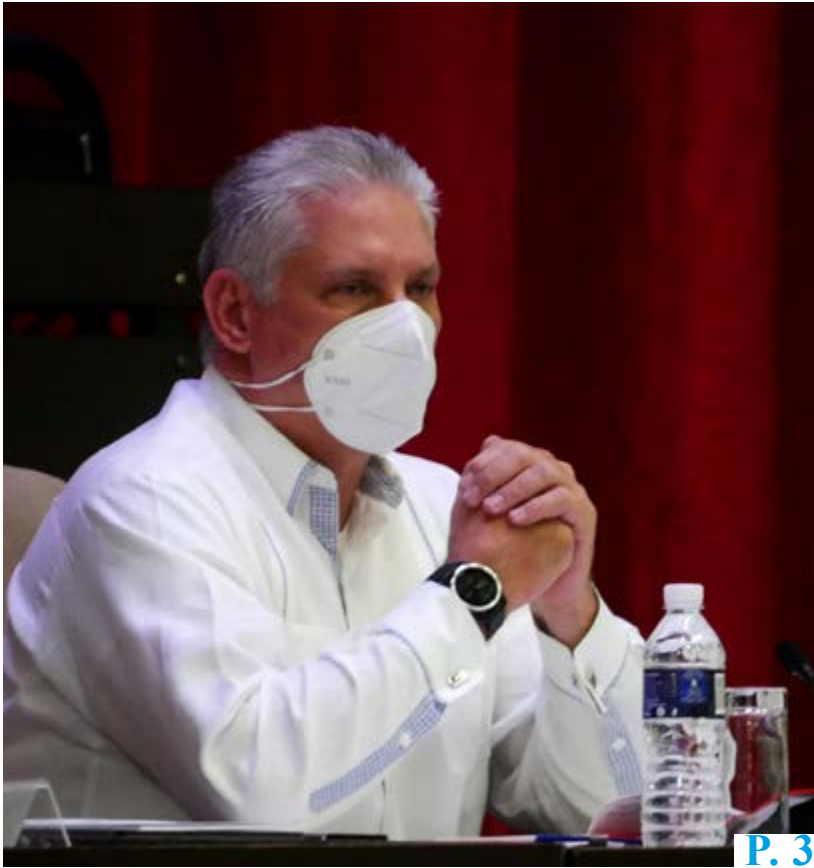




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Tourist Reopening at a Steady Pace

By Roberto F. CAMPOS

HAVANA.-Cuban commercial and hotel sectors slowly renew their offers and begin their operation in view of the tourist reopening next November 15.

The two basic principles to allow this beginning are based on the extension of vaccination against COVID-19 among Cubans and the strict health measures in place, with reinforcements in some destinations.

To sum up what is already happening in the tourist sector, several foreign hotel chains have started their operations and get their facilities ready before the abovementioned date.

An example of that is the Canadian Blue Diamond Resorts group, the one that has experienced the fastest growth in the Caribbean. This hotel chain announced that it will be ready for the reopening of its facilities in Cuba during the next winter season.

On the biosafety protocols, Blue announced that its Safety-Assured Vacations program protects both guests and the company's staff, thanks to several pillars.

Those pillars include physical distancing, higher staff

training, cleaning all common areas and rooms, and complete the disinfection of each point of contact.

Created in 2011, the Blue Diamond Resorts group's portfolio includes 45 properties with over 15,500 rooms in 10 countries. It offers a novel hotel management specialized in high-quality vacations in tropical areas facing the sea, in the Caribbean and Mexico.

In the case of Cuba, the group manages 21 facilities and 8,600 rooms. It is present in the country's main tourist resorts, such as Havana, Varadero, Cayo Santa María, Cayo Coco and Holguín. The group's facilities will start operating in these destinations.

On the other hand, the Cuban Cubatur Agency, an entity that has over 60 years of experience in national and international tourism, bets for a hygienic and safe service. Cubatur director for the Western region, Carlos Rivera, said that the agency has divisions specialized in the commercialization of services abroad, which are responsible for reservations through tour operators.

According to Rivera, their sales comprise all the tourist destinations in Cuba, including the keys and hotel and extra-hotel products of all the chains present in the country. The Cuban Gran Caribe hotel chain also announced the restart of its activities. In a message published in the social



The Hotel Nacional is a symbol of the Cuba's tourism industry. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

media, the group announced the gradual reopening of its facilities depending on travelers' demand.

Gran Caribe (grancaribehotels.com) also informed that the facilities that would first start operating include Atlántico; the Los Pinos, Trópico, Loma and Kawama villages; Tortuga Sunbeach; Rancho Santa Clara; Cruces Placetas (Cienfuegos province) and Nueva Gerona (Isle of Youth).

The Hotel Nacional de Cuba (Cuban National Hotel), founded on December 30, 1930, will reopen its doors on that specific day – on the occasion of its 90th anniversary. The Hotel Nacional is not only a symbol of the country's hotel sector but also of Cuba's tourism industry.

The Canadian Air Transat airline also reinitiated its commercial flights to Cuba last October, when the first flight of the season arrived at the Frank País International Airport, in the province of Holguín.

Iberostar Strengthens its Presence

By Raquel DÍAZ



Iberostar Parque Central in Havana.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.-The Spanish Iberostar hotel chain, present in Cuba for the last 25 years, has grown stronger through a logistics company at the Mariel Special Development Zone (ZEDM) and the recently inaugurated World2fly airline flights.

The entity's marketing director, Alexis Torres, told *The Havana Reporter* that in order to give the tourist industry an added value, the group opened two years ago at ZEDM the Logística Hotelera del Caribe (Caribbean Hotel Logistics) company, responsible for providing services to the chain in particular and to other hotels.

The official affirmed that the said company will provide Iberostar with a variety of food and drinks, supplies and other raw materials the tourist chain needs in order to be more competitive in the Caribbean region.

Although it is a different company with a different corporate purpose, it represents an addition that complements the value chain, Torres noted.

In order to complete the equation, at the end of September, Iberostar inaugurated the flights of the young World2fly airline to Cuba, with two weekly frequencies – Wednesdays and Thursdays – which will add more value to the Spanish hotel chain. Torres recalled that the COVID-19 pandemic made the world come to a halt; thus, reactivation will be gradual and air connection will be one of the factors that will facilitate tourist recovery. "We can have clients eager to travel to Cuba from Latin America, Europe or Canada, but without planes, that will not be possible," he stressed.

The tourist company announced the progressive reopening of its facilities as of November 1st and the opening of a new hotel – the Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Esmeralda – in Cayo Cruz, in the north of the island.

An accommodation free of single-use plastic in its rooms and with the commitment to completely eliminate them in all areas this

year, thus betting for quality tourism in Cuba, he added.

The Varadero beach resort, the Santamaría and Guillermo keys, Trinidad and Holguín were the places selected to begin the company's operations.

As announced, the Iberostar Grand Packard Hotel, the main exponent of the luxury segment in Cuba, will reopen on November 1st, and then others will follow, including Iberostar Selection Bella Vista Varadero, Iberostar Selection Ensenachos, Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Ensenachos and Iberostar Daiquiri – on time for this year's Black Friday.

According to the official, on December 1st, Iberostar Bella Costa (Varadero), Iberostar Selection Holguín and Coral Level at Iberostar Selection Holguín will reopen their doors, while Iberostar Playa Alameda and Iberostar Heritage Grand Trinidad will do it on December 22nd.

On the topic of health protection, Torres explained that the 'How We Care' program will be implemented in all the hotels of the group, including over 300 hygienic measures that offer a safe environment, clean standards, social space and a novel experience.

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On the Way to the Greater Justice

By Claudia **CORRALES**

HAVANA.- Cuba is currently on the way to achieving the greatest possible social justice, and for this it bets on reactivating civil participation mechanisms, economic growth and increasing the quality of life.

The statement was made by the First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party's (PCC) Central Committee, Miguel Díaz-Canel, at the closing session of the second plenary of that political organization on October 24, with the presence of Army General Raúl Castro.

Miguel Díaz-Canel, who is also the President of the Republic of Cuba, ratified that the Caribbean country is a socialist democracy, an independent State focused on the fulfillment of equality, solidarity, wellbeing and individual and collective prosperity.

The Cuban leader insisted that the PCC is the superior leading force of society, as well as people's participation, strong motivation and the use of scientific results in all the spheres play a determining role in accomplishing that goal.

Díaz-Canel called for systematic meetings with social sectors and to defend the concept of people's power, which he considered to be a way for the sustainability of socialism.

Moreover, he noted that promoting spaces for the people to hold debates, make proposals and analyze the problems is a pressing matter, and that those issues need

to be addressed with sensitivity and with a critical analysis of the reality.

The Cuban president also mentioned guidelines such as maintaining constant exchange with youth and strengthening the social work in the communities, with emphasis on vulnerable people, adding that more should be done in favor of inclusion.

Díaz-Canel condemned the U.S. government for trying to destroy the Revolution through economic strangulation, political-communication operations, discredit campaigns and fake news, as part of the unconventional warfare tactics.

He recalled the difficult context in Cuba caused by the U.S. blockade and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, "we have tools to cope with that situation and capacity to find solutions," the head of State sustained. "We will win this battle, because we have intelligence, innovation, empowerment, patriotism and revolutionary spirit in our people," he said.

The participants attending the second Plenary Meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee held at Havana's Convention Center analyzed the implementation of the agreements adopted by the 8th PCC Congress held last April.

The members approved the changes to the Party Statutes, the program for the transformation of ideological work, the system for the political consolidation of economic actors and a proposal to strengthen the people's power in Cuba.

People's Power, 45 Years of Constant Creation

By Lissy **RODRÍGUEZ**



The Constitution bet for the transformation of its structures and granted the municipal bodies the legal status needed to foster popular consultation. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- Establishing a new institution and generating a culture of citizen participation were the basis for the creation, in the 1970s, of the People's Power organization, the cornerstone of democracy in Cuba.

The beginning of a profound economic, political and social transformation resulting from the triumph of the Cuban Revolution and the overthrow of the Fulgencio Batista (1952-1959) dictatorship had started 15 years before, but the need in creating the representative institutions of the people's power in Cuba prevailed.

The protagonists of those years recall the initial experiment conducted at the western province of Matanzas; the legitimization in the Magna Carta approved in 1976; the first elections of municipal delegates; the sessions of the National Assembly of the People's Power (ANPP, Cuban Parliament) in the month of December and the election of the first Council of State – in the same year. Forty-five years after its foundation, among the most significant elements is the constant development of these bodies as a result of the adoption of laws and regulations that transform the social reality, or the reforms made to the Constitution.

Just to mention one example, the Constitution in force – approved by 86.85 percent of voters in 2019 – bet for the transformation of its structures and granted the municipal bodies the legal status needed to foster popular consultation processes, decision-making, the identification of problems and solution settlement.

A distinctive feature of the People's Power organizations in Cuba is that 50 percent of the delegates chosen in neighborhoods and communities are part of the National Assembly of the People's Power, ANPP; so that all the municipalities are represented, at least, by one person. In addition, the Cuban parliament is the second in the world with highest representation of women (53.2 percent).

At present, the work these bodies conduct is addressed at improving methods and styles and strengthening the spaces

in which delegates account for their management to those who elected them. Secretary General of the Cuban parliament, Homero Acosta, recently explained that eliminating formalities in the People's Power organizations and working for a higher decentralization of decisions are a crucial demand.

An example of how much can be achieved in this endeavor can be seen in the last few days in Cuba, with the transformations that began two months ago in vulnerable communities, with the participation of grassroots delegates, population, ministries and student and mass organizations.

The Havana Reporter talked to the youngest delegate of the municipality of Cerro (Havana), Roberto Soto, who at his 20 undertook the task assigned by his neighbors. Since then, and because of his management, a telephone plant that benefits all neighbors was installed, the street lighting was improved and a new bus stop was created, among other actions.

"I especially feel proud of the achievements attained in the work with children, the promotion of history and the overall community work, which includes the participation of the people and the imprint of neighbors," said Soto, who referred to problems that are still pending a solution, such as street asphalt and the opening of new services.

"We have to be more pro-active. We do not have to wait to be told how to solve the most basic problems; we must take the initiative to find solutions. The delegate cannot be the protagonist of social discontent when it's in his hands the management to avoid it," he affirmed. All these challenges go hand in hand with the request Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel made recently during a tour of the La Corbata neighborhood, in the Playa municipality (Havana), when he urged to break with everything that can lead to the immobility of these bodies that, by definition and design, were created to revolutionize.



Cuba is a socialist democracy, an independent State focused on the fulfillment of equality, solidarity, wellbeing and individual and collective prosperity. PHOTO: Estudio Revolución.

The Florida Factor in U.S. Policy towards Cuba

By Adriana **ROBREÑO**

HAVANA.- The U.S. electoral machinery prevents politicians from the southern state of Florida from enjoying the benefits they can obtain if relations with Cuba were normalized, said director of the International Policy Research Center José Ramón Cabañas.



Director of the International Policy Research Center José Ramón Cabañas. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

In an exclusive interview to The Havana Reporter, Cabañas – former ambassador to Cuba in Washington DC 2012 to 2020 – commented that the topic of Cuba was included in the U.S. electoral agenda during the presidential campaign for the election of Ronald Reagan (1981-1989).

During that period, the Cuban-American National Foundation was created, a structure that no longer plays such an important role, but helped create Republican leaders of Cuban origin in south Florida, the analyst recalled.

Since then, campaigns against the island and anti-Cuban lobbies at the U.S. Congress continue to be financed, which has an influence on the White House policy towards Cuba – a situation that has become worsened at present due to the extreme polarization of the U.S. society after the Donald Trump administration (2017-2021).

That is a machinery that the Democrats have not changed, said Cabañas, who also added that about 80 to 90 percent of the federal budget addressed to programs against Cuba is invested in Florida, and that money goes back to candidates endorsed by Cuban-Americans.

The Democratic Party has not created an alternative system and the way it has chosen to compete with its opponents in a swing state without a constant political tendency, "is to try to be more Republican than the Republicans themselves," hence the reason why they avoid a different path, the diplomat added.

According to the expert, this way of projecting oneself prevents us from seeing the benefits of a normal bilateral relationship. To Cuba, it would be an economic relief not to have the blockade and sanctions, of course, but also to Florida itself, which is so close to the Cuban archipelago, he stressed.

A study conducted over 20 years ago by the Arthur Andersen company, in charge of the Florida Trade Data Center (based in Miami), clearly shows the opportunities the abovementioned topic represents to U.S. ports and telecommunications, transportation, construction and electric companies, in addition to others.

Florida was the territory that made more profits during the easing of tensions, by the end of the Barack Obama administration, as cruise ships and airlines alone paid millions of

dollars in taxes for their trips and businesses with Cuba, the ambassador noted.

Other advantages would be related to the environmental sector, agriculture and the social, cultural and religious fields. However, the whole state is affected because a minority tries to distance itself from Cuba, from its socialist project, and prevents normal ties in order not to lose political power.

If normal relations existed, neither Radio nor TV Martí would be in place, nor programs aimed at a change of regime, under which, the pockets of a small group of people who actually damage the interests of the majority are benefited.

Legislators from other places handle several topics of interest in their local agendas, while at the U.S. Congress, politicians from the southern state of Florida – senators and representatives alike – maintain their vitality with a single topic: Cuba.

While that situation remains in place, the Florida factor will have a strong influence on government decisions and the benefits of such ties will thus be far from favoring both countries, Cabañas told **The Havana Reporter**.

U.S. Insists on Economic Asphyxiation in Spite of World Condemnation

By Ernesto **VERA**

HAVANA.-Although the US economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba has almost received unanimous condemnation worldwide, the United States insists on maintaining a policy aimed at causing economic suffocation and forcing a change of regime.

Ten months after the arrival of Democrat Joe Biden at the White House, the measure – which Donald Trump intensified with over 240 new regulations – has grown stronger as a result of sanctions to Cuban institutions and officials and the extension of the Trading with the Enemy Act, one of the laws the White House implements to endorse such a siege.

According to a memorandum Biden signed last September, "the continuation of the exercise of these authorities with respect to Cuba for one year is in the national interest of the United States." The document also establishes that September 14, 2022, is the new date for revision.

Last October, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) urged the U.S. president to make

a substantial change to the application of the blockade on Cuba and advised Congress to proceed toward its elimination. In a regional meeting held in Mexico, the members of the regional body recalled that since 1992, the UN General Assembly has approved, on 29 occasions, a resolution on the need to put an end to that coercive and unilateral policy that severely affects the Cuban people and prevents the country's development.

The most recent report Cuba presented at the United Nations states that the accumulated damage amounts to over 147,853,000,000 dollars. It also affirms that from April to December 2020, the blockade caused losses of about 3,586,000,000 dollars.

The repeated extension of the U.S. siege reveals its genocidal nature, specially amidst the complex health and economic situation resulting from the pandemic of COVID-19, which is used to cause destabilization.

The excuses put forward try to hide the real objective: undermining the Cuban people's will to build their own development model without foreign interference and guarantee the sovereignty and self-determination of their country.



CELAC urged the U.S. president advised Congress to proceed toward its elimination. PHOTO: Internet.

The alleged defense of democratic values, liberties and rights of the Cuban people disregards the constitutional precepts endorsed by the people, who approved the new Carta Magna with over 84.41 percent of the votes.

In fact, the Constitution establishes the irrevocable character of Socialism as political system for the enjoyment of freedom, equity, solidarity, wellbeing and individual and collective prosperity.

The blockade is considered an act of genocide by international law, by virtue of item C, article II, of the Geneva Convention for the prevention and sanction of that crime, approved in 1948. It is also considered an act of economic war as per the London Naval Treaty of 1909.

In order to hide the application of wartime provisions, the United States uses the term "embargo," but isolation, suffocation and immobility are unmistakably categorized as blockade.



Controlling COVID-19

By Joel Michel**VARONA**

HAVANA.- COVID-19 is still in Cuba, but the noticeable reduction of infected people, patients in ICUs and deaths is accompanied by the call made by health authorities to maintain the prevention strategy to control the new coronavirus.

Not to get overconfident of the promising statistics by the Public Health Ministry and predictions by Cuban scientists is the key to continue improving the indicators on the fight against the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

Over the past few weeks, the intensity of COVID-19 transmission has decreased considerably in all the Cuban provinces, according to local authorities.

The change in Cuba's epidemiological situation largely owes to the fact that the vaccines have proven to be effective, even against the Beta and Delta variants.

The incidence rate per 100,000 inhabitants dropped in all the provinces except Camagüey during the first two weeks of October.

Experts sustain that the disease is being contained in almost the entire country, even when the COVID-19 vaccination campaign with locally produced vaccines began with certain delay.

The immunization process is going well. On October 16 alone, more than 300,000 doses were administered, thus showing a steady pace, according to experts.

Such advances, said government authorities should not lead us to look at the current epidemiological context with satisfaction.

Far beyond the reduction of COVID-19 statistics in Cuba, the challenge now is to be able to steadily control SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

The measures adopted, together with the progress of the vaccination campaign in the country, have also made it possible to reduce the number of deaths caused by the virus.

Cuban authorities insist that the gradual reopening of spaces and resumption of activities need to be carried out with responsibility and lot of discipline in all scenarios.

The Cuban Public Health Ministry hopes to report less than 600 cases by the middle of November. That figure would put the Caribbean island in a very favorable position to deal with the easing of the restrictions adopted during the pandemic and the flow of foreign visitors.

In this context, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said the country can be pleased about the results obtained but "without getting overconfident."

Vaccination Campaign among Children Makes Progress

By Nara**ROMERO**



Cuba is the first country that has developed a vaccination campaign among children. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- The mass vaccination campaign against COVID-19, with Cuban-produced immunogens, moves forward without pause in the country, where over 6,820,000 people have already received the complete scheme and the goal is to reach 90 percent of the population by the end of November.

According to data provided by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP), from 200,000 to 300,000 doses of Soberana 02, Soberana Plus and Abdala are administered every day, a strategy that positions Cuba among the world's first.

Cuba is the first country that has developed a vaccination campaign among children, as a result of which 92 percent (1,759,642) between the ages of two to 18 years of age had been administered at least one dose by the end of October 10th, MINSAP informed.

For convalescent children – over 157,000 up to the abovementioned date – the Soberana Plus-Pediatría clinical trial is conducted, with the participation of 530 children from the Havana and Cienfuegos provinces. Cuban scientists evaluate conducting a similar study among children under the age of two with some of the abovementioned vaccines, such as Soberana 02, president of the Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries Group (BioCubaFarma) Eduardo Martínez recently revealed.

At the same time, Cuba started the flu vaccination campaign among babies from six to 11 months and 29 days in order to prevent complications associated to the southern hemisphere seasonal influenza.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease caused by the flu viruses that affect the nose, throat and

lungs and can lead to minor or serious episodes, including the death, MINSAP added.

This illness can be caught by any person but has a higher risk of serious complications among senior adults and those who suffer from chronic diseases such as asthma, diabetes or heart conditions, including pregnant women and small children. That is the reason why the Cuban State guarantees protection against this illness.

The Head of the Immunization Program, Dr. Lena López, noted that in the case of the last-mentioned age group, two doses would be administered, at a four-week interval, a process that will be extended until next December.

Children suffering from asthma and pregnant women – regardless of the months of pregnancy – will also be included, as well as those suffering from diabetes between the ages of 19 to 24. The population over the age of 85 will also be vaccinated at a later date, including people institutionalized in elderly homes, grandparents center and psycho-pedagogical centers. MINSAP National Director of Epidemiology, Dr. Francisco Durán García, affirmed that all the vaccines, syringes and needles needed for the pediatric ages have already been distributed at the provincial drugstores.

Since 1962, Cuba annually conducts a vaccination campaign against poliomyelitis, as a result of which the country became the first Latin American nation to eradicate this infectious-contagious disease that affects the central nervous system.

The national immunization program includes vaccination against 13 diseases; eight of the products used are developed and produced in Cuba.

Abdala
Cuban Vaccine

50 µg

Abdala
Vacuna anti-COVID-19 de subunidad proteica/
Protein subunit COVID-19 vaccine

50 µg

The first anti-COVID-19 vaccine
developed and produced in Latin America

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2022 Jazz Plaza Festival Returns to Havana

By Barbara **JANSEN**

HAVANA.- The International 2022 Jazz Plaza Festival will enhance the interactions among Caribbean musicians during its 37th edition in Havana, the capital that once again will be the scenario for jam sessions and in-person and online concerts.

From the Hotel Nacional's Salon 1830, its organizers confirmed the return of the in-person event, which will be held from January 18 to 23, 2022, after four decades enjoying international prestige among the artistic community in the region.

This year, the event will defend the pairing between music and visual arts, based on the talent of National Plastic Arts laureate Eduardo "Choco" Roca, whose work *La Trompeta China* (The Chinese Trumpet) was chosen as the event image, they announced.

The piece, in which he used collagraphy, a technique that has characterized his work for more 30 years, pays tribute to conga as folkloric dance of the Caribbean island, Choco said. "I am a frustrated musician. I think I could not create if I do



not listen to jazz. It's something that strengthens the soul in these difficult times," confessed the artist when his piece was chosen as the festival image.

His work adds to the list of National Prizes convened by the organizing committee, as are those by Nelson Domínguez, Alberto Lescay and Roberto Fabelo, thus forming part of a young tradition to put image to the Jazz Plaza sounds.

January always welcomes us with this big party of Cuban music. It's another opportunity to have our artists and cultural institutions come together at a platform that shows the best we have, stated the president of the Cuban Institute of Music, Indira Fajardo.

Liz Cuesta, event specialist at the Ministry of Culture, highlighted the in-person nature of Jazz Plaza 2022 Festival, where all biosafety protocols implemented in the country will be fully respected. Likewise, she praised the efforts done to "show to all its guests this beautiful face of Cuba that is its music," she noted.

The much awaited musical event will take up all the main venues in the Cuban capital and, as usual, will travel to the eastern province of Santiago de Cuba.

As something new, UNESCO's support through its Transcultural Program made the announcement to participate in the upcoming edition of one of the most prestigious jazz events applicable to musicians from the Caribbean region.

The festival will bring academic spaces of references with emphasis on the Leonardo Acosta International Colloquium that annually promotes reflection on the universal jazz activity. As well as workshops and lectures.

Cross-cultural Program Creates Bridges with Europe

By Claudia **MADEN**

HAVANA.-Transcultural (Cross-Culture) Program, which brings Cuba, the Caribbean and the European Union together through culture and creativity, opens up possibilities to carry out significant exchange programs in the regional artistic field, from Havana as epicenter of action.

The initiative, financed by the European Union and promoted by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), currently translates into cooperation with the Cuban Ministry of Culture and the Office of Havana City's Historian.

In remarks to *The Havana Reporter*, Tatiana Villegas-Zamora, a specialist with the UNESCO Regional Office for Latin America, provided detailed information about the promising mechanisms that are being implemented to transform the island into an artistic training center.

"Transcultural Program involves prestigious institutions such as the San Antonio de los Baños International School of Film and Television, the Higher Institute of Arts and the Higher Institute of Design, which are examples in their field," she said.

For the most part, all the academic institutions connected with the Office of Havana's Historian offer their knowledge in the restoration

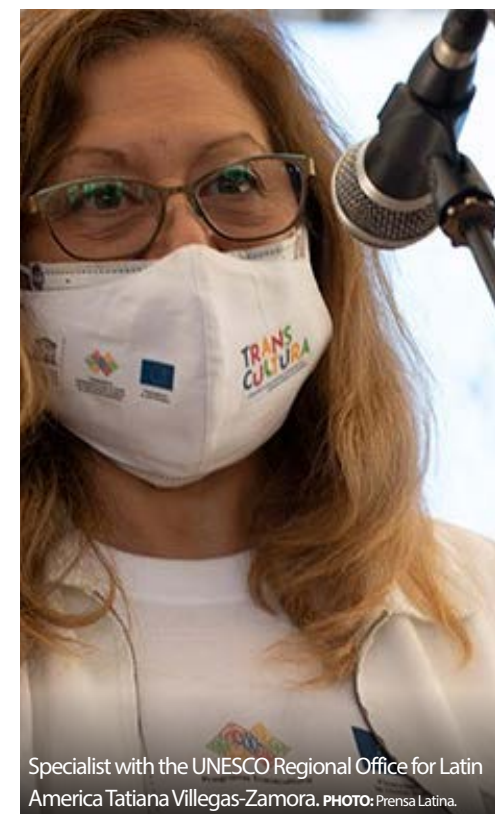
and management of the material heritage. However, it's worth mentioning the school-workshops, the

San Gerónimo College of Havana and the future Santa Clara College of Arts and Trade for the Restoration of Cuban and Caribbean Heritage. They will be the main members of Transcultural Program in this Caribbean region and will offer in-person and online training courses. The idea is to create opportunities to exchange and help creative professionals get involved in the professional world of scholarships, facilitate spaces for the presentation of debut films or creation systems, stated Villegas.

The program involves all cultural manifestations, from filmmaking to plastic arts, theater, design or music. In the case of music, its most recent announcement focuses on the call for regional countries to choose jazz bands that meet the participation rules for the program of the 37th International 2022 Jazz Plaza Festival.

What is out there to promote your art? will be one of the questions to be answered by the program, which aims at increasing the impact of arts in cultural tourism, while giving room to think about the best type of travel for the Caribbean, more inclusive, ecofriendly and community-based.

In recent times, Transcultural Program has been betting on twinning events, allowing to strengthen cooperation among countries, empowering young women and men as agents of sustainable development.



Specialist with the UNESCO Regional Office for Latin America Tatiana Villegas-Zamora. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



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Legislation for Indigenous People, a Possible Utopia



Much is yet to be done in the world to protect the rights of indigenous communities. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Indigenous Rumi Urqu in Napo Amazon province of Ecuador.

By IbisFRADE

HAVANA.- With their vision of a world in harmony with nature and an ancestral wisdom they try to pass on from one generation to the next, the indigenous communities wage a never-ending fight to preserve cultural riches and traditions.

According to UN statistics, over 476 million indigenous communities live in 90 countries, accounting for 6.2 percent of the world population.

Those groups are characterized by a large diversity of cultures, traditions, languages and exclusive knowledge, plus a special connection with their lands and environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected them considerably and exacerbated many of the existing inequalities, reveals UN reports.

Amid this scenario, UN Secretary General António Guterres called to ensure the right for indigenous people to take part in decision-making, which is a key component in achieving reconciliation between these groups and States. But, what guarantees or legislation exist at the international level to enforce the exercise of these fundamental rights?

ILO CONVENTION 169

Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples is currently the international framework used by some countries for the legal protection of those communities, the expert of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, Irma Pineda, told *The Havana Reporter*.

Unfortunately, the convention is sometimes used by States to pursue their own interests. In the case of Mexico, for example, when it comes to megaprojects such as those on mining or appropriation of water resources, the duty to consult

indigenous communities is not fulfilled, she stated.

When the topic of education for indigenous peoples is debated, the authorities say the duty to consult indigenous peoples is violated, as contained in the document. That is to say, it is used in someone's own interest, stressed Pineda, who belongs to the Binnizá community of Juchitán, Oaxaca.

The Mexican activist also highlighted that, in general, very little progress has been made in terms of international legislation on indigenous communities.

Adopted on June 27, 1989 in Geneva, ILO Convention 169 was signed by only 22 of the 193 UN member countries.

The treaty has two basic principles: the first one advocates the indigenous peoples' right to preserve and strengthen their cultures, traditional ways of life and institutions. The second one is about their actual right to take part in decisions that affect them.

So far, this is the most important international instrument to protect indigenous rights, and compels to consult those communities about legislative and administrative measures that are likely to affect them directly, aimed at reaching a consensus.

Many Latin American countries signed that Convention (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela), and so did Denmark, Spain, Fiji, Nepal, Norway, the Netherlands and the Central African Republic. The Convention was reinforced in September 2007 with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which was approved by large majority at the UN General Assembly.

However, much is yet to be done in the world to protect the rights of indigenous communities, a group historically marginalized and excluded from national and international policies.



Tribute ceremony to Mother Earth in Bolivia.

Mexico holds Cervantino Festival with Cuban flavor

By Danay **GALLETI**

MEXICO.- A delegation of Cuban artists, staged several cultural presentations as part of their participation in the 49th International Cervantino Festival, an event held in the city of Guanajuato, Mexico, from October 13 to 31, with Cuba as the guest country of honor. This prestigious event, officially set up in 1972 by presidential order, was held on-site, although it included a varied virtual program of activities such as the performance of Mexican pianist Braulio Alcaraz and his repertoire of works written for that instrument for over 200 years. The opening concert, held at the emblematic Juárez Theater – a facility built by the end of the 19th century – included the performances of the Van Van musical band, from Cuba and the Sinfónica del desierto orchestra, a renowned popular music group from the state of Coahuila. According to director of the Cuban band, Samuel Formell, this is the third occasion the group participates in this festival, in which

they now delighted the audience with memorable themes such as Sandunguera, Aquí el que baila gana and Dale dos.

The Cuban delegation also participated in a broad program of public concerts, opening of visual arts exhibitions, film screenings, poetry recitals and talks on Cuban culture, a date the island celebrates on October 20. Singer Eduardo Sosa, who participated in this event for the first time, also gave several performances accompanied by musician Ray Fernández. In his opinion, the Cuban traditional trova is very much connected to the Mexican ranchera (folk) music.

The visual arts section included the opening of the exhibition Resistencia (Resistance), by José Omar Torres, at the Conde Rul Home-Museum, one of the most representative examples of neoclassical style built by the beginning of the 19th century by architect Francisco Eduardo Tresguerras.

The Cuban delegation was also represented in the Cervantino Festival by the Camerata Romeu, Septeto Santiaguero, José María Vitier



The opening concert included the performances of the Van Van musical band. PHOTOS: Internet.

and his band, filmmaker Alejandro Gil, the La Reina y la Real rap duet, among other artists.

CUBAN FILMS ON SHOWING

Inocencia (Innocence), a film produced by Cuban filmmaker Alejandro Gil, was one of the audiovisual proposals shown at the 49th International Cervantino Festival. The film tells the story of one of the most sensitive events occurred in Havana in the 19th century.

Gil, who is also a journalist, told *The Havana Reporter* that the idea of the work emerged at the beginning of the 1990s, inspired by a documental series of the late Havana city historian Eusebio Leal. However, it was not until 2017 that Gil started shooting this testimony, for which he was granted the Best Director award

at the Havana Film Festival of New York and the jury and people's prizes at the International Latin American New Film Festival of Havana, in 2018.

"For the first time, we gave a face to each of the 42 students of which eight were selected at random and then shot. We had to ensure that the group, in spite of their difference of thought, as a whole had a poetic and good sensory exchange with the spectator", he said.

In Gil's opinion, during the creation process, borders between each specialty disappeared. A feeling of belonging and commitment with the narration and the film dialogue emerged within the film crew, as well as an unusual process of historical learning, he added.

Fábrica de Arte Bursts into the Digital Market

By Liz **BOBADILLA**

HAVANA.- Fábrica de Arte Cubano (FAC), considered a contemporary cultural lab, tries out new experiences and diversifies its proposals by joining world trend on digital creation, also known as NFT.

From the nft.FAC platform, the entity supports and spreads crypto-art among exponents of the different artistic expressions in Cuba with the purpose to join a movement that increasingly fosters new forums for debate, discussion, auction and exhibition.

This experimental proposal tries to facilitate and familiarize artists with the use of this revolutionary and developing technique, while exhibiting Cuban art files that were first hosted and then generated in NTF, as stated in the web page regarding this initiative.

The institution reaffirms its commitment to artists by accompanying each piece in NFT generation, as well as in all procedures related to their exhibition, promotion and potential commercialization.

Up to the present, the project's catalog includes the name of 23 exponents of this expression, which is on the rise and is validated by authenticity certificates and copyrights. In the future, the web page will include a virtual gallery with transitory exposures.

This project was started by FAC founder, musician X Alfonso, who will launch five works to the market and whose funds will be used to finance the management of the initiative.

Among the names that appear on the list of creators, Forming 3D, Cristian Cuevas, Alien Maleta, Juan Blanco Lozano, Alberto Veloz, Raupa, Andy de Calzadilla and Reinier Nande in addition to others.



Fábrica de Arte Cubano (FAC) tries out new experiences and diversifies its proposals. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The platform coincides with the foundational bases that established this entity in 2014, when an old oil factory located in Havana was selected as its venue and hard work was conducted to build a platform for the promotion of renowned artists in the field of music, visual arts, cinema, stage arts, photography, dance and design.

Because of its unique management, FAC has received different awards, such as the World Greatest Places 2019; the World Travel Awards; the Excellence 2017 prize, and the Travelers Choice 2020 – an award based on the opinions that tourists state on the TripAdvisor platform. In addition to this, it was recently included among the eight unforgettable bars in the world, according to the U.S. Travel + Leisure magazine.

It is no surprise, then, that it has joined the NFT market, whose files – associated to an authenticity certificate, identification codes and metadata considered inviolable – can range from a chromolithography, painting, meme, gif, audio or animation clips, musical pieces, photos, video fragments or tweets.

In recent months, artists from different Latin American countries have taken the NFT market by storm, to position themselves in the vanguard of this creative trend, which has attracted collectors and has become a turning point in the cultural industry.

FAC has joined initiatives from Mexico, Argentina, Chile, the United States, Peru and Bolivia, which, more and more, are part of crypto-art as a way to promote and commercialize their unique, novel and non-transferable works.

Guanahacabibes, Where the Sun Sets

By Claudia **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- Located in Cuba's westernmost region, the Guanahacabibes Biosphere Reserve stands out between stories of pirates that came to its coasts to hide still-uncertain treasures, land and underwater landscapes, as well as preservation projects.

Bathed by the Gulf of Mexico, the peninsula belonging to Pinar del Río Province and has places that allude to pirates such as Poza Juan Claro (Juan Claro Lagoon), Punta del Holandes (the Dutch Tip) and Playa Antonio (Antonio Beach), giving explorers the sensation that they can come up with legendary places.

This remote area, where plant and animal species live in harmony with few residents in an area comprising some 1,060 square kilometers, resembles an oasis with about 20 beaches, paths that are ideal for bird and reptile watching, a large number of endemic species, and one of the most diverse coral reef ecosystems in the Caribbean.

Guanahacabibes has the largest lakeside area in the country, whereas the iguana, the island's biggest lizard – some male species are up to two meters long- is part of its legends.

One of the main tourist attractions in the region includes the possibility of observing, from a short distance, sea turtles hatching, as part of a project for the monitoring and preservation of those reptiles.

Between May and September, four of the seven species at risk of becoming extinct in the world get to the coasts of the peninsula to lay eggs in the dunes.

The initiatives of scientific and academic institutions include counting the eggs and groups of species, while analyzing the periods they prefer to nest.



Guanahacabibes has about 20 beaches, paths that are ideal for bird and reptile watching. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

The article entitled "Eight Reasons to Travel to Guanahacabibes" by Online Tours blog refers to the place as 'a dream destination for lovers of nature and ecotourism.' Likewise, it highlights the underwater heritage along the coastline and its archaeological sites, 140 of them connected with indigenous life.

The emblematic places in the region include the Roncali Lighthouse, the only construction built

during the colonial period in the western region and the María la Gorda International Scuba Diving Center, with some 60 immersion points in quiet and crystal clear waters.

In 1987 UNESCO declared Guanahacabibes a Biosphere Reserve, where each afternoon the National Park enjoys how Cuba's sun sets behind the peninsula seas.

Holguín's Famous Angel

By María de Lourdes **LEGRÁ**

HOLGUÍN.- Erected in one of the most emblematic parks of the eastern Cuban province of Holguín, the sculpture of a winged female angel honors the local rebels that fought against Spanish colonialism.

Popularly known as El Angelote (The Angel), the statue represents a young woman with a sad face and open wings resting on a globe, with a laurel branch in one hand and crown of martyrdom in the other, symbolizing the defeat of death.

At the bottom of the marble base, passers-by can read: "To the memory of the compatriots killed during the Independence Wars (1868-1898). Homage by the Provincial Council of Oriente, 1912." It was precisely the granddaughter of rebel Commander Facundo Cables, executed on December 10, 1870, who unveiled the monument on April 10, 1916 at the former Saint Francis Square, today the Carlos Manuel de Céspedes or San José Park.



El Angelote, sculpted in bronze and Carrara marble, is perhaps one of the Holguín's most beautiful and delicate sculptures. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

El Angelote, sculpted in bronze and Carrara marble, is perhaps one of the city's most beautiful and delicate sculptures, which stands out in contrast with the San José Church in the back and the red cobblestones of the park.

Regardless of time, the weather and some vandalistic actions, the statue has preserved its splendor.

A Municipal Visual Arts Festival is held every year in the city under the name El Angelote due to its importance. The objective is to recognize outstanding personalities and institutions from that sector, who are granted a small replica of the statue.

Holguín residents regard that female figure as part of the local culture, of the scenery

of people that everyday walk across the city's system of squares and, of course, of those that prefer to rest in the shadow of lush trees of San José Park, one of the most beautiful in Holguín.

Together with other symbols scattered throughout the city, the winged female angel is part of the tribute paid to the city's heroes and independence fighters.

Solidarity by Air and Sea

By Claudia **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States have made several countries offer their solidarity to Cuba by air and sea. The Caribbean country, which shortly after the revolutionary triumph on January 1, 1959 became an example of international solidarity, consolidating that practice ever since, received medicine, food and other supplies from various countries that have expressed their rejection of the U.S. blockade imposed for almost six decades, causing more than \$147.85 billion dollars in damages. Over the past few months, two aircrafts from

Moscow brought 88 tons of humanitarian aid, Bolivia sent one plane, two ships from Mexico and other shipments arrived in Cuba with biosafety materials, disposable syringes, fuel and medical oxygen. Vietnam donated 12,000 tons of rice, Nicaragua sent 30 containers with supplies and a second shipment with red beans and 28,812 gallons of vegetal oil. Mechanical ventilators from China, food from Venezuela, Belize and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as well as health materials from Jamaica and Australia are other examples of solidarity with the Caribbean island. In addition to the governmental aid, several organizations, solidarity with Cuba groups and Cuban residents abroad collected funds and sent donations, in the context

marked by the worst outbreak of the health emergency in Cuba.

Among some of the organizations are the Jose Marti Association of Cuban Residents in Mexico and the Mexican Movement of Solidarity, who collected over 26,124 dollars that were used to buy medicine and health supply.

Meanwhile, Cuban residents in Italy arranged the arrival in Havana of a plane with more than 200 cubic meters of oxygen, face masks, antibiotics, and rapid testing devices to detect SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus for hospital use in the country.

Cuba thanked Chile, Panama, the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti, Uruguay and Guyana for the protection materials, dialysis bags and other devices they sent as part of a

campaign coordinated by the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Network of Solidarity.

On the other hand, members of Germany's Left Party arranged the arrival of a container with special ventilation masks, ultrasound devices, surgical suture, catheters, medical furniture, disposable material and personal hygiene kits used in the fight against COVID-19.

With regards to the food donated, Cuba designed a mechanism for the equal and free distribution of packages containing rice, pastas, grains and sugar for each of the 3.8 million family units registered in the country.

While the world has decided to help the Caribbean island with its actions amid these difficult times, the United States has decided nothing else but to promote a political and media campaign against the Revolution, and maintaining the economic asphyxiation derived from the blockade and the 243 coercive measures implemented by the Donald Trump administration (2017-2021).



Cuba groups and Cuban residents abroad collected funds and sent donations. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



Over the past few months, two aircrafts from Moscow brought 88 tons of humanitarian aid. PHOTO: Granma.

Schools Reopen in Cuba

By Orlando **ORAMAS**

HAVANA.- Cuba has gradually restarted its 2020-2021 school year and in an unusual way with more students likely to join in-person learning, starting November 6th after it was postponed due to the impact of COVID-19. On October 4, the students of 12th grade, third and fourth year of pedagogical training and those of the third year of vocational technical education returned to the classrooms.

Their return to classes responds to the progress of the national vaccination process, when more than 90 percent of the Cuban population is expected to be immunized by November.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez attended the activity marking the resumption of the school year held at the Carlos Rafael Rodríguez Polytechnic School, in Old Havana.

The Education Minister Ena Elsa Velázquez and Havana's Governor Reinaldo García, who also attended activity, praised the work of personalities from the teaching sector.

The Provincial Education Director of Havana, Yoania Falcón, announced that 71 teaching centers opened in the Cuban capital welcoming over 13,000 students who, together with professors and related support staff, will watch over biosafety protocols to avoid SARS-CoV2 transmission.

The Cuban Ministry of Education informed that 84,585 students have retaken in-person classes. That figure is still

below five percent of the country's total enrollment in general education.

The intention is to guarantee physical distancing and make the best use of space at teaching institutions.

Over 41,000 twelve-grade students are already attending classes and will do so for 20 weeks before the end of the current school year to ensure that they are adequately prepared to take the entrance exams for higher education.

In the case of technical and professional education, a total of 29,552 students returned to classes, with a program comprising 19 weeks - 16 weeks to systematize and learn contents and the last 3 weeks for exams.

They will go to schools three days a week and the rest of the time they will engage in workplace practices and work in areas of impact related to their specialties.

Another stage of the education program will begin on November 6, when other levels of education will resume the school year as well, particularly secondary students and ten and eleven-graders.

The epidemiological situation is expected to continue improving in the country by then. Today, more than 300 schools are serving as isolation centers, field hospitals or are engaged in other activities connected with the fight against COVID-19.

Due to the health situation, the western province of Pinar del Río, central Sancti Spíritus and Las Tunas in the east, have postponed the resumption of in-person classes.

Paradoxically, Las Tunas will be the first province to begin the 2021-2022 school year in November.



Carlos Rafael Rodríguez Polytechnic School, in Old Havana.

PHOTO: Cubadebate

Las Terrazas, Adventure and Agritourism

By Roberto F. CAMPOS

HAVANA.- The Las Terrazas community is a place of many charms that captivates travelers for its green vegetation and virgin nature.

Located in Cuba's west, on the way to the Pinar del Río Province, this rural tourist village promotes sustainable development and has an impact on visitors.

Las Terrazas is situated on the banks of the San Juan river, in the heart of the Rosario mountain range, in Artemisa province. It covers an area of 5,000 hectares and has a population of about 1,000 inhabitants.

The community is the result of a project promoted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and dedicated to biosphere reserves.

The objective of this project, which started in 1971, was aimed at connecting rural communities with their environment and supported from its beginning to face a strong deforestation of nearby copper mines, the indiscriminate forestry and coffee

plantations caused since the colonial time. In 1985, when UNESCO declared the Rosario mountain range as a Biosphere Reserve, plans began for the renovation and tourist development of this community.

The Las Terrazas Tourist Complex was officially created in 1994. As of that date, modern facilities were built and the economic bases were transformed, with emphasis on the services sector, particularly sustainable eco-tourism.

Some of those facilities include the Moka Hotel, restaurants, coffee shops, rehabilitation halls and other centers run by the inhabitants of this community with high quality, looking after the protection of nature.

Due to the beauty of the site –home of the late Polo Montanez, a famous rural singer – its attractiveness captivates many tourists from various corners of the planet.

Those who love adventures can enjoy the canopy (zip line) tour and appreciate the area's landscape from the heights, an activity the youth particularly prefers.

Las Terrazas is currently one of the main tour options chosen by those who come to Cuba from different parts of the world.



PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



Pandora Papers: New Corruption Cycle in Latin America

By Alain **VALDÉS**

HAVANA.- Corruption is an evil so deep in Latin America that it seems to be eternal, as scandals of this type cyclically shake the richest and most unequal regions of the world. It is an area with some 667 million inhabitants where ten percent of the population amazes the big fortunes; however, a little over five percent of them only pay income taxes. Looking for legal loopholes to conceal or increase the capital accumulated is a common practice among political

leaders and business executives all over the world. Nonetheless, Latin America, which became part of what is known as western culture a little over four centuries ago, has the lead.

This is corroborated by the new world scandal Pandora Papers, a global journalistic research that exposed financial secrets of political leaders, government employees, business executives and other owners of big fortunes.

The analysis of millions of leaked documents revealed cleverly conceived traps designed to accumulate more and more money outside the law through covert or shell companies, trusts and offshore system in tax havens that avoids taxes and ensures the anonymity of those involved.

The Pandora Papers brought the matter to light once, resulting into political crisis in some countries, while heads of state and other public figures are identified in the aforementioned illegalities.

According to the investigation made by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), Presidents Sebastián Piñera (Chile), Luis Abinader (Dominican Republic) and Guillermo Lasso (Ecuador) are among those involved in the scandal.

However, the list of top-level personalities is much longer, as it also includes eleven former presidents such as Colombian César Gaviria and Andrés Pastrana, Peruvian Pedro Pablo Kuczynski, Paraguayan Horacio Cartes and Panamanian Carlos Varela.

About a hundred other politicians of lower rank are equally identified by the investigation, due to the fraudulent way they used to manage their fortunes and there is even talk of the illicit origin of many of them.

For instance, from Brazil there is the Minister of Economy and the president of the Central Bank; from Colombia, the ministers of foreign affairs, transport, the country's richest man and singer Shakira, among others.

Mexico has more than 3,000 nationals included on the list, several of them with posts in the national and state governments, as well as figures close to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, who ordered a thorough investigation.

Many wonder the true scope of Pandora Papers for Latin America, what governments and international financial institutions will do to put a stop to these tax evasion practices in one of the world's most unequal regions.

The recent investigation is preceded by other similar scandals that rocked the political architecture of not few countries in the hemisphere, and that nowadays are nothing more than news reports.

This is what happened with the Offshore Leaks in 2013, the Panama Papers in 2016 and Paradise Papers in 2017. All of them contain less information than the Pandora Papers but are equally revealing with regards to how the powerful make fortunes and twist laws to their advantage.



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Gradual Economic Recovery

By Miriam **CÉSAR**



Cuban Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economics and Planning Alejandro Gil. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- Cuba has started a phase of gradual economic recovery and effective control of COVID-19 to achieve the highest possible growth at the end of 2022 in a better position, thanks to more favorable conditions in the last two months, which will lead to a solid recovery.

The statement made by Cuban Deputy Prime Minister Alejandro Gil, allows visualizing encouraging results, obtained because of the efforts made in the science and biotechnology sectors and the vaccination process in place. This, however, is not a reason to be too optimistic or not to acknowledge the complex scenario caused by the pandemic and the U.S. economic blockade, which has remained unaltered.

Such progress is also a demonstration that Cuba bets for the gradual reopening of its economy, which should have a favorable influence on productive activities.

At a meeting of the Council of Ministers, Gil – who is also the Minister for Economics and Planning – stated that the economic performance attained by the end of August stresses the need for higher initiative and creative work, as well as the importance of making good use of the measures the Government has approved in recent months.

Among those measures, he referred to the actions taken to strengthen and increase the autonomy of the socialist state companies, the main subject of the Cuban economic model. The objective is to make these companies more competitive, efficient, innovative and bold in their actions, and to foster a better use of resources as part of a joint work with other forms of management, such as non-agricultural cooperatives and the private sector.

The approval of micro, small and medium-size companies (MIPYMES) was an important step in this regard; a step never taken before in Cuba with the purpose to include more productive forces and start 2022 in better conditions, to which the reopening of the tourism sector (as of November 15) will also contribute to the process.

On that challenge and its importance to the island, Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero highlighted that “it is an event that gains strength internationally and is going to have an effect on the economy; we are convinced that it will revitalize the economy, but for that to happen, we all have to make

a contribution. It is not a topic exclusively related to tourism; no sector of the country is alien to this.”

The idea is to be gradually creating a framework that facilitates the steady recovery and expansion of the economy in spite of the tense financial and inflationary situation the country at present. It is also the result of shortages, high prices and irregularities whose solution depends on productive recovery, the creation of more goods and services and the revitalization of the economy.

With that purpose in mind, mechanisms have been eased as much as possible and obstacles have been eliminated, in order to foster efficiency, productivity and innovation in all forms of management – state or private – with good practices and promising results.

Those favorable elements that identify Cuba from the rest of the world include the fact that, in addition to fighting COVID-19, the country has generated jobs whose number will increase with the improvement of the economic actors and the reopening of the gastronomy services, the tourist industry and the private sector.

At present, 203,733 persons have addressed the municipal Labor and Social Security departments looking for a job – of which 138,656 were already employed and 5,440 enrolled training courses to afterwards get a job.

However, the national production of food has not been met in what regards rice, corn, beans, milk and eggs, in addition to beef and pork. In the case of vegetables, although the demand is a lot higher than the supply, more products were stocked in August in comparison to previous months – a tendency that also prevailed in September.

UPDATED STATISTICS

The Cuban economy lost 13 percent of its Gross Domestic Product between 2020 and the first ten months of 2021. It's been “a very hard blow indeed,” said Cuba's Vice Prime Minister Alejandro Gil, who is also Minister of Economy and Planning, when addressing the National Assembly of People's Power.

As to income, some 2 billion dollars (60 percent of the plan) had been reported at the end of September, while some 700 million dollars less than planned. The lack of tourism income is much to blame.

In 2020 Cuba stopped bringing in 2.4 billion dollars. “We are talking that in

a period of almost two years we have lost more than 3 billion dollars. The economy has been almost resisting,” the minister said.

Exports through September are estimated at 1,344 million dollars of goods, 68.7% of the plan, while imports are around 5.8 billion dollars, 65% of the plan.

The minister explained that some 1.34 billion dollars were assigned to buy food, “way below the demand but the country has been doing these efforts to, as much as possible, guarantee the offer of basic products for the population.”

The retail market circulation in Cuban Pesos is at 64 percent and in hard currencies at 75 percent.

New Business Opportunity Portfolio

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuba added 175 new projects to its new Business Opportunity Portfolio for Foreign Investment in the country. Now the projects, approved by the Council of Ministers, the highest executive and administrative organ of the government, totals 678. Since the approval of the Foreign Investment Law 118 in 2014, the portfolio has been functioning as one of the main tools in promoting Cuba's interests aimed at attracting foreign capital. Recently presented by Foreign Trade and Investment Minister Rodrigo Malmierca, this 9th edition (2021-2022) contains business proposals, given the importance and need in making good use of investments to boost the economy in the middle of the current scenario.

The country currently has 492 approved direct projects ready to be agreed and 56 in the Mariel Special Development Zone (ZEDM) created to generate exports, promote import substitution and foster the transfer of technologies and skills related to transaction management.

That zone, located in Artemisa Province, 45 kilometers west of Havana, has 59 businesses approved, of which 34 are already operating and six are in the reinvestment phase.

The projects of the New Business Opportunity Portfolio are connected with strategic elements of the National Economic

and Social Development Plan up to 2030: productive transformation and international insertion, natural resources and environment, human and scientific potential, technology and innovation.

From the territorial point of view, this business package is distributed among all the provinces and for the first time, food production is the most represented sector.

Some of the elements taken into consideration to encourage foreign investment are that the projects allow for mutually beneficial relations with the rest of the national economy, can generate foreign currency liquidity so as to be financially sustainable (export capacity) and that they effectively contribute to replace imports.

Referring to the topic, Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero stressed the need to promote that strategy in a more dynamic way to boost the country's development, always abiding by the principle of national sovereignty.

The Cuban Foreign Investment Law regulates the access to foreign financing, technologies and new markets, the inclusion of national products and services in leading international chains, and the generation of other positive impacts on the local industry and the country's growth.

That law stipulates that the activity can be authorized in all sectors, except for health, education and military, with the exception of the business systems in all those three fields.



Foreign Trade and Investment Minister Rodrigo Malmierca. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Improvement in Favor of Development

By TeyunéDÍAZ



Deputy Economy and Planning Minister Johana Odriozola. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- Improving economic actors in Cuba is a gradual and continuing process that involves both the socialist state-owned enterprise and the private sector, stated Deputy Economy and Planning Minister Johana Odriozola. The most recent example is the approval of the creation of micro, small and medium-sized companies (MIPYMES), and the end of the experimental phase for nonagricultural cooperatives and therefore their extension, Odriozola told **The Havana Reporter**.

In order to achieve this, it was necessary to reform the Constitution, because private property was not legally recognized; that is to say, it did not exist in our previous economic model, she added.

Likewise, it was necessary to wait for the implementation of the Monetary Reform that started last January 1, as the

exchange rates were different for the state and private sectors, thus posing an obstacle to mutually beneficial relations, the official explained.

The eradication of the dual currency system allowed to eliminate the difference in the exchange rate: one USD to 24 CUP (Cuban Peso) for individuals and one USD to one CUP for companies.

Odriozola said this process does not end with the implementation of laws but it needs to be improved, so that it can actually contribute to the country's socioeconomic development.

Since 2011, there has been talk of ties between self-employed workers and state owned companies, but the steps taken have been timid.

However, an increase was seen as private activities diversified and barriers and prejudices were being eradicated in the state sector in terms of access to financing sources and bank accounts.

The idea is that all actors can contribute to the country's economic transformation with the state-owned companies as the main type of property, Odriozola stressed.

As an example, the deputy minister said that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the world economy and in the case of Cuba, many businesses redirected their activities to others that were not carried out before.

"That entailed better services for the population such as electronic trade and home deliveries," she pointed out.

The same thing happened with tourist businesses, as they were much affected after the borders were closed, forcing them to readdress their activities.

Others channeled all their efforts into food production, the technological base, new technologies, recycling,

equipment and machinery repair services. All those activities are replacing spaces not covered before, the official explained.

Referring to the platform of actors, she highlighted it is a new experience in the country, having created a system that involves different companies with access from anywhere in the country.

Although perfectible, it is an initiative that can be reproduced, with lot of coordination among all the actors that participate in the process and the use of the digital world, to prevent the physical presence of people in those places.

It was with that objective in mind that Cuba held the 2021 Economic-Productive Campaign last month, so as to help make the country's economy more dynamic.



The 2021 Economic-Productive Campaign celebrated last month was to help make the country's economy more dynamic.

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First Junior Pan-American Games

By Yodeni **MASÓ**

HAVANA.- With over 200 qualified athletes and on the premise of evaluating the sport reserve, Cuba prepares its machinery and clears the way towards the opening edition of the first Junior Pan-American Games, to be held in Cali-Valle, Colombia, from November 25 to December 5.

The future champions make a good use of each training session at the facilities of the Cerro Pelado and Giraldo Córdova Cardín National High Performance centers, in a "bubble" format because of COVID-19 and with their motivations for qualifying to the Santiago de Chile 2023 continental games. The Cuban delegation qualified in 26 out of the 28 sports summoned, with full teams in Greco-Roman wrestling (free and women), in addition to team competition in baseball, handball and beach volleyball.

The track and field athletes, who reached the highest number of quotas (33), are represented by world junior champion in Nairobi 2021, Juan Carley Vázquez (shot put) and Olympic youth champion in Buenos Aires 2018, Melany Matheus (discus throwing).

When only days to go to the Pan-American event, the Cuban judokas, weightlifters, table tennis players and fencers live up the training areas of the Cerro Pelado center and make the most of their time after several months of inactivity due to the impact of COVID-19.

Because of infections prior to their participation in the Pan-American Judo Championship, the Cuban judokas received invitational quotas. At present, women athletes such as Thailen Castillo (57 kg), Idelannis Gómez (70 kg) and Thalia Nariño (+78 kg) and male players such as Kimi Bravo (66

kg), Serguei Rodríguez (90 kg) and Ray Keny Díaz (+100 kg) get ready for the Cali-Valle games.

At the weightlifting gym, eight wrestlers undergo training, where two women and three men will travel to Colombia, headed by coach Lázaro Rivera.

In statements to *The Havana Reporter*, Rivera commented that in spite of the short period of training, practices have gone well. He also added that Marifelix Sarriás (+87) and Edisnel Corrales (73) are the main options Cuba has to win medals in this discipline.



First Junior Pan-American Games in Colombia, from November 25 to December 5 PHOTO: Internet.

Fencing, for its part, guaranteed the participation of one woman and one man in each of the three discipline – saber, foil and épée. Under the coaching of Yandy Ortega, they polish up technical-tactical aspects with the purpose of being included among the first eight.

The head of the coaching staff stressed the will and sacrifice these six youngsters made during the training period and acknowledged the rivalry they have shown against fencers from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Brazil and Venezuela.

According to the Cali-Valle Organizing Committee, all those who attend the games and are over the age of 18 should be vaccinated. In addition, the health protocols establish that delegations should arrive in Colombia three days before the start of the event and should leave the day after the end of their competition.

Because of the limitations imposed by the epidemiological situation and the lack of international participation, Cuban sports will face by the end of the year, the first of the most important competitive events of this cycle, which also includes the San Salvador Central American Games and the Santiago Pan-American Games – both in 2023 – and the Paris 2024 Olympic Games as their final goal.

Arlenis Sierra: Dreams and Cycling Challenges

By Fidel **MANZANARES**

HAVANA.- Although the 2021 competitive season has come to a close, Cuban cyclist Arlenis Sierra continues to be full of dreams and willing to show her ability with her new club, Spain's Movistar, which belongs to the elite of the International Cycling Union (UCI). The two-time Olympic champion (Rio de Janeiro 2016 and Tokyo 2020) is well prepared to face a contract that "will demand the best version of herself," said Sierra in exclusive comments for *The Havana Reporter*.

In 2022, the Spanish club will have an athlete that says to be in very good physical conditions. "It is said that an athlete reaches full maturity at the age of 27. I'm 28 years old and I feel I'm at my best moment. I am also motivated and happy although, of course, I will not cycle until I am 40, but I have to make the most of the moment," she commented.

The change from being practically the first figure of her previous team (A.R. Monex Women's Team) to being part of Movistar, brings for Sierra a challenge "with which you can even feel a little scared."

As it happens with other prestigious teams, Movistar embraced a cycling star that will have "the objective to help current Olympic runner-up Annemiek van Vleutun and Danish Enma Norsgaard, who are the leaders."

She said that cycling involves teamwork: "one day you make an effort for others and the next day they can do it for you and you are satisfied because the triumph belongs to all of them."

Born in the eastern city of Manzanillo, Granma Province, Sierra bets on the discipline's growth and the union of factors in her country, "to grow it is impossible to compete only in Cuba. We need to participate in the Colombia Tournament, for example and gradually jump from Latin America to Europe," Arlenis commented.

Because of that, she recalled emblematic figures. "We have women cyclists that won Olympic and world medals, such as Yumari and Yohanka González and Lisandra Guerra, whose merits are to be envied in the world."

With two Pan-American titles to her credit, in addition to leading important competitions at the UCI international circuit, Arlenis Sierra will take her bicycle to a higher level now with Movistar, a team that will now run on Cuban blood.

Moreover, that will happen shortly after her most outstanding performance in Road World Cycling Championships, when she was fifth in the tournament held in Flanders, Belgium.



Arlenis Sierra continues to be full of dreams. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Prensa Latina Has New Website

By JorgeLUNA

HAVANA.- The Prensa Latina Latin American News Agency, one of the most read alternative media in the region, inaugurated a new, more attractive, interactive and easy-to-access website on November 1.

With 62-plus years' experience in news coverage and nearly 40 Correspondent offices in all the continents, the new design allows Prensa Latina to offer better services in all its sections and platforms.

The new website, which can be opened from cell phones and computers, will provide easier access of its contents to all those interested in corroborating the news agency's foundational premise: always at the service of truth, said Norge López, engineer with its Technical Development Department.

The platform was made as flexible as possible, especially its design, with views to ensure a better position, as compared to other international media, he stated. "It's necessary to get to people with up-to-date tools," Lopez added.

The specialist praised the major changes made to its graphic and audiovisual contents, which include podcasts in its radio service and enhanced television products, as well as new offers such as photos for news reports, among others. Prensa Latina, the leading news agency in the region, was inaugurated on June 16, 1959 to defend the rising Cuban Revolution, and provide the peoples with its own voice against world news monopoly.

For more than six decades, several generations of Cuban and Latin American journalists have followed the principles of its founders grouped in what is known as Operation Truth (January 1959).

Historic leader Fidel Castro strongly defended the initiative that the region's media should communicate the truth and never be victims of lies.

Since its very first day, its founder and first director, Jorge Ricardo Masetti, highlighted it was necessary that the Prensa Latina writing staff exercises "objective but not impartial" journalism, because one cannot be impartial between good and evil, he reiterated.

In spite of financial and material limitations, the news agency is transforming into a modern center that broadcasts nearly 400 daily dispatches in six languages, edits about 20 publications, offers radio and television services and has a growing participation on different digital networks.

The website www.prensa-latina.cu is Cuba's most visited news portal and the best ranked on the internet in the world, according to world assessment agencies.



Jorge Ricardo Masetti, highlighted it was necessary that the Prensa Latina writing staff exercises "objective but not impartial" journalism.

TO ACCESS PRENSA LATINA IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES:

In English: plenglish.com

In Portuguese: prensalatina.com.br

In Russian: <https://ruso.prensa-latina.cu/index.php>

In Italian: <https://italiano.prensa-latina.cu/>

In French: <http://frances.prensa-latina.cu/>



With 62 years of existence, the agency has the foundational premise of always being at the service of truth.



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