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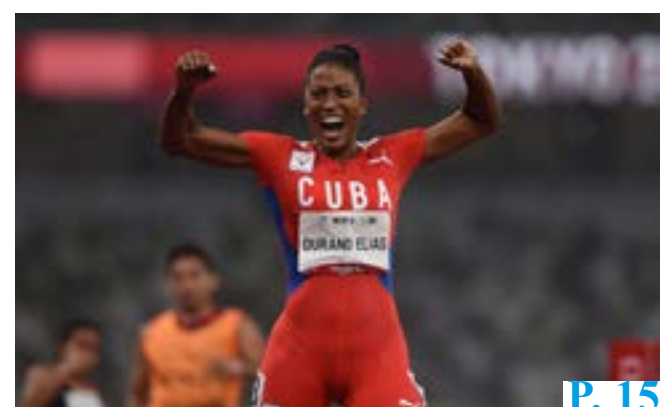
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Tourism Seems to Revive

By Roberto F. CAMPOS

HAVANA.-In times when the travel industry is going through difficult moments all over the world, tourism seems to see the light at the end of the tunnel in Cuba, where several economic sectors have been badly affected by COVID-19. The announcement that the island will gradually reopen its borders on November 15 pleases both tour operators and companies that are somehow connected with the tourist sector.

In this regard, Cuba's First Deputy Tourism Minister María del Carmen Orellana recently presented the Cuba product for the upcoming high tourism season in the Russian city of St. Petersburg.

The meeting was attended by over 80 representatives of retail agencies that sell the Cuban destination in that city. They talked with directors of the Gran Caribe, Cubanacán and Islazul hotel groups, and of the Cubanacán and Cubatur travel agencies, who also visited the Russian capital.

The objective was to continue with the plans that had begun earlier this year, when Russian vacationers enjoyed places such as Jardines del Rey, particularly Cayo Coco (key), in the central-northern coast of the island.



Cuba has granted 2,259 certificates to hotel facilities that ratify the condition +Hygiene and Safe Tourism. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

With that announcement local tourist authorities expect to recover at least part of the travelers that visited Cuba before the pandemic, when the island welcomed over four million visitors and was close to register the record figure of five million tourists. Health and hygiene protocols will be reinforced in the service provided to international travelers coming to the country, local authorities noted.

The Cuban government is working to reactivate the hotel network, attract employees and look for supplies, because it will be a gradual process, stated Cuba's Tourism Minister Juan Carlos García.

Tourism is a strategic sector, as defined in the National Economic and Social Development Plan up to 2030, due to its importance for the country's exports and its revitalizing role for the rest of the economy.

Furthermore, all COVID-19 vaccination schemes (Cuban doses) suggest that the country will have more than 90 percent of the population immunized by November.

In order to complement the gradual reopening of the tourist market, the minister stated the idea is to do so with renewed offers and high levels of quality and satisfaction in a destination that he described as safe and in strict compliance with health protocols.

Tourism practically came to a standstill in 2020 with the pandemic. From January to August this year, the country welcomed 163,743 tourists, two million less compared to the same period in 2020, with just three tourist destinations in operation: Havana, Varadero and Cayo Coco.

It's worth mentioning that for the reopening, Cuba so far has granted 2,259 certificates to hotel facilities that ratify the condition + Hygiene and Safe Tourism (T+HS), aimed at guaranteeing the control of the disease.

The Cuban minister explained that although travel protocols will be more flexible for arriving travelers, those implemented in the sector will be reinforced which, together with the progress of the national vaccination campaign, will allow to control the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2.



The promenade was built by order of General Captain Don Felipe Pons de la Viela. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Alameda de Paula, a Promenade in Havana

By Mario ESQUIVEL

HAVANA.-The Cuban capital, founded in 1519 in its current and final location, embraces in its area a varied set of attractions linked to an old architecture that has been preserved until the present.

Specialized museums, art galleries, theaters, shopping centers, hotels and hostels are disseminated throughout the city, which also stands out for a constructive diversity that dates back to over 500 years.

A range of architectonic styles gives the city an important patrimonial value. Its constructions combine elements of baroque, neo-gothic, neoclassicism, eclecticism, art nouveau and modernism.

The expansion of the formerly called Habana Intramuros (the village within the city walls) paved the way for the development of extensive construction projects such as the one that resulted in the creation of the Alameda de Paula, the capital's oldest promenade.

Considered the city's first promenade, its construction was concluded in 1776, when it became the site for social and cultural interaction in Havana. The promenade was built by Antonio Fernández Trebejo by order of General Captain Don Felipe Pons de la Viela, the Marquis of La Torre.

Initially, the promenade consisted of an embankment with two rows of poplars and stone benches, which was described as a nice area for the entertainment of the neighbors of the Villa of San Cristóbal de La Habana – where no other recreational area existed at the time.

In 1845, Mexican engineer Mariano Carrillo added a square to the promenade and in 1847, a decorated marble fountain was added. That date marks the time in which several small palaces started to be built in the surrounding area.

The promenade's name comes from the proximity of the former San Francisco de Paula hospital; whose construction began in 1664 near a church that over time was also given the same name.

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Dialogue and Consensus in Difficult Times



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Prime Minister Manuel Marrero visited the Oxicuba S.A Industrial Gas Producing Plant in Havana. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

By Claudia **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- Dialogue, consensus and encouraging all forms of social participation characterize the Cuban government's agenda these days, in times when the country is coping with shortages due to the pandemic and a blockade attempting to asphyxiate the island.

In addition to the current outbreak of COVID-19 and the consequences resulting from the economic blockade imposed by the United States for nearly 60 years preventing Cuba from obtaining food and medicine and chases the country's financial operations, the island is surviving without tourism, the driving force of its economy.

In the middle of this difficult context and after the July 11 disturbances, which were stimulated and financed from the United States, the Cuban leadership has analyzed its causes to take actions and prevent similar situations from happening again.

The government immediately informed about the work being done to stabilize electricity supply and adopted measures to reduce power cuts in the service for the population.



Cuban President share with the people directly to know their concerns, proposals and wishes. PHOTO: Estudio Revolución.

Likewise, it lifted the tax on food, hygiene products and medicine brought into the country until December 31, something that will be under the terms and conditions set by airlines.

The Cuban authorities analyze each day from the Palace of the Revolution the impact of the health emergency in all economic sectors with views in identifying further actions to control the situation.

Faced with a lack of oxygen in August due to breakdowns in the main factory in charge of supplying that product, the country developed alternatives. In the meantime, different industries, organizations and institutions (with capacity to handle it) got involved in the production of oxygen.

In fact, the Government Administration Center was created in recent days to monitor that exceptional situation in real time and guarantee oxygen supply to health institutions.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and Prime Minister Manuel Marrero visited the Oxicuba S.A Industrial Gas Producing Plant in the capital to check on the work being done to revive the national production of the medicinal gas.

It is no longer news to anyone the visits made by the heads of State and Government to production centers, neighborhoods, factories and crop fields, to exchange with the people directly to

know about their concerns, proposals and wishes.

With that goal in mind, in recent weeks the president encouraged debates with representatives of different walks of life, including artists, religious people, members of communities and fraternal associations, students, jurists, economists, women, self-employees, journalists and farmers. It was "a very fruitful experience," the president said.

Similarly, the country is carrying out actions to transform 62 communities in Havana that are considered vulnerable, as they were identified as priorities during the talks with the people. The actions have the support of Cuban ministries and neighborhood actors.

Social actions are part of that initiative, and they include leg, the restoration of the environment and key services, job offers, guarantees for the continuation of studies, day care center registrations and economic help to families.

"Are things getting better? Have the people welcomed the action? Are they getting involved?" were some of the recurrent questions made by Díaz-Canel when he visited neighborhoods in Havana such as El Fanguito or La Güinera. During the visits he called to make the work of organizations and institutions more dynamic, and stressed the efforts must be sustained and not done out of habit.

In times when it is well known that the situation in Cuba is complex, the authorities have decided to explain all that is happening in the country with clarity, as part of a municipal growth strategy based on the active participation of residents.

The transformation program prioritizes the most vulnerable sectors and people, with the government calling to make the best use of each experience, to save more, be more efficient and promote the socialist state-owned enterprise, which is the main actor of the Cuban economy.

"We can have more only if we make more, which we can do if we work together, facilitating the dialogue with all forms of production, rescuing the entire social work of the Revolution," the Cuban president stated.

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Nothing Changes in Biden's White House

By DeisyFRANCIS

HAVANA.- Eight months after becoming President of the United States, Democrat Joe Biden has changed nothing in relation to Cuba.

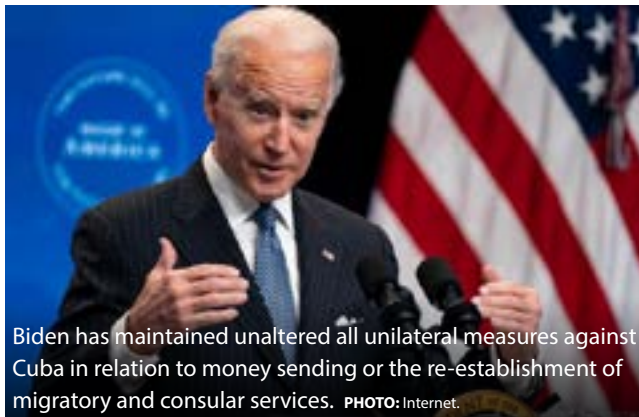
His stance on the island is similar or even harsher than that of his Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, whom he wanted to distance himself from, according to Biden.

Biden's White House has maintained unilateral measures against Cuba unaltered in relation to remittances or the re-establishment of migratory and consular services which, as he says, are under revision as part of the promised new beginning of his policy towards the island.

Last September, the General Director of the US Division at the Cuban Foreign Ministry, Carlos Fernández de Cossío, told the national media that Washington still forbids the sending of remittances to Cuba, and just limited to informing that he would soon make a decision on the issue.

Something similar happens in relation to migratory and consular services, they "simply informed that the diplomats could be accompanied by their spouses, which has been forbidden since 2017 and that some of these will be hired to do embassy work," said the director.

According to a source consulted by The Havana Reporter – who preferred to remain anonymous – recalled that about four years ago and on the pretext of the so called



Biden has maintained unaltered all unilateral measures against Cuba in relation to money sending or the re-establishment of migratory and consular services. PHOTO: Internet.

sonic attacks, the U.S. government concluded that its representation in Cuba was in danger and decided that its officials would be appointed for one year only, without relatives or accompanying persons.

The so-called change of status they talked about at some point is only related to spouses or adult persons, as children are not authorized. "It is all a hypocritical act. In Cuba, they are as protected as in the safest place of the world," the source indicated. The U.S. government has not authorized either cargo planes to transport humanitarian assistance, Fernández de Cossío also stressed.

The only thing that has happened in practice is that "it granted licenses to two airlines so that they can operate a

limited number of cargo flights between the two countries, while general prohibition on flights imposed on August 2020 remains in place," he added.

In the meantime, calls for Biden to lift the sanctions that affect the Cuban families and to end the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed for over 60 years, increase in the U.S. and abroad as well.

That call was further increased last July by the Bridges of Love project during an unprecedented walk between Miami and Washington D.C. of about 1,242 miles, together with other initiatives such as caravans in different U.S. cities.

In fact, by the time this edition is published, the call "Million Voices against the Blockade on Cuba" will be under way.

Promoted by the No Embargo Cuba Movement (NEMO), the call made on digital platforms aims at asserting pressure on the democrat president to keep his campaign word in relation to the policy towards Cuba, once and for all.

Since November 24, 1992, the UN General Assembly has rejected the coercive measure, as shown by the overwhelming vote held every year to put an end to the unilateral siege, which has survived over 10 White House administrations, both Democrats and Republicans.

Last June 23, the blockade was rejected by 184 of the 193 UN member nations and again, the United States was isolated with its unconditional ally, Israel, after voting against the Cuban resolution.

More UN Voices Reject the U.S. Blockade

By IbisFRADE



The overwhelming majority of the UN member countries expressed their rejection of the U.S. blockade against Cuba. PHOTO: Internet.

HAVANA.- Calls to end the U.S. blockade against Cuba once again came to light during the top-level debate of the 76th period of sessions of the UN General Assembly, held September 21-27.

During their speeches at the UN's biggest event, Heads of State and Government from different regions of the world demanded the end of a mechanism broadly rejected by the international community. When addressing the plenary session, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa expressed his country's solidarity with the Cuban people and requested the end of the U.S. blockade, which has caused incalculable damage to the Cuban economy and people.

For his part, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro urged (the U.S. government) to lift the unilateral sanctions and coercive measures against his country and the Caribbean island.

Venezuela raises its voice with justice and humanity for Cuba, a Republic and heroic people, Maduro said in his video message. Likewise, he recalled the numerous times the majority of the UN member countries have voted in favor of ending the U.S. economic, commercial and financial siege against the island during the annual meeting of the UN

General Assembly.

Vietnamese President Nguyen Xuan Phuc said he wanted to take advantage of his participation at the General Assembly to reaffirm his country's solidarity with the Cuban people and asked to put an end to the punitive measures against the island.

Meanwhile, the President of Surinam, Chandrikapersad Santokhi, stressed during his in-person speech that isolations and commercial blockades like the one against Cuba must end and advocated the use of dialogue to solve those differences and conflicts in the framework of the United Nations.

For his part, Costa Rican President Carlos Alvarado demanded that the unilateral actions that contravene international law and affect the Cuban people are brought to an end.

Since the pandemic broke out in 2020, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has repeatedly called to raise all unilateral sanctions and coercive measures that prevent from giving a proper response to the health crisis.

However, countries such as the United States maintain and even tighten economic, commercial and financial sanctions against nations like Cuba, Venezuela, Syria and Iran, as continuously denounced by those governments.

During his visit to the UN headquarters in New York to attend the general debate, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez stated that Washington says to be concerned about the impact of COVID-19 in the world, while it tightens its blockade on the island.

He recalled on his Twitter account that the Republican administration of Donald Trump (2017-2021) identified the pandemic as an ally of the merciless U.S. siege, which was reinforced with 60 new sanctions during the health crisis.

It's incredible that U.S. President Joe Biden, who continues to have those measures in place, alleges to be worried about the impact of COVID-19 for all the countries, the Cuban minister pointed out when talking about the speech delivered by the White House chief before the UN General Assembly.



Mass Pediatric Vaccination against COVID-19

By Nara**ROMERO**

HAVANA.- Cuba became the first country in the world to immunize its children – between the ages of two and 18 – against COVID-19, after the positive results obtained in the clinical trials of several of its vaccines.

This process started with Soberana Pediatría, in the western province of Havana, where Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus were administered and Ismaelillo, in the central province of Camagüey, where Abdala was used. The Center for the State Control of Medication, Medical Equipment and Devices (CECMED) authorized the mass immunization campaign on September 3, due to the confirmation of over 140,000 positive cases in the pediatric ages since the start of the pandemic – of which over 9,400 are under the age of one and more than 30,000 are adolescents.

One day later, children between the ages of 12 and 18 received the first dose of Soberana 02, developed by the Finlay Institute of Vaccines – a process that is to be conducted until November 5. Children between the ages of two and 11 began to be vaccinated on September 16; this process, directed with the

same immunogen, should be extended until November 15.

In addition to this vaccination scheme – which includes the administration of Soberana Plus, with 91.2 percent efficacy against the symptomatic disease in its phase III study – 12 grade students, third year of the technical-professional education and last year of pedagogical studies receive the Abdala vaccine. Designed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center (CIGB), Abdala was the first vaccine in Cuba and Latin America that received authorization to be used in emergency cases, after proving 92.28 efficacy. Discipline and the mass attendance of children and their parents to the sites used as vaccination centers ratified confidence on Cuban science and the technological platforms of its vaccines, which will protect the youngest of the family against COVID-19. As this process is carried out, without incidents, the Cuban Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries Group (BioCubaFarma) announced that a proposal would be submitted to the Ministry of Public Health to carry out immunization evaluations among children under the age of two.

BioCubaFarma president Eduardo Martínez confirmed that the vaccines created in Cuba allow doing so, due to their safety.

“The high effectiveness rate of the vaccines in the places where they have made the most progress show that the risk for people getting seriously ill or dying is ten times higher among the people who have not been vaccinated, in comparison to those who are,” Martínez said.

The group’s Vice-president, Mayra Mauri, highlighted that the impact the immunogens have, especially in pediatric ages and convalescents of COVID-19, will open up new possibilities for the commercialization of the national vaccines.

Another good news is that the Cuban biopharmaceutical industry announced that the country completed the production of all the national vaccine doses needed to immunize the population against COVID-19 in 2021.

“We have completed the production of all the vaccine doses needed to immunize our population. It was a huge challenge but we did it,” the BioCubaFarma president affirmed.

The official also stressed that the Cuban strategy to create its own vaccines based on the capacities of the country worked, as well as the manufacturing, in a record time and under difficult conditions of the doses needed.



Children between the ages of 12 and 18 received the first dose of Soberana 02 in September. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Cases between ups and downs

By Joel**VARONA**

HAVANA.- The number of positive COVID-19 cases in Cuba in September had its ups and downs, a behavior that keeps local health authorities on alert as they aim to have better results with the vaccination.

The nine month of the year did not register the improvement so much wanted by all the actors involved in the fight against the pandemic, but rather increased concerns due to the high number of people infected –which ranged between 6,000 and 8,000 daily.

According to doctors and scientists, the presence of the SARS-CoV-2 Delta variant has further worsened the epidemiological situation in the country, as it is highly contagious, more virulent, aggressive and deadlier.

Pinar del Río, Sancti Spíritus and Camagüey are the provinces with the most complex transmission rate, followed by Las Tunas. The situation is complex in the rest of the territories but certain control and even a decrease in the incidence rate are being reported.

However, short-term mathematical predictions for the country are unfavorable.

In order to exemplify such panorama, Dr. Francisco Durán, the National Epidemiology Director at the Cuban Public Health Ministry, commented that 180,517 people got infected in 23 days in September. That figure accounted for an average of 7,848 daily cases.

In the meantime, 1,727 patients (75 per day) died in that period due to COVID-19-related complications, announced Durán, who is considered Cuba’s most visible face in the fight against the pandemic.

In this context, scientist Agustín Lage mentioned three elements to reduce mortality: first, to bring the spread under control, then to control the transition to severe illness and finally to provide adequate treatment to patients in serious condition.

In 2020 and 2021, Cuba’s mortality rate was below that of most countries, which is a positive element, stressed Lage. “It is true we’ve been having more serious cases, but it is because we have more patients,” he noted.

The mortality rate has increased, mainly in the past three months. But at the same time, the average age of people in serious or critical conditions at ICUs has been declining, explained the famous scientist.

The spread and transition to severe illness are not the same in all the territories, commented Lage.

There are places with rapid transmission of the disease where the mortality rate is either proportional to that or even below. Whereas, territories with lesser spread have reported more deaths.

The positive effect of the vaccination has become noticeable since September. However, the idea is not just to immunize the population but also to be able to classify patients properly; to have them go to where they must go and that they are treated in accordance to their risk factors, the scientist explained.



The famous Cuban scientist Agustín Lage mentioned three elements to reduce mortality. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Women Dressed up as Men

By Danay **GALLETTI**

HAVANA.- U.S. politician Murray Hall, British Doctor James Barry and French writer George Sand, among many other celebrated professionals and independence activists, depict the story of women wearing men's clothes.

A number of women worked as archaeologists, soldiers, painters, lawyers, professors and botanists under male names and clothes. Cuba was not an exception and was also influenced by that revolution.

"Puerto Rican anarchist leader Luisa Capetillo, a precursor of the feminist movement and a champion of women's rights in public spaces, was expelled from Havana in 1915 after she was arrested at Obispo Street for wearing men's apparels," said essayist Julio César González Pagés.

Pages, Doctor of Historical Sciences, told The Havana Reporter about Cuban independence fighter Martina Pierra de Poo who, according to the New Orleans Post dated August 1852, was fighting alongside her compatriots dressed up as a soldier and riding a beautiful horse.

THE EXPERIENCES OF SWISS ENRIQUETA FAVEZ

Swiss Enriqueta Favez, best known woman in her country, considered the first female to practice medicine in Latin America. Her story inspired Pages to write the book *Por andar vestida de hombre* (For walking around dressed as a man), published by Editorial de la Mujer publishing house in 2012.

By the name of Enrique, she studied surgery in Paris, treated the army of and statesman Napoleon Bonaparte during its



Swiss Enriqueta Favez was the first female to practice medicine in Latin America. PHOTO: Internet.

incursion into Russia. After arriving in Cuba, she married a young girl that, 14 years later, requested an annulment of marriage, according to experts.

Although Favez had confessed to avoid being humiliated, she was forced to undergo a medical examination to determine her sex. She was first sentenced to ten years that were later reduced to four, after she appealed to the Puerto Príncipe Royal Court of the Spanish Crown.

In his book *Médicos y medicina en Cuba- Historia, Biografía, Costumbrismo* (Doctors and Medicine in Cuba-History, Biography, Local Customs), historian Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring transcribed the speech of her defense lawyer: 'society is guiltier than she is, as it has deprived women of their civil and political rights (...).'

According to him, Favez chose Cuba due to the high number of Swiss and French people traveling to the Caribbean to escape

the Napoleonic wars –although her first destination was Guadeloupe. She then got to Santo Tomás Plaza in Santiago de Cuba, looking for a cousin.

Wearing men's clothes, Enriqueta appeared before the jury that judged the aptitude of future doctors and granted them with licenses to practice the profession. She passed the rigorous test and was thus included on the short list of people from countries other than Cuba or Spain to renew her medical degree.

FOR WALKING AROUND DRESSED AS A MAN

In the 1990s, while he was at Havana's National Archive analyzing information for his doctoral thesis about women's voting rights, González Pagés found the judicial file of her cause 'for walking around dressed as a man.' It was then that he began writing the book with the same name.

'It meant creating a story about someone from the 19th century, with a contrasting opinion, which is why it entailed a text ranging from bibliography to archaeology and anthropology. The whole story is real and is based on a document or evidence supported by social sciences,' he pointed out.

However, at the beginning of the 21st century Cuba was not ready for a book about a trial against a lesbian, so certain publishing companies refused to print it.

After it was published thanks to late journalist Isabel Moya, it was one of the most popular books at the 2012 Book Fair.

According to those that criticized her, Enriqueta symbolized the anti-woman model and was tried for that reason, although there was no decree stating that she could be sentenced for her behavior and sexual orientation. The only argument used was 'for walking around dressed as a man.'

Critical Lens of Elena Palacios

By Marlen **SAAVEDRA**

HAVANA.- Producer and scriptwriter Elena Palacios, one of Cuba's most renowned audiovisual artist, has included key topics such as prostitution, psychological violence and racial and genre problems in her works since the very beginning of her career.

Palacios was a member of the Novísimos group, the first generation of Cuban intellectuals born after the triumph of the Revolution who offered fresh proposals while narrating stories and understanding the role of writers in a peculiar way. One of her texts, "Los últimos serán los primeros" (The Last will Be the First), was included in Salvador Redonet's anthology.

That literary influence is a constant feature in Palacios's audiovisual works for the television, versions of old or contemporary short stories in which the presence of prejudices or stereotypes are identified.

For example, in *The Silent Towns* by U.S. writer Ray Bradbury, she transformed the vision of the female character – represented in the original version from the rejection to

obese men and women – to a woman who feels happy with her body and reality.

In her opinion, literature is an endless source of story lines that are functional in narrative terms and of which she chooses those that have 'points in common with my opinion about universal topics and which I call personal activism related to women.'

In that sense, the artist rescues conflicts linked to couple relations and physical and psychological violence seen at present and demythologizes roles, behaviors and traditional attitudes related to what 'the society considers as norm or expects from women in everyday life.'

In an interview to *The Havana Reporter*, the playwright recalled titles such as *Del lado del velo* (On the Other Side of the Veil). It deals with the story of a lady who feels overwhelmed by the idea of whether a 20-year old marriage is effective or not, whose plot was transgressive at the time it was premiered – some years ago.

Demonios en la almohada (Demons in the Pillow), her TV film that is still undergoing the first phases of production, brings to light other social topics such as fidelity,



Elena Palacios, one of Cuba's most renowned audiovisual artist. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

treason, demons, monogamy and settlement of couple conflicts upon the basis of three interrelated stories.

She also plans to make a four-chapter mini-series dedicated to Cuban heroine

Celia Sánchez Manduley, together with a film and research work about the guerrilla fighter's experiences in the Sierra Maestra mountains during the struggle against the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, in the 1950s.

Land of the Waters

By Odalys **OCHOA**

HAVANA.- Almost as old as the Cuban capital and very close to it, Guanabacoa town represents the symbiosis of ethnic groups and cultures, a true mirror of Cuban identity. Located in the heart of the province, it is in a prime position, not too distant from the Bay of Havana, the northern coastline or the eastern beaches of the city, with its natural features alternating between plains and high points, plus a peculiar valley.

Its name comes from an aboriginal local term that in Taino language means 'land of the waters' or a place with 'plenty of water,' due to the underground springs that irrigate its soils and rivers.

The genealogical history of guanabacoenses (the term used to refer to this town's residents) embraces the aboriginal, Spanish and African influence, the main components behind the formation of Cuban identity.

When the occupation and colonization of the archipelago's western region took place, Guanabacoa was the place chosen as a sort of 'reservation' to gather the native population that had survived the extermination.

It thus became known as 'settlement of Indians,' many of whom were freed and converted to Christianity later on.

Enslaved Africans and descendants of freed slaves that were working at ports or sugarcane plantations would join them afterwards.

The historical locality's founding was on June 12, 1554, with the authorization of Havana's Town Council.

Later, on August 14, 1743 and by Royal Decree, King Phillip V designated Guanabacoa a Villa that had its own coat of arms, where the sea, two castles and a mountain stand out as its symbols.

With the passing of time the then semirural

region became the temporary capital and headquarter of the colonial government, after French pirate Jacques de Sores attacked the city in 1555.

The popular saying "to fit Havana into Guanabacoa" alludes to that event precisely, meaning that something big is fitted into a smaller place.

Other events would have the locality stand out in the history of Cuba, like when Havana was taken by British troops in 1762. Its residents created a militia and fought back under the command of the Provincial Mayor of the Holy Association, José Antonio Gómez. It is in his honor that the town is also known as the 'Villa of Pepe Antonio.'

An important element of that battle was the use of machetes as weapons for the first time, which is considered as the first "machete charge" ever recorded in the country's history.

Also of historic interest was the visit that Cuban National José Martí made to Guanabacoa's Artistic and Literary Lyceum in 1879, where he delivered his first speech in Cuba.

The territory is perhaps the place in Havana where the biggest number of African religions are preserved, from Regla de Ocha (Santería) to Abakúa, a male secret society.

Another cultural peculiarity involves the contribution made by great exponents of the Cuban music such as Rita Montaner, Ernesto Lecuona and Ignacio Villa (Bola de Nieve), all born in this town.

Its landscape and historic and ethnographic richness make Guanabacoa an exceptionally unique destination to experience natural and cultural tourism.

The emblematic and very old town of Havana thus survives modern times with four and a half centuries of history, plus the exceptional quality of being a true reflection of Cuban identity.



The historical locality's founding was on June 12, 1554. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Guanabacoa is an exceptionally unique destination to experience natural and cultural tourism.

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Argentina: Two Conflicting Country Models

By Maylín VIDAL

BUENOS AIRES.- After assuming power in a shattered country whose problems worsened as a result of COVID-19, Argentinean President Alberto Fernández currently faces a difficult task due to the mistakes made in the primaries held last September and which he will have to revert in November.

The result of the primary elections has represented a major setback for the country project proposed by the governing Frente

de Todos coalition, which advocates “opportunities for all.” The consequences were paid at the ballot boxes, due to the constant blows of the major economic powers, in addition to the difficult social situation.

Since becoming President on December 2019, the government has had a rough ride and in these first 19 months, it has carried the heavy burden of two pandemics: the huge debt inherited from his predecessor and COVID-19.

Many are worried about Argentina’s path and the possibility that the right,



Ultra-liberal economist Javier Milei enter the campaign with a clearly fascist discourse. PHOTOS: Internet.

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represented by the opposition Juntos por el Cambio coalition, advances in the elections. This party made a good choice and won the primaries in 17 provinces and the capital city – where it has ruled for the last 14 years – allowing it to comfortably get to the general elections, to be held on November 14.

Two years after the historical elections that paved the way for Fernández to reach the presidency and leave behind the Mauricio Macri government, the panorama seems astonishing, as the alliance that lost in 2019 has gotten stronger.

Many attribute these results to protest or punishment vote, social unrest and discontent. The truth is that Frente de Todos has a hard task ahead in order to keep majority in Congress, particularly in the Senate, where they control at present. Convinced that there is no time to lose, President Fernández acknowledged that he listened to the voice of the people and insisted that two different country models are at stake: one that includes all the people and another that leaves millions of persons aside.

In statements to *The Havana Reporter*, sociologist and doctor of Economic Sciences Jorge Elbaum affirmed that the result of the primary elections is clearly a punishment vote to the government’s decision to conduct a stronger project that benefits the vast majority.

Elbaum stressed that the economic crisis has shown that very few governments that go through the pandemic, especially in the region, are rewarded – not only because of the cost of human lives but also because of

the economic cost, which has resulted in unrest and frustration.

On top of this comes the existence, in the region, a basis of support that is exported by a reactionary, racist, extreme right wing that defends individual interests over collective ones.

According to the sociologist, the most representative expression of this is a political monster that emerged in these elections: ultra-liberal economist Javier Milei, who was able to enter the campaign in the capital city, with a clearly fascist discourse.

The Milei phenomenon, he said, is the toxic contamination of “Trumpism” (Donald Trump followers) in Latin America, articulated with a supreme selfishness discourse and the logic of re-vindicating the market as the only way of social regulation.

The sociologist also noted that there is a possibility for the government to improve before November; however, decisions will have to be made to benefit the great majorities and this implies in Argentina, confronting the concentrated groups.

Hope is not lost, but for that to happen, decisions will necessarily have to be made to benefit most of the people, even if oligarchic powers get angry, he stressed.

Journalist and secretary of International Relations at the Argentinean Communist Party, Jorge Kreyness, said that the result of the primary elections are a warning and added that a battle of ideas is to be fought at present and people’s power has to be built, because the dominant power is strong.

Positive Results at the 6th CELAC Summit

By Luis Manuel ARCE

MEXICO.- The results of the 6th Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) achieved its objectives, according to the opinion of all its participants. After nearly four years without holding a meeting of this kind, Mexico had the difficult task of organizing the summit as president pro tempore of that association, with the objective of strengthening and turning the entity into a regional representative in face of other Pan American and world institution. The idea that took Mexico to the meeting held on September 18 was to create mechanisms to act as a community and not individuals, so that the Latin American and the Caribbean can be heard and respected. The Summit accomplished that goal despite the discrepancies resulting from a well-known variety of political views. The meeting approved all the documents on the table, the most important being the 41-point Declaration of Mexico, which summarizes the main demands and goals of CELAC's 33 member countries – Brazil left the organization and Canada and the United States are excluded. The special declarations include a demand made by the regional governments urging



President Andrés Manuel López Obrador. PHOTO: Internet.

the United States to lift the economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba without any conditions.

The 2021-22 action plan was also approved as part of the region's efforts to reactivate the world economy even before the COVID-19 pandemic is over, which has worsened.

The comprehensive development plan presented by Alicia Bárcenas, the secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL), is essential to fight the most profound causes

of migration, focused on Central America and southern Mexico.

In general, the regional leaders looked for mechanisms to promote the much needed economic growth and a relation with intraregional partners, as part of an international cooperation program far beyond their continental borders.

They will try to strengthen the activities in the framework of the CELAC-China Forum, the European Union meeting and other areas of interest previously defined with the region. A closer approach to the

African Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and a permanent dialogue of cooperation with India were also the center of attention.

Another topic with good results was the environment and climate change. The idea is to foster a point of view with an effect on those two issues, and carry out sustainable management of marine resources, because this region is known to be affected by devastating natural disasters.

Another topic was connected with innovation, with the commitment to foster scientific and technological development in the region, as well as all its actions.

But, according to observers, the most important is that all the presidents, even those that are recognized as conservative and very close to the U.S. government, publicly admitted the need to strengthen CELAC and turn it into a forum of coordination, cooperation and platform to face the challenges the region is exposed to, including the political ones where the incompetence of the OAS is anthological. Finally, the messages sent by Chinese President Xi Jinping and UN Secretary General Antonio Manuel Guterres were very important, and regarded by the participants as an incentive to move forward.

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Cuba Stands Firm

By EverRODRÍGUEZ

HAVANA.-Cuba reaffirmed its determination to resist the U.S. blockade and discredit campaigns at the 76th period of sessions of the UN General Assembly, held in September.

Cuba "does not kneel to anyone," said Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel during his online speech at the UN general debate and condemned the use of coercive economic measures against independent states.

The current Democratic administration of President Joe Biden maintains the 243 coercive measures adopted by the Donald Trump government intact, including Cuba's inclusion on the spurious and immoral list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism, he pointed out.

The Cuban president also denounced that as part of that policy, his country is victim of nonconventional war that involves millions of dollars in funds of the U.S. Treasury Department to finance manipulation

campaigns and lies through the use of new information technologies and other digital platforms.

Cuba is not afraid of lies nor does it kneel before pressures, conditioning or impositions, regardless of where they come from, Díaz-Canel stressed at the world forum, where he called to unite efforts against the pandemic.

He also mentioned the Cuban medical cooperation in 40 countries in the context of COVID-19, which involved 4,900 health professionals organized in 57 medical brigades, as well as the Cuban scientific community's efforts to develop vaccines. Moreover, the president called to reverse the inequality in the process of global immunization against COVID-19 which excludes hundreds of millions of people in poor countries that "are still waiting to get their first shot and do not even know if they will ever receive it," he said.

During the meeting, the Cuban head of State also reiterated his country's commitment on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable



Cuba is not afraid of lies nor does it kneel before pressures, said Díaz-Canel. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Development, the Paris Agreement and the Samoa Development Plan.

In the virtual meeting with Heads of State and/or Government of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), he reiterated the commitment to cooperate in different fields, particularly health, and to share experiences in disaster risk reduction and the fight against climate change. Miguel Díaz-Canel urged rich countries to assume their responsibilities in supporting the efforts to attain sustainable development in the world and preserve the planet from threats caused by their actions.

In this regard, he highlighted that, in addition to having the resources, those nations have the moral duty to meet their commitments to officially contribute to development, create capacities, transfer technologies, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and finance climate actions.

The Cuban president also spoke at the top-level UN meeting that celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action against racism, where he ratified his government's will to achieve full social justice and fight all forms of discrimination.

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ESTI CUBA

A French City in the Caribbean

By Elizabeth **BORREGO**

HAVANA.- Surrounded by the waters of the Caribbean sea and upholding the ultimate heir to the French architecture, the city of Cienfuegos, located in southern Cuba, stands out as one of the country's most exceptional destinations.

Its historical center, considered a representative exponent of the Enlightenment in Latin America and declared a World Heritage Site in 2005, is also an example of modernity and urban planning in the XIX century.

The elegant domes, facades and ornaments seen on the oldest edifications confirm the

heritage of the only Spanish-speaking city in the Americas founded by the French under Spanish control.

Over 40 settlers led by Don Luis De Clouet, coming mostly from Bordeaux, established the city in the center of Cuba on April 22, 1819 under the name Fernandina de Jagua. In spite of the passing of the years and the city's development, its traditional environment and the value of its constructions maintain their worth; they've joined a group of buildings that together identify Cienfuegos, known as the Perla del Sur (the Southern Pearl).

Cienfuegos also preserves French on some its streets and the architecture of

art nouveau, art deco and neoclassic edifications.

The presence of this European culture in Cienfuegos is also seen in the Martí Park, with its Triumphal Arch; the La Union Hotel, with its neoclassic showcase; the tombs of its founders and heirs, at the Reina and Tomas Acea cemeteries, and their descendants, with their French surnames.

French customs present on housewares, knitting techniques, dinner sets, food habits and other elements that identify the city - such as the local shield and flag - prove Cienfuegos to be a French city in the Caribbean.



PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Safe Education in Times of Pandemic

By Isaura **DIEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba makes progress in the world's first pediatric vaccination campaign against COVID-19, while students gradually return to on-site classes, two elements that go hand in hand in order to protect the health of students and teachers. Cuban Minister of Education (MINED) Ena Elsa Velázquez recently affirmed that the 2020-2021 school year will maintain its televised teaching activities until students under the age of 18 complete their immunization schedule. With that purpose in mind, the country divided the students into three groups that will gradually receive the national vaccine doses of Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus – until its conclusion on November 15.



Cuban Minister of Education (MINED) Ena Elsa Velázquez. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The Head of the National Primary Healthcare Department María Elena Soto explained that all the teaching-related staff will also be immunized.

National health authorities informed that during the month of September, all Cuban children between the ages of two and 18 were administered the first dose and by November, they should have completed the whole vaccination schedule (three doses). This schedule turns Cuba into the first country in the world to start a vaccination campaign against COVID-19 in its pediatric population (two to 11 years), the BioCubaFarma group informed.

A BROADER OBJECTIVE

As informed, this campaign is not only about children, by September, the adult population that can be vaccinated against COVID-19 will have received at least one dose and



Schools receive repairs. PHOTO: Trabajadores

by November, 92.6 percent of the population (about 11 million people) will have completed the three-dose cycle. This plan also has an influence on the gradual design drafted by the Ministry of Higher Education (MES) for students to return to the classrooms.

According to MES Minister, José Ramón Saborido, universities started the teaching process on September 6 through the distance learning modality.

However, MES specialists foresee to start on-site classes by November and thus finish the current academic year by March. They added that the next academic year could start on April 2022 and be extended until December the same year.

The Cuban educational system advocates a high degree of on-site learning "because we do not only try to educate but also to have an influence in order to train a better professional," said the minister.

Saborido stressed the need of combining on-site classes with semi-presence classes and/or distance learning, without affecting the quality of the contents or putting the health of students and teachers at risk.

In summary, Cuba bets for a hybrid education in which on-site classes will depend on the culmination of the vaccination schedule against COVID-19 of all students and teachers.

However, experts stressed that the above does not mean giving up the hygienic-sanitary measures; thus, students should wear masks correctly, wash hands and keep physical distancing.

Cuba to begin transition to digital terrestrial TV in December

By **The Havana Reporter**

HAVANA.- Cuba plans to begin the first stage of partial transition to digital terrestrial television in the western region of the country between November 30 and December 15.

According to statements made by the deputy Communications Minister (Mincom), Ana Julia Marine, the process is part of the program designed in this Caribbean nation to install digital terrestrial television and abandon the obsolete analog transmission, whose duration was agreed in ten years (2013-2023).

'Due to the tense economic situation, the dates have been rescheduled and we will do it by geographic zones, not by territories, extending the program until 2024,' explained Marine.

The current schedule intend to complete the transition in the west in 2021 and by the end of 2022 it would be executed in the central part of the country; while in 2023 it will occur in the eastern region.



The program designed is to install digital terrestrial television and abandon the obsolete analog transmission. PHOTO: Internet.

'Finally, a reception study would be carried out to know the real situation of receiving equipment available to the population and the so-called analogical blackout would be proposed to government authorities,' said the vice-minister.

In order to turn off the educational channels in the western part of the country, she clarified, it has been intended to commercialize Set Top Boxes in these provinces, whose sales should be around 300 000 between February and November of this year.

She explained that in the case of those people without a digital television receiver, they will be able to watch the classes in the analogical channels (Cubavision, Telerebelde and Multivision), which will retransmit the contents of the Educational and Educational 2 channels.

Experts in the Caribbean nation have indicated that in the case of Cuba it is necessary to switch to digital television because it will free the 700 megahertz (MHz) band for the deployment of fourth generation 4G mobile technologies.

Reorganizing the Private Sector

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba undertakes important transformations in order to attain a dynamic and sustainable development despite the strengthening of the U.S. blockade, the numerous domestic challenges, the slowing of the world economy and the complex international context.

Notwithstanding this difficult scenario, the island fights for equity in the distribution of wealth, with the endorsement of legislations addressed at supporting alternatives to be adopted by the different economic actors of the society.

In this sense, the Council of State recently approved six decree-laws, one decree and other resolutions to regulate the exercise of the self-employed (private) sector, which according to the Ministry of Economics and Planning (MEP) has a business potential of over 600,000 workers, per the number of licenses granted.

In addition to these legislations, there are other new options that allow the restructuring of jobs into micro, small and medium-size companies (MIPYMES) and non-agricultural cooperatives.

In sight of the foreseen interests in adopting these new forms of non-state management

and in order to make progress in these processes in due time, MEP designed an interesting strategy in regard to the authorization process, through summons addressed at the country's top priority activities.

Export of goods and services, food production, local development projects, technology-related businesses, scientific-technological park businesses and circular recycling economy, are the first categories to be conducted as part of this process.

These activities were selected because the export of goods and services generates fresh foreign money which is then reinvested in the country. Since their approval in 2020 until present, over 170 forms of non-state management materialized buying and selling actions at the international level through 42 foreign trade institutions authorized to perform this activity, specialists said.

In relation to food, the first phase is mainly addressed at manufacturing production, which means the transformation of raw materials and consumables into food, for their distribution and consumption.

Gastronomic services, thus, are conceived for subsequent phases, stressed the official entity.

That category is a priority for the country due to the deficit of food supply and



The Council of State approved decree-laws and other resolutions to regulate the exercise of the self-employed sector. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

because of Cuba's foreign dependence on the import of food, which is substantial. In this regard, over 1.8 billion dollars have been spent in recent years.

Other key areas include local development projects, of which over 400 are already in place. These projects are related to the set of resources, efforts and actions with their own identity addressed at transforming a reality, with an impact on the population's quality of life.

In relation to the scientific-technological parks, MEP has indicated that these

include those organizations that are managed by specialized professionals with the goal of developing projects from science and innovation. These projects count on a regulatory framework, with favorable benefits and incentives for their development.

Finally, the circular economy uses a sustainable model of production and consumption that involves sharing, reusing, restoring, renovating and recycling materials and products as much as possible, to create added value.

U.S. blockade, a challenging hostility

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- The serious problems Cuba's Cubana de Aviación Airlines deals with due to U.S. punitive measures against the country aggravated after it was announced that, beginning in August 2021, the Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) compensation mechanism in Spain would be suspended for that Cuban entity. Like many other Cuban economic sectors, Cubana de Aviación is affected by the 243 measures imposed by the Trump government (2017-2021) to tighten the economic, commercial and financial blockade that, for almost 60 years now, has tried to prevent Cuba from moving forward.

On August 13, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) issued a release saying the Cuban airline had been excluded from the BSP payment compensation mechanism headquartered in Spain due to the U.S. blockade and its extraterritorial character. Cubana de Aviación Sales Manager Soremi Beltran told The Havana Reporter that the announcement was just another move to try to asphyxiate Cuban entities.

A similar measure was implemented two years ago with the Bank Settlement Plan (BSP) in Mexico, France and Italy but the commercial strategy was redefined to use other ways and allow operations to continue, she recalled.

The BSP is a system created by IATA to facilitate and simplify the selling, reporting and remitting procedures between travel agencies and airlines, in order to have better financial control over sales.

"Competing in a globalized world where the rest of the aeronautics industries are not blocked puts us at a disadvantage, and prevents us from getting new technologies," Beltran pointed out.



Because of the measures adopted by the Trump administration, Cuba could not rent planes and many negotiations came to nothing, even those that were going through the final phase, she stressed.

Also as part of the restrictions resulting from the blockade, it is impossible for Cuba to transport cargo to and from the United States, an operation that is done through third countries only, making it more expensive.

"We've also been victims of contract termination with airlines that had been operating in Cuba for more than ten or 15 years, which has translated into serious economic consequences. Something similar happened with plane rental, which is allowed for national operations only, as international operations are considered exports of services," stated Beltran.

Aircraft rental is costly as it is charged per flight hour; hence, that choice is not profitable for domestic flights, because they are charged in Cuban pesos and subsidized by the State for the benefit of the population, something that was compensated by international flights, the expert explained.

Also as part of the damage caused by the blockade, the Cuban airline cannot get fuel from providers that have business with U.S. entities nor buy aircraft parts with ten percent of their components made in the United States.

The list of negative consequences goes on: Cubana de Aviación cannot receive bank loans for maintenance services abroad nor make direct bank operations, which further complicates transactions.

Facing energy problems

By Ernesto **VERA**

HAVANA.- Cuba works to guarantee the supply of electricity to the population and the economy amidst a complex situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the strengthening of the U.S. blockade.

The electricity service was affected in recent months due to breakdowns in power plants, with an average of over 35 years of operation.

The impossibility of conducting scheduled maintenance on power plants due to limitations in access to credits, financing, spare parts and technologies – as a result of the U.S. siege – caused such situation.

In order to conduct such tasks, Cuba must buy pipes, electrodes and other related elements – such as water pumps, ventilators, burners – in the international market, in addition to the raw materials needed to manufacture other components. On top of this scenario, COVID-19 was added, as the nation has had to use considerable resources for the acquisition of medications, medical supplies and food. All these factors caused a deficit in energy reserve which led to the unpleasant blackouts, at a time when the demand was higher due to the hot Caribbean summer, among other reasons.

The inevitable but planned power cuts were used by those who encourage destabilization in Cuba as a pretext in an attempt to cause social unrest and generate actions such as the disturbances that took place on July 11 in several cities of the nation. On this particular topic, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel recently affirmed that this attitude is an opportunistic reaction that obviates the harsh persecution of the U.S. administrations to oil supply to Cuba.

In spite of shortages of resources, Cuba allocates funds for projects linked to the improvement of the basic generation and the distributed generation sites.

The country tirelessly works to avoid negative impacts to the population and addresses contingency measures to industries and some productive sectors, stressed Energy and Mines Minister Liván Arronte.

In the light of the epidemiological situation, Cuba also gives priority to the constant supply of energy to those circuits related to the fight against COVID-19, such as hospitals, isolation centers and plants that manufacture vaccines, medical supplies and oxygen, among others.

On the other hand, renewable energies, whose development is still incipient, are Cuba's first oil reserve. This type of energy represents about two percent of the country's generation and has been hit by strong economic restrictions, the expert added.

However, the nation does not give up developing solar-photovoltaic energy; wind energy (with the presence of several parks), and biomass – mostly through the sugarcane industry. Thermal generation should likewise be increased.

In addition, the island fosters projects for the increase of the generation capacities through the construction of four new blocks – three in Este Habana and one in Mariel – that will use national crude oil, all of them with Russian financing.



The electricity service was affected in recent months due to breakdowns in power plants. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

Studies Focused on Economic Priorities

By Roberto **SALOMÓN**

HAVANA.- Health, food and renewable energy are among the key sectors on which the Cuban Institute of Sugarcane Byproduct Research (ICIDCA) is focusing its projects.

Founded in 1963 by Commander Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the institution also centers its attention on exports and developing information technology systems, according to the center's Director Mariela Gallardo.

In an interview with The Havana Reporter –the first one for the press after she recently assumed her position- Gallardo affirmed that the research programs are aimed at giving solutions to the most pressing issues connected with those and other economic and social priorities in the country.

OTHER IMPORTANT PROJECTS

Among other significant research programs Gallardo highlighted the development of new bio-products or more effective combinations using sugarcane byproducts.

Likewise, other programs are aimed at improving the technologies used to produce sugarcane wax and further increasing the use of its byproducts. Combining technologies to save more energy during the production of sugarcane and its byproducts is also a key goal for ICIDCA.

"We also work on studies intended to increase the technological and functional integration of sugarcane mills with the production of byproducts," she commented.

Obtaining new products and technologies is indispensable to increase the value added of goods, the ICIDCA director stressed. Moreover, it is important to guarantee the quality standards in the production of sugarcane and in other objectives, like when obtaining new products from alcohol byproducts production, Gallardo noted.

The official referred to the importance of increasing the variety of byproducts for animal feed and of improving technologies to increase sugarcane production and develop raw materials or new products for the medical-pharmaceutical industry.

Gallardo praised the efforts done by the scientific staff, which is committed to rescuing and updating results from the technical and economic points of views, such as the second and third generation byproducts obtained earlier and still not introduced into the national economy.

Before making her last remarks, the director recalled that ICIDCA has been involved in the activities of Cuba's Scientific complex since its very founding, and participates in different research projects making use of the biotechnological capacity of pilot plants and providing technological support for new engineering and information technology processes.



Director of the Cuban Institute of Sugarcane Byproduct Research (ICIDCA) Mariela Gallardo. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Omara Durand, Cuba's Paralympic Arrow

By Adrián **MENGANA**

HAVANA.- Cuban Omara Durand, the Caribbean bolt, endorsed her absolute reign in the speed of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games after winning, once again, the 100, 200 and 400 m races, thus closing Cuba's performance in style. Durand retained the three titles won in Río de Janeiro 2016, increasing the number of medals obtained in those competitions to eight – including the two she won in London 2012. With this result, she became Cuba's overall winner in this type of event.

The Cuban athlete also established a new world record in 200 m (23.02 seconds), thus improving her previous record (23.04) and opening up new possibilities of running less than 23 seconds.

A world record holder in the 100 and 400 meters and a member of the Cuban parliament, Durand has also emerged victorious in Pan-American Games, in which she has won 11 gold medals in total – three in her debut in Río de Janeiro 2007, two in Guadalajara 2011, three in Toronto 2015 and three in Lima 2019.

Durand was born on November 26, 1991, in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba. She started practicing sport at a boarding school for blind and visually impaired children, located in her hometown, after being selected by a PE teacher for her sprint potential.

She first participated at an international event in 2007, at the Brazilian World Championship for Blind and

Visually Impaired Athletes, in which she won the 100 and 200 m races.

Even though she was only 16 years old, she started as one of the favorites at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games; however, because of an injury and due to the lack of experience, she had to return home without a medal.

She became a legend after participating in several high

performance competitions and obtaining two titles in the London 2012 Paralympic Games (100 and 400 m) – even though at the time she did not know she was pregnant.

The Cuban athlete got away from active sport for a while to take care of her daughter, but continued training to recover her fitness with the help of her coach, Miriam Ferrer.

After the birth of her first baby, Durand's vision worsened and she started running with her guide, Yuniol Kindelán, with whom she won three gold medals in Río 2016 and set two world records.

To improve her legend, five years later (in Tokyo) she won another three titles, thus shining again thanks to her strong will, total dedication and modesty.

The Cuban gazelle has no intention to put an end to her sporting career, because she still has the strength and energy to continue participating in high performance competitions – although titles and medals are not the most important thing to her, she says.

"We will get to the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games well trained, give it all for Cuba," the sprinter told The Havana Reporter after concluding her performance in the Japanese capital, where Cuba won four gold medals, one silver and one bronze, ending 35th in the medal standings.

Long jumper Robiel Yankiel Sol won the fourth gold medal in the T46 category (affected upper limb), while Leinier Savón won the silver in the same event but in the T12 category and discus thrower Leonardo Díaz (F56-wheelchair) won the bronze.



Omara Durán won three titles in Tokio. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Golden Fists

By Yodeni **MASÓ**

HAVANA.- Cuba will take its best boxers to Belgrade with the objective of increasing its all-time medal stand in World Amateur Boxing Championships, backed by 77 gold medals.

The so-called "flagship" will arrive to Serbia as clear favorites in a competition that will see the premiere of 13 categories of (48, 51, 54, 57, 60, 63.5, 67, 71, 75, 80, 86, 92 and over 92 kg) will make its debut for the first time since the start of the world championships, in Havana 1974.

In this boxing event, to be held from October 26 to November 6, Cuba will be represented by Olympic gold medal winners in Tokyo 2020 Andy Cruz (63 kg), Roniel Iglesias (69 kg), Arlen López (81 kg) and Julio César la Cruz (91 kg) – the three latter, two-time Olympic champions.

The Cuban squad won five gold medals in Tokyo – with only seven boxers – under the guidance of head coach Rolando Acebal, thus reaching the top of the Olympic

Games 17 years after their success in Athens 2004 (5-2-1).

The Cuban boxers have remained undefeated in the finals since London 2012 and have reached 41 Olympic titles thanks to the 20 victories and only three defeats in Tokyo.

On the Kokugikan arena, the Cuban boxers struck a harsh blow on the Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan boxers, who had headed world and Olympic events the last 10 years.

About 30 Cuban boxers undergo intensive training at the Olvein Quesada National Boxing School, in Havana, seeking a spot on the 13-man team and attempt to add more medals to the total of 130 already reached after participating in 20 championships.

Since the first edition of the world championships, in 1974, Cuba has only been absent in Chicago 2007 and has been placed first in the medal stand on 12 occasions – the best results being the eight gold medals in Tampere 1993 and the seven in Belfast 2001.

Individually, three-time Olympic champion Félix Savón is the boxer

who has reached the highest number of gold medals in world championships (6) and has been absolute winner of the 91 kg division from 1986 to 2000.

The list of Cuban boxers who have won several medals in world events includes Julio César La Cruz (four gold and one bronze) and Lázaro Álvarez (three gold and two silver).

The Cuban squad that will participate in the Serbia championship will try to improve the

image projected in Yekaterinburg, two years ago, when they only won three medals and lost the top of the medal standing in their preparation to Tokyo.

Statistics of world boxing events show that 18 categories have been included throughout its history, since their first edition in Havana 1974 – when the Cuban team won five gold medals, one silver and two bronze.



The Cuban boxers have remained undefeated in the finals since London 2012. PHOTO: Internet.

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