director added that UNESCO experts then visited the area, helped identify its potential, and made recommendations for the required work to complete the application.



Guamuhaya will be the third geopark in Cuba. PHOTO: ACN.



# Marabana: Emotional and Challenging Course

By Yodeni**MASÓ**

HAVANA.- With Mexico and Cuba as major protagonists, the Marabana marathon concluded its 2025 edition, consolidating its international prestige, supported by a course full of emotions and personal challenges. After three decades, Mexican Miguel Ángel Vega broke the local record and finished first in the 42-kilometer and 195-meter race, with a time of 2:38:49 hours.

In his first international victory, the long-distance runner from Nezahualcóyotl praised the race and the organization: "The climate is very different from that of Mexico City, the temperature, the humidity a bit strong, but throughout the course, I met my expectations because water was available and they were looking after us along the way."

Without pressure and away from her best times, Cuban Yudileyvis Castillo again climbed to the top of the Marabana marathon, adding her fifth victory in the capital's race.

With a smile and waving at the cameras, the experienced long-distance runner broke the finish line tape with a time of 3:08:00 hours, her third title after those of 2017 and 2019.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, Castillo regretted the lack of competition in this edition, which prevented a good record despite favorable weather and course conditions. Affected by injuries, Ronnei Estevez led the Marabana half marathon with

a time of 1:06:56 hours, becoming a three-time champion of the 21-kilometer race at the iconic event. Celebrated by athletes, coaches, the public, and journalists, the victory prevented him from ending 2025 with the taste of defeat,

after being unable to defend his title at the Varadero half-marathon.

In the women's category, Melissa Bacallao, from the province of Matanzas, reached the podium for the first time in the 21-kilometer race, with 1:16:35 hours. "From the moment the bell rang, I started running hard not to lose the lead. The course and the weather were good, and my goal was to make a good record in view of the Central American Games," said the 28-year-old champion. Marabana closed its 2025 edition with additional attractions, including multi-record holder Erick Hernández's participation in the five-kilometer race mastering the ball with his feet, thighs and head. The event, with start and finish at the Ramón Font Sports Center, brought together 2,815 Cuban runners and 340 foreigners, who aimed to surpass personal challenges on the Caribbean circuit. On its way to its 40th anniversary, the Organizing Committee honored several of Cuba's top long-distance runners, especially national marathon record holder Emperatriz Wilson (2:36.35 hours), for her performances in Marabana, first as an athlete and now in her capacity as a volunteer.



Yudileyvis Castillo again climbed to the top of the Marabana maratón. PHOTO: Tito Meriño.

## Among Diamonds and Hopes

By Boris Luis**CABRERA**

HAVANA.- Cuban baseball has again started to tour its own calendar of emotions. It was another year in which the country measured itself against the world and against its own soul, navigating victories that taste of glory and stumbles that, far from extinguishing the flame, only cause it to burn brighter.

Because in Cuba, baseball is not just a sport: it is national breath, a heartbeat that accompanies the history, humor and nostalgia of an entire nation.

At the international arena, the colors of the national uniform were seen in almost all tournaments of the year, not with the force of yesteryear but with the dignity of those who never give up.

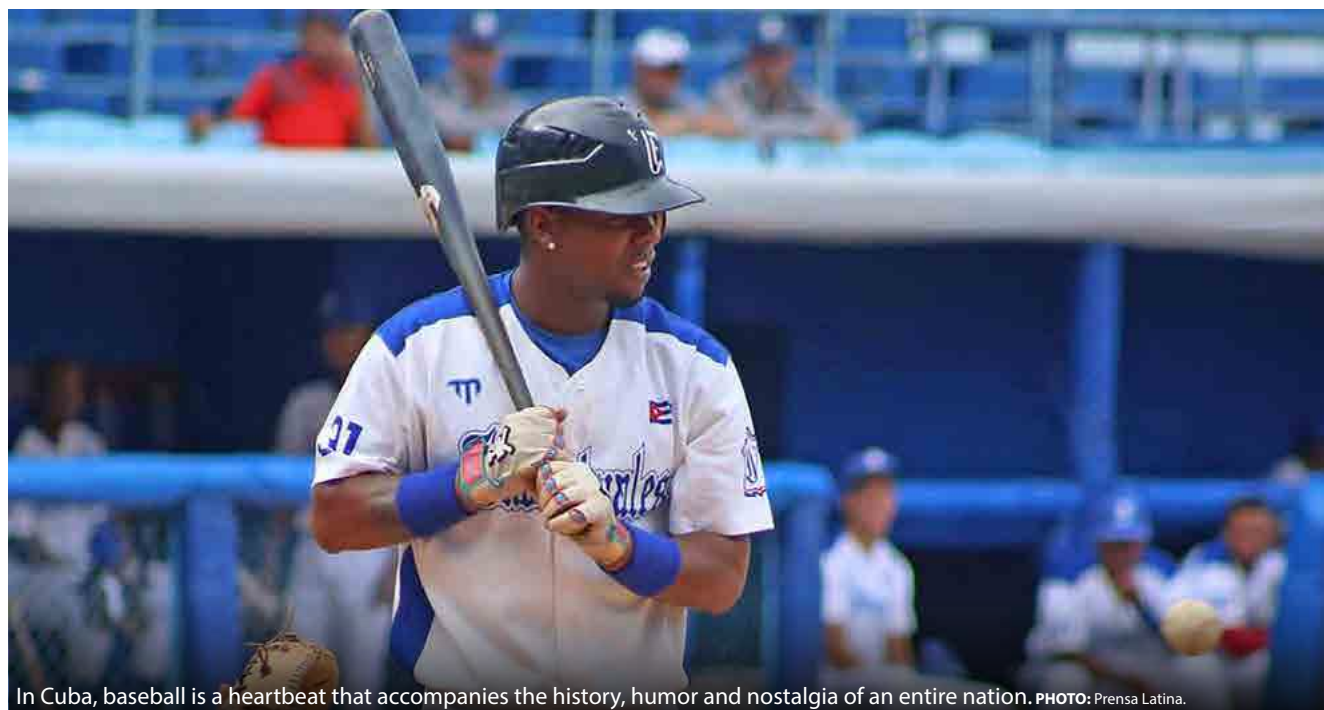
The Leñadores de Las Tunas team, ambassadors at the Champions League, came close to the continental title with their second place. At the same time, in the Americas Series, they again faced the region's powers. And although on this occasion they could not reach the podium, they showed that talent still flourishes in the red soil of Cuba's east.

The greatest moment of pride, though, came from a field where neither gloves nor traditional bats are used: Baseball5. That urban and fast-paced version of the game, played with hands and passion, once again took the Caribbean island to the center of the world stage. The youth team became absolute champions. A gold medal that not only hung around players' necks but also in the hearts of an entire country in need of victories. With every hit, with every catch, it was certain that the Cuban baseball gene does not get old: it transforms and adapts itself; it keeps winning. Meanwhile, at home, the ball kept rolling. Ciego de Ávila

won the III Elite League, Granma dominated the U-23 Series, and the little prospects from La Lisa and Santa Clara continued shining at the children's tournaments.

However, not everything was a reason for celebration. The last-minute cancellation of the first Americas Baseball Cup, to be held in Panama, left a symbolic and sporting void. That challenge will no longer be the Caribbean Series in the Bahamas, as Cuba will not ultimately attend because the World Baseball-Softball Confederation (WBSC) granted the island a direct spot to the Santo Domingo 2026 Central American and Caribbean Games – a quota

the nation initially had to compete for there, thanks to their position in the ranking (sixth in the Americas). Next year, Cuban baseball will face two major challenges: The Caribbean Series, to start on January 30 in Caracas, and the VI World Baseball Classic, to be hosted in the United States, Puerto Rico and Japan – although the island has not received yet the official call from Major League Baseball (MLB) to define the team roster. 2025 will not be remembered as the year of major titles, but as the one of reconnection; that of a country which again felt pride in a handful of clean plays, a Baseball5 world championship won with pure heart, sustaining the hope of a team that still knows itself to be capable of astonishing the world..



In Cuba, baseball is a heartbeat that accompanies the history, humor and nostalgia of an entire nation. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



# Farewell forever, Jorge Luna

By Omar **SEPÚLVEDA**

SANTIAGO DE CHILE.- "The last one turns off the light," Jorge told me over the phone last September, repeating a familiar farewell referring to the fact that we two were the only survivors of the group of six journalists, who on September 11, 1973, were in the Prelagoch office – the internal code name of Prensa Latina's correspondent's office in Santiago de Chile.

The group was composed of Jorge Timossi, Pedro Lobaina, Mario Mainadé, Jorge Luna, Orlando Contreras – who had arrived in Santiago the night of the 10th, after years of absence, and myself. Moments before the violent raid on our headquarters, Elena Acuña had left the office on "Timo's" instructions.

I met Jorge on June 15, 1971, when I started working at Praela. We were the two youngest; he was only a little over a year older than me. Daily coexistence fostered a friendship that later on grew stronger in the streets of the then-turbulent Santiago's downtown.

"So many tear gas bombs that we couldn't see each other." It was a common greeting among reporters covering the protest marches and counter-marches of supporters

and opponents of the government of socialist president Salvador Allende, often dispersed with water cannons by the police. We frequently arrived soaked and with irritated eyes at the office located in the heart of Santiago, just two blocks away from the La Moneda Palace, the seat of the Chilean government.

Jorge was always at the forefront. I vividly remember a time when, during one of those particularly violent clashes, gunshots were heard. Timossi asked me to go look for Luna, and I saw him lying on the ground in a corner of the then National Congress building, while bullets whirled from different directions.

On the day of the coup, half my body hanging out from the office balcony, I photographed tanks passing by and the repression of bystanders, while infantry soldiers pointed their weapons at the surrounding buildings. A cry from Timossi interrupted my work.

Luna himself, with another cry, restrained my dangerous reaction against a soldier who was smashing a picture of Che Guevara against the back of a chair.

I cannot forget our farewell at the elevator door, where two soldiers were escorting you to the Cuban embassy, while I, for being Chilean, had to stay alone in the office. Nor do I forget your constant calls for me to travel to



Jorge Luna was one of the Prensa Latina journalists who witnessed the coup against Salvador Allende. PHOTO: Archives.

Lima after the closing of the office to join you, which finally happened in February 1974.

After 21 years in the agency, the last six in Cuba at the Prensa Latina headquarters, I returned to Chile.

I also treasure, now more than ever, our meetings in Peru, Cuba, Uruguay and Santiago de Chile, when you returned as a correspondent.

Luna was multifaceted: an excellent writer, a good photographer, a cook, and even a hairdresser (my wife has always told me that during those years, at the photo lab, he gave me the best haircut of my life).

Farewell, colleague and, above all, friend, Jorge Luna!

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