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# FITCuba-2022 in Varadero Resort

By Wilfredo **ALAYÓN**

MATANZAS.- After being postponed in 2020 and 2021 because of the world epidemiological situation caused by COVID-19, the forthcoming International Tourism Fair (FITCuba-2022) is projected to be the best event organized by the Tourism Ministry (MINTUR) in Cuba.

MINTUR Minister Juan Carlos García Granda recalled that the sector's main trade event will take place from May 3-7 at the Varadero Beach resort, Cuba's biggest and most important center, located in the northern coast of the Matanzas provinces – in the country's west.

The most immediate task and a great challenge we have is to hold this event in Varadero, which will promote products of nature, such as the Havana cigar route, he said.

FIT is included among the main priorities and we have the intention of extending it for a couple of days before and after, he said in a meeting with authorities and officials of the sector in Varadero, situated in the Hicacos peninsula, about 140 kilometers east of Havana.

Varadero is currently ranked second as the world's best beach according to Travellers Choice 2022, as reviewed in the

TripAdvisor site – a referent for travelers who look for a new destination or plan a trip.

This tourist city is only preceded by Grace Bay Beach, in the Turks and Caicos Islands, in the Caribbean. The site included a maximum of 25 beaches, located in countries such as Brazil, Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, the United States, Aruba, Portugal, Italy, Australia, Hawaii, Spain, Cyprus, Greece, Tanzania and Japan.

In a meeting with journalists, MINTUR representative in Matanzas province, Ivis Fernández, told **The Havana Reporter** that FITCuba-2022 will mark a new stage in Cuban tourism.

In this sense, she commented that the sector has had to readapt and readjust itself, with health protocols because of COVID-19, and due to the complex world situation, aggravated by the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

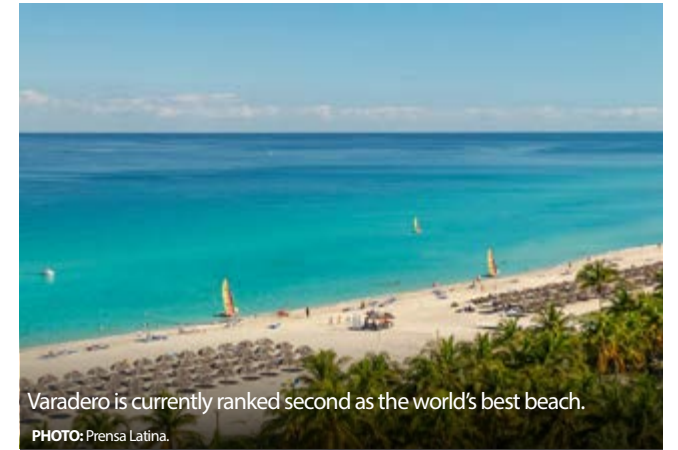
She added that the event will summon travel agencies, tour operators, hoteliers, airlines and other people interested in Cuba's tourist development.

"Varadero, the host city, will welcome Cuba's destination as a whole and will be dedicated to the sun-and-beach resorts," Fernández highlighted.

The official noted that during the post-pandemic reopening stage, Varadero – aka Playa Azul (Blue Beach) – included new values and attractions and conducted a process of maintenance, improvements and investments in the lodging and extra hotel facilities.

In this regard, she referred to the comprehensive restoration of the Plaza América Convention Center – the seat of FITCuba – and the renovation of Casa Perla, a patrimonial building that will give Varadero a high lodging standard, in addition to the new Varadero boulevard.

A renewed Plaza América will be the main host of FITCuba-2022, where participants will benefit from restored conference rooms equipped with new technologies, as per today's requirements, said Zulema Afá, the facility's event organizer.



Varadero is currently ranked second as the world's best beach.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## The Light at the End of the Tourist Tunnel

By Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- All the indications are that, even though there is no immediate solution, the efforts made to recover the tourism sector in Cuba point to the strengthening of tasks and operations in view of the 40th edition of the International Tourism Fair (FITCuba 2022), to take place from May 3-7 this year. Hosting FITCuba at the Varadero beach resort, in the country's west, shows the interest markets have on this industry in the island.

The venue of this meeting, postponed on two occasions because of the health situation caused by COVID-19, is precisely the country's most important resort.

Official statements recently indicated that the tourist activity of the Cuban province of Matanzas – where Varadero is located – hopes to be a referent in the Caribbean area, and the premise is to be more responsible, accessible and inclusive for its visitors.

This idea was mentioned during a work meeting in which Tourism Minister Juan Carlos García participated. At the said event, officials of the sector, hotel and extra-hotel chains and travel agencies analyzed the potentials and perspectives of this industry.

An assessment made by the Tourism Ministry stressed that 2021 was a complex scenario for the development of this activity because of the effects related to the pandemic and the strengthening of the U.S. pressures against Cuba.

However, the Minister highlighted that strategies were adopted in the light of the necessary tourist recovery. He added that Russia, Canada, Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom provided 80 percent of foreign tourists, although the quota of all issuing markets decreased in comparison to 2020.

### TOURISM AGAINST PRESSURES

On February 3, 2022, sixty years after the U.S. economic pressures against Cuba were made official, tourism is one of the

most affected sectors because of the implementation of such measures.

The blockade, which is evident in the financial, economic and commercial barriers, affects all sectors of life in the island, and its punitive measures are hanging over the tourism industry like a sword of Damocles.

This issue is an important topic every time Havana presents its annual report on the blockade imposed for over six decades at the United Nations (UN) multilateral forum. In addition to the measures adopted in recent years by the U.S. government, the suspension of private charter flights from the United States to Cuba – except Havana, although frequencies were likewise limited – is also added.

On top of that, authorization to people subject to the U.S. jurisdiction to attend or organize professional meetings or conferences in Cuba were eliminated, as well as the conduction of transactions linked to public performances, clinics, workshops, exhibitions and sport competitions, among others.



The luxurious Grand Aston Havana hotel opened its doors last March, with 600 rooms.

PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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# Playa Girón: A Heroic Deed

By Melissa**KING**

HAVANA.- The Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón) invasion turned out to be a historic deed that marked the first military defeat of the United States in Latin America, thus renewing pro-independence aspirations on the continent. Operation Pluto was the prelude to the armed incursion directed by the Central Intelligence Agency, which aimed at triggering a psychological war and internal subversion actions to destabilize the emerging Cuban Revolution.

With the objective of carrying out the mercenary actions, the U.S. government created the Brigade 2506, made up of Cuban exiles such as ex-soldiers, policemen and henchmen of the overthrown regime of Fulgencio Batista.

Located on the southern coast of the western province of Matanzas, Playa Girón was chosen for the failed landing operation because it is a hard-to-access swampy area.

Cuba's historic leader Fidel Castro and members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) General Staff were somehow aware of the U.S. plans. In fact, the air raids against the Santiago de Cuba, San Antonio de los Baños and Ciudad Libertad Airports on April 15, 1961 raised the alarm. The objective was to destroy the reduced Cuban air fleet.

It was on April 16 during the funeral service of the victims that Fidel Castro proclaimed the socialist character of the Revolution under the slogan Homeland or Death! He also called the people to take up arms to fight the imminent invasion.

The incursion began very early on April 17 through Larga and Girón Beaches, remote places in Ciénaga de Zapata (Zapata Wetlands). It was a member of the Cuban militia who raised the alarm.

Days earlier, ships with over 1,200 mercenary fighters onboard had left Port Cabezas in Nicaragua, also carrying a large arsenal that included five war tanks, eight tons of explosives, 500 cluster bombs, 700 air-to-ground missiles, 20 tons of ammunitions and communication equipment.

On the first day of combat, the revolutionary pilots brought seven planes down, including bombers. While the Houston and Río Escondido Vessels, which were carrying weapons for the enemy troops, were left out of action. The counteroffensive led by Fidel Castro began on April 18, and involved Rebel Army forces, combatants from the National Militia School, the National Revolutionary Police, air defense artillery battalions, and the militia battalions from the provinces of Cienfuegos, Matanzas and Havana. The attacking troops lost control of Playa Larga and were forced to withdraw to join the other members of the invading brigade.

On April 19, the last day of fighting, the mercenary troops found themselves surrounded in Girón and finally surrendered. Although some of them tried to escape, the majority was captured.

The mercenary troops reported over one hundred casualties and 1,197 prisoners, while the Cuban side had 176 fighters dead and 300 injured. Six decades after the Bay of Pigs invasion, the island still faces U.S. aggressions, which aim at asphyxiating the economy and causing chaos within the population.



On the first day of combat, the revolutionary pilots brought seven planes down. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.



The counteroffensive led by Fidel Castro began on April 18.



On April 19 the mercenary troops found themselves surrounded in Girón and surrendered.



# Consular services will be limited

By Adiane**QUINTANA** and Adriana**ROBREÑO**

HAVANA.- Five years after having suspended the consular services in Cuba, the U.S. government's announcement that the visa issuing process will be resumed in Havana has been applauded both on the island and in the United States.

Cuban Foreign Affairs Minister Bruno Rodríguez called the event "a right step in bilateral relations," and recalled that the decision to suspend them in 2017 used groundless accusations that U.S. diplomats had been attacked in Cuba as a pretext.

From Washington, the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Gregory Meeks, welcomed the decision with joy –although no date for its resumption has been set yet- and urged President Joe Biden to continue committing with the Cuban people.

Democratic Congressman Joaquín Castro said that once the measure takes effect, thousands of Cubans will be able to meet with their relatives in the United States. He also voiced his interest in working together with the Department of State for greater engagement with Cuba. For her part, Democratic representative Barbara Lee stressed on her Twitter account that the move represents a major breakthrough towards the normalization of bilateral relations.

The Center for Democracy in the Americas (CDA) joined the message saying that the reopening of the consular services would prevent Cubans from making a travel abroad - costly and sometimes unsafe- for those U.S. services.

Although the measure was well welcomed by both countries, the services in the Cuban capital will be limited and will not include tourist visa processing nor the resumption of the family reunification program.



The U.S. embassy in Georgetown, Guyana, will continue to serve as the main venue to process immigrant visas for Cuban applicants, according to U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Havana Timothy Zúñiga-Brown.

Notwithstanding, the measure is positive for Cubans, who have been forced to travel to third countries over the past five years to process their visa applications, without any guarantees that they will be approved.

The closing of the embassy meant a step backwards in bilateral relations, after the rapprochement attained at the end of the Barack Obama administration (2009-2017), something current President Joe Biden had promised to rescue during his electoral campaign.

According to Cuban authorities, the suspension of legal ways and reinforcement of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by Washington encourage irregular migration from the island, even at the risk of people's life.

Moreover, the White House constantly breaches the migratory agreements on the approval of 20,000 annual visas for Cuban citizens, something that has also stimulated illegal migration in the country, local authorities say.

In spite of the announced restart of consular services, the Biden administration keeps in place the over 240 unilateral measures adopted by his predecessor Donald Trump, which have intensified the blockade against the island.

## Solidarity Continues in USA

By Ibis**GRADE**

HAVANA.- Numerous activists, friendship associations and organizations of the civil society in the United States advocate better relations with Cuba and voice their rejection of the blockade Washington has imposed against the island for over 60 years.

These calls have been heard over the past few months in cities like Miami, New York and Seattle, which witnessed caravans that call for Bridges of Love and the end of the punitive measures implemented by the U.S. government against the island.

The Bridges of Love project, which is led by Cuban-American professor Carlos Lazo, is now focused on bringing efforts together for a campaign aimed at sending powdered milk for children's hospitals in Cuba.

In fact, that group together with Code Pink have already sent shipments of that product to the Caribbean nation, which has problems to buy milk on the international market due to the economic and financial restrictions of the blockade.

According to Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Code Pink peace organization, these days that wars are proliferating, it is more important than ever to show love and friendship between the peoples of Cuba and the United States.

Meanwhile, Lazo highlighted on his Facebook account that an increasing number of people in Miami is joining the caravans that demand the end of the coercive unilateral measures against Cuba, as it is no longer time to hate but to love.

These signs of solidarity and love toward Cuba were also seen at the International Conference on the Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations held March 19-20 in Manhattan, New York.

People from around the world participated in the event from different digital platforms, when homage was also paid to the Cuban health professionals that fought the COVID-19 pandemic in numerous countries of the world.

The different actions to fight the U.S. economic and political war against Cuba were discussed at the conference, and the upcoming trips to the island were announced as well.

Meanwhile, Ike Nahem, the leader of the New York-New Jersey Cuba Si Coalition, said that initiatives like the Veceremos Brigade and Pastors for Peace Caravans have been travelling to the island for the past two years as a sign of solidarity, in spite of the restrictions imposed by Washington.

The most recent demonstrations of support took place at the end of March in cities in Canada, Bolivia, the Åland Islands (territory of Finland), Panama, Mexico, Slovakia, Belize, Bahamas, El Salvador, Brazil and the United States, with the participation of solidarity groups and movements, and representatives of associations of Cubans living abroad.

In Mexico City the solidarity caravan concluded with an act in front of the Cuban embassy in the city, where Lazo denounced the policy of permanent hostility followed by President Biden.



The Bridges of Love project is led by Cuban-American professor Carlos LAZO. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina.

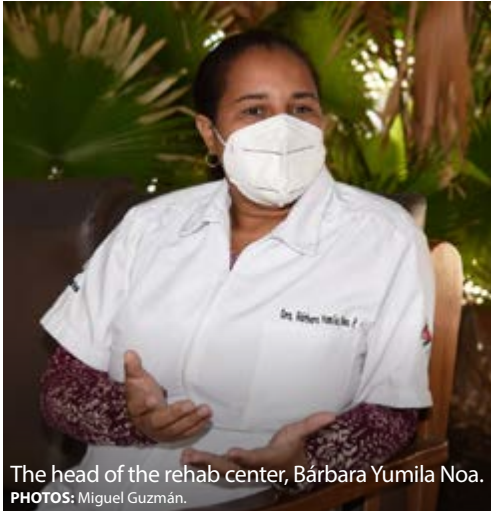


The International Conference on the Normalization of U.S.-Cuba Relations in New York.



# Hopes for neurological restoration

By ZeusNAYA



The head of the rehab center, Bárbara Yumila Noa.  
PHOTOS: Miguel Guzmán.

HAVANA.- The parents of the ten-month-old Haitian baby, Anne Isema Elli, and of Argentinian Camilo Cerviño, 8, decided to bring their children to Havana, Cuba, to have them undergo tests, diagnosis and rehabilitation, as they suffer from central nervous system lesions or diseases.

The two families knew about the vast experience of the International Neurological Restoration Center (CIREN) –inaugurated on February 26, 1989- in multifactorial, thorough and personalized treatments, which are one-of-a-kind in the world.

The thousands of patients from nearly one hundred countries treated at the center for the past 33 years corroborate the strong prestige won by the institution. The research works result into new discoveries that also allow to introduce and develop technologies in the field of neurosciences.

The programs of the scientific-medical entity have had a great impact on neurological restoration and general biological restoration (premature aging and related pathologies, including aesthetic surgery); as well as drug resistant epilepsy, movement disorders, Parkinson's disease and cognitive rehabilitation. They have also reached noninvasive brain stimulation, sleep tests and treatments, Alzheimer's disease, medullary bone pain, autism disorders, the post-COVID-19 syndrome, executive medical checkups, special dental care services, among others.

CIREN has a well-structured research team and clinical and nonclinical services, as well as modern and comfortable hospitals with cutting-edge technology and equipment.

## CHILDREN'S BRAIN GYM

The Haitian girl Elli, in her third cycle at Ciren, stopped crying as soon as she heard the head specialist of the rehabilitation department Yaneysi Caballero, who described to **The Havana Reporter** the procedure they use to care for the little ones.

Caballero, who has a bachelor of Physical Culture and 13 years experience at the institution, said that the diagnosis made by the Integral Psychomotor Evaluation Center

## restoration

(LEIS) shows: the aftereffects of the disease and degree and type of the damage. Then, they have seven days to study and design the treatment.

"They come to the gym the second week for an adaptation period, because most of them are not used to spending seven hours a day at the intensive rehabilitation unit," she stressed.

"We have a strength. We act as a multidisciplinary team: physiotherapy, physical therapy, defectology, speech therapy, holistic medicine and psychology; all of them specialized in pediatric neurology," the expert explained.

The head of the rehab center, Bárbara Yumila Noa, talked about the role of LEIS, where its members act as external assessors that complement the process. At the end, 28 days later, they once again evaluate whether the patient improved or not, she emphasized.

Noa, who is a First Degree Specialist in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and also has a Master's Degree in Therapeutic Physical Culture, praised the high level of the professionals, the teamwork and warm environment, always caring for the good of patients, she said.

## THERAPEUTICAL EXERCISES FOR ADULTS

"My son came in a wheelchair because of a car accident. After his first round of rehabilitation here, he stood up and walked with the aid of a walking frame; he improved a lot, step by step," said Italian Elena Mariani.

"We are providing attention to young Lorenzo for the fourth time," commented the head specialist with the department of adults, Ivette Martínez, who mentioned that a significant number of patients have serious elasticity problems and hemiplegia.

Martínez, who has 32 years experience at CIREN and is a founder of the pediatric rehabilitation section, added that Panamanian Cristopher Said, arrived recently for his fifth stay.

His mother Angela de González said her son was born with brain paralysis. He had been receiving therapy in his country since he was eight-month-old but without any hope. She wanted to try something else to see if there were any improvements.

"We first traveled to Cuba in 2017. He would not eat or drink by himself but began to improve. He speaks rather fluently now because he used to cut words. He developed muscles and now walks with the aid of a harness, she stated. In 2019, he was to have noninvasive brain stimulation but he no longer needed it, the mother added.

Said, 31, expressed: "I sincerely thank everybody for their pleasant manners and thoughtfulness; this treatment brought my life back." Said was fond of journalism since he was little and is a fan of baseball and the Olympic Games. He graduated from Social Communication recently.

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The treatment received by the Panamanian Said allowed him to develop muscles and now walks with the aid of a harness.



# Dreams Turned into Visual Arts

By Liz **BOBADILLA**

HAVANA.- The most extraordinary pieces are conceived by his hands. The immense wealth of knowledge and talent that flow all through Alberto Lescay's body transform dreams, stories and figures into sculptures, engravings, paintings and drawings.

With more than 70 personal exhibitions and a similar number of collective displays along almost 50 years of artistic career, Lescay represents a major boost for culture in Cuba and the Caribbean, especially thanks to its monumental sculptures. Recently awarded with the 2021 National Plastic Arts Prize, the engraver said to be excited with the recognition, which honors his career and at the same time becomes a starting point to continue with his work.

"Cuba's visual arts are praised internationally as extremely powerful, so I think it is very hard for the jury to make a decision when granting a distinction of this kind," said the artist, who was chosen among 32 award nominations.

Lescay told The Havana Reporter he always has the intention of stimulating the public, outside specialized scenarios, so as to maintain the dialogue with the pieces because "they are for them; the pieces aren't located in my spaces and the idea is

to know the exchange that can exist between the audiences." "I soon realized that portraying the creative expressions of the Caribbean nation was my responsibility and I studied a lot for that; in fact, more than usual, for almost 16 years," recalled Lescay, who is also National Culture laureate.

His professional training includes the 1968 certificate in painting, the 1973 certificate in sculpture granted by the National School of Art and the Art Teacher certification granted in 1979 by the Repin Academic Institute of Sculpture, Architecture, Painting and Graphics in St. Petersburg.

Lescay reminded of the government's support and trust placed on him since he began his training up to the present day, especially with the creation of the Caguayo Foundation for Monumental and Applied Arts, founded 25 years ago.

The project "encourages the unification of art, design and architecture schools, as a meeting point where theoretical spaces and creation converge," the artist said. It has a dynamic group that has allowed to look for creative solutions at Cuban institutions and the placing of monumental pieces in different Cuban cities.

Lescay, 71, has developed most of his work in the Eastern province of Santiago de Cuba, his birthplace. His signature appears on works such as the group of sculptures at the Antonio Maceo Revolution Square, the monument dedicated



Lescay represents a major boost for culture in Cuba and the Caribbean. PHOTO: Prensa Latina

to the Cimarrón (Runaway Slave) and the one inspired by Mariana Grajales, who is known as the Mother of the Homeland in Cuba, among others.

He is also the author of small-format sculptures and graphic series that have been shown at prestigious galleries and museums in Cuba and other countries such as Mexico, the United States, Canada, Venezuela, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Jamaica, Brazil and Russia.

With this award, the member of the Union of Cuban Writers and Artists of Cuba and of the International Association of Plastic Artists enlarges his list of prizes, which also includes the National Culture Award.

## New Building for Dance Enthusiasts

By Martha **SÁNCHEZ**

HAVANA.- The Liza Alfonso Dance Cuba (LADC) company has increased its social and educative work with the opening of a new building on the popular seawall drive known as Malecon of Havana where, since the first days of March, different workshops are being taught, including ballet, flamenco, popular, Afro-Cuban and urban dance.

With the name MaleconART 255, the building houses a local development project focused on offering "more art, ways, and spaces, on

being a center with all and for the good for all, like José Martí taught us," said the director, teacher and choreographer Liza Alfonso, who assumed this new challenge upon a request made by former historian of Havana, Eusebio Leal, who died in 2020.

At first Liza refused, but the Doctor of Historical Sciences and Master of Archaeological Sciences would not take a refusal for an easy answer and always gave her and her three-decade-old enterprise his personal support, so he took the initiative to the jubilation of the Office of the City Historian.

The building is on Malecón seaside drive, a few meters from Galiano Street. Young artists trained at LADC together with some of the company's professors will be teaching the center's different workshops.

"There are not many material resources nowadays, but this project involves the dream, aspirations, consecrated work, willingness and good will of all those taking part in it,"

said Alfonso during the inauguration of the building, also known as LADC+.

The premise had formerly served as headquarters for the Automotive and Aeronautic Association, the Cuban Association of the United Nations, the Spanish Cultural Institute and the Irene Rodríguez Dance Company, among other entities.

Workshop registrations opened on February 28 for children five years old on and for adults without age limit, said regisseur Lorena Flores, a LADC dancer and one of the young artists responsible for fostering the MaleconART 255 work, together with her colleague Claudia Fernández.

"We'll have all possible dance styles, talks, presentations, book reading, audiovisual screening, film, theater, plastic arts and more," stated teacher Liza Alfonso.

The lessons began on March 7. The building could also host different artistic events in the future.

In 2020, LADC was declared official headquarters of the Andalusia Flamenco School (EFA) in Cuba, although the company cultivates the so called fusion style, which combines elements from flamenco, ballet, contemporary dance, folklore and different popular dances.

"It is precisely due to this fusion mostly that we've seen how audiences from around the world feel identified with the company proposals," noted Alfonso.

"I also think that the energy with which LADC dances is crucial. The company has this halo of mystery; but it is something contagious, immersed in happiness, a spirit, a strength and above all, I translate it as soul, life and energy," she added.

When one is able to transmit all that to the public, because you are doing it from very deep inside you, in an authentic way, sharing that art, the barrier breaks immediately and the artists connect with the audience easily," the director stated.



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# Inequities Worsen the Crisis in Latin America

By Raquel **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The situation for 2022 in Latin America is likely to be even more uncertain and complex, where the recovery and increase of the labor market will be slower than what it had been predicted, stated Ramon Pichs, director of Cuba's World Economy Research Center.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, the expert explained there will be greater inflationary pressures, high exchange rate volatility, low investment and production levels and high levels of informal employment, inequality and poverty.

The sanitary crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic deteriorated the socioeconomic situation in the region, with surplus stocks in the labor markets as compared to the behavior of the economic activity, in an area characterized by huge social debts.

About 30 percent of the jobs lost in 2020 could not be recovered in 2021, while the informal labor market continues to grow in parallel. This means that a bigger number of workers are engaged in lower-quality jobs, the researcher pointed out.

However, job recovery is partial and in many cases occurs at the expense of certain

population groups like women; putting them at big disadvantage, with increasing gender gaps on the regional labor market. In the third trimester of 2021, the female employment rate stood at 49.7 percent, while that of men was 71.5 percent, two percent less than in the same period of 2019.

## RED NUMBERS

According to the expert, the current context is subject to the evolution of the virus and possible appearance of more aggressive and contagious strains. Those perils, he stressed, will go on as long as there is unequal vaccination management. It's a reality and we may live under these circumstances for a long time, but that impact also has an economic and social price, said Pichs, who is also Doctor of Economic Sciences. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) had envisaged a 6.2 percent regional growth for 2021. However, less than half of the region's countries are expected to return to their 2019 economic levels this year 2022.

Only eleven countries were able to grow in 2021, and another three are likely to join them in 2022, added Pichs, who said that the crisis

caused by the pandemic has long-lasting effects on the economic growth of most Latin American and Caribbean countries.

As an example he mentioned that the sending of resources abroad continues, and that in 2021 the Latin American countries –with the exception of the Caribbean– paid millions in negative net transfer to other nations.

With regards to the debt service coverage ratio alone, the region currently pays 40 percent of

the value of goods and services exports. But, if the interest rates increase, the amount of money to pay would increase as well; not to mention that Latin America has a high percentage of investment capital allocated to portfolios.

As long as the debt grows, those economies get unstable and are logically less attractive to investment capitals in the short term. The conditions in Latin America will get worst, he stressed.



About 30 percent of the jobs lost in 2020 could not be recovered in 2021. PHOTO: Internet.

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# International Caribbean Festival

By Martha **CABRALES**

SANTIAGO DE CUBA.- The 41st edition of the International Caribbean Festival will take place in this Cuban city from July 3 – 9 this year under the auspices of Casa del Caribe, on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

Also known as Fiesta del Fuego (Fire Festival), the event will make emphasis on the foundation of Casa del Caribe, an institution dedicated to studying, researching and promoting Cuba and the Caribbean people's culture.

After two years of hosting the festival in the digital platforms – because of the pandemic of COVID-19 – this edition is aimed at again gathering groups, leaders, artists, cultural promoters and scholars from Cuba, the Caribbean and the world in situ.

Organizers stated that the event's objective is to take once again to the streets and squares of the city of Santiago de Cuba, with the contagious joy of its welcoming people, complying with the protection measures in place against the pandemic.



After two years of hosting the festival in digital platforms this edition is aimed at again gathering in situ. PHOTO: Prensa Latina

The festival will also be dedicated to the 40th anniversary of Septeto Turquino (Turquino Septet) – founded in 1982 at the University of Oriente – and the 30th anniversary of the Macubá Theater Studios – a renowned artistic group headed by professor and National Theater awardee Fátima Patterson.

The festival will be adapted to the epidemiological conditions linked to COVID-19, the organizers stressed.

In spite of the difficulties created by this pandemic, last year's festival developed virtual programs but ended up with the traditional Devil's Burning at Barrancas, a site that preserves the Haitian legacy. "Against all the odds," the festival has been held without a break in spite of hurricanes, earthquakes and other natural phenomena, even in spite of political instability circumstances such as the Honduras 2009 coup d'état, when tribute was rendered to that culture.

On that occasion, the city expected the participation of President Manuel Zelaya, who was violently removed from his constitutional mandate.

A lesson learned by the Casa del Caribe collective and other cultural institutions in Santiago is resilience in the face of various onslaughts, in an admirable effort to sustain at all costs this meeting of brothers and sisters based on Caribbean spirituality, according to experts.

That vocation of resistance, that has maintained alive the traditional popular culture through centuries, will put forward the program of activities organized by Casa, respecting the restrictions imposed by the pandemic.

The XV International Colloquium held last January in memory of Joel James, founder of Casa and the Caribbean festivals – which he headed until his death, on June 2006 – was a good preamble.

The poster of this year's festival, considered an impressive legacy for the Cuban culture, was designed by Alexis Caballero. Its bright colors and flames make reference to the festival's fire, an image that will accompany all activities prior to the summer and to the preparations for the jubilee, in the middle of the summer.

## Guasch Palace, a Jewel of Eclecticism

By Claudia **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- Seahorses, gargoyle-like heads and winged monsters take visitors by surprise when arriving to the Guasch Palace, an eclectic building of the city of Pinar del Río, in Cuba's westernmost province.

The current Tranquilino Sandalio de Noda Natural History Museum dates back to 1914, when its designer and constructor, Francisco Guasch Ferrer, finished the work with the assistance of only two builders, as a present to his wife.

According to historic files, the creator's conception of the work had a peculiar style, which included a reinterpretation of different cultures he met and a combination of elements characteristic of the Gothic, Egyptian, Byzantine and Islamic art, with influences of Catalan modernism. For that reason, in the palace, people can

appreciate Doric capital, Arab pointed arches and Hindu porticos, as well as an Egyptian columns in which the Pharaoh and his court appear.

For the palace whose construction began in 1909, Dr. Guasch Ferrer used all his economic resources and also devised the stained glass windows, painted pictures for the walls, built much of the furniture and designed the lamps, later made in Europe. Another attraction of the place is the universe of creatures from the animal kingdom, in a facility whose patio looks like a Jurassic park – with dinosaurs sculptures made of stone.

The Guasch Palace is considered one of the first jewels of eclecticism in Cuba and the Américas.

The palace is the seat of the Natural History museum since March 8, 1979. Its objective is to show the Cuban fauna's most representative elements and exotic species.



Another attraction of the place is the universe of creatures from the animal kingdom. PHOTO: Prensa Latina





# Security of Cuban Vaccine in Italy

By Frank **GONZÁLEZ**

ROME.- Safety and efficacy as a universal booster dose were demonstrated by the Cuban anti-Covid-19 immunogen Soberana Plus in a joint clinical study of the Finlay Vaccine Institute in Havana and the Amedeo di Savoia Hospital in Turin. "Soberana Plus Turin" was the name of the observational, clinical trial addressed at checking reactogenicity – reaction to the vaccine – and immunogenicity – ability to generate an immune response – in people protected with the basic cycle of the injections authorized in Italy against the disease.

About thirty volunteers injected with Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson and AstraZeneca traveled to Havana to receive the doses of the vaccine created by scientists of the Finlay Institute, after providing blood samples that were analyzed by Cuban institutions.

Back in Italy, and 28 days after the injection, the group's members were taken another blood sample at the Turin Hospital's Microbiology and Virology Lab, for a parallel blood analysis.

This was the second joint initiative between the two entities, after blood samples of Cubans injected with Soberana Plus were analyzed at the Amedeo di Savoia Hospital – which proved the vaccine's ability to induce neutralizing antibodies against the Alfa, Beta and Delta variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

In practice, Soberana Plus Turin included two researches: first, a clinical trial endorsed by the

Medication, Equipment and Medical Devices Regulation Authority of the Republic of Cuba; second, an observational study authorized by the respective institution of Turin.

With these projects, promoted and organized by the Agency for Cultural and Economic Exchange with Cuba (AICEC), both countries strengthened collaboration in the field of health, which started with the assistance Cuba provided to Italy to face COVID-19.

Doctors and nurses of the Henry Reeve International Contingent of Doctors Specialized in Disasters and Serious Epidemics helped their Italian colleagues face COVID-19 at a time in which the pandemic was at its peak – in 2020 – in the cities of Crema and Turin.

The work of the Cuban health professionals was received with several signs of gratitude, and almost two years later, it is still appreciated all over the country, especially in Turin, where 38 Cuban collaborators still provide their services and receive the support of a group of volunteers and translators created by AICEC.

The Cuban health professionals left an important imprint there, especially because of the bonds established with the Amedeo di Savoia Hospital and the Local Health Company – the institution responsible for managing the city's health system. Young Italian scientist Fabrizio Chiodo – a collaborator of the Finlay Institute – was a key person in the conduction of Soberana Plus Turin. He highlighted the contribution of the trial to continue proving, even more, the importance of the vaccines designed, developed and produced by Cuba.

# Syrians Thankful for Donations

By Fady **MAROUF**

DAMASCUS.- Syrian authorities, health experts and citizens thanked Cuba for the vaccines donated to this country -with a civil war since 2011- and praised their efficacy.

The Cuban vaccines are largely being administered at the Al-Faiha tent hospital fitted out in the capital for this goal, as well as at others in the rest of the country's provinces.

The director of the tent hospital, Yasser Al-Zahra, told The Havana Reporter that as of March, the medical center had vaccinated 716 people with Soberana 02, Abdala and Soberana Plus.

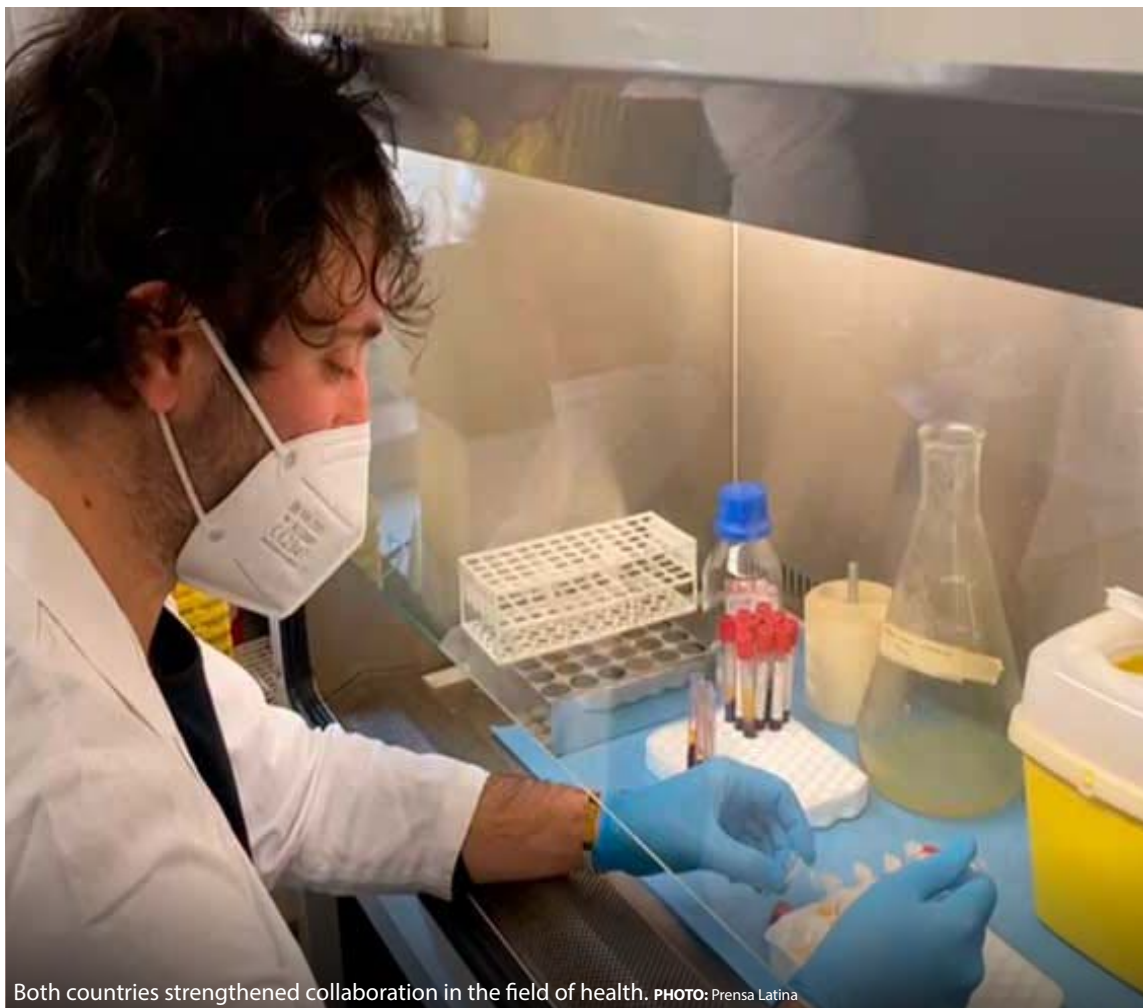
The Cuban vaccines are increasingly accepted in the world not only because they are effective, but also because they have less side effects compared to others, the doctor said.

In an interview with the Kawakab Suleiman, 48, said she chose to be vaccinated with the Cuban shots because of their great prestige and minimal side effects, as she suffers from migraine.

Doctor Aya Al-Laimouni, who is part of the medical staff involved in the vaccination operation, commented that the (Syrian) people are aware that the Cuban vaccines are more than 90 percent efficient in fighting COVID-19 and that no severe symptoms have so far been reported among those vaccinated.

Cuba's ambassador in Syria Miguel Porto noted that the Cuban vaccines broke the unfair blockade imposed against Damascus, and that it was thanks to the efforts of Cuban scientists and technicians that it was possible for the Syrian people to have access to those vaccines.

Last February Cuba donated 240,000 COVID-19 doses of Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus, hence ratifying its historic stance that it shares what it has and not what it has left.



Both countries strengthened collaboration in the field of health. PHOTO: Prensa Latina



Cuba donated 240,000 COVID-19 doses of Abdala, Soberana 02 and Soberana Plus. PHOTO: Prensa Latina



# Women in the Center of Transformations

By EverMELLADO

HAVANA.- Cuba shows progress in terms of women's political, cultural, social and family rights, together with the challenges they cope with in the center of the transformation process undergoing on the island.

The foundation of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) in 1960, which currently groups 90 percent of women over 14 years of age, allowed them to participate in policy-making and the implementation of measures to eradicate prejudices and stereotypes that had them keep a subordinate position in the society.

Today, over 60 years later, Cuban women hold nearly 49 percent of seats in the National Assembly of the People's Power (Parliament), while 51 percent of the provincial governments and 34 percent of municipal leaderships are headed by women.

According to statistics by the Ministry of Sciences, Technology and Environment, of the 89,214 people dedicated to those activities in the country, 53 percent are women, who also account for 68 percent of the 7,750 scientists designated at the end of 2019.

Cuba currently has 13,731 health collaborators in numerous countries, and women represent 54 percent of those professionals.

Far beyond the achievements attained with regards to equal contribution in the fields of production and leadership tasks and the recognition of their contribution to the family as the heart of the society, the experts note

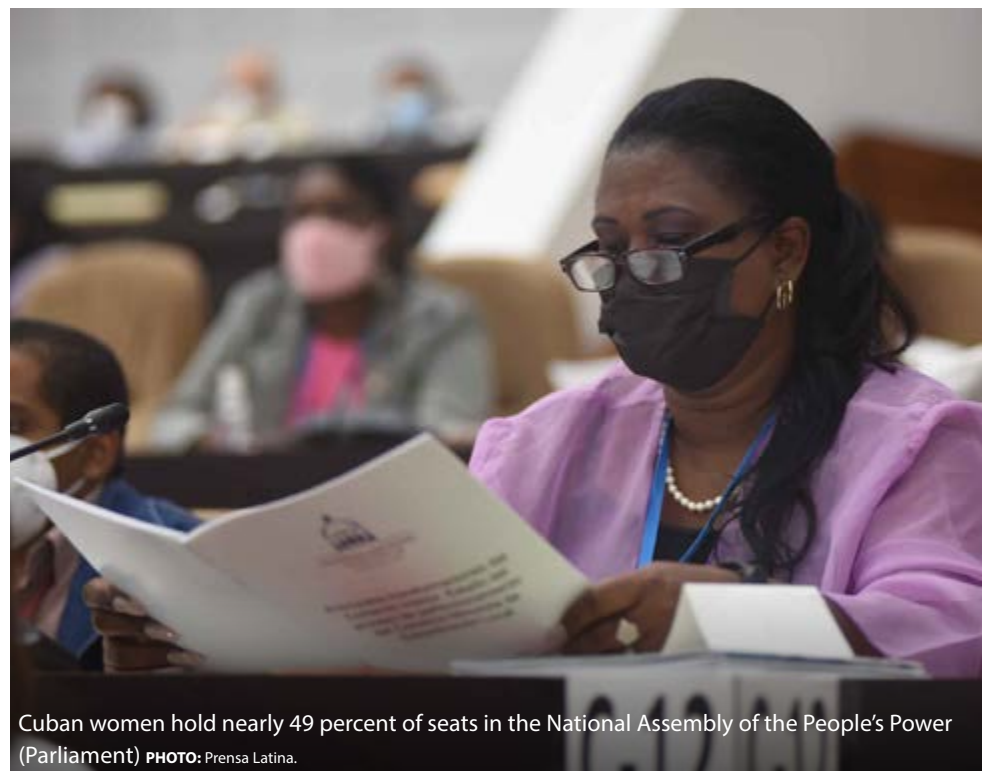
that they face sexist cultural barriers that hinder their full personal satisfaction.

Therefore, the implementation of the National Program for Women's Growth is considered a cornerstone in fostering actions aimed at ensuring equal rights and the institutionalization of women-related policies.

That initiative updated the National Action Plan of 1997, with the objective of preserving the achievements conquered and allowing Cuban women to grow in the middle of the ongoing transformations.

On the other hand, the Families' Code draft bill, currently under popular consultation, recognizes the economic value of the household work, care for the elderly or disabled people and emphasizes the figure of vulnerable divorced women with pension, as well as the protection of children and older adults.

It likewise includes the gender-based violence issue in the family legislation, previously included on the Penal Code only and in administrative law in a lesser degree; characterizing all forms of violence: physical, psychological, economic and sexual.



Cuban women hold nearly 49 percent of seats in the National Assembly of the People's Power (Parliament) PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

This year, the central Cuban province of Sancti Spiritus hosted the national activities marking International Women's Day on March 8.

For the occasion, FMC General Secretary Teresa Amarelle stressed the role of Cuban women in the middle of the reinforcement of the U.S. economic, financial and commercial blockade and the complex situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

They, she said, are examples of their role in transforming the society, with an active participation in the country's main decision-making policies and are champions in the conquest of rights.

# Efforts in favor of world peace acknowledged

By ErnestoMELLADO



Iraklis Tsavdaridis, the Executive Secretary of the World Peace Council (WPC). PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

HAVANA.- The fact that Cuba will hold the upcoming 7th International Seminar on Peace and the Abolition of Foreign Military Bases will recognize the island's commitment with the fight against militarization and warfare.

According to Iraklis Tsavdaridis, the Executive Secretary of the World Peace Council (WPC), the organization that sponsors the event, set for May 4 to 6, the Caribbean island is a leading country in the efforts towards peaceful coexistence among States.

The 22nd WPC World Assembly will be held in parallel to the seminar scheduled in the eastern city of Guantánamo, as prelude to the world meeting of that international organization, which will take place this year in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Referring to these meetings, which were also convened by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), the Greek authority said they have a special meaning because they will be held in a Cuban territory where the United States illegally maintains a military base against the will of the Cuban people and government.

It will also be in recognition of the island's successful efforts in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and its contributions to the world with the development of homegrown vaccines and health aid to some 50 countries; in spite of the reinforcement of the U.S. economic,

financial and commercial blockade, stated Tsavdaridis.

In a press conference held recently at the ICAP headquarters, the WPC executive secretary reiterated the need to find a political and diplomatic solution to the conflict in Ukraine, and urged the countries involved to hold fruitful talks.

He noted it is important to take into consideration the role played by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United States in the crisis that led to a Russian military operation in the Donbass region on February 24.

Tsavdaridis also warned about the return of fascism in Europe and, in some cases, he said, with institutional and financial support of governments from that region. Similarly, the official called attention on attempts to rewrite history ignoring the horrors of fascism and the sacrifices made to defeat it.

He stressed the CMP stance in favor of peaceful coexistence and respect for human rights and against the use of force to solve disputes between States, in compliance with the UN Charter.

He likewise rejected what he called other forms of war against peoples such as blockades and unilateral coercive measures that attempt against the sovereignty, self-determination, independence and peace of the countries.



# Peculiarities of Sancti Spíritus

By Mayra **PARDILLO**

**SANCTI SPÍRITUS.**— The city of Sancti Spíritus or Espíritu Santo, the fourth of the first seven villas founded by the Spanish conquerors in Cuba and the only one that preserves its original name in Latin, shows several peculiarities.

It was declared the City of Murals, but the name for which it is known and that has spread beyond local and national borders, to reach other places of the world, is City of Yayabo – because of the river with the same name goes through its territory.

According to local experts, it is the only village that can bear testimony to the exact location of its foundation or first settlement – the Pueblo Viejo site, a National Monument.

The urban historic center of this splendid city, which is over five centuries old, was also declared a National Monument, on October 10, 1978.

The town, founded on June 4, 1514, stands out for its narrow streets and colonial houses, with red-tile roofs that have survived the passing of the years, stained-glass windows, doorknockers and mural paintings, in contrast with the modernity or simplicity of other areas.

In its transfer to its second and definitive settlement in 1522, the bibijaguas that pierced the navel of newborns had nothing to do with it, as indicated by the legends that adorn the surroundings, such as those of the güije (a mythat prowls the Yayabo River on moonlit nights).

In 1522, the city was moved to a second and final settlement. The reason for this has nothing to do with the leaf-cutter ants that bit on newborn babies'

navel, as people say. It is just one of the legends that season the environment, such as that of El Güije, a mythological, black child who prowled around the Yayabo river on full moon nights.

María Antonieta Jiménez, Historian of the City, points out that there are three works on the list of valuable constructions: the bridge over the Yayabo River –the only one of its kind in the country–, the Main Parish Church and the Main Theater, the first two of which are National Monuments.

At the main entrance of this temple stands the enigmatic Puerta del Perdón where, it is said, the young Rosa del Castillo y Barroso was buried by her own decision, so that the parishioners could step on the place where her remains would rest and thus atone for their sins.

The truth about this city, a cradle of fables and traditions, is that it was looted in the second half of the 17th century by a gang that desecrated the church, 'destroying the files and stealing the famous golden rooster donated by Don Pedro Pérez de Corcha in 1612.' A testimony of this appears in the book Sancti Spíritus, Epílogo para una historia inconclusa (Sancti Spíritus, Epilogue for an unfinished story), by journalist and writer Raúl García Álvarez, from Sancti Spíritus.

The permanence of names from the catholic list of saints also make the city streets special, as well as the Coro de Clave (Choral Choir), which, according to specialists, is the only of its type in Cuba.

If this were not enough, the province – with the same name of the capital city – has the privilege of housing two of the first seven colonial villas founded in Cuba: Sancti Spíritus and Trinidad – the latter, a World Heritage Site.





# Lula Leads Electoral Polls

By Osvaldo **CARDOSO**

BRASILIA.-In a surprising decision, Brazilian Federal Supreme Court (STF) Judge Edson Fachin annulled former President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's convictions related to the dismantled Lava Jato operation.

The founder of the Workers' Party (PT) thus recovered his political rights, representing a sudden change in the upcoming presidential electoral race in October.

A year ago, the Supreme Court had dismissed corruption sentences that kept the former working leader behind bars for 19 months, preventing him from joining current President Jair Bolsonaro in the 2018 presidential run.

The annulment of the sentences and other wins in court were followed by another revealing court decision, according to which former judge and Minister of Justice Justícia Sérgio Moro was not impartial when trying Lula.

Lula's defense argued that by accepting the post of minister, Moro would have a "political position" and that "he used his role as judge in a biased way to help

groups opposed to the former president." According to the lawyers, Lula was a "target of lawfare (the strategic use of law for illegitimate goals)" and a victim of Lava Jato.

Another important decision was made on March 2 when STF Justice Ricardo Lewandowski suspended the last penal action against Lula over the Lava Jato case. The case deals with alleged influence

peddling in the purchase of Swedish Gripen fighters for the Air Force.

The suspension of that last action responded to an appeal made by Lula's defense, who criticized the Lava Jato actions and warned there was a plan intended to use the law to attack the PT leader and his lawyers.

When presenting the resource, Lula's lawyers used leaked messages where former attorney Deltan Dallagnol, who was also the former coordinator of Lava Jato, "tries to build an accusation."

Other messages support the defense's speech at the time that some groups were being organized then to accuse the former president with false arguments.

Now that he got rid of the last of the 25 processes connected with Lava Jato, Lula should return to the courts as accuser.

According to Folha de Sao Paulo columnist Monica Bergamo, the first case will be against Dallagnol.

The Supreme Court of Justice is expected to hear the case in which Lula asks for a million real (some 195,000 USD) compensation for moral damage.

Dallagnol is charged with abuse of power when he tried the former president without proof.

Lula is leading all the opinion polls heading into the upcoming electoral race, where Bolsonaro aspires to be reelected.



The founder of the Workers' Party (PT) leads electoral polls. PHOTO: Internet.

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# U.S. Blockade hinders bank transactions

By Cira**RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- The aggressive policy of the United States with its economic, commercial and financial blockade has resulted in the last three years for the Cuban banking and financial sector in more than 850 actions that have prevented operations with foreign banks. It is no secret to anyone, and this is considered by the island's authorities, that this is the main obstacle to

the country's development, the implementation of the National Economic and Social Development Plan and the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Negotiations and transfers with entities from any regions of the world are affected as well, with its consequent rise in operation costs.

The Central Bank of Cuba's (BCC) Manager for International Affairs and Protocol, Juan Jorge Galego, told The Havana Reporter that in 2019, 2020 and 2021, those measures were implemented amid a very complex scenario, characterized by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a cruel way and in the middle of a sanitary crisis, a considerable number of those actions were connected with the acquisition of medicine, raw materials and other resources for the health sector, as well as food for the population.

Galego noted that another aspect of the blockade against Cuba is that the restrictions banning the use of the U.S. dollar in Cuban commercial and financial transactions are still in place. Cuban residents abroad cannot even open bank accounts in the country where they are living, he added.

Those people are also forbidden to use certain credit cards or make transactions normally, only because they are Cuban residents.

In addition, beginning in June 2021, Cuban banking and financial institutions were forced not to accept, temporarily, cash bank deposits in dollars, due to the obstacles the blockade poses to exports.

The BCC director stressed that the banking and financial system continues to be one of the main targets of the U.S. government's hostile measures, which were tightened when Donald Trump occupied the White House and that are still in place.

In May 2019, the Trump administration activated Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which shows the extraterritorial nature of that legislation in clear violation of international law, as it forces foreigners to choose between dealing with the United States or Cuba, thus imposing a secondary boycott, Galeno emphasized.

In addition, in 2020 the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) decreed, under the jurisdiction of that country, the ban on remittances to Cuba through Fincimex and AIS, and also included the International Financial Bank on the list of restricted Cuban institutions.

Cuba's inclusion on the U.S. list of State Sponsors of Terrorism alleging false and cynical arguments is of public knowledge to banking institutions.

Galego recalled that the distinguishing element during the Barack Obama government (2009-2017) were the heavy fines against foreign banks for having made transactions with countries sanctioned by OFAC, including Cuba.



The banking and financial system continues to be one of the main targets of the U.S. government's hostile measures against Cuba.

## Good Practices and Technological Solutions

By Teyuné**DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The transformation of a formerly impoverished rural landscape into an agro-ecological farm developed thanks to the application of good practices and technological solutions, has become a reality.

La Finca del Medio was a family wish intended at creating a different way of life without depending on too many things for living; being able to produce our own food; a 20-year journey that has not been exempted from difficulties, Leydis Casimiro, one of the project's member, told **The Havana Reporter**.

When we moved to this location, in 1993, one of the main problems we faced was the lack of workers, as the family – composed of 11 members at present – only included 4 people at the time, two of which were minors (the older was 12 years old), Casimiro commented.

She added that because of that, her father – José Antonio Casimiro – had to develop his innate, innovative skills. He designed an equipment for animal-drawn implements that replaces the work of 66 men in the farm and is able to conduct 28 different agricultural tasks.

In 2005, the Campesino a campesino (Farmer to farmer) Movement recruited the farm's members as agro-ecological promoters. At present, they are part of other groups, such as Permacultura en Cuba, SlowFood Internacional, the Biomas Cuba project and other national and international academic institutions.

Finca del Medio stands out for the innovative tools and actions it implements, such as the hydraulic ram, the construction of barriers for

soils' protection, the creation of hedges, crop rotation and fallow areas.

Other actions include production practices and the use of natural fertilizers; reforestation with fruit trees; innovation in bio-digesters; a gravity feed irrigation mechanism; bio-constructions, among others.

Another outstanding aspect is the use of different renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind and the abovementioned bio-digesters. That allows the farm to generate 95 percent of the energy it uses and to get rid of the use of fossil fuels, which they started to enjoy seven years after moving into the location.

Casimiro also explained that from 2001 to 2018, Finca del Medio hosted several events, congresses and workshops; however, it was not until 2018 that they decided to join rural tourism. The idea was to do it as part of an additional activity to generate incomes from the provision of lodging and meals, as well as to expand the project's knowledge, principles, values and ethics to other contexts.

Notwithstanding the above, the essence of Finca del Medio lies in the initiative La idea de sobre la mesa (The idea on the table), which José Antonio Casimiro excellently defines.

"It is the root of a life model where the family farm can have the good fortune of turning a set of simple and tiny details into the main expression of culture, thus giving the title of 'small farmers' a big meaning," he stressed.

"We can show on the table the natural conception of food, from the selection of seeds to tasting. La idea sobre la mesa shows a new agricultural thought that people can see, smell, touch and taste as if it were an art gallery," he added.



Leydis Casimiro, one of the project's member. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



# Agricultural Financing Opens New Horizons



The granting of loans is part of measures approved by the government to meet the unmet needs for agricultural products. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

By Miriam**CÉSAR**

HAVANA.- Over 287,300 agricultural and livestock producers have benefited from credits granted by the Agricultural Promotion Bank of Cuba, one of the tools that allows to have long-term state funds, thus fostering food availability in the country.

Implemented on September 1 last year, the initiative granted loans worth some 1.42 billion Cuban pesos in 2021, accounting for 79 percent of the 1.80 billion pesos (75 million USD) with which it began.

The granting of loans is part of the 63 measures approved by the government to meet the unmet needs for agricultural products.

The Agricultural Ministry's General Director for Economic Affairs, Alexis Rodríguez, told **The Havana Reporter** that the Agricultural Promotion Bank is one of the most important actions that encourage agricultural producers, as it provides them with working and investing capital.

Faced with the demand of agricultural workers and the inability to create a new bank, we analyzed the fastest and more effective way to speed up funding operations, through the Bank of Credit and Commerce (Bandec), a commercial institution with representation in almost all the country's territories, he informed.

When explaining the current situation of the sector, he stated that the lack of basic supplies and technologies is what most prevents the sector from being efficient, thus negatively influencing yield per cultivated area, which is way below the levels needed.

Rodríguez rated as positive the first results of this step, which is decisive to encourage strategic fields for the Cuban agriculture sector such as: the production of pork meat, beef, rice, banana/plantain, guava and yucca; while beans, potato, protected crops, sheep/goats and sugarcane were added recently.

Among its advantages, he mentioned the low interest rates: 1.5 percent on production-related loans and two percent on investment loans.

According to the director, another benefit is that the producer only deals with 50 percent of the interest rate and 50 percent of the insurance premium, with consequent savings. Moreover, no additional bank guarantees are required with this option, as it happens with other credits. The process for its application, analysis and approval is quick; it usually takes no longer than one day.

The people benefited with these funds must comply with the requirements agreed for each activity, such as yield per area, to use science and technique, have irrigation systems, that the industry and agricultural markets are the final destination of their produce, and to guarantee water and food supply in the case of livestock.

In addition to these facilities, there are other credits available that also benefit the development of several crops, cattle and horses, with reasonable repayment terms and low interest rates, Rodríguez added.

For this year, the State budget once more will allocate 1.8 billion pesos to the Agricultural Promotion Bank only, to finance a number of expenses such as those related to fertilizers, fuel and workers' salaries.

# International Fair Returns to Havana

By Elizabeth**RODRIGUEZ**

HAVANA.-As expression of the economic recovery in the country and control of the current COVID-19 pandemic, the 38th International Fair of Havana (FIHAV 2022) will be held from November 14 to 18.

Regarded as a transcendental event for trade and investments in Cuba, FIHAV has consolidated itself as the most important commercial showcase of the country and the Caribbean, given the large participation of institutions that promote trade and investments.

Moreover, important business people attend the fair to showcase their products and services, and identify partners to create international strategic alliances.

The COVID-19 related health situation in the country and the world made it impossible to hold, in 2020 and 2021, one of the most prestigious events in Latin America, as stated by Cuba's Foreign Trade and Investment Minister (MINCEX), Rodrigo Malmierca.

The panorama changed and that is why the 38th edition of the fair is this time set for November 14-18 at Expocuba exhibition center, which is expected to welcome a large number of foreign participants, a sign of confidence on the Cuban market, Malmierca noted.

Thanks to our dedicated scientists we have three effective vaccines, and almost 90 percent of the population has completed the three-dose vaccination scheme. Meanwhile, keeping the pandemic under control in Cuba seems to be possible, the MINCEX minister affirmed.

FIHAV 2022 will be held regardless of the reinforced U.S. economic, commercial and financial blockade. It is an excellent business

platform, where the Cuban entrepreneurial system and new forms of non-state management will be represented with a full showcase of products and services, he explained.

Concerning this, the Minister emphasized that among the new actors of the national economy, the micro, small and medium-size enterprises (MSMEs) will be able to promote their goods and services with views to exporting them. For this, they will be provided with all related facilities.

All the sectors of the Cuban and world economy will show their potential and offers all five days of the event, which is a right space for meetings, business rounds, conferences and seminars.

The 5th Business Forum was announced as well, with the participation of potential investors and numerous activities for the promotion of exportable Cuban assets.

As usual since its first edition in 1983, the delegations from every participating country will be able to mark their national days at their respective stands, while an online business forum will be held for those who are unable to travel to Cuba.

The Havana Fair will be open to business people from anywhere in the world, including the United States and Cuban residents abroad, who are expected to account for a large number of participants given the interest in developing productive contacts with them, stated Malmierca.

Over 2,000 representatives of companies from more than 55 countries attended the 37th edition of the fair in 2019 at Expocuba, an exhibition center located some 25 kilometers southwest of the capital.



FIHAV, consolidated as the most important commercial showcase of the country and the Caribbean, returns to Expocuba. PHOTO: ACN.



# Farewell to Dreaming of the World Cup

By Alejandro **DEL PINO**

HAVANA.- The Cuban men's basketball team said goodbye to its dream of qualifying for the upcoming FIBA Basketball World Cup after it finished last in Group D, despite its good performance as a team.

The Cuban team was unable to beat Puerto Rico during a decisive game on February 27 at Havana's Sports center, where the visitors won 62-65.

The Puerto Rican team thus recorded its second victory against the home team during the qualifying competition of the FIBA Basketball World Cup 2023. With that result, it was third in that group, winning the last quota for the next phase.

"It was a very complex and hard-fought game that forced us to give it all. The Cuban team is very strong, they made their best in front of their fans, but we took advantage of their mistakes and led the game until the final moment, Puerto Rican coach Nelson Ponce told **The Havana Reporter**.

Jezreel de Jesús and Christopher Ortiz were the best defenders for the winning team, with 21 and 19 attacks respectively. However, the key was the effective defense as a team, allowing them to recover ten balls.

The power forward with Spain's Valencia Basket team, Jasiel Rivero, once again was the most outstanding player for the Cuban team, with 13 points, but his performance was below expectations. He failed six of eight free shots, which defined the defeat.

"The Cuba team was more intense and motivated; it was a different team compared to the previous game. However, it is hard for us to make everything right in the last minutes, like it happened today," Rivero said in a press round.

With regards to the other games within Group D, where Puerto Rico finished third and the eliminated the Cuban team which finished fourth, the United State defeated Mexico 89-67 in Washington. Those two teams now have three victories and one defeat, although the U.S. team is the new leader of the group.

The third qualifying round will be held from July 1 to 4, and will define the 12 teams from the American continent that will try to win one of the region's seven spots for the 2023 World Cup with venues in Japan, Philippines and Indonesia.

As a country Cuba once more lost its chances to participate at the most important event of this sport. This means harder work must be done, largely in terms of hiring by foreign clubs, something that has gradually provided Cuban athletes with better possibilities.



The Cuban team was unable to beat Puerto Rico at Havana's Sports center.

PHOTO: JIT.

# Success at Caribbean Table Tennis Championships

By Adrián **MENGANA**

HAVANA.- The Cuban table tennis players swept to victory at the 62nd edition of the Caribbean Table Tennis Championships, winning all the titles disputed at the halls of Havana's Pabexpo exhibition center, setting sights on new challenges.

In March, the women's and men's national teams were the winners in all the categories -individual, pairs, mixed and by team- thus qualifying for the Pan-American Games set for October 17-23 in Santiago de Chile, which will secure tickets for the 2023 World Tennis Cup in South Africa.

From the women's team, it's worth praising the victory of Idalys Lovet against Daniela Fonseca 4-3 at the women's single final. Fonseca had represented Cuba at the Olympic tournament in Tokyo 2020.

Also inspiring within the women's competitions were Puerto Ricans Daniely Ríos, Pan-American winner by team in Lima 2019, and Fabiola Díaz, medalist at the first Pan-American Junior Games in Cali 2021. During the Havana tournament, Ríos and Díaz won the silver in women's doubles and the bronze by team, together with Brianna Burgos and Kristal Meléndez.

Meanwhile, Jorge Moisés Campos stood out for the local mens team by winning four gold medals: in the individual competition, doubles, mixed-sex and as a team.

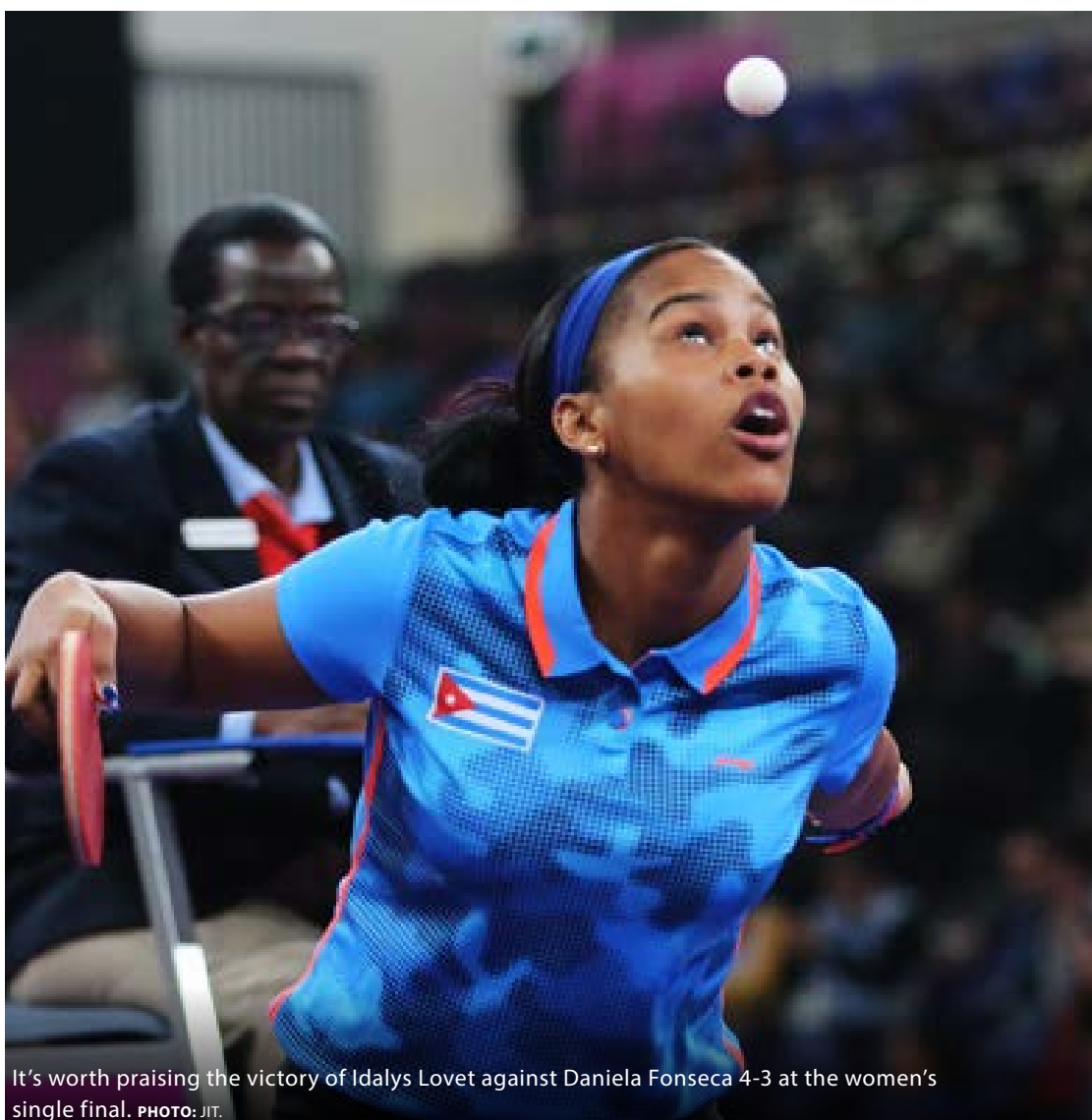
Players from the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and Cuba cheered up the regional championships, reaffirming it as a top level event.

"We are very surprised because, after a pandemic that has affected the world and above all the world of sports, Cuba has amazingly offered us a venue for the Caribbean Championships, which is a world class event," said Dominican Juan Vila, President of the Caribbean Table Tennis Federation.

The venue located west of the Cuban capital was fitted out with a total of 18 tables over synthetic flooring, with fences, referee tables and led scoreboards.

"It's an impressive scenario very hard to be matched by the rest of the Caribbean countries that will organize future events," the president told press.

The Cuban table tennis thus made firms steps with views to future international competitions, including the Central American and Caribbean Games in 2023 in San Salvador.



It's worth praising the victory of Idalys Lovet against Daniela Fonseca 4-3 at the women's single final. PHOTO: JIT.



# Achievement to delay Alzheimer's disease

By ZeusNAYA

HAVANA.- Cuba has recorded a new achievement with the approval of the health registration granted to NeuroEpo, an innovative medicine to delay the progression of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and improve the life of people suffering from that condition.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel praised the decision made by the Center for State Control of Medicine, Equipment and Health Devices, and called the news excellent.

He once again thanked Cuban science and its dedicated scientists, in particular all those involved in the project developed by the Molecular Engineering Center (CIM) of Havana.

"Treating neurodevelopmental disorders in children is one of the priorities of the post-pandemic phase," the head of State emphasized.

Cuba's top authorities knew about the program for integral attention to children with those disorders conducted at the Borrás-Marfán Children's Hospital in Havana which, Díaz-Canel said, "has very good results."

This experience will be taken to other provinces such as Villa Clara, Huguin and Santiago de Cuba, announced Díaz-Canel, who is also the First Secretary of the Cuban

Communist Party (PCC). The dream is to extend it to the entire country, he added. The medicine registration will be valid for three years, to become effective after the issuing date of the registration certificate, said CIM General Director Eduardo Ojito.

The condition to register this product is established to confirm the results of a phase III clinical trial to assess its efficacy, with the request for its approval to be presented within not more than six months, the Director of the biotechnological institution explained. According to the experts involved in the NeuroEpo clinical trials, along the course of their 27 years' experience in treating patients with this disease, they had never seen any improvement in the natural progression of the disease. The CIM Director of Clinical Research, Tania Crombet, explained it is a nasal administration drug, very easy to be used by caregivers.

The use of this product to treat other diseases such as ataxia, Parkinson, ischemic brain damage and COVID-19-related aftereffects is being studied, she noted.

More than 50 million people in the world are affected by different types of dementia, and this number continues to grow every three seconds. Therefore, this is a challenge for the island, where nearly 170,000 people suffer from this affliction, according to figures by the Cuban Public Health Ministry.

That number accounts for ten percent of the people over 65 years old -1.3 percent of the total population. Its prevalence rate is estimated at 10.2 percent for each 100

Cubans 65 years or older, being Alzheimer's disease the more common cause.

As reported, the phase II/III studies have already concluded and a stage IV for the gradual introduction of the product is being prepared.



NeuroEpo is an innovative medicine to delay the progression of mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## Hemodiálisis en Cuba



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