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III International Exchange Heads to Safe Destination

By José Antonio **FULGUEIRAS**

VILLA CLARA.-The III Destino Gaviota S.A. International Tourism Exchange Santamaria Key led the over 700 tour operators and travel agents from all over the world gathered at the Paradisus Hotel – in Cayo Santamaria, on the northern coast of the Villa Clara province – to a safe destination. Prime Minister of the Republic of Cuba, Manuel Marrero, who headed the Tourism Ministry for 16 years, described the event as a huge success.

"I am in my element, because I know most of the tourism professionals, whose teamwork has characterized the industry at the international level," Marrero said.

The Prime Minister added that Cuba is in a favorable situation in relation to COVID-19, which has allowed designing a strategy of gradual opening. He also stressed that the hotel facilities and airports are totally opened.

During the event, held from December 7 – 12, businesses were made between officials from foreign and local firms, especially from Russia, Canada and Cuba.

Cuban Tourism Minister, Juan Carlos García, informed that the island hopes to welcome no less than 2.3 million travelers in 2022, who will be offered tourist packages including visits to historical and cultural sites.

García highlighted that the III Tourism Exchange was the first on-site meeting held in Cuba with the guarantee of safe tourism following the implementation of the Public Health



During the event businesses were made between officials from foreign and local firms. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

protocol and the sanitary guidelines, after two years of a pandemic increase.

The minister noted that the Cuban tourism staff is totally protected with Cuban vaccines against COVID-19 and that most of the population is also immunized.

The head of the Tourism Ministry invited the participants to the 40th edition of FIT Cuba 2022 (Cuban International Tourism Fair), to be held from May 3-7 at the Varadero beach resort, in Matanzas province, and will be dedicated to the Russian market and the sun-and-beach modality.

FIT Cuba 2022 will be an ideal space for exchange among specialists, officials and tourist companies settled in Cuba, García added.

It will also allow designing strategies, policies and actions in the tourist market and being familiar with Cuban products

and destinations, as well as knowing the culture and the tourist features of the guest country.

Canadian tourists and journalists said that, at present, Cuba is the safest destination. They also expressed their satisfaction for the biosafety protocols, the fulfillment of the hygienic-sanitary norms and the guarantee that the staff is protected with face masks, gloves and other accessories.

Hola Sun Holidays Business Director, Hugo Rocha, said that at least 1.2 million Canadian travelers will visit Cuban tourist destinations in 2022, a number that would be in the same level with the one reached in 2019 – the highest from that country.

"Canadian tourists want to come back again to Cuba and we have the intention of increasing the number of visitors, with view of people-to-people exchange and for them to know the Cubans' reality and culture," Rocha said.

Marketing Vice President of the Cuban Gaviota S.A. Group, Frank País Oltuski, highlighted that the desire for reunion was stronger than the traveling restrictions imposed on Cuba. He also congratulated the over 36,000 men and women that compose the Gaviota family, who were responsible for the preservation of all hotels and tourist infrastructures in Cuba. Oltuski commented that one of the modalities of this event included the Nativa gastronomic project, which promotes typical dishes based on national products and ingredients in the Cuban hotels.

The III Destino Gaviota International Tourism Exchange included an opportunity fair in which national and foreign firms showed their best options.

Towards a More Accessible Tourism

By Miriam **CÉSAR**

HAVANA.-From December 15 to 17, Cuba became the Ibero-American capital of accessible tourism by hosting the 4th Summit of this kind, with the objective of showing all the efforts done together with the rest of regional countries to advance toward more inclusive destinations.

The meeting was held at the right moment to express their public and official willingness to participate in all the actions that may lead to truly accessible tourism for all, as contained in the Havana Declaration for Accessible and Inclusive Tourism in Ibero-America.

Held at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba (Cuba's National Hotel), the summit included panels on accessibility, technology, nature and heritage, with views to attaining more inclusive, responsible and socially sustainable tourism from any points of view. Some of the meeting's objectives were to create solid relations between public

authorities, the private sector and organizations of physically disabled people, as well as to promote knowledge about these topics.

Every speech and debate ratified the intention to promote the Caribbean island as a safe health and nature destination that is sustainable and ever more accessible and inclusive, especially to tourists with any kind of disability, including those with mobility, sight or hearing impairments.

Over one billion people in the world suffer from any kind of disability, representing 15 percent of the world population, which is why accessible tourism is one of the most popular modalities.

The idea is not to build new facilities but to ensure full accessibility in the existing ones so that visitors can enjoy their stay to the fullest, implementing a management strategy focused on that market segment. When closing the event, Cuban Prime Minister Manuel Marrero praised that objective by sustaining that Cuba makes no distinction at all among its visitors,

because its vocation is to eradicate all kinds of differences. The summit reaffirmed the willingness to work in favor of a tourist industry with equal opportunities for all, he added.

Our tourism is made with a lot of sacrifice, marked by competitiveness, quality, professionalism, and humbleness of its staff, who makes visitors feel at home, representing a commitment to continue developing an accessible sector for all, he stated.

Cuban Tourism Minister Juan Carlos García ratified Cuba's willingness to encourage all people with disability or reduced mobility to come enjoy its hotel and extra-hotel services, without any kind of discrimination at all.

The Caribbean island wants to be recognized not only as a safe destination with culture, landscapes and beaches, but also for other attractive features like accessibility, said the minister. That objective entails investment and training to make the tourist experience truly inclusive and pleasant, García added.

The enthusiasm of the entire Cuban tourist sector is special, as it is not usual to find hotel employees with so much love and



"Cuba stands as a special destination for us," said González. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

dedication towards that modality of the tourist industry, commented the president of the Ibero-American Accessible Tourism Network, Diego González.

"Cuba stands as a special destination for us," highlighted González, who stressed the need to change the way people with disability are viewed and treated, because the limitations and barriers are actually created by others.

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Printing: Prensa Latina

Publisher: Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana
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Challenges and Victories in 2021

By Orlando **ORAMAS**



The president's approach was critical to the economic performance. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- Cuba is closing 2021 with challenges and victories, and in that spirit, the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP) was in session, this time with the on-site participation of its members, like a symbol of victory against the COVID-19 pandemic that is now under control and decreasing.

The 8th ordinary session of the Cuban Parliament was characterized by a deliberative, decision-making exercise in which the deputies gathered again after two years of distance work, under the protection of three vaccines and two immunization candidates against the disease, all produced in Cuba.

At the closing of the meeting, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel described this achievement as "a victory

of effort, discipline, consecration, human talent and collective action; a victory of science, health, integration and the Cuban socialist State. And one of the defeats for those who talk about Cuba as a failed State."

That was the spirit that characterized the parliamentary meeting and the end of a year that was particularly tough for the island; also marked by the strengthening of the U.S. blockade.

The president's approach was critical to the economic performance, particularly to the inflationary phenomenon; however, he also referred to its strengths for the future.

He likewise referred to the work in neighborhoods, attention to vulnerable people and communities and the implementation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan for 2030, whose first stage finished on December 31st.

PRIORITIES FOR 2022

The Cuban State maintains social and territorial development as top priorities for 2022, as well as to boost to Science, Minister of Finances and Prices Meisi Bolaños said at the legislative, plenary session.

The ANPP approved the budget for 2022, which guarantees the vitality and the functioning of the medical institution system – including primary and secondary attention – and the registration of over two million students in the different teaching modalities. In addition, 50 percent of the resources collected at the local level will be addressed to territorial development management in each of the municipalities, while products and services with a high impact on the population will continued to be massively subsidized.

In the next months, the construction of about 38,000 new homes are expected to be finished – 15,000 by the state sector; 13,674 by individual effort, and about 600 will be basic housing cells.

Important investments are also planned in the fields of health, energy, hydraulics, transportation, communication, biotechnology and industry, she added.

ACCOUNTABILITY

This is a procedure that characterizes the Cuban government's democracy and exercise. By virtue of this, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero accounted for his management responsibilities, as well as governor of the central Sancti Spiritus province, Teresita Romero. Marrero also referred to the fight against the pandemic in the country, where 99.1 percent of the infected people recovered and lethality reached 0.86 percent – the lowest in Latin America.

In this sense, he noted that as part of the battle against SARS-CoV-2, the biotechnological and pharmaceutical industry was able to produce 12 medications, in addition to the anti-COVID vaccines and candidates that save lives in Cuba and abroad.

In relation to the government's main tasks, he mentioned the situation of oil, electricity generation, family basket supply and other retail products, as well as the development of the food industry, agricultural production and the transportation sector.

In the last parliamentary session, the Cuban president highlighted that these sessions were an exercise of socialist democracy, expressed through the participation of the country's citizens in the creation, exercise and control of state power, and the permanent link of all actors of the political system with the people.

He stressed that Cuba bets for both peace and respectful relations with the United States, in spite of the destabilization campaigns the island faced in the year that has concluded.

Intense Legislative Agenda Marks Parliament Session

By Liz **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- The approval of three new laws and the new Family Code draft bill to be voted by the population next year marked the agenda of the Cuban parliamentarians during the ordinary session of the National Assembly of the People's Power, held December 18-22.

The legislators gave the green light to the Laws on Courts and of Criminal Procedure in the military sphere, as well as the Laws on Territorial Planning and Urban Development and the Use of Soils, which respond to a deep transformation in the country's juridical reform, with the participation of experts, the academy and the population itself.

With regards to the laws linked to the military sector, the President of the People's Supreme Court (TSP), Rubén Remigio, said the new laws will allow to ensure the development of fair, functional and quick actions, while strengthening the people's rights and guarantees, in line with the basic principles of the due process.

Also praiseworthy is the possibility to offer a special treatment to accused people under 18 years, in accordance with the UN Convention on Children's Rights, just to mention a few examples.

During the ANPP period of sessions, the deputies also approved, and for the first time, a Law on Territorial Planning and Urban Development that respects constitutional rights concerning the enjoyment of a healthy and balanced environment, safe and healthy habitat and suitable housing, in close relationship with the sustainable development of the economy and society.

With regards to draft bill of the new Family Code to be under popular consultation

from February 1 to April 30, 2022, the parliament members held enriching debates about the challenges entailed by this topic in the Caribbean country.

It is a "modern, inclusive regulation that respects the rights of all," explained Cuba's Minister of Justice Oscar Silvera, who added that the law abides by all international treaties of which Cuba is a signatory country. Some of the new draft bill's advantages include the consolidation of family responsibility, the role granted to gender

equality, the increase of the economic variations in marriage, and full protection of the rights of boys, girls and adolescents. It also protects youth, the elderly and people in vulnerable situations; defends maternity and paternity; recognizes rights of grandmothers, grandfathers and other relatives; promotes self-determination and equal opportunities in family life, and voices the right to a family environment without violence, among other issues.

In the debate held prior to the approval of the popular consultation, Deputy Mariela Castro said the Family Code is the expression of the maturity attained by the Cuban Revolution along the process for the construction of social justice.

"We are in front of a text that designs the present and future of Cuban society," Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said during the closing speech. He also recalled that the spirit of the late President of the Cuban Women's Federation, Vilma Espín, is embodied in that legal document.

In 2022 Cuba will continue to have a busy legislative agenda that plans to approve 27 laws and 14 decree-laws, with a schedule that is in line with the country's priorities and growth requirements.



The President of the People's Supreme Court (TSP), Rubén Remigio. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Solidarity in the Face of Hatred



The call to lift the U.S. blockade against Cuba was convened by Bridges of Love, a solidarity project led by Cuban-American Carlos Lazo. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Adriana **ROBREÑO**

HAVANA.- The call to lift the U.S. blockade against Cuba brought dozens of people together in the United States during a vigil for peace and against the unilateral siege, held in several U.S. cities in late December. Convened by Bridges of Love, a solidarity project led by Cuban-American Carlos Lazo, the initiative was supported by those who, from different U.S. cities, demand the end of the White House's hostile policy against the Caribbean nation.

"We ask God to intercede and enlighten the hearts of those that make the decisions in Washington, so that they eliminate the restrictions that so much affect the Cuban families," said Lazo when announcing the vigil that took place in different parts of the world, from the Vatican to Miami.

The vigil was the activity with which Bridges of Love closed 2021, a year when it organized caravans and other actions that called for the end of the blockade imposed against the island for six decades.

Together with the people that attended the vigils, 114 U.S. legislators joined the voices that urge President Joe Biden to meet his electoral promise that he would revert the hostile strategy of his Republican predecessor Donald Trump, who tightened the blockade with 243 measures that are still in place.

Last December, the congressional representatives sent a letter to the president asking for a different policy towards Cuba, one that prioritizes the Cuban people's wellbeing. They also stressed the need to change the

strategy due to the lack of basic products in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter also urged the U.S. administration to lift all the restrictions on bank and financial transactions, family remittances and other restrictions so as to help improve the standard of living of the Cuban people.

The congressional representatives also made it clear that far from the removal of sanctions, they advocate a more integral change to advance towards the normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba. In the face of Biden's reluctant stance, the number of people in U.S. territory that demand for a change in Washington's aggressive policy is ever increasing. Organizations such as Pastors for Peace, Codepink or The People's Forum collected and donated food and medicine to Cuba last November.

Analysts such as William Leo Grande, professor at the American University of Washington D.C., sustains that the reason why the president has not engaged in the Cuba matter is because he fears for the Florida (votes), despite the fact that the Biden said otherwise during the presidential campaign.

In remarks to The Hill daily, Leo Grande recalled that the current president's campaign strategy in Florida in 2020 was to make the least possible comments about Cuba. The electoral result was a debacle that increases fear because the southern state plays a leading role in estimates for the 2022 midterm elections.

However, many people in the United States reject their government's hostile actions and want to help their neighbors from the Caribbean island, as stated by Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Codepink.

From Trump to Biden, Hostility Continues

By Deisy **FRANCIS**

HAVANA.- Just nine days before leaving the U.S. presidency, on January 2021, Republican Donald Trump decided to again include Cuba in the unilateral list of countries that sponsor terrorism, a line of action Democrat Joe Biden does not seem to distance from, one year later.

Similarity in his policies toward Cuba is, so far, the common denominator between Trump and Biden, even though in the 2020 election campaign the current president promised to try to re-approach the island and eliminate sanctions in order to give a break to families on this side of the Florida Strait if he made it to the White House.

However, bilateral relations did not change a bit in 2021, as expected as part of a Democrat administration. Instead, Washington's hostility and aggressiveness remain in effect.

Biden maintains in place the blockade Trump intensified, including 55 measures adopted in times of COVID-19, and attempts to cause a change of regime with the endorsement of Washington's million-worth funds aimed at subversion are still in force.

The break the Republic president put on the normalization of relations with the island – which Barack Obama started in 2014, when Biden was the vice-president – shows no sign of reactivation.

The inclusion of the island in the list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism

is the result of the political opportunism of those officials who feel indebted with the elections held on November 2020 or those who are already dispensing favors in view of the 2024 elections, experts say.

That's what happened with Trump and that's what Biden's current stance shows, particularly regarding the sanctions announced after the disturbances that took place in Cuba on July 11, which were denounced by the island as a plan organized from the United States with the intention of destabilizing the country and damaging social peace.

On Biden's fear of Florida, a recent article published by The Hill states that the president does not know how to handle political risks on the topic, especially due to the proximity of the 2022 midterm elections – in which the Democrats will try to keep their narrow majority in the Congress.

"The Democrats continue suffering a post-traumatic electoral stress disorder since Al Gore lost the State – and the presidency – against George W. Bush by 537 votes, with Cuba as the key topic, and the Cuban-Americans played a fundamental role," says the commentary.

The electoral result was a chaos that exacerbates those fears due to the predominant role the southern state plays in political calculations for next year and beyond.



President Biden does not know how to handle political risks on Cuba, especially due to the proximity of the 2022 midterm elections. PHOTO: Internet

Epidemiologic Control Key to Minimize Covid-19

By Nara**ROMERO**

HAVANA.- The considerable reduction of COVID-19 endemic transmission rate in Cuba since last September confirms the effectiveness of the massive vaccination campaign carried out on the island with locally produced vaccines, where the current number of daily cases until December 15 does not exceed 100 throughout the country.

With more than 9,388,600 people (83.9 percent of the population) having completed the vaccination program (3 shots of Abdala or 2 shots of Soberana 02 + 1 shot of Soberana Plus), the Caribbean island is the region's leader and number two in the world, according to Our World in Data website.

Likewise, the daily number of hospitalizations, infection among people under 20 years and pregnant women, as well as the mortality rate has decreased—some days with zero deaths. According to experts from the Public Health Ministry, that behavior shows the pandemic is being gradually controlled without disregarding hygiene measures. The Cuban vaccines used in the national territory and abroad have proven to be highly effective against the symptomatic disease: Abdala with 92.28 percent (developed by the Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Center) and Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus with 92.28 percent (produced by The Finlay Vaccine Institute, IFV).

Abdala, the first COVID-19 vaccine produced in Cuba and Latin America, received the national regulatory entity's authorization for Emergency Use in groups of people between 2 and 18 years old, beginning last October, after the positive results of the pediatric clinical trials known as Ismaelillo y Meñique.

Two shots of Soberana 02 proved to be safe and 71.0 percent effective in groups between 19 and 80 years. That parameter rose to 92.4 percent after one shot of Soberana Plus was added to the vaccination scheme.

A phase III randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study of some 44,000 volunteers from Havana revealed that the first vaccine offers 71.0 percent protection against symptomatic disease, 63.0 percent against severe illness and 59.0 percent against death. When the three-dose schedule with Soberana Plus was applied, that indicator proved 100 percent effective against disease severity and mortality.

Like Abdala, the Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus program was approved for emergency use in the pediatric population, while Soberana Plus in minors recovering from the disease.

"The approval was based on the results of the trial using Soberana Plus on children that recovered from COVID-19, when it proved the administration of one dose effective and beneficial against the potential risk of reinfection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes the disease," the IFV said on its Twitter account.

Due to the circulation of the Delta variant, which caused multiple fresh outbreaks of the disease worldwide, and the appearance of the Omicron variant, Cuba began administering a booster dose to further enhance the people's immune response, six or more months after their immunization.

Dagmar García, the IFV Research Director, stated the use of Soberana Plus as booster on people immunized with Abdala proves to have a favorable duration, as well as a booster shot of Soberana 01 vaccine candidate on people vaccinated with the U.S. vaccine Pfizer.

Moreover, the CIGB coordinator of projects for the development of COVID-19 vaccine candidates, Miladys Limonta, noted Abdala is just appropriate to stimulate an immunological response as booster dose.

That vaccine can be used on people that recuperated from the disease, individuals already vaccinated with other shots like Russia's Sputnik and China's Sinopharm, and on those vaccinated either with Abdala or Soberana 02 + Soberana Plus five months earlier, she explained.

Residents from the Havana Municipalities of Guanabacoa, Regla, La Habana del Este and San Miguel del Padrón, began receiving the booster dose on December 6.

The first phase also included the staff of the Group of Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries (Biocubafarma) and risk groups all over the Caribbean island.



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IFV Research Director Dagmar García. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



The Cuban vaccines have proven to be highly effective.

Havana and the 42nd New Film Festival

By Claudia **MADEN**

HAVANA- Winner of the Golden Shell at the San Sebastian 2019 Festival, the film *Pacified* (Pacificado), by producer Paxton Winters, was screened in Havana during the 42nd edition of the New Latin American Film Festival, where it was granted the Coral Award to the Best Feature Film. During the awarding ceremony, the producer thanked the jury for recognizing the spirit of this collaboration, while in his online message, Winters said he and his working team were honored for the opportunity of being the protagonists of the 42nd Havana Film Festival – an event held from December 3-12 that attracted both film buffs and professionals from the region.

In *Pacified*, Winters's second film, the producer not only exhibited the lights and shadows present in the South American favelas but also pressing topics in the current regional context, such as the preservation of family bonds and values in spite of adversities.

With regard to outstanding filmmakers, Mexican Michel Franco established an almost expected imprint in the race for the Corals with his dystopic drama *Nuevo Orden* (New Order),



The Havana Film Festival brought the film environment back to the Cuban capital. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

a strong accusation of the rooted violence and the breach between the rich and the poor in the convulsed Mexican capital.

Co-produced by Les Films d'Ici (France), the film won the best Script, Artistic Direction and Editing awards. The Mexican nation was also granted the best Music, First Work, Postproduction and Short Fiction Film awards for the films *Selva Trágica* (Tragic Rainforest), *Sin señas particulares* (Without distinguishing marks) and *El Triste* (The sad), respectively.

Chilean Leonardo Medel also stood out at the festival with his production *La Verónica*, winner of the Coral awards granted by

the International Federation of Film Press (FIPRESCI) and the World Catholic Association for Communication (SIGNIS), which centered its attention on the social media subterfuge, for the approval of the Cuban spectators.

The Spanish-Mexican film *La Caravana* (The caravan), by Nuria Clavero and Aitor Palacios, also excelled in the postproduction category, while the Brazilian film *Breve Miragem al sol* won the Coral awards to the Best Soundtrack and Best Actor.

Homeless (Chile) and *El Intronauta* (Colombia) won the best Animation category.

Posthumous Tribute from the Cinema In a year marked by mourning because of the

pandemic, the Festival also rolled its carpet out to render posthumous tribute to Latin American filmmakers, actors, documentary makers and professionals whose life ended because of COVID-19.

A final ovation was given to outstanding Cuban producers and scriptwriters Enrique Pineda Barnet and Juan Carlos Tabío; photography director Raúl Pérez Ureta; actor Frank González, the emblematic voice of the animated character Elpidio Valdés, and renowned actors Enrique Molina and Manuel Porto.

Tribute was also paid to Argentinean filmmaker and politician Jorge Coscia; Mexican scriptwriter and producer Felipe Cazals, and other memorable figures, such as actresses Xonia Bengurind and Amalia Aguiar; graphic designer Holbein López, and editor and documentary maker Gloria Arguelles.

The Havana Film Festival brought the film environment back to the Cuban capital, after exhibiting over 160 films from 26 countries. It also screened works from the Documentary Panorama and the International Contemporary Panorama, in addition to films recently premiered in the world, with a solid path in international festivals.

Cuba's Contemporary Dance and National Ballet Back on Stage

By Martha **SÁNCHEZ**

HAVANA.- British Culture Week held in December in Havana was the occasion that allowed the Contemporary Dance Company of Cuba (DCC) and the National Ballet Company (BNC), two of the island's leading dance troupes, to return to the stage, offering a brilliant joint performance.

After one year of compulsory confinement to stop the COVID-19 pandemic, the contemporary group directed by the 2018 National Dance Prize laureate, Miguel Iglesias, revived the piece *Danzas del amor que se fue* by British choreographer Billy Cowie. He also composed the music and made a series of audiovisual images that complemented the movement.

Characterized by a minimalist and performing style, Cowie is an avant-garde artist internationally known as a pioneer in combining live dancers with others in 3D images. It was in 2015 and with DCC when he first won the heart of the audience in Cuba, where he choreographed the sublime piece *Tangos cubanos*, with his own music.

In general, his creations convey a sort Apollinaire-like creative vision, an alliance between painting and dance, plastic arts and mimetic performances, as seen in the aforementioned revived piece. His



choreographies not only stimulate the senses but also make spectators feel as though they were visiting a modern art museum.

For the productions in Cuba, the Scottish artist has been sponsored by the British Council. Its project *Islas Creativas* (Creative Islands) opens a sort of choreographic space on the island where professors, choreographers and dancers exchange experiences and contribute to their mutual growth as artists.

The British Council's project allowed for a professional relation between the mother of contemporary dance in Cuba and the artistic director of the Scottish Dance Theatre (2012-2018), Fleur Darkin, who staged *Equinoccio*.

The December performances included the play *Próspera* (Prosperous), which British Cathy Marston, current director and

chief choreographer of the Zürich Ballet, gave to Cuba's National Ballet in 2018. Marston was inspired by William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) to honor Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso.

The original plot takes place on an island, where a supernatural atmosphere mixes with family relationships and forgiveness. For this creation, Marston decided to turn the original lead character (Prosperous) into an equivalent feminine character to honor Alicia Alonso, the most prestigious ballet dancer in Cuba and one of the great legends of world dance.

According to the choreographer, *The Tempest* entails very natural and sensual dance, because it is above love. She wanted to have a corps de ballet able to make the impression that they were doing magic on stage, like when something really marvelous is created. "I trusted Cuban dancers precisely because there is something about their bodies that creates more rhythmical movements, although they are classical dancers," she told *The Havana Reporter*.

"When the play is over, the protagonist asks the audience to applaud, and the ovations sort of release her from her reign. It's like the last bow on stage; like the end of an artistic career," she explained.

If anyone ever questioned that different artistic manifestations can be fluently combined, those performances certainly cleared any doubts.



Guatemala's Heart in Its Coffee

By Maitte **MARRERO**

GUATEMALA.- "Guatemala's heart is in its coffee; it's not just a mere bean, there is history in a cup of coffee," producer Estuardo Porras says over and over again and he is right. Delicious aroma, pleasant sourness, full-bodied flavor and delicate sweetness are features that distinguish it among the best in the world.

That combination, Porras says, results into an exquisite, balanced cup of coffee that has rivals in each region of the country; so much so that there are eight particularly complex flavor profiles.

The variety of microclimates in Guatemala, with highly beneficial rain patterns, soils rich in minerals and abundant water sources, make special contributions in every region. This crop grows in all 22 Guatemalan departments, in 204 of the 340 municipalities (60 percent), equivalent to 2.8 percent of the national territory.

The hand of more than 125,000 families is behind this complex process. They mostly run micro, small and medium-size enterprises, generating over half million stable jobs. Hence, coffee growing is one of the country's main economic sectors. The fact that coffee growing and harvesting is done by hand represents an added value. Moreover, it grows under the shade of native trees, creating a beneficial system for the environment.

In recent days, when launching the new image of coffee growing in the country, President Alejandro Giammattei defined coffee as "the big ambassador that has taken the flavor of quality and good taste all over the world. Every bean, perfectly roasted and turned into a cup of coffee, means work and development for Guatemalans."

In August 2018, by Ministerial Agreement No. 606-2018 "Traditional Knowledge on Coffee Growing" was declared a symbol of identity and of great importance for the economic, educative, social and cultural development since the first half of the 18th century.

The coordinator of the Tasting and Roasting Laboratory of the National Coffee Association (ANACAFE), Juan Luis Alvarado, likes to promote this Guatemalan product as "a full-bodied coffee that leaves the feeling of pleasant creaminess in the mouth, a characteristic that makes us well known around the world,"

"It's not necessary to add any substance because they are sweet," Alvarado sustains. They just stand out for the coffee flower fragrance.

RECOGNIZED VARIETIES AND QUALITY

Different varieties of the two most important economic species are grown in Guatemala: *Coffea Arabica* (96.4 percent) and *Coffea Canephora* (3.6 percent).

However, over a century ago they were already much in demand in the international market. Its economic

importance had been recognized already in 1915, when Juan José Rodríguez Luna won the first international award to the Best Coffee in the World, during the exhibition fair in San Francisco.

The biggest coffee productions are in Santa Rosa, San Marcos, Chimaltenango, Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz and Suchitepéquez, totaling 61.5 percent.

The favorable climate conditions allow to grow over a dozen varieties that are unique in the world. The top ten are Typica, Anacafé 14, Pache Común and Bourbon, according to Anacafé Guide.



Coffee crop grows in all 22 Guatemalan departments, in 204 of the 340 municipalities. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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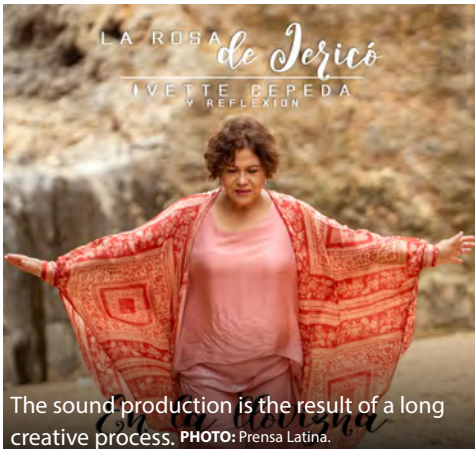
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La Rosa de Jericó in the voice of Ivette Cepeda

By Barbara **JANSEN**



The sound production is the result of a long creative process. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- From the Cuban bolero to the so-called flamenco salsa, popular Cuban vocalist Ivette Cepeda starts a unique travel to her new phonogram *La rosa de Jericó* (Rose of Jericho),

her first studio album with the Reflexión band, produced by the Bis Music Record Company. The sound production is the result of a long creative process that gathers 11 gems of the Cuban song field and which includes the theme *Me va la vida en ello* (My life depends on it) – by Spanish singer and songwriter Luis Eduardo Aute – in collaboration with gypsy artist Moisés de Moidanis de Los Yakis, renowned in Madrid. “This is the first time I make a record from the distance. I am fond of duets but I particularly admire Moy de los Yakis. I enjoyed listening to this theme in his voice, which perhaps breaks with gypsies’ philosophy,” Cepeda told The Havana Reporter in an exclusive interview. On this occasion, the singer finds points of contact with the work of notable Cuban composers such as Carlos Varela, Polito Ibáñez, Ireneo García o Augusto Blanca. At the same time, she renders tribute to other Cuban artists who already passed away, including troubadour Santiago Feliú and actress Broselianda Hernández.

The album’s first songs – *Ayer y hoy enamorado de Santi* (Yesterday and today, in love of Santi) and *Fue tal vez* (Perhaps it was) – were dedicated to them “for being an ode to hope.” The latter is the only theme that is already available on video and in which talented pianist and arranger Joel Domínguez participated together with musicians of the Spanish band and instrumentalists of the Havana D’Primera band.

“I am really pleased with La Rosa. I also decided to sing themes by Cuban authors, especially by troubadours, because I like to defend that deep, poetic level, to draw inspiration from the reality I know, that of my country,” she acknowledged. From the spirituality of her voice, Cepeda goes from her successful romantic tone to the new expressions that salsa singing means. “Getting involved in this genre in a country with a peculiar salsa tradition was a nerve. I did it because the songs demanded it and I wanted to get to the dancing audience,” said the singer.

However, love is again the key theme of her work, in which she is particularly accompanied by the Reflexión band and other young members of the Mozarteum project, who contributed to her performance with their lyric touch.

The themes included in this, her fifth phonogram, are already available in virtual shops and the Cuban music platform Sandunga, and also deal with the topic of splendor, reencounter and the wonders of life when you start again.

“I appealed to purity, to the beauty of each theme in the repertoire. This is the record I have been more committed to,” stated the artist, who also added that this production kept her creatively active since its conception in 2018, prior to the stop imposed by the health crisis in Cuba.

Like a rose of Jericho, Cepeda expands her work and opens her repertoire to the multiplicity of genres she is able to master with the purpose to please her large audience, both in Cuba and abroad.

Alejandro Jurado’s Painting: A Combination of Abstraction and Reality

By Claudia **HERNANDEZ**

HAVANA.- Through an abstract lens, Alejandro Jurado combines colors and textures like an alchemist, while his strokes captivates spectators and his paintings shows the strength of Cuban artistic avant-garde.

With a two-meter high triptych, Jurado shows his peculiar visual identity as part of the collective exhibit Estado de Espíritu (Spirit State), which celebrates the 35th anniversary of the Hermanos Saíz Association (AHS), an entity that gathers Cuba’s best young creators. With the work entitled Glass Path, the painter exhibits his talent in oil painting and enamel on canvas as part of the 60 Cuban creators summoned to the pictorial exhibition that gives visibility to the AHS creative talent after two years of stop because of the pandemic, the curatorial team said.

The pieces made as part of the Caleidoscopio 2021 series were the result of the work with the palette knife, based on that effect, “which generated one of the many creations I did at the start of the pandemic in Cuba,” affirmed Jurado, an Art Instructor graduate in 2005.

“I wanted to convey a strong visual message, inherent to hope and happiness amidst the emotional cut the sanitary crisis entails,” said the painter, who is also a Bachelor of Social Communication since 2013.

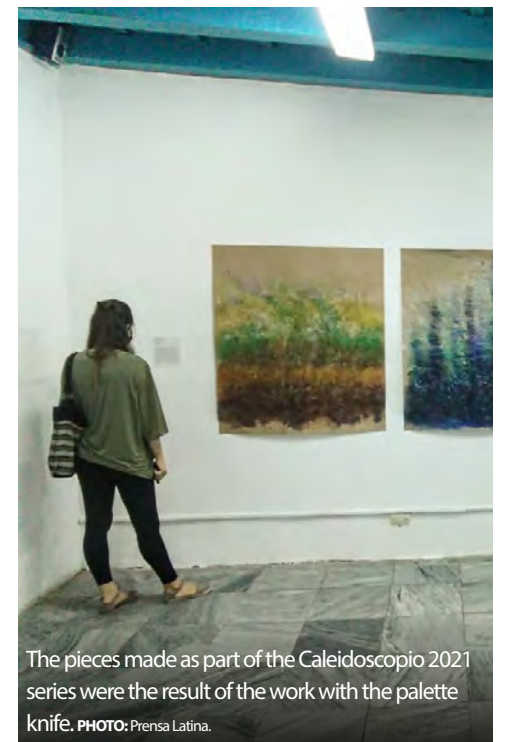
The use of a wide range of colors and attachment to detail in his landscape work stand out among the exhibitions – over 30 collective and 10 individual – he has conducted as part of his affiliation to AHS, as a legitimate exponent of the young artistic avant-garde in the island. “Basically, I identify myself in the use of paint, thick filling, as a result of which a peculiar texture is created,” the painter told The Havana Reporter. He also highlighted the presence of landscape or nature in his works.

The Caleidoscopio and Crystalized series define Jurado’s visual discourse, whose ability to combine different elements in formats such as canvases, acrylic or glass stands out in catalogues in different collective exhibitions and international fairs in places such as Madrid (Spain), Houston, Texas and Miami (United States).

In his country of origin, his career is endorsed by his participation in three editions of the renowned Havana Art Biennial, and Estado de Espíritu precisely fell within the first cycle of Cuba’s largest visual art events.

In Jurado’s view, it is essential to show his paintings in events of this type, as they are a showcase for visual arts and a platform to promote creations and establish bonds with other artists.

The Havana Art Biennial not only consolidates artistic creation but stands out for its warm environment, human factor and direct connection with the audience, said the painter, who stated his pleasure for being part of that space.



The pieces made as part of the Caleidoscopio 2021 series were the result of the work with the palette knife. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



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Gibara, the White Village

By Mario**ESQUIVEL**

HAVANA.- The city of Gibara, on the northern coast of the eastern province of Holguín, treasures over two hundred years of history, complemented with the name of White Village (Villa Blanca).

Its name comes from the indigenous term Jibá, with a rich history and culture, in keeping with the lineage of its foundation and its beautiful landscape.

The city shows the contrast between its architectonic heritage and the environment and was one of the first spots admiral Christopher Columbus saw after he sighted Cuban land.

On January 16, 1817, in a solemn ceremony, the first stone of the fortification was placed in Punta de Yarey, on the shores of the Bay. That day has been considered as the city's foundational date.

The foundation of the port favored its economic splendor and turned the village into Cuba's second walled city, as the construction of military fortifications was needed to protect the area against the attacks of corsairs and pirates.

In 1853, the opening of the San Fulgencio Parrish Church marked a milestone in the architectonic styles prevailing in Gibara until that time.

In fact, its architecture is a combination of the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, with important exponents in each of them, experts say.

The city has a main park and the old Plaza de Armas (Arms Square), with a miniature replica of the Statue of Liberty in the center – obtained through popular funds collection and entrusted to Italian sculptors.

The piece, which symbolizes liberation from Spanish control, is dedicated to the entry to the village of the pro-



The city shows the contrast between its architectonic heritage and the environment. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

independence troops headed by Colonel Cornelio Rojas on July 25, 1898.

Parque de las Madres (Mothers' Park) and Plaza de la Cultura (Culture Square) also stand out, as well as exponents of the architectonic group, such as the Decorative Arts Museum – in the upper floor of one of the domestic constructions that best represents the city's neoclassic style.

That facility shows one of the most important decorative art collections in the country and treasures the largest half-point stained-glass windows in the Cuban eastern region. Also notable are the Parrish Church and the old seat of the Spanish Club.

Bariay, the point where Columbus disembarked on October 27, 1492 and which is considered a symbol of the meeting between the Old and the New World, is about 40 kilometers away from Gibara.

Mountain Tourism

By Francisco**MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- Located in the eastern region of Cuba, Turquino Peak (Pico Turquino), the country's highest point with 1,974 meters above sea level, captivates visitors from around the world.

It is located in the heart of Sierra Maestra, the largest mountain range on the island. Surrounded by breathtaking landscape, it is an ideal destination for nature and adventure lovers.

The peak rises majestically in an area comprising of 17,540 hectares of rivers, forests, valleys and mountain tops. On the way to the site, visitors bump into abrupt spots and paths that facilitate the journey, while enjoying an exclusively well-preserved landscape with a variety of animal and plant species.

There are two main routes: one from Santiago de Cuba province and the other from Granma.

According to records, the first visits to the site dates back to 1915. The name Tarquino, rather than Turquino, appeared on a map of the late 16th century owned by Flemish geographer Gerardo Kramer.

In 1957, the members of the Rebel Army then led by Fidel Castro (1926-2016) climbed to the peak. A bust of Cuban National Hero José Martí welcomes visitors on its top.

The monument was made by Cuban sculptor Gilma Madera, and the base reads one of Martí's quotes: "Scarce like the mountains are the men who know how to

look from them and feel with the heart of a nation or of humanity."

The Sierra Maestra mountain range –some 250 km long by 60 km wide- stands as a bastion that spreads along the southeastern region of Cuba, from Cape Cruz (Cabo Cruz) to Maisi Point (Punta de Maisi).

With an average height between 300 and 1,500 meters above sea level, it also includes other peaks such as Pico Cuba (1,872 meter height) and Pico Suecia (1,734 meters).

Apart from Pico Turquino National Park, the other natural parks in Sierra Maestra include Desembarco del Granma, Santo Domingo-La Sierrita and Marea del Portillo.

The region is a highly attractive destination for ecotourism, having being declared National Park in 1980.

The Sierra Maestra mountains is a place of great historical meaning for the Cuban people: it was the scenario of battles waged by Taino indigenous people against the Spanish colonizers, provided shelter to runaway slaves that fled sugarcane plantations and was even home to the Rebel Army during the guerrilla fight against the Batista dictatorship

One of Sierra Maestra's main natural attractions is the Gran Piedra, a 70,000-ton rock at a height of 1,225-meters, the world's third biggest and registered in the Guinness World Records.



A bust of Cuban National Hero José Martí welcomes visitors on its top. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

63rd Anniversary of the Popular Revolution

By Isaura **DIEZ**

HAVANA.- On January 1st, 1959, Cuba reached its national sovereignty after breaking with its dependence on the United States, following the victory of the popular Revolution headed by leader Fidel Castro.

That day, 63 years ago, the Ejército Rebelde (Rebel Army) seized final power and forced the departure of dictator Fulgencio Batista, putting an end to tyranny.

Shortly after taking power, the new Government started dismantling the neocolonial political system, dissolving repressive forces and cleaned the public administration.

The Cuban process rejected the Monroe Doctrine, which characterized Washington's relations with the region. This event caused a higher impact on the continent than any other uprising occurred in Latin America in the last century.

Cuba achieved improvements in the fields of culture, sport, science and technology, among other areas, in spite of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States for over 60 years.

In fact, last year, that hostile policy reached historic levels, as U.S. President

Joe Biden did not meet his electoral promise of reestablishing relations with Cuba.

The blockade was the biggest obstacle in the fight against COVID-19 in the country, which was more complex in 2021, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez said.

During the pandemic, the island faced a tougher U.S. siege, intensified with the application of 243 measures by the administration of former president Donald Trump (2017- January 2021) – measures that are still in force under the government of the current president.

On top of that comes attempts to subvert the Cuban social and constitutional order with the support of political actors settled in the United States.

The use of the mass media in the non-conventional war against the Cuban government, including attacks in the social media and politicization of musical awards, were a constant in 2021.

Last November, Cuba had to face the organization of an anti-constitutional demonstration, in addition to distortion of its reality after the disruptions held on July 11, when citizens vandalized establishments and caused chaos.



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel recently stressed the creativity the Cuban people have shown in the face of difficulties. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Cuban authorities and the media provided evidence of the connections Yunior García – one of the main perpetrators of these acts – had with terrorists, movements and organizations settled in the United States.

While these actions occurred, Cuban scientists made progress in the design and application of five nationally-produced vaccine candidates, needed to face the high incidence of COVID-19 in the country in the year.

The Soberana 02, Abdala and Soberana Plus vaccines have allowed immunizing over 85 percent of the Cuban population, according to official data.

As a result, the island overcame the most difficult times of the pandemic, for which socio-economic activities were gradually reopened, as well as borders and the tourism sector.

In addition, in 2021, Cuba started the Ordering Task aimed at monetary unification and economic restructuring, and applied new measures to substitute imports, increase production and prioritize science and technology.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel recently described 2021 as a period of learning, and stressed the creativity the Cuban people have shown in the face of difficulties.

ALBA-TCP: Against Interference

By Noelio **TUINA**

HAVANA._ The 20th ALBA-TCP Summit was not only an antibody vaccine against neoliberalism and U.S interference, but also a boost in favor of solidarity and integration principles of the mechanism created by Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez.

It was confirmed by the heads of states and government and representatives of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-People's Trade Treaty during the summit held in Havana. Among the participants were Presidents Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela), Daniel Ortega (Nicaragua) and Luis Arce (Bolivia), as well as Prime Ministers Ralph Gonsalves (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) and Keith Mitchell (Grenada). Other countries represented at the meeting were Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, St. Kitts and Nevis and St. Lucia, which returned to the meeting five years after the previous government decided to leave the summit.

"It's so good to meet again!" Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel said referring to the COVID-19 pandemic which the Alliance handled the best way possible concerning the United States' manipulation of the disease in its constant attacks against the bloc's member countries.

We renew our commitment to strengthen this mechanism of political coordination, based on the principles of solidarity, social justice, cooperation and economic equity, reads the Havana Declaration signed by the participants.

The document ratifies the solidarity among the peoples and their commitment to Latin American and Caribbean integration allowing to "jointly face imperialist hegemony

and plans for (world) domination, as well as increasing threats to regional peace and stability."

The summit marked the end of a difficult year for the world but, above all, for the ALBA member countries.

Cuba under a tight blockade; Venezuela and Nicaragua also under siege; Bolivia mobilized due to new coup attempts, were denounced during the summit held in the Cuban capital.

At the same time, a destructive volcano in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and another earthquake struck Haiti which, although it does not belong to the mechanism, receives the bloc's solidarity. In the meantime, the Caribbean continues to withstand the brutal reduction of tourism, together with other economic problems and matters of other nature, including protectionism affecting their fragile economies.

It was a very active period that included the 19th Summit of Caracas held on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Carabobo, as well as different sectorial meetings aimed at bringing cooperation forward.

The group created a humanitarian fund to establish the ALBA Vaccine Bank, as well as the Medicine Bank with the objective of helping alliviate the effects of the pandemic.

Concerning this, it created a humanitarian air corridor using Venezuela's Conviasa airline to transport vaccines, medical staff, treatments and supplies.

It was through that and other Airlines that Cuban medical brigades traveled to member countries of the bloc and further beyond to fight COVID-19. Thousands of lives were saved.

Something similar happened with the air and sea bridge that carried aid to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines after La Soufriere Volcano erupted.

During the Summit Cuba committed to provide vaccines to help put an end to the pandemic.



The Summit renewed the commitment to strengthen this mechanism of political coordination. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

National Capitol

By Aymara**MASSIEL**

HAVANA.- The Cuban National Capitol defies the passage of time and with more than nine decades of history and over 90 years later, rises up like a Phoenix to grow stronger as Cuba's patrimonial site.

The combination of precious woods, over 50 types of marble, fine lamps and candelabras, bronze ironworks, stained-glass windows, upholstery, curtains, sculptures and a variety of works from Cuban and foreign artists is admired as part of its decorative wealth.

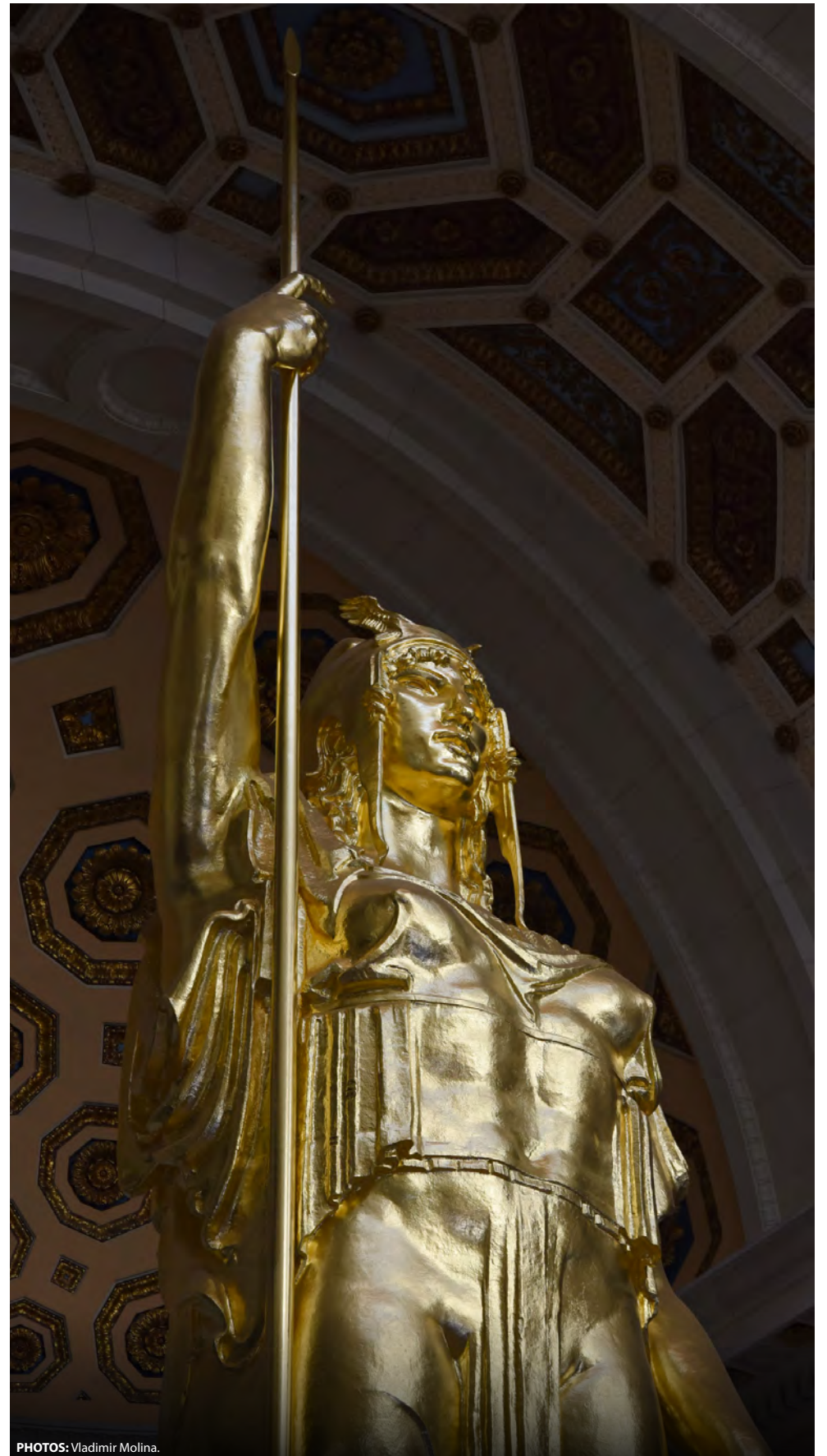
Its impressive gold-plating dome, 91.73 meters high, is one of the outside elements people admire from different parts of Havana. A monumental concrete and granite step welcomes visitors to the building. At the end of the 55 stairs, two sculptures made by Italian artist Angelo Zanelli – in representation of labor and people's tutelary virtue - guard the portico. Also made by Zanelli is the Statue of the Republic, the world's third largest indoor

statue, casted in bronze and recently covered with three gold sheets thanks to the Russian Federation's collaboration.

In one of its halls, a burial mound, an eternal flame and the flags of Spanish American nations – including those of Spain, the United States and Portugal – render tribute to the Homeland heroes, the Unknown Soldier and the foreigners who fought for Cuba's independence.

On the northern and southern ends, two chambers recall the building's original function: lodging the Senate and the House of Representatives of the neocolonial Republic.

The Capitol was declared a National Monument on November 2010 and in light of its visible deterioration, the Office of the Havana City Historian, headed by the late Eusebio Leal, was given the responsibility of restoring the building's splendor and worth through a capital restoration financed by the Cuban government. Today, the National Capitol is the institutional seat of the National Assembly of the People's Power (Cuban Parliament).



PHOTOS: Vladimir Molina.

Chile after the Victory

By Carmen **ESQUIVEL**

HAVANA.—The victory of leftist candidate Gabriel Boric in the Chilean presidential elections represents a milestone in the country's history and hope for Latin America. However, the challenges he will have to face when he takes power in March 2022 are as big as his win. The candidate for Apruebo Dignidad coalition—which groups Frente Amplio (Wide Front), the Communist Party and other political forces—won the December 19 elections with 55.87 percent of votes, an advantage of 11.74 points over his rival José Antonio Kast, a

rightwing extremist of Frente Social Cristiano (Christian Social Front).

People's participation records registered in the country since voluntary attendance to the polls was adopted in 2012 were broken during the past elections. Boric, 35, thus became Chile's youngest president elect and the most voted as well with 4.6 million votes, over the four million votes Eduardo Frei obtained in 1993.

The president has a hard task ahead. He will rule a country that is considered to have one of the highest inequality indexes in the region, hit by COVID-19, high inflation and structural problems caused by a neoliberal model which,

in 2019, led to the biggest protests ever in the country since the end of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-1990).

"The coming years will not be easy. We must cope with social, economic and sanitary consequences of the worst pandemic our country has ever lived in over a century, and also with the causes of the social outbreak, which still exist," Boric admitted in his first speech to the nation.

Developing a healthcare system that makes no distinctions between the rich and the poor, dignifying pensions for all retirees, fair distribution of wealth, better access to housing, strengthening public education and increasing salaries are among the challenges mentioned by the president elect.

"Of course, not everything can be done at the same time and we'll have to define priorities in order to make steps that allow us to gradually improve our people's standards of living," he noted.

Boric also promised to defend the constituent process, which makes them feel proud because it is the first time a constitution is being drawn up in a democratic and fair way, and with the participation of indigenous communities.

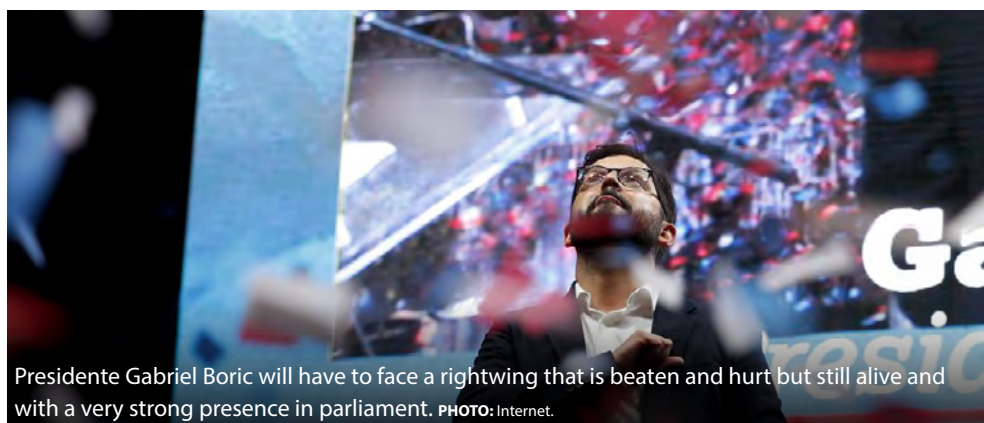
In remarks to *The Havana Reporter*, political

analyst Pablo Jofre characterized as very important the fact that Boric defeated a candidate such as Kast, because he represents Pinochet's ideas and a reversion of all the achievements attained in terms of gender, sexual rights, environmental protection, among others. Nevertheless, he says the challenges ahead for the next president are big indeed, because he will have to deal with a divided parliament: 50 percent central-leftist and the other central-rightist.

On the other hand, Boric will have to face a rightwing that is beaten and hurt but still alive and with a very strong presence in parliament, which will impede bringing forward laws that fail to reach consensus between the conflicting parties.

Jofre recalled that Boric was able to increase his votes but Kast obtained 3.7 million (more than President Sebastián Piñera in the past elections), a figure that is considerable indeed. The expert in international affairs said that the progressive candidate's victory over the extreme rightwing is also positive for Latin America.

Boric's win in Chile, together with the victories in countries such as Peru, Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil with chances for Lula to win, represents a change in the region, where problems are solved among the Latin American countries, without the interference of the United States or the European Union.



Presidente Gabriel Boric will have to face a rightwing that is beaten and hurt but still alive and with a very strong presence in parliament. PHOTO: Internet.

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Year of Great Efforts

By Camila**MAYO**

HAVANA.- Cuba looks at 2022 with optimism and without renouncing to development, in spite all of the economic and social challenges ahead.

After seven consecutive semesters with red numbers, the country entered a phase of gradual recovery that allowed concluding 2021 with almost two percent growth of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).



More than 60 regulations went into effect in order to make agricultural and livestock production more dynamic. PHOTO: ACN.

It was a tough year when the country experienced not only the worst wave of COVID-19 (thousands of people died) but also an increase in shortage due to the lack of hard currencies and the impact of the tightening of the U.S. blockade.

Amid that scenario, the government designed a strategy to alleviate the crisis without abandoning to its mid and long-term goals. For that, it adopted measures to strengthen the state-run enterprise, the mainstay of the Cuban economy.

Likewise, more than 60 regulations went into effect in order to make agricultural and livestock production more dynamic, and new economic actors were given the green light: micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MIPYMES) and nonagricultural cooperatives, with over a thousand approved at the end of 2021.

In parallel, the development of locally produced COVID-19 vaccines and the people's vaccination campaign were other significant steps that allowed closing the year with almost all children over two years of age inoculated with at least one dose of the vaccine; while the one booster shot continues advancing.

As Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel reiterated during the 8th ordinary period of parliamentary sessions, it is indispensable to keep the disease under control in order to advance with the country's goals, when a projected four percent growth of the GDP is expected to be attained at the end of the new year.

International tourism plays a leading role within those goals, because it helps boost other sectors

and is key in obtaining hard currencies; which is why its reopening on November 15 deserved special attention.

The incorporation of new airlines, tour operators and even the resumption in the arrival of cruise ships based on the idea that Cuba is a safe destination, are positive signs suggesting that it is possible to welcome 2.5 million visitors in 2022, accounting for some 1.15 billion USD (484 million more than in 2021).

The goals prioritized in the 2022 Economic Plan aim at solving pressing problems of the Cuban reality, said Economy and Planning Minister Alejandro Gil during the parliamentary sessions.

Therefore, and as part of the gradual economic recovery, the first objective is to attain progress in the process for macroeconomic stabilization and in having the Cuban peso recover its role as center of the financial system, which has weakened by a strong devaluation.

At the same time, the efforts will be directed at rationalizing the prices of goods and services, giving priority to the most sensitive ones for the population, as inflation is a phenomenon that severely affects society.

The country will also prioritize the stability of the national electrical grid, where it is working already to recover power generation capabilities. At the same time, it will continue to offer special attention to people, homes and communities in vulnerable situation.

Transforming the state-run business system and decentralizing power in order to make the municipalities more autonomous and boost territorial growth, are other goals included in the 2022 working agenda. The year is expected to be very busy but Cubans are once more willing to overcome any obstacles.

Meliá Always Optimistic about Cuban Tourism

By Roberto**CAMPOS**

HAVANA.-The recent reopening of hotels run by Meliá Hotels International in Cuba corroborates the philosophy that it continues to set its eyes on the island, mainly because it is a safe destination regarding the sanitary crisis caused by COVID-19 and due to the country's potential. Meliá currently manages 32 hotels and 13,916 rooms, with plans to open another four hotels with 924 rooms in coming years. Therefore, Cuba would become the only destination in America where the company intends to enlarge its hotel infrastructure in the near future. The resumption of tourism in the Caribbean island on November 15 has a favorable impact on the operations of hotel chain, which first established in Cuba in 1990.

Of all the Meliá hotels in Cuba, 18 plan to reopen soon (some of them have done it already). The main hotels in Havana, Varadero, Cienfuegos, Cayo Santa María, Cayo Coco and Holguín are operating, as announced by their managers in the middle of November 2021. In the case of Havana, they mentioned Hotels Meliá Habana and Tryp Habana Libre.

In Varadero, Hotel Meliá Las Américas reopened on October 1. Meanwhile, Paradisus Varadero, Meliá Las Antillas, Meliá Internacional Varadero, Meliá Península Varadero, Sol Palmeras, Sol Varadero Beach and Meliá Varadero resumed operations in November.

Meliá San Carlos and La Unión reopened in the central southern province of Cienfuegos,

while booking for Paradisus Rio de Oro in Holguín Province is available already.

The regional deputy manager of the Spanish hotel chain, Francisco Camps, certified those openings and noted that since the arrival of COVID-19, the corporation decided to define health protocols jointly implemented with the Cuban Tourism Ministry (MINTUR).

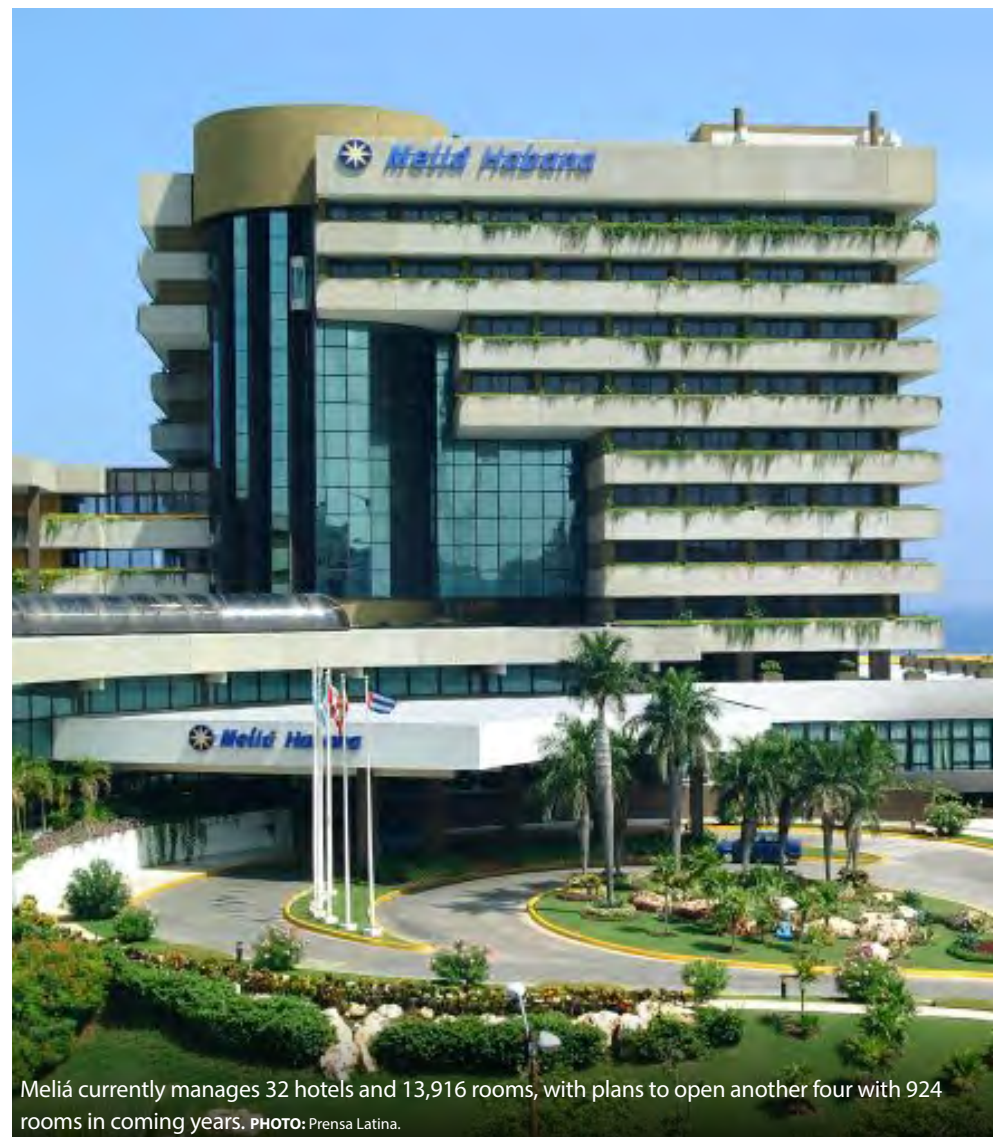
Regarding this, Camps mentioned two new programs that could help stimulate the arrivals of tourists to Cuba: one about the possibility to do telework from hotel rooms and the other about the promotion of long stays.

The expert noted that the establishment of recovery phases and the vaccines developed by Cuban scientists have been wise moves in dealing with the pandemic.

A total of 3,500 active workers from the Meliá hotels have completed the three-dose vaccination schedule, representing 95 percent of the total number of workers.

The Meliá hotels in Cuba are located in Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo, Cayo Largo and Cayo Santa María (keys), and in the provinces of Holguín, Havana, Santiago de Cuba, Camagüey, Cienfuegos, Sancti Spiritus (Trinidad city) and Matanzas (Varadero beach resort).

Cuba expects to recover its tourist industry with the arrival of 200,000 visitors at the end of 2021 and a little over two million in 2022. Before the pandemic, the island was welcoming more than four million tourists on a yearly basis, and was very close to a record of five million.



Meliá currently manages 32 hotels and 13,916 rooms, with plans to open another four with 924 rooms in coming years. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

New Prospects of Industrial Development

By Karina **MARRÓN**

HAVANA.- The Cuban industrial sector started 2022 with new prospects of development following the enforcement, as of January 9, of the policy defined by the Council of Ministers to that purpose.

The guideline, approved in October last year, sets the course for the sector's gradual transformation and modernization, giving priority to areas of higher impact on the country's strategic spheres, as its implementation is aimed at meeting domestic demand with national products.

Because of the criminal and strengthened economic blockade imposed by the United States for over 60 years, the Cuban industry faces a high degree of obsolescence and other problems, which the new policy will try to

resolve based on foreign investments, the introduction of new technology and the efficient application of science and innovation.

In relation to foreign capital, the sector's portfolio of opportunities includes 89 projects related to the light industry and the manufacturing of elements for the renewable sources of energy, among other areas.

Meanwhile, entities attached to the Ministry of Industry currently include over 500 science and innovation projects, many of them in collaboration with national universities.

Improving the country's balance of trade and gradually increasing exports based on the development of more competitive and top-quality products, are also included among the policy's objectives.

With that purpose in mind, the industry fosters productive connections, not only with state entities but also with

other forms of management, as it considers the small, private manufacturing industry and the productions of other economic actors – including cooperatives – as a complement to industrial development.

The creation of the Industrial Development Assistance Fund, which will provide loans for medium and long-term investments, is a new feature that will contribute to foster renovation projects. The fund is also addressed at promoting diversification of exports and productive connections; modernizing the industrial plant, and fostering the generation and increase of the manufacturing added value.

All industrial actors, including the private sector, will be entitled to access this financing provided that they meet the foreseen requirements, in this case, having contributed to its creation and that their projects have been approved by a commission established to such purpose.

The fund is reimbursable, considers the sector's needs and priorities, and is handled as a complement to the economy's plan.

Changing the electricity generation matrix – based on fossil fuels – and improving efficiency in this field are a priority in Cuba. For that reason, the electronic and metallurgical industries will give higher importance to related productions.

In addition, other prioritized lines include the manufacturing of equipment and tools for the agricultural sector, the sugarcane agribusiness and the construction sector, as well as the renovation, consolidation and creation of new capacities for the manufacturing of chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Expanding items such as cleansing and hygienic-sanitary products, textiles, footwear, furniture and boxes, among others, are also important in the Cuban context, as well as the manufacturing of medical devices and industrial robots, to be developed by the electronic industry.



The Cuban industry faces a high degree of obsolescence and other problems. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Recovery of the Electric System Gets Priority

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- One of the priorities the Cuban state has for 2022 is the stabilization of the electric system, whose failure and breakdown of power plants caused a deficit of electricity generation that had a negative impact on the population. According to predictions, a total of 8,099,000 tons (t) of fuel are foreseen to be used this year, of which 5,092,400 will be addressed to electricity generation.

In this sense, about 20,168 gigawatts (GWh) are foreseen to be generated with the support of the AZCUBA Sugarcane Group, foreign-capital companies (photovoltaic solar energy) and the hired, movable power plant.

Consumers of the residential sector shall receive about 9,133 GWh of electricity, while the non-residential sector will receive about 6,400 GWh – 5,833 of them for the state sector and 566 for the private – according to the national plan.

Generation will be distributed as follows: thermic energy (57.1%); fuel (12.8%); movable (12%); energías (7.8%); diesel (5.4%); photovoltaic (1.8%); water (0.5%), and wind (0.1%). The National Electricity Union (UNE) explained that the system's maintenance is highly expensive, as most of the supplies used are purchased in foreign currencies and the service is charged in Cuban pesos, because of the negative impact of the economic, commercial and financial

blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for over 60 years.

Just to give an example, power plants, which are responsible for 40.6 percent of the generation, have a useful life of 30 to 35 years and 8 plants already have over 30 years of exploitation – except two blocs of the Felton plant, in the country's east, which have been synchronized for 25 and 21 years.

In addition, plants have also been affected by the non-execution of planned maintenance. In September, 16 of the 19 units were in operation out of their cycle and some of them, for more than two periods without capital maintenance, UNE added.

One of the strategies the country implements to face problems in power plants includes the hiring of four floating plants, one of which is located in the Bay of Havana and will be connected to the National Electric System.

This plant, which is still undergoing the adjustment and operation stage, will provide 130 megawatts that will allow conducting planned maintenance in other units, and thus recovering power generation.

This is an agreement with the Turkish Karadeniz Holding Company, which has included Cuba in a group of nine countries with floating facilities for electricity generation.

The rest of the generation is divided as follows: 21.7% with oil fuel engines; 21.9% with diesel; about 8% with gas resulting from oil production; about 5% with renewable

sources of energy, and over 3% with the floating units located in Mariel.

The country's strategy and future objective is addressed at producing 100 percent of the energy with renewable sources; that will allow gaining technological independence and working for sustainable development.



About 5% of the generation is with renewable sources of energy. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Determination to Win

By Moisés **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- The very positive results Cuba attained at the 1st Junior Pan-American Games Cali-Valle 2021 were expression of its 212-member delegation's discipline and commitment to the country and determination to win.

Those were the conclusions reached by the country's top sports authorities, who considered that the Cuban delegation's performance in the Colombian event also ratified the strength and vitality of the Cuban sports system, even with the results of young athletes that participated in an international tournament for the first time. It's worth praising fifth place on the medal standings by country, a result attained regardless of material shortages connected with the COVID-19 pandemic and the tightening of the U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade, said Osvaldo Vento, head of the Cuban delegation.

The Cuban representation that participated in the Cali-Valle 2021 games, held November 25-December 5, included athletes from all the provinces and the special municipality of the Isle of Youth, as well as 45 students from Preparatory Schools for Athletes (EIDE). According to Vento, although the main objective of attending the event was to "assess the main athletes of our reserve,

we consider very positive the number of medals won: 29 gold, 19 silver and 22 bronze," as well as having secured 28 places for the 2023 Pan-American Games in Santiago de Chile.

It's worth saying that the Cuban athletes participated in just 186 of the 321 scheduled competitions and disputed 95 titles, winning 29 gold medals -30.5 percent effectiveness. The total of 70 medals were won in 14 sports disciplines, with special mention

to athletics (9-6-3), Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling (9-3-3), boxing (4-1-1), judo (2-2-3), diving (2-2-1), canoeing (2-1-0) and table tennis (1-1-5).

Weightlifting, beach volleyball, modern pentathlon, fencing, karate, rowing and baseball contributed with medals as well.

With their performance, the young Cuban athletes demonstrated they were capable of changing particularly difficult circumstances, like the ones lived over the past two years;

that they were capable of doing their best to at least make a decent performance—in case of those that did not win a medal—stated the President of the Cuban Olympic Committee, Roberto León Richard.

GOLD ROUTE ON A SPECIAL DAY

The first gold medal disputed at the Junior Pan-American Games went to Cuba. It was won by the mixed diving team made up of Anisley García, Carlos Ramos, Laidel Domínguez and Luis Cañabate, and on a very important day: November 25.

That day, but in 2016, the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, passed away. That is why "we worked even harder, because we knew we could give Cuba that moment of happiness," said García.

The gold route started by the young multiple medal winner was followed by another 28 fellow nationals who, as additional incentive, were encouraged and advised by great sporting figures such as Mijaín López, Julio César la Cruz, Omara Durand and Yudith Águila, who attended the games specially invited by Panam Sports.

The Junior Pan-American Games of Cali-Valle 2021 also served as an ideal context for the Cuban Olympic Committee to sign collaboration agreements with its counterparts from Chile, Colombia and Peru.



The first gold medal disputed was won by the mixed diving team made up of Anisley García, Carlos Ramos, Laidel Domínguez and Luis Cañabate. PHOTO: Granma.

Sporting Stars

By Alexis **RÚA**

HAVANA.- In a year marked by the celebration of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, wrestler Mijaín López and judoka Idalys Ortiz were designated the best athletes of the year in Cuba.

López (130-kilogram division) was the big winner among the male athletes thanks to his fourth Olympic title, with which he became the only wrestler in the world with that record ever in the history of those tournaments.

Meanwhile, Ortiz (over 78kg), silver medalist in the Japanese event, obtained the highest number of votes in the women's individual sports category, having won her fourth Olympic medal in Japan.

Boxing was chosen best individual sport, thanks to its performance at the Olympic Games and the World Championships. In the meantime, canoeing was also top on the list with the results of Fernando Dayán Jorge and Serguey Torres pair (C2-1000 meters) and Yarisleidis Cirilo, winners in the categories of non-individual event and most outstanding new athlete.

Miguel Ángel López (volleyball) and Lidianny Echevarría (beach volleyball) were the best within the collective sports, while Arlenis Sierra (cycling) won the prize to the best athlete sponsored by her federation.

The list of the most outstanding sporting figures includes Julio César La Cruz, Andy Cruz and Roniel Iglesias (all boxers), Luis Orta (wrestling), Leuris Pupo (sports shooting), Rafael Alba (taekwondo), Juan Miguel Echevarría (athletics), Yaimé Pérez (athletics) and Fernando Dayán Jorge y Serguey Torres (mentioned above).

In a separate voting, sprinter Omara Durand tops the list of physically disabled athletes, thanks to the three gold medals (100, 200 and 400 meters) won at the Japanese tournament. Meanwhile, long jumper Robiel Yankiel Sol, gold medalist in Japan, was the winner for men.

The prize-giving ceremony was held on December 23, when a special moment was dedicated to the main protagonists of Cuba's excellent performance at the Junior Pan-American Games of Cali-Valle 2021.



Mijaín López was the big winner among the male athletes thanks to his fourth Olympic title. PHOTO: JIT.



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