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Towards tourism recovery

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The optimism of Cuban authorities on the recovery of the travel industry to the island is potential and it expects better results in 2023 with the ongoing efforts.

This criteria was reiterated at the Government's main conclaves, such is the recent case of the National Assembly of People's Power (Parliament) which examined at the end of 2022 the most relevant aspects in terms of society and economy.

Despite the fact that the figures initially raised as a possibility (2.5 million foreign visitors) were not reached, the sector's directors expect to receive 3.5 million tourists in 2023, one million more than those planned in 2022, although far from that of 2019, which reached four million before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Cuba expected to receive 2,5 million foreign visitors last year, but this forecast was reduced to 1,7 million, a reduction of almost a third.

In addition to the increase of travelers in 2023, announced by Cuban Tourism Minister Juan Carlos García in November at the tourism fair in London, in the United Kingdom, the 2023 Economic Plan contemplates

itself an inflow of foreign currency from that sector of 1.672 million dollars.

Tourism generates the second largest share of the gross domestic product (PIB) and the second largest source of foreign currency in Cuba, after the export of professional services, mainly in the health sector.

Specialized sources stated that Italian tourists are among those who resumed their vacation trips to the Caribbean nation from January to October 2022, and although they still do not occupy a prominent position in the list of recovery, they do maintain a gradual ascent. Official statistics corroborated that travelers are already returning to the Caribbean country from Canada, the United States, Spain, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Mexico.

The official figures published also mention Cubans living abroad, surpassed by Canada and followed by the United States.

The report underlined that the result of the first 10 months of 2022 represents 580 percent more than in the same period of 2021.

Experts consider that the Italian issuing market contributed with 177, 652 tourists to Cuba in 2018, although the figure fell by 133, 217 in 2019. Canada, as usual, keeps leading the issuing market to the island

with 359, 034 vacation travelers from January to October 2022.

In any case, experts and the Cuban Tourism Ministry (Mintur) expect that 2023 to be a better year, and to allow for a gradual, but a more accelerated recovery of this sector, that is why investments on hotels are being maintained.

The country has more than 80,000 rooms in some 300 hotel facilities nationwide, mostly four and five-star, and is making efforts to reinforce that plant in Havana, the main arrival point for foreign vacationers.



Tourism generates the second largest share of the PIB and the second largest source of foreign currency in Cuba. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Muthu Hotels Increases Presence in Jardines del Rey

By Neisa **MESA DEL TORO**

CIEGO DE AVILA.- The MGM Muthu Hotels chain increased its presence in the Jardines del Rey tourist destination after assuming the management of the Colonial Cayo Coco hotel, in the northern coast of this central Cuban province.

The facility, which is part of the Cubanacán group, is the first four-star hotel managed by this Indian company in Cuba, in a destination that stands out for its natural and cultural values, in addition to the hospitality of its people and its safety.

Director of the Colonial Cayo Coco Hotel, Rodolfo Martínez, stated that with the

new administration, they hope to increase the arrival of tourists, as Muthu Hotels has a solid market and has connections with renowned tour operators and travel agencies worldwide.

In the course of this year's high tourist season, the number of foreign visitors has increased as a result of the promotional activity in the social media and the positive

reviews of its clients, the different virtual platforms, he added.

The hotel's original architecture, its colonial motivations, cobbled stone streets and small squares that resemble the neoclassical style that characterized the time of the colony in Cuba, turn the facility into the most famous hotel in this tourist region, located in the northern keys of the Ciego de Ávila province.

Opened on November 12, 1993, by historical leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro, the facility has 458 rooms in 23 room modules and is on the first line of beach, surrounded by natural lakes.

The Indian company also manages other three hotels in Jardines del Rey: Grand Muthu Cayo Guillermo, Grand Muthu Imperial and Grand Muthu Rainbow – the latter, the first hotel in Cuba addressed to the LGBTI segment, with a quality service and high standard.

The headquarters of this hotel chain, which was founded about 10 years ago, is located in Portugal. The company manages 54 hotels worldwide in countries such as France, England, Spain and Scotland, in destinations such as Algarve, Malaga, Almeria and Tenerife, among others.



Colonial Cayo Coco is the first four-star hotel managed by this Indian company in Cuba. PHOTO: ACN.

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Circulation: Commercial Department
Printing: Prensa Latina

Publisher: Agencia Informativa Latinoamericana
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Start of an Intense Electoral and Legislative Year



Programs aimed at facing economic difficulties will continue to be boosted. PHOTO: ACN.

By Ever**MELLADO**

HAVANA.- Cuba will start 2023 preparing for elections scheduled for March 26, when deputies to the Parliament will be elected and whose members will then elect the President of the Republic.

The electoral cycle started last November 27 with municipal elections and will conclude with the election of the Head of State in the second semester of 2023.

While this happens, programs aimed at facing economic difficulties – some of them linked to food sovereignty, stability of the national electro-energy system and COVID-19 control – will continue to be boosted.

The island will also conduct a comprehensive legislative schedule that complements the Constitution approved in 2019 and will take place amidst the strengthening of the U.S. blockade, the world economic crisis and the consequences of the pandemic.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel recently affirmed that the nature of the U.S. policy towards Cuba indicates that Washington's siege can go on for years, thus the need of uniting forces to solve problems, face limitations, channel development and denounce such policy in every space.

When giving an account of his administration at the National Assembly of the People's Power (ANPP, Parliament), on December 14, the Head of State urged to eliminate bureaucracy, remove obstacles and overcome self-satisfaction, in order to make rapid and sustained progress in the consolidation of Socialism in Cuba.

During the tenth ordinary session of

Parliament, he called for creative and innovative work to promote the actions implemented for national progress.

In this sense, the Economy Plan for 2023, approved on the occasion of the meeting, defines the objectives to attain an effective and rapid progress in that direction.

At that meeting, held at the Havana's Conference Center, Díaz-Canel stressed the importance of attaining a gradual but sustained increase of foreign incomes, to help solve the current macro-economic unbalance, which is seen in inflation, shortage of supplies, among other aspects that have an impact on the population's quality of life.

In that sense, he encouraged to work, innovate, strengthen circular economy and attain the development of the socialist state company, so that this meets its role.

The President also stated that attention to vulnerable people and communities and boost socio-economic development from the municipal level, making a better use of the potentials each territory of the country has, are included among the priorities for 2023.

Those aspects characterized the debates of the 10th ordinary session of the IX ANPP Legislature, held from December 12 to 14, 2022, when four legislations were approved and several ministries gave an account of their work.

The legislations mentioned before include the following: Law of the General Finance Office of the Republic; Attorney General's Office Law; Law of Expropriation on account of Public Utility or Social Interest, and Law for Cattle Raising Promotion and Development, in addition to the State Budget Law for 2023.

Cuban Communist Party's Vanguard Role

By Ernesto**VERA**

HAVANA.- President and First Secretary of the Cuban Communist Party (PCC) Miguel Díaz-Canel urged to improve the work of the political organization through the proper implementation of actions directed to the country's socio-economic development.

At the closing of the V PCC Plenary Session, last December, the President highlighted the importance of the work mass organizations and other associations of civil society have conducted as part of the battle against the U.S. economic war and the brutal psychological campaign promoted from that country to overthrow the Cuban revolutionary process.

The Cuban leader stressed the role the PCC has to play, as the vanguard of society, in the battle against the economic and social problems.

He recalled that Cuba has also withstood "nature's powerful impact and those caused by our mistakes, but without kneeling nor giving up hope of prosperity."

Díaz-Canel affirmed that the work of the PCC, the consecration of its members and the heroic character of the Cuban people have allowed facing complex situations such as those linked to the pandemic of COVID-19, in addition to large-magnitude accidents.

During the two-day session, the participants analyzed topics related to the control of inflation, electricity generation and the importance of increasing the offer of basic products, among others.

At the meeting, the Minister of Economics and Planning Alejandro Gil informed that the growth levels foreseen for 2022 were not met, and referred to the strengthening

of the U.S. blockade and the unprecedented increase of international prices as some of its causes.

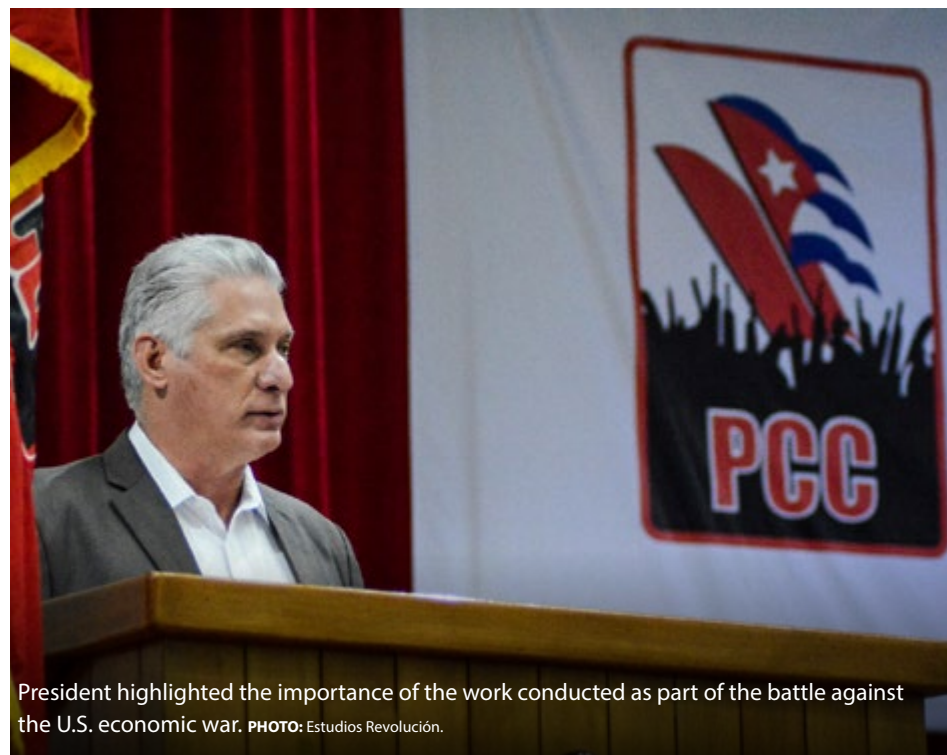
On top of that, we have to mention the mistakes made in the implementation of measures addressed at fostering the economy, he added.

In relation to those sectors that have an impact on foreign currency generation, Gil commented that the export of goods shows a recovery in the case of nickel, cigars, rum, honey and sea products; however, the tourism sector foresees 1.7 million visitors – about 800,000 less than planned – while national production in general shows a slow recovery.

On this scenario, the Cuban President urged to strengthen the PCC domestic control on the socio-economic plans and processes, without diminishing the responsibility of the bodies of the People's Power and the General Finance Office of the Republic, among other institutions and bodies.

He pointed out that the Cuban people understand and face the adversary's attack, but "that resistance may falter and creativity suffers when the people collide with bureaucracy, idleness, corruption of certain intermediate layers that fish in the troubled river of difficulties by putting obstacles where solutions are going".

The President reiterated that the current situation is complex and difficult and the adversary takes advantage of it to meet its purpose; thus, he urged to be united, determined and creative to face difficulties. The main leader of the PCC also urged its members to make a more efficient work through self-control and popular empowerment by different channels which, he affirmed, does not diminish the organization's vanguard nature.



President highlighted the importance of the work conducted as part of the battle against the U.S. economic war. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

A New U.S.-Cuba Thaw?

By Deisy**FRANCIS**

HAVANA.- Recent visits to Cuba of U.S. Congressional Representatives and agricultural business executives, in addition to the resumption of migratory talks, are some of the events that quietly moved the stagnant bilateral relationship in 2022.

A new thaw? That is the question experts and mass media ask when referring to this topic, in a year in which slight signs were shown in that direction, after the backward step taken during the Donald Trump's four-year administration (2017-2021).

The Republican was responsible for reversing the steps taken by his predecessor, Democrat Barack Obama (2009-2017), who, in the last years of his term in office, changed the policy towards Cuba, which was then characterized by the carrot and not the stick.

Trump, however, applied an extreme-pressure policy whose main sign was the strengthening of the blockade, through 243 additional measures. On top of that, during his last days in the White House, he decided to include Cuba in the list of countries that foster terrorism.

That is a policy his successor, Democrat Joe Biden, promised to revert at his arrival

at the executive mansion, but according to experts The Havana Reporter interviewed, it was clear that after he came to power, on January 2021, that "urgency" disappeared under the excuse that "Cuba is not a priority."

In fact, the continuity of Trump's coercive measures had a greater negative effect in a context aggravated by the pandemic of COVID-19.

However, on April 2022, authorities from both countries resumed migratory talks in Washington, and then in Havana, in November.

On May 16, the Biden government announced a group of provisions in areas such as migration, travels and exchanges, financing to the private sector and remittances, although the extreme-pressure policy is still in effect: Cuba is in Washington's unilateral list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

In addition, travel limitations continue, as well as the application of Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, in addition to trade prohibition, restricted entities, prohibited lodging, limited dialogue and financial persecution.

However, the announcement of the resumption of the family reunification program was favorably received, as well as the fact that, as of January 4, 2023, all

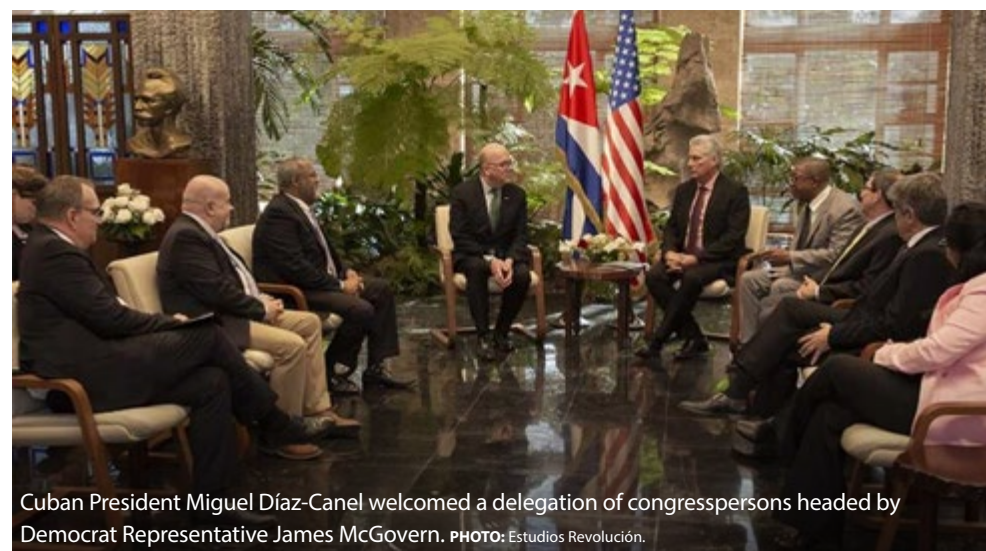
immigrant visas will be processed at the U.S. embassy in Havana.

In 2022, the United States first met its commitment of granting 20,000 immigrant visas, as foreseen in the 1994 agreements.

On December 10th, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel welcomed a delegation of congresspersons headed by Democrat Representative James McGovern, and in November, another group of U.S. legislators was welcomed at the headquarters of the National Assembly, where food production was the key topic of the discussions.

When giving an account of his administration at the Cuban Parliament, Díaz-Canel acknowledged that "modest steps directed to channel bilateral cooperation to meet migratory agreements and those of other areas of priority among both countries" were taken, but "the main and ultimate feature of the bilateral link is still the economic blockade."

In the first 14 months of the Biden administration, the blockade caused damages for over 6.3 billion dollars, and from August 2021 to February 2022, the cost amounted to 3.8 billion dollars.



Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel welcomed a delegation of congresspersons headed by Democrat Representative James McGovern. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

Love for the Flag

By Ivette**FERNÁNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The battle against the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for over six decades adds unconditional friends year after year, even at the very heart of the U.S.

A sign of that are the constant solidarity demonstrations conducted all over the U.S. and materialized in the form of donations, caravans in favor of the normalization of relations between both nations and formal requests to federal entities to eliminate that cruel, punitive policy.

The assistance gathered by Cubans living abroad and sent to the island by groups such as the Bridges of Love Movement, to mention one, benefitted pediatric hospitals in 2022, which received supplies for liver transplants and food.

Other associations, such as Codepink and The People's Forum, accompanied Cuba through summons to send material aid after disasters such as the explosion at the Saratoga Hotel, in Havana (May) and the fire at the oil supertanker base, in Matanzas (August), in addition to the devastating Hurricane Ian caused in the Pinar del Río province in September.

However, the main contribution these associations make is their constant demand in favor of the lifting of the U.S. blockade and the elimination of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism.

The holding of caravans and demonstrations in Miami and other U.S. cities, on the last Sunday of every month, has become a tradition. Such actions urge to end the cruel stance against the island and demand the normalization

of relations that allow families in both countries to meet. One of the largest solidarity demonstrations conducted in the U.S. in 2022 was the one held on October 29 in New York, prior to the vote of a resolution on the need to put an end to Washington's unilateral siege at the UN General Assembly.

The activity was included among the over 30 actions designed to demand the government of President Joe Biden to change the policy toward Cuba, and was conducted by a coalition composed of over 100 friendly associations under the motto "UN Vote 4 Cuba."

Associations such as Black Alliance for Peace, Party for Socialism and Liberation, Democratic Socialists of America and Nemo (NoEmbargoCuba) frequently

renew their condemnation of the blockade and fight for presenting on the U.S. media the truth about the Cuban people and government, which is often silenced.

The People's Forum was able to give visibility to calls in favor of the island at a press release published on the Sunday edition of The New York Times, in which it demanded the U.S. government to "act right now to help the Caribbean people," after the pass of Hurricane Ian.

For its part, Codepink recently presented at the Department of State a request signed by over 10,000 people and about one hundred associations that demanded the elimination of Cuba from the list of countries that sponsor terrorism.



The assistance gathered by Cubans living abroad was sent to the island by groups such as the Bridges of Love Movement. PHOTO: José Tito Meriño.

Health Sector's Challenges in 2023

By Lourdes **PÉREZ**

HAVANA.- The Cuban health sector will face several challenges in 2023, after more than two years using the financing available to purchase diagnostic kits and other supplies needed to fight COVID-19.

Guaranteeing the logistics the national health system needs; opening hospital services that are in great but accumulated demand; updating medical technologies; eliminating breach in the availability of supplies, as far as possible, and attaining stability in the production and import of medications, are included among those challenges.

As Health Minister, José Ángel Portal, said at the Parliament, last December, 53 percent of the financial resources given to the sector in recent years were dedicated to the fight against the pandemic, in detriment of the rest of the services.

He added that by the end of December 5, there was a shortage of 219 medications in the country and 197 had a coverage of less than 30 days – 73 of them are imported and 146 are nationally produced.

Subjective difficulties also determine the current reality this sector faces, such as the wrong use of medications due to inadequate and indulgent prescription; organizational and control-related problems; criminal activity, and pharmaceutical staff's insufficient preparation.

In this context, Portal announced that in 2023, a new work model will be implemented in the pharmacy and optician shops' network in the Cuban capital, on an experimental basis.

Havana's Pharmacy Company will be attached to the BioCubaFarma Entrepreneurial Group

as part of the project aimed at improving pharmaceutical services nationwide, and thus close medications' cycle.

If this experience is positive, all pharmaceutical companies in the country will be gradually attached to that entrepreneurial group.

The Minister stressed that in spite of efforts, "the scenario will continue to be complex and it would not be responsible to make a commitment in relation to figures nor to say that we will not have difficulties."

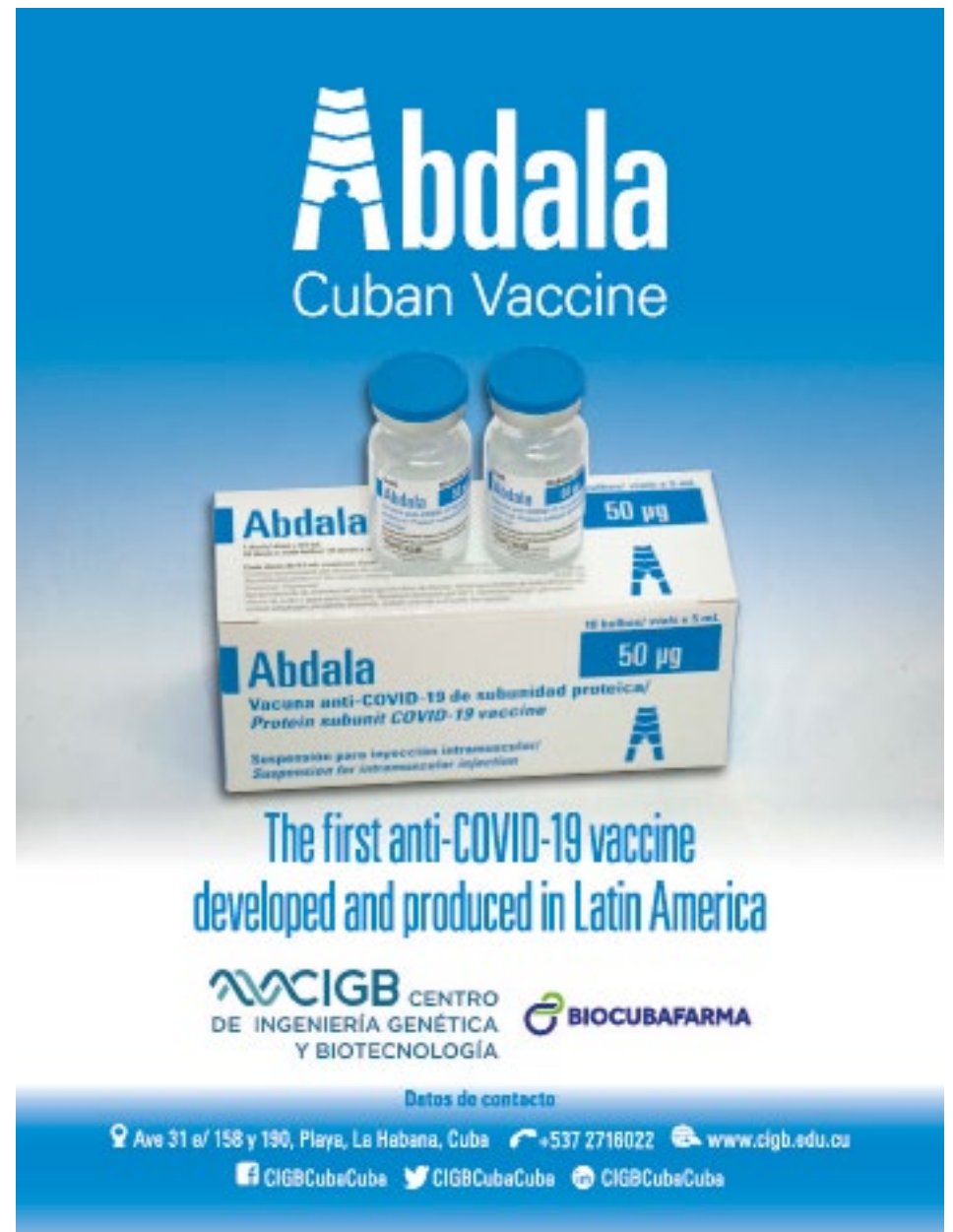
The program's priority is still guaranteeing "the availability of medications, medical technologies and pharmaceutical services that guarantee the functioning of the Health System, as well as the strengthening of the Natural and Traditional Medicine Program," he said.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Even though in 2022 efforts were directed in endorsing the opening of services in high demand and accumulated for over two years, increasing specialized practices, attending patients waiting for surgeries and giving priority to the mother-child program's logistics, are included among the challenges for the present cycle.

On top of this, the country faces limitations in basic disposable material items and there are critical resources – such as catheters, transfusion equipment, hip prosthesis and collectors, among others – the health authorities closely follow.

Portal stated that we also have difficulties with the technology; for this reason, equipment's technical availability coefficient meet 91 percent at present and solutions are found to get spare parts for imagery, cancer treatment and endoscopy equipment.



Cuban biotechnology is health for all

By Cira **RODRIGUEZ**

HAVANA.- More than three decades ago, Cuba began a path that led it to become a world power in biotechnology, recognized for its innovative products with high quality standards and social benefits for thousands of people.

This has been possible due to the strategy of having highly qualified professionals in the so-called closed cycle (research + development + production + commercialization). This strategy measures the effect of the results, how many diseases are avoided, how many people are saved, what vaccinations are achieved and what protocol is established to control pests and diseases or to improve crop yields.

On this basis, the Cuban pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors are moving in 2023 towards strengthening this practice, which is key in a very competitive industry and in which the projection is the development of innovative and unique drugs. In recent statements to **The Havana Reporter**, the president of the Biopharmaceutical and Biotechnological Industries Business Group, Biocubafarma, Eduardo Martínez presented this year's projects,

some in the initial phase, others in the intermediate phase and in the final stages of clinical trials, some unique in the world, and designed for conditions that still have no solution.

Among them, he mentioned NeuralCIM (NeuroEpo), for the treatment of Alzheimer's, which is also being evaluated in dementia, Parkinson's, ataxia, and stroke. It is a medicine whose results are encouraging, now in phase IV of studies and with which work is being done to produce it on a large scale, meet national demand and export. Added to this is Heberprot-P, a leading product with several years in the market for diabetic foot ulcers, currently undergoing reformulation as an innovative controlled release system based on nanotechnology, with the possibility of achieving healing of injuries in less time.

Within the projects, Martínez commented on vaccines against cancer, since in Cuba this disease is the second cause of death. It has an anti-angiogenic action, with encouraging results and could reach registration in 2023. This product has been tested in solid tumors and various types of cancer. In terms of investment, the Biotechnological Industrial Complex of Mariel stands out.



Minister José Ángel Portal informed that by the end of December 5, there was a shortage of 219 medications in the country. PHOTO: ACN.

Filmmakers Appreciate the Havana Film Festival

By Mario **MUÑOZ**

HAVANA.- The 43rd edition of the International Festival of New Latin American Cinema concluded with an invitation to the next meeting in 2023 and thanks to Cuba from all filmmakers participating in the event, who agreed on its importance for world cinema.

At the closing ceremony, on December 11th, Kiro Russo – director of the multiple prizewinning film *El gran movimiento* (Bolivia) – highlighted the importance of the event to portray history, reality and the conflicts Latin American nations face, in addition to the possibility creators from the region have to meet together.

One of the most moving moments of Havana's largest film festival was the granting of the Honorary Coral Award to Cuban singer and songwriter Silvio Rodríguez, who said he received the award on behalf of his late fellow members of the Grupo de Experimentación Sonora del ICAIC (Cuban Film Institute), including Pablo Milanés, Sergio Vitier, Noel Nicola, Emiliano Salvador and Eduardo Ramos, among others.

Bolivian, Argentinean and Brazilian films stood out in the festival and showed their consolidation in Latin America's seventh art after their huge box-office hit in several categories in competition. Russo was the main winner of the event, as his production won the Best Film, Best Direction, Sound and Edition categories.

El gran movimiento was premièred at the Venice International Film Festival, on September 6th, 2021 and this year, it started to be exhibited in the distribution circuits.



Kiro Russo, director of the multiple prizewinning film *El gran movimiento*. PHOTO: Miguel Guzmán

The film received the Special Jury Prize at the Venice Orizzonti section and has been included in the official selection of several of the world's most important film festivals, such as the San Sebastian and New York festivals.

The film *Argentina, 1985*, by Santiago Mitre, was also one of the main winners of this event. The film, which tells the story of the trials conducted as a result of the civic-military dictatorship (1976-1983), won the Best Male Actor Coral Award – for the role Ricardo Darín played as lawyer Julio Strassera – and the Artistic Direction Award.

Because of the validity of the texts, based on a true story, the film also received the Best Script Award, which went to the hands of Mariano Llinás and Santiago Mitre – the latter, winner of the Signis Award for its accurate approximation to the past from a deep approach.

With the invitation of enjoying the “cinema in style” – the Festival's slogan – Havana welcomed, from December 1st to 11th, over 100 titles in competition, in addition to a varied proposal of presentations and collateral activities.

According to the organizing committee, the jury received over 2,000 films from all Latin American countries, specially Argentina, Mexico and Brazil, which were also selected for the Latin America in Perspective exhibition and the Special Presentation section.

The program included a theoretical event that paid tribute to Cuban filmmaker Nicolás Guillén Landrián through the screening of a documentary on his imprint, by Ernesto Daranas and the analysis of the audiovisual *Inside Downtown* (2001), which Landrián personally made in the United States.

The Festival's collateral agenda included the screening of Restored Classics, International Contemporary Panorama; the exhibition of 30 posters by artists from 11 countries, and editorial launches by the Cuban Film Institute.

Founded on December 3, 1979 by Cuban filmmaker Alfredo Guevara, the Festival's main distinction is the Grand Coral Award, which symbolized the Caribbean's coral reefs.

Marcel Dousse's *A través de la ventana*

By Claudia **HERNÁNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The photographic exhibition *A través de la ventana* (Through the window), on display in the Cuban capital, characterizes the creative universe of famous Swiss artist Marcel Dousse, whose visual discourse focuses on social dynamics in other parts of the world.

The series, exhibited in Havana for the first time, is a photographic test that gathers small fragments of cities the artist photographed while touring the world.

Going from street creativity to landscapes created in popular neighborhoods as a result of the passing of time, the artist considers the city a huge gallery

which the inhabitants fill in with graffiti, advertisements and posters, said the organizers of the exhibit.

Described as a permanent life traveler, a philanthropist whose dreams and work

are aimed at seeing a better world, Dousse carries his camera during his journeys and has turned this art into a shelter, while being a mean to access and understand complex realities.

The variety of colors and shapes present in the architectonic elements characterizes the work of this Swiss artist, who is

interested in photographing the reality of the different ethnic groups.

Influenced somehow by his Lausanne fellow countrymen, renowned photographer Luc Chessex – who settled in Cuba from 1961 to 1974 and was his longtime mentor – Dousse's black and white works recall that renewed way of conceiving urban documental photography, where immediate response to explore the environment is essentially the result of a keen eye.

Dousse previously exhibited in Cuba a work inspired by new scenarios and entitled *El otro lado de la vuelta* (The other side of the turn), at Fototeca de Cuba.

The present work, curated by List Gallery's specialists Lisandra Aguilar and Lisset Alonso, is on display at the Havana Level gallery.



Going from street creativity to landscapes created in popular neighborhoods, the artist considers the city a huge gallery. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



El Salvador: Disagreement about the War against Gangs

By LuisBEATÓN

SAN SALVADOR.- The war the government of President Nayib Bukele launched in 2022 against gangs, triggers strong disagreement due to the diversity of topics that have an impact on the president's plan to clear the nation's streets of homicides and violence.

At least 87 Salvadorans lost their lives last March due to actions attributed to those groups, whom the State describes as terrorists because of the actions they conduct against the rest of the society.

As a result, the fight against gangs (Salvatrucha M-13, 18 sureños and 18 revolucionarios) became an official policy aimed at creating an atmosphere of safety that allows making progress in the tourist development plans and guaranteeing the safety of the population, a hostage of those groups' violence.

Measures taken in that direction include the implementation of the State of Exception endorsed by the Legislative Power at the request of the government, which suspended free association and demonstration and the right to defense, while allowing tapping telecommunications and correspondence and extending administrative detention for 15 days "to give prosecutors time to investigate."

By the end of 2022, the Legislative Assembly (Parliament) extended the regime of exception for the eighth occasion, which no doubt was used to face gang members and allowed the government to make progress in the results of a policy that few considered successful, due to gangs' power.

Those groups did not emerge in this country; they were the result of the extradition of thousands of immigrants from the U.S. territory. MS-13 and Barrio 18 were born in the United States in the second half of the 20th century, and in spite of the expulsion of many gang

members, their influence is still present in several U.S. states.

According to studies revealed by the La Opinión newspaper, Salvadoran immigrants who ran away from the war created the gangs in Los Angeles, but when the deportation policy started, thousands of Salvadorans were sent back and both gangs settled in El Salvador and Honduras. Like a cancer, they spread through the region, particularly through El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala triangle, controlling neighborhoods, municipalities, departments and penetrating spheres of power, some experts say.

Studies revealed by Salvadoran authorities and news media estimate that the gangs' annual profits amounted to over 740 million dollars, which were obtained through extortion, murders, drug trafficking and other illicit acts that had the Bukele government on the rack and forced him to take actions to stop the scourge of armed violence and homicides.

In spite of criticisms, the majority of the Salvadorans currently approve the measures the government has implemented to fight those gangs and recover the streets for society, according to Gallup surveys.

According to a new evaluation on the number of gang members, the present figure does not stand at 76,000, as Salvadoran Vice-President Félix Ulloa told **The Havana Reporter** in an exclusive interview, in which he affirmed that the State of Exception would be in place until the last terrorist is behind bars.

The new figure – 118,000 terrorists, as governmental authorities call them – will necessarily extend the State of Exception and all the deployment of technology and logistics the government has used to fight them.



Studies revealed estimate that the gangs' annual profits amounted to over 740 million dollars. PHOTO: Internet.

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ALBA-TCP: Finding Solutions for the Peoples

By José **FERNÁNDEZ**

HAVANA.- Eighteen years after its foundation, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America-Peoples' Trade Treaty (ALBA-TCP) faces the challenge of proposing practical ways to replicate its political success in the economic field.

Founded on December 14, 2004 by leaders Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, the regional integration mechanism was raised from a structure that praised each member's potential to meet the needs of its people.

As a result, social programs that benefited millions of people were created, such as the Milagro (Miracle), Barrio Adentro and Manuela Espejo missions, in addition to projects such as the ALBA Bank, the ALBA Games and a network of cultural institutions that gave priority to the protection of the peoples' heritage.

In the light of natural disasters, or more recently, during the pandemic of COVID-19, humanitarian corridors were activated for the transfer of health professionals, medical supplies and medications, while a few countries in the world stockpiled vaccines or imposed embargos to divert flights carrying masks and equipment.

The XXII ALBA-TCP Summit, held in Havana on December 14, highlighted those achievements, while vehemently stating the need to repeat those successes in the economic field through the promotion of a fair trade that replaces the market's logic with solidarity and sustainable development.

Several Heads of State and delegations from the 11 member countries referred to potentials in the fields

of energy, transportation and logistics, agriculture and biotechnology, which would allow complementing and strengthening unity.

Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro categorically said that ALBA must show in practice, as Latin America and the Caribbean's political, cultural, social and economic vanguard group, that it is superior to any other mechanism people have knowledge of and that it can find solutions to peoples' real problems.

The Summit concluded with a 22-point political declaration that ratified the bloc's progressive stance on strategic topics about the world's political context.

In that sense, endorsement of the governments of Bolivia, Nicaragua, Venezuela and Cuba was ratified in the light of the attempts to subvert the domestic order; in favor of the Caribbean nations' right to receive a special and fair treatment in international relations and in condemnation of the 'lawfare' acts in Argentina and Peru.

Once again, the ALBA-TCP members condemned the U.S. blockade on Cuba, demanded the fulfillment of the agreements reached at the Climate Change Summit (COP27) and praised the progress made in the peace talks in Colombia and between the government of Nicolás Maduro and the Venezuelan opposition.

At this XXII Summit, Félix Plasencia was elected as new executive secretary of the Alliance, while Bolivian diplomat Sacha Llorenti was acknowledged for the role he played.



The XXII ALBA-TCP highlighted the need to repeat its successes in the economic field. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución

President Díaz-Canel's Visits Strengthen Ties with the Caribbean

By Mandy **FERNÁNDEZ**

HAVANA.- Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel's official talks with authorities of Barbados, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Grenada strengthen relations with the Caribbean region.

Díaz-Canel's official visits, which started on December 3, 2022, included his participation to the VIII CARICOM-Cuba



Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was the first stop of the Cuban President. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución

Summit, on occasion of the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Havana and several countries of the region.

TOP-LEVEL TALKS

In Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the first stop of the Cuban President tour led to talks with Governor-General Susan Dougan and Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves; he was also welcomed at the national Parliament.

In all meetings, the President ratified Cuba's will to strengthen solidarity and cooperation with that insular state, with which historical bonds are shared, in addition to future challenges.

The head of the Cuban State was also welcomed by Barbados Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley and President Sandra Mason, to whom he reaffirmed the will to continue strengthening political dialogue and cooperation.

As part of the official talks, a memorandum of understanding was signed between a Barbados exporting company and the Cuban Biotechnological and Pharmaceutical Industries Entrepreneurial Group (BioCubaFarma).

The President's visit to the Caribbean region concluded in Grenada, where he had discussions with Grenadian Prime Minister Dickon Mitchell.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, both leaders stated that cooperation in the fields of agriculture, health, infrastructure, education, environment and climate change will increase.

A UNITED CARIBBEAN

Díaz-Canel headed the Cuban delegation to the VIII CARICOM-Cuba Summit, which celebrated the 50th anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between Havana and four nations of the region, which then put an end to the United States' attempt to isolate the Cuban Revolution from the world.

CARICOM, created in 1973, held its first summit in Cuba in 2002, on occasion of the celebration of the 30 years of diplomatic ties between Havana and those Caribbean nations.

At the recent summit, held in Barbados, agreements were reached in relation to cooperation in the fields of health, human

resources formation, medical assistance and the use of biopharmaceutical products.

Other topics included boosting three joint collaboration projects in the area of mitigation of climate change effects and reduction of disaster risks.

In his speech at the Summit, Díaz-Canel highlighted that the meeting went beyond formal relations and proved the strong brotherhood links.

Condemnation of the blockade the United States has imposed on Cuba; support to small insular states' fair claim to receive a just and preferential treatment, and defense of the region as a peace zone, were included in the final declaration of the top-level meeting.

CARICOM is composed of Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Lucia, Saint Christopher & Nevis, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, Surinam and Trinidad & Tobago.

At present, 1,698 collaborators of the Cuban Public Health sector provide their services in 13 CARICOM member nations and a non-independent territory.

Fiart returned with resilient and sustainable art

By Liz**BOBADILLA**

HAVANA.- The Fiart 2022 International Crafts and Gifts Fair returned to Cuba's cultural agenda after two years of pandemic and for 10 days displayed a wide catalog of textile, utilities, and decorative items, which endorsed the value of recycling as a key piece for contemporary creation. From December 10 to 20, the Cuban Fund for Cultural Assets (FCBC) once again created this project, which for more than two decades has positioned itself as an exhibition and trade platform at the Pabexpo venue and the Cultural Linea station, in Havana.

The motto Art, Utility and Craft became the guiding thread of the event's agenda, which in its 24th year adopted the festive character of the month of December and the arrival of the 64th anniversary of the Revolution, to offer not only artisan products, but also utilities, entertainment, decorative and gifts.

Likewise, the event was dedicated to recycling in the different craft expressions and to Italian culture, which "has historically had an important presence in Cuban society," said Arturo Valdés, director of the FCBC, while highlighting the presence of proposals from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Spain, India, Mexico, Panama, Russia, Peru and the Caribbean island, in nearly 300 stands.

The meeting calendar included fashion catwalks where designers presented their original and innovative collections in a peculiar fusion of tradition and modernity, while the meeting served as an opportunity to reflect on the role of culture in social, economic and environmental transformation, through the presentation of local and foreign artists.

To fulfill this purpose of exchanging knowledge, an academic program was developed, which under the title Culture, creativity and innovation, agents for sustainable development, allowed for a dialogue around recycling and the intention to standardize -somehow- the best experiences as a sign of resilience.

According to the deputy director of the FCBC, Marta Ivis Sánchez, the choice of this theme is consistent with



For more than two decades Fiart has positioned itself as an exhibition and trade platform. PHOTO: José Tito Meriño

the presence of recycling as a practice for years in the productive dynamics of creators, as an aesthetic choice and alternative to the lack of raw materials.

"Our artists carry out a continuous recycling exercise in favor of their creation, all productions they regularly present are the result of recovery acts", stated Sánchez, as he explained that "in the current atypical circumstances they turned this option into a necessary practice ". In order to promote the most outstanding initiatives and items in the catalogue, the fair included in its agenda a varied cultural program, in which expositions, auctions, exhibitions, business rounds, concerts, among other artistic, commercial and educational actions stood out.

The meeting was a showcase for the pieces made by prominent creators such as Ángel Ferrer, Jesús Frías

(Chuchi), the Fresco project, among others, explained Sánchez.

"Our fashion catwalks this year intend to go back to the origin, we have a lot of quality in the exhibitions and they are not going to do fantasy parades but they are going to show clothes that Cubans can wear in everyday life" she pointed out. Sánchez said that the initiative is consistent with the intentions of the fair's organizing institution to become "an aesthetic compass for the country", with innovative garments appropriate to the island's climate conditions.

Another of the novelties of the event was the articulation of a complete sample of Telarte, an initiative of the FCBC, which "a few years ago had stopped making pieces and designs were recovered" adding the inauguration of the Market Place electronic commerce platform.

Complex realities at photography exhibition

By **THREditorial Staff**

HAVANA.- The Atlas exhibition, by Cuba's photographer Alfredo Sarabia, deals with problems that are currently occurring in the world such as conflicts, migrations and economic crisis, which cause a degree of strangulation on humanity.

The exhibition's organizers stated that many of the ups and downs of contemporary times also have an impact on the Cuban island and; consequently, on the personal experience and subjectivity of Sarabia, who captures reality and human spirituality with his lens.

The exhibition was inaugurated last December with a performance

piece between the artist and dancers from the Mal Paso group.

Alfredo Sarabia (Havana, 1986), is a renowned photographer graduated from the University of Fine Arts, in 2012, and the Atlas exhibition will be open to the public throughout January at the Servando Cabrera Gallery, located at the city's central zone of Vedado. The artist usually orders the speech by dual associations and, precisely by the strength of this principle, his photographs are never manipulated. Experts state that in the semantic shot the piece questions fields of different nature; that is of historic, religious, philosophic, political or ethical character.



Internet Governance: Paving the Way



Internet governance is related to the population's digital literacy, the flow of information and the technological sovereignty Cuba Foster.

By Joel Michel**VARONA**

HAVANA.- Internet governance is a priority topic in Cuba in its intention of fostering a sustainable human development, building inclusive knowledge societies and improving the free flow of information and ideas.

The term, unknown to some, includes principles, norms, rules, decision-making processes and activities that, implemented and applied by governments in coordination with the private sector, civil society and the technical community, define the evolution and use of the network of networks.

Havana's Computer Palace recently hosted the II Internet Governance Forum, a three-day meeting sponsored by the Computer Specialist Union and the Cuban Association of the United Nations.

Some of the topics under discussion included strategies for Internet use development in Cuba for the benefit of the population, in addition to the promotion of such tool's responsible use.

The meeting of experts of different sectors was aimed at boosting local development and promoting innovation, with the incorporation of the communities.

Participants made emphasis on the creation of contents that favor citizens' wellbeing and the spread of the Cuban reality, in addition to fostering respect among people in relation to the use of such tool.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter**, Cuban International Journalism Institute professor Sabdier Batista explained that there is still lack of knowledge on Internet

governance among the population, even though this is a highly important topic.

DIGITAL ISSUES AND TECHNOLOGICAL SOVEREIGNTY

There are technical issues on Internet governance that are even related to domain name assignment, web hosting and the sovereignty of the software we use in the country; for that reason, there are different organizations involved in this topic, the expert commented.

It is a common topic for many institutions, which is not often dealt with in Cuba, although it should be, as it is part of the information process the island conducts, Batista said.

It has a lot to do with Internet governance, because it is closely related to the population's digital literacy, the flow of information and the technological sovereignty Cuba fosters.

An example of this are the antiviruses, software and operating systems that are nationally produced, he stressed.

The Industrial Computer Sciences, Communications and Electronics Company is responsible for the technological field, while the University of Computer Sciences (UCI) is responsible for software; that's the reason why Cuban phones have a national operating system called Nova.

Many Internet governance topics were new to us and some are not even within our reach, because domain name assignment is a U.S. asset, except the .cu, he mentioned. There is a lot to do in this field; we lack knowledge and taking into account the spread of Internet in Cuba, the population should know more about this topic, Batista added.

Prometheus Statue in Havana

Text and Photo by Benjamín**MICERINOS**

HAVANA.- Equestrian statues are a passion many people have and that passion is also seen in the Cuban capital, where there statues that are even unknown to people, such as the one called The torchbearers.

Located on the corner of the Ayesterán and 20 de Mayo streets, in a Havana park, the aforementioned statue is one of the most peculiar.

This sculpture grouping, made by U.S. artist Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973), portrays the myth of Prometheus, who one day went to Mount Olympus to steal the fire Zeus had taken away from men.

Prometheus was persecuted, not without giving it first to a younger and stronger man, according to the work in question.

The artistic grouping, a tribute to the preservation of culture, represents the moment in which a young man mounted on a horse stops walking to pick up the torch of civilization from an exhausted athlete.

One of the monument's features lies on its technical quality, which surprises viewers for the anatomy of humans and the very horse.

Faces show a level of detail in their gestures, verging upon the literal meaning of feelings such as agony, in the case of the dying man and hope, in the case of the horseman.

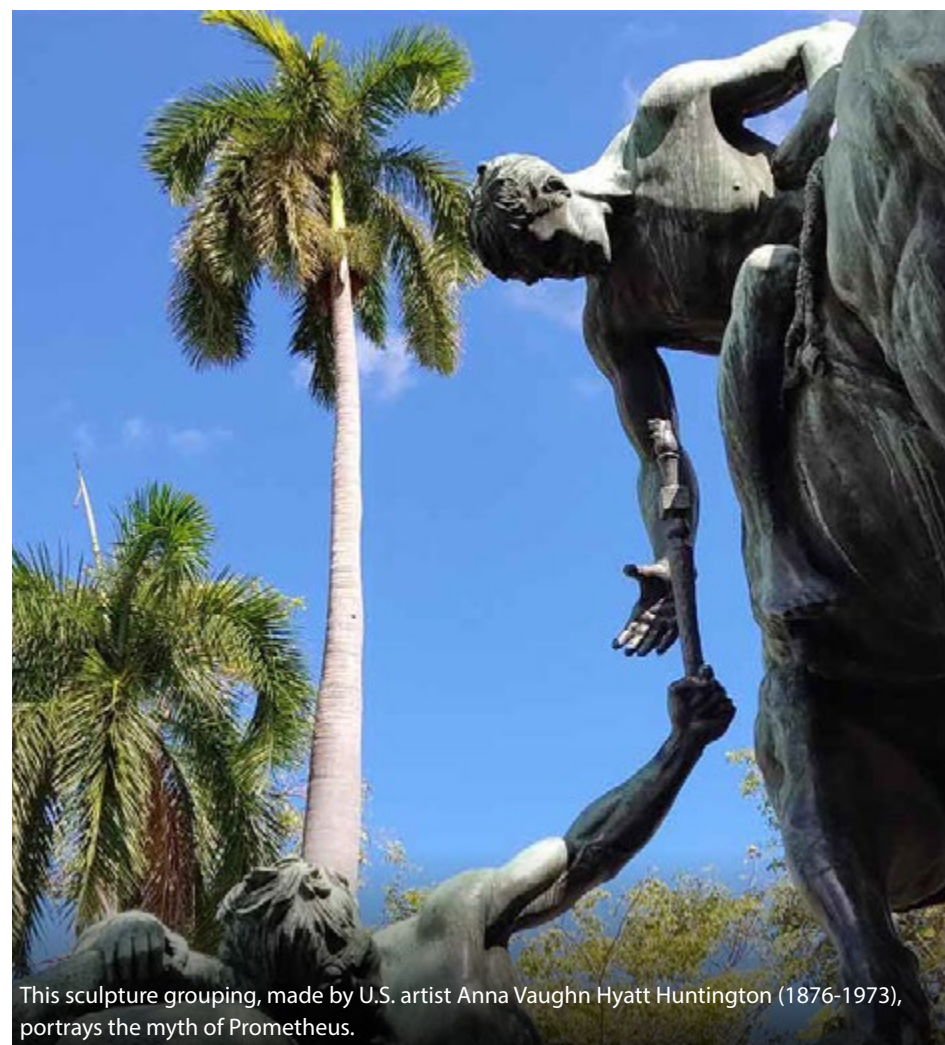
Anna Vaughn Hyatt's original monument, made in aluminum and also known as El relevo (The relay), is located in the Ramón and Cajal Square, in the Madrid University City, in front of the Faculty of Medicine of the Universidad Complutense.

The bronze replica erected in Havana, which is over three meters high and weighs 1,500 kilograms, approximately, was donated to the Cuban people in 1956 by Archer Milton Huntington, Anna's husband.

Other bronze replicas are erected at the University of Valence, Spain and other two university centers in the United States.

Anna's artistic legacy reached Cuba not only through The torchbearers, as in 1958, her husband also donated a replica of the statue Diana of the Chase, which portrays the moment in which Diana is about to shoot an arrow. This piece is erected at the gardens of the Cuban Women Federation's headquarters, in Havana.

However, what sealed this artist's imprint in the history of Cuba was the fact that at the age of 82, she made the famous statue of José Martí that is erected at the New York Central Park since 1965, whose replica is located in Havana since 2017, at the 13 de Marzo park.



This sculpture grouping, made by U.S. artist Anna Vaughn Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973), portrays the myth of Prometheus.

Guamá's Natural Charm

By RobertoCAMPOS

HAVANA.- Located in an isolated and former poor region of Cuba, the Guamá recreational complex is an emblematic tourist center located in Zapata Swamp, in Matanzas province.

The complex's most interesting sites include the Taíno Village, a place that recreates the settlement of the indigenous population that lived in Cuba when the Spanish arrived in the island and that is composed of 26 sculptures made by artist Rita Longa (1912-2000), who portrayed the indigenous hunting, fishing and doing other activities.

Created more than 50 years ago following an idea of leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro (1926-2016) and heroine Celia Sánchez (1920-1980), the complex's curious feature is that visitors can only access the complex's lodging (46 cabins) through a canal, as the said cabins are located on pontoons.

Local guides have the responsibility of checking everyday access to those places that, according to experts, are located in the Caribbean's largest wetland area: Zapata Swamp.

A crocodile farm, a motorboat journey, cabins on pontoons, wooden paths to allow access through swampy areas and the abovementioned sculptures, give this site a perfect touch.

Boca de Guamá is the name of the jetty in which visitors and guests get on a boat for a trip through the canals and lake that take them to the Taíno Village. Restaurant services are also offered there.

One of the sites visitors prefer, though, is the crocodile farm, a well-preserved and developing area.

When tourists get to this place, they are able to enjoy three phases: the first, to see and interact with small animals and learn about different species; the second, a social-historical learning about the charcoal workers who lived in the area, and the third, a trip to the area where crocodiles are kept.

Some of the species visitors can see there include the Cuban Rombifer, endemic in the swamp, in addition to animals of different ages, from newborns to 40-year-old species.

The complex is undergoing a comprehensive investment and renovation process that includes its bridges, cabins, containment walls, paths and other facilities.



PHOTOS: Tito Meriño and ACN

Ecuador-USA: Cooperation or Submission

By Adriana **VALDÉS**

QUITO.- The recently approved Strategic Partnership Act with Ecuador in the U.S. Congress causes divided opinions in the South American country, and although for the government it is an opportunity to expand cooperation, for others it is submission and interference.

Ecuadoran Foreign Affairs Minister Juan Carlos Holguín welcomed the said provision which, in his opinion, will strengthen bilateral relations and is a sign of confidence in his country.

However, to former Ecuadoran Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister, Fernando Yépez, it is a shameful and servile submission on the part of the Guillermo Lasso government to Washington's unlimited interests and visions. Diplomat and political analyst Juan Meriguet, who shared the abovementioned opinion, told **The Havana Reporter** that such an "ignominious and neocolonial" Act does not include the opinion of the Ecuadoran people, as it is not an agreement between both nations. Meriguet added that its approval is significant, because the United States does not have a similar act with other nations –

except Cuba, on which the U.S. legislative body does have provisions to codify the blockade and prevent the country's development.

On June 16, 2022, the Ecuadoran National Assembly rejected what was then a bill approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the initiative of Senators Bob Menendez, Jim Risch and Marco Rubio. At that time, assembly member Ricardo Ulcuango affirmed that, in spite of the intention of strengthening bilateral relations, it was an interference act in fields such as trade, investment, customs,

environment, safety, cybersecurity, justice, the police and human rights.

However, the Ecuadoran legislators' opinion does not count, because it is a unilateral law adopted by the U.S. Congress, Meriguet stressed.

Another element that drew attention was the reaction of the Executive to U.S. ambassador Michael Fitzpatrick's recent statement, who publicly criticized the Andean nation's judicial system.

Former Ecuadoran President Rafael Correa admitted in Twitter that the country's justice is controlled by drug traffickers, corruption

and political maneuvering, "but it is unacceptable that an ambassador interferes in Ecuador's internal affairs."

I have been the victim of corruption and political maneuvering on the part of the Ecuadoran justice, but even so, I will not accept that the representative of a foreign country tells us what to do, said the former President.

In recent months, relations between Quito and Washington strengthened; a sign of that are the constant visits to this capital of senior White House officials, including Christopher J. Dodd, Joe Biden's special adviser for the Americas, who was welcomed by president Lasso.

Secretary of the U.S. National Security Department Alejandro Mayorkas previously had talks to the head of the Ecuadoran Executive and senior members of his cabinet to deal with topics such as security, amidst the upsurge in violence in the South American nation.

In the last two months, other officials also visited Quito, including U.S. Senators; head of the U.S. Southern Command, Gen Laura Richardson, and Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Victoria Nuland.

According to analysts, Ecuador is today a key enclave for the U.S. government, considering the region's political changes.



Christopher J. Dodd, Joe Biden's special adviser for the Americas, was welcomed by president Lasso. PHOTO: Internet

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Economic Projections for 2023

By Yoandry **AVILA**

HAVANA.- Cuban Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics and Planning, Alejandro Gil, predicted an increase of the Cuban Gross Domestic Product of about 3.0 percent in 2023.

At the 10th ordinary session of the ninth legislature of the National Assembly of the People's Power, the Minister affirmed that there are conditions for 2023 for the Cuban economy to improve.

Among the key factors that endorse such projection are the control of the COVID-19 pandemic; results of the visit President Miguel Díaz-Canel carried out at the end of 2022, and business agreements reached in the framework of the last edition of the Havana's International Trade Fair, Gil stated. The official noted that fuel supply in the country, to guarantee both the national economy and the population's demands, is better at present.

He stressed that the reactivation of several industries, as a result of the increase of

power generation – thanks to investments made by the Cuban government – will contribute to reach such projections.

Key working objectives for 2023 include stabilizing the country's macroeconomic and the gradual recovery of the foreign currency financing schemes for main exporters, Gil added. The idea is to guarantee that actors of the national economy have a real cash flow at the market, the Minister commented.

EXPORT OF GOODS AND SERVICES

The Deputy Prime Minister highlighted

that the export of goods and services is a key sector in view of the fulfillment of the economic growth projections in Cuba in 2023.

Gil stated that minimum income of about 9.7 billion dollars are predicted in this sector and said that this would mean an increase of over one billion dollars in relation to 2022, although this figure would still be under the amount reached in 2019.

The tourism sector, which foresees to welcome 3.5 million visitors in 2023, will play an essential role in the fulfillment of these predictions, the Minister affirmed.

He also insisted on the importance of generating incomes through export, the only unique source that will allow endorsing essential aspects, such as the acquisition of the subsidized family basket – to which about 1.6 billion dollars are needed, at the international market's current prices.

Gil also mentioned that none of the economic measures taken in the island are on halt, even though their results are far from being the expected ones.

In spite of the adverse international context and the strengthening of the U.S. blockade on Cuba, the island looks for solutions to its problems, the Minister affirmed.



The tourism sector will play an essential role in the fulfillment of 2023 predictions. PHOTO: ACN.

Higher Efficiency in Small Sugarcane Harvest

By Roberto **SALOMÓN**

HAVANA.- The 2022-2023 sugarcane harvest looks to attain higher efficiency compared to the previous harvests, in spite of the difficulties the country faces in the availability of financial and material resources.

Director of Computer Sciences, Communications and Analysis at the Sugarcane Entrepreneurial Group (AZCUBA), Dionis Pérez, told **The Havana Reporter (THR)** that most of the sugarcane mills involved in this season – 23 in total – started milling sugar in December, and the last of them is expected to start milling this month. All factories are expected to mill 6,574,000 tons of sugarcane and produce 455,198 tons of sugar, which will be addressed at the Family Basket and other sectors of the economy, including tourism, medication, industrial productions and export.

Nightly six percent of the sugarcane will be harvested by mechanical harvesters, while the rest will be done manually, by cane cutters.

Pérez commented that most of the raw material to be harvested is low-quality cane, and although this is a small harvest, mills will have to produce more sugar in comparison to the previous season, in spite of the limitations.

AZCUBA President, Julio García, informed about a new plan to be implemented

this season, which is expected to help reach better results and contribute to the recovery of the sector.

According to García, the idea is to plan the harvest, aimed at it being objective, flexible and although small, uses good practices, concentrating resources in less mills, in order to attain higher efficiency.

Also important is to consider the real financing available and the principle of guaranteeing domestic consumption and obtaining by-products, the official stressed at a meeting on this season's preparations.

The production of by-products will focus on rum and cane alcohol from the molasses obtained in the sugarcane

mills. Other by-products include energy, bagasse boards, syrups, sorbitol and crude and refined wax.

AZCUBA agricultural experts talked to **THR** about the importance of increasing sugarcane sowing, which they consider essential in order to have bigger harvests in a country that once was the world's largest sugar producer and exporter.



Nightly six percent of the sugarcane will be harvested by mechanical harvesters. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Lights for 2023 after Tense Energy Scenario

By Mirna **GONZÁLEZ**

HAVANA.- A tense energy panorama in Cuba shaded 2022, a reversible situation and for this purpose measures are projected in 2023 to contribute to the total recovery and sustainability of the national electro-energy system.



The minister said that they will continue implementing actions to recover thermal generation. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Perspectives are focused on proceeding with the recovery of distributed generation's availability, a technology whose power recovers faster with less cost, said Minister of Energy and Mines (MINEM) Vicente de la O.

At the 10th ordinary session of the National Assembly of the People's Power, the Minister highlighted the importance of executing at least two general maintenances per year at the power plants until 2024, and three as of 2025, for the system's sustainability.

Being able to conduct that planning and guaranteeing quality in the execution will allow us to be in better conditions to attain stability in that technology, avoiding unforeseen breakdowns and failures, said the MINEM Minister.

He also commented that they will continue implementing actions to recover thermal generation, giving priority to the recovery of the Mariel and Moa engines and at the floating stations.

De la O affirmed that work is conducted on the implementation of measures to change the current energy scenario through actions such as the increase of the electricity companies' purchase prices of the electricity generated by third parties.

Fiscal benefits to the state sector and the non-state management forms that foster and develop projects aimed at making a better use of the renewable energy sources (RES) are also foreseen.

Similarly, there are plans to install photovoltaic systems in roofs and areas near food industries.

The Minister stressed that other actions foresee boosting the use of electric vehicles following their commercialization, and the sale, in Cuban pesos and freely convertible currency, of technologies that make a better use of RES.

On top of this, we will foster the use of those technologies to guarantee their availability in the country, he added.

In the case of state and non-state entities that contribute to increase power generation through RES, authorization will be granted for them to directly conduct foreign trade activities, although under the control of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Investment, said the Minister.

De la O informed that all actors of the economy will be able to execute projects for the installation of solar parks and agree on the electricity buying and selling contracts.

It will be stipulated that all new high electricity-consuming investments will have to install photovoltaic energy, so that 100 percent of their daily consumption is through renewable sources.

De la O referred to the tense situation the energy sector has faced in recent years as a result of the strengthening of the U.S. blockade, the deficit of oil, the decrease of power after several accidents in power plants and the damages caused by Hurricane Ian.

MIPYMES and Management Sector Consolidate Exchanges

By Raquel **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The recent Havana International Trade Fair (FIHAV) allowed consolidating relations between the management sector and the micro, small and medium-sized companies (MIPYMES) through productive connections and import substitutions. One of those companies is Laminados Concepción, an entity dedicated to producing sheets of wood – mostly cedar – that has the intention of substituting the purchase of that material abroad, which is used for cigar boxes.

These products meet important needs for the country, participate in exports once incorporated into tobacco packaging and all this through productive linkages with domestic companies, Yarisel Concepción, partner and salesperson of this private MSME, told **The Havana Reporter**.

Through the Sancti Spíritus province's Agricultural and Forestry Group, Laminados Concepción obtains the necessary raw material; Cabaiguán, in the same province, provides its technology, and the ARCA National Packing Company is responsible for commercialization, the specialist commented.

Through a market study, we identified the tobacco sector's potentials, as Cuba imports sheets of wood for a cost of over one million dollars, and this proposal can substitute those purchases which, as added value, count on the ARCA company's quality certification and higher levels of efficiency in relation to those bought abroad, she highlighted.

Concepción also added that at the fair, they presented cases for a unique cigar box, in addition to a prototype for rum, coffee, rolls of cigar, as well as disposable pieces of cutlery for the hotel sector, tongue depressors and spatulas for cervical cytology tests. FIHAV exceeded the expectations of attracting national and foreign clients to materialize exports, "several entities are already interested in hiring our productions, such as Internacional Cubana de Tabaco," she commented.

JR SOLUCIONES

Another MIPYME that stood out in Cuba's trade fair was JR Soluciones, whose social objective involves refrigeration, temperature and domestic, commercial and industrial electricity. This company bets for Solar Fotovoltaico as one of the services and products to stand out in the light of the present market niche.

The President of that private trading company, José Luis Acosta, told **THR** that as attaining a balance between the energy matrix and clean energies is a national intention, they considered the perspectives of using alternative systems for that goal.

JR Soluciones' proposal is directed to join the conception, setting-up and starting-up of the photovoltaic system; after-sales warranty with a first maintenance, and in that process,

they foresee the sustainability of client service, even when warranty expires, Acosta stated.

The idea is to accompany the process from the scientific point of view, with the possibility of conducting a technical preparation or a project suitable to the system each user needs, and optimize their finances and costs, he stressed.

This project includes two essential concepts: energy efficiency and use of renewable sources and that can be attained through foreign partners – Fondon (Spain) as exclusive supplier to Solar Fotovoltaica and JR as the responsible entity for the assembly and running of the systems.



Yarisel Concepción, partner and salesperson of Laminados Concepción. PHOTO: Francisco González (Panchito)

Argentina, Messi and Yulimar Headed Prensa Latina Sports Poll

By Lemay **PADRÓN**

HAVANA.- The Argentinean soccer team; its forward player, Lionel Messi, and Venezuelan triple jumper Yulimar Rojas, were the main winners of the Prensa Latina Sports Poll as Latin American and the Caribbean's best athletes in 2022.

The Argentinean squad, the new winner of the Qatar 2022 World Cup, closed the poll with 25 votes – more than the 9 the Argentinean basketball team, winner of the Americas Cup, reached.

Messi, for his part, got 21 votes (most of them in the last week), thus ousting Brazilian world hurdle champion Alison dos Santos, who headed the poll but closed with 11 votes.

Messi has the planet at his feet. Experts shower him with praise and almost all fans state their respect, bringing greatness on the man who responded on the field and minimized the destructive and implacable force of time, which was unable to cast a shadow over the talent of real sport legends, **The Havana Reporter** wrote from Doha.

In the women's category, the athlete who received the highest number of votes from beginning to end was Yulimar Rojas, world indoors and outdoors gold champion in the present season (32 votes) – easily ahead of her closest escort, Peruvian walker Kimberly García (9), world gold champion in 20 and 35 kilometers.

Rojas made history in 2022 after becoming the first woman to reach three world titles in triple jump.

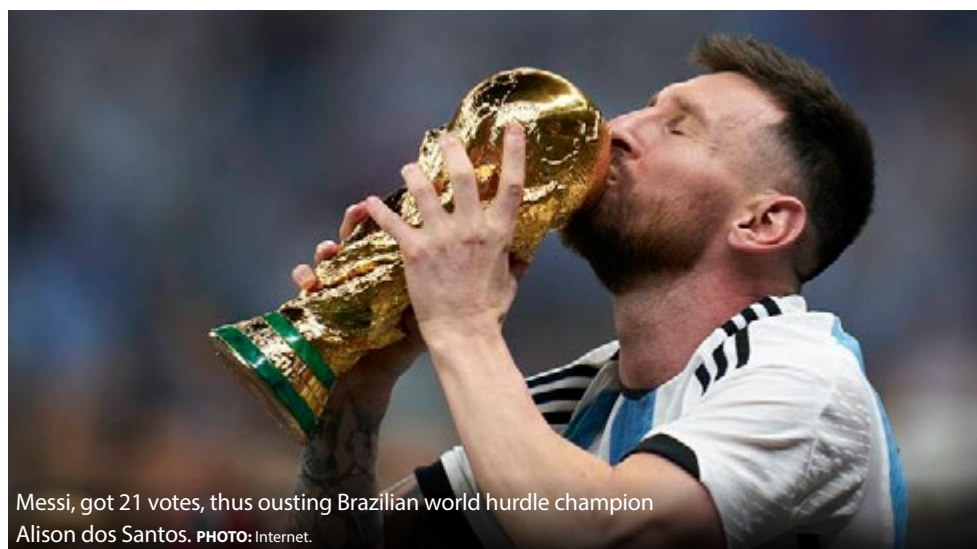
At the world championship held in Eugene (Oregon), the South American athlete recorded 15.47 meters – the best in the season. Before, at the Belgrade World Indoors Championship, she beat her own world

record by recording 15.74 meters. On top of that, she also won the Diamond League.

As expected, the holding of the Qatar World Cup at the end of 2022 influenced on the poll, not only on the results but also on the late reception of preferences. This time, the poll included 56 mass media from 17 countries, some as distant as Lebanon and China.

Voters also acknowledged this year other outstanding athletes, such as Dominican baseball player Jeremy Peña; Cuban judoka Andy Granda; Brazilian gymnast Rebeca Andrade, and the Colombian female futsal team.

In the case of Messi, this is the third time he wins the poll, as he also did it in 2011 and 2014. That is also the case of Rojas, who also won in 2017 and 2019. As for the Argentinean soccer team, this is their sixth victory (in the team category) after the ones reached in 1986, 1990, 2001, 2008 and 2014. Historical winners of this poll continue to be Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt; Colombian triple jumper Catherine Ibargüen, and the Brazilian men soccer team – with six, five and nine victories, respectively.



Messi, got 21 votes, thus ousting Brazilian world hurdle champion Alison dos Santos. PHOTO: Internet.

Ronaldo Veitía Heads to Divine Eternity

By Yasiel **CANCIO**

HAVANA.- Cuban and the world judo community are mourning. Ronaldo Veitía set course for immortality, that divine place where the icons of human history, the managers of the universe, rest. Veitía passed away, I was told. I closed my eyes and sighed. Even though the news was expected, it was extremely painful, terrible.

The Cuban God of judo had been struggling for a long time against death and many of us were clung to a breath of hope. But, unfortunately, the candle was extinguished.

Death is not real when life's duty has been honored, said Cuban apostle José Martí.

I was very young when I saw that peculiar, eccentric, strong man; a Buddha of soul and heart; a real Cuban; an enthusiast through and through; a creator.

Veitía was, indeed, a magician of creation. He was a sorcerer capable of turning mud into gold; of lifting myths the size of a temple; of molding them to perfection.

Idolized, loved, worshiped, respected, Veitía created one of the world's most revered and prolific women judo schools

out of the blue, with his goldsmith hands. He rescued the sport from obscurity; created essences and examples; flew over human meanness; withstood difficulties; dedicated himself in every action, every detail.

Listing the names of his champions would be hypocrite. Mentioning dozens of winners born under his aura would be irrelevant in the face of his huge work.

However, you should trust me when I say that nothing else would make him happier, because his main pride – family apart – were, are, his pupils, "his girls," his tatami champions, his iron women.

Idalys Ortiz, Estela Rodríguez, Legna Verdecia, Amarilis Savón, Daima Beltrán, Driulis González, Odalys Revé and Yurisleidis Lupetey, and many more. Generations.

Too many medals and Olympic and world titles were obtained under his aegis. A huge figure! No wonder he was included in the International Judo Federation Hall of Fame.

Six years ago, when his official retirement as main coach of the national team was

announced, Veitía said something that went down in the history of our Homeland: that he was going home, between tears, "crowning a life for judo."

Veitía lived for sport. No doubt! Since he took charge of the Cuban national team, at the end of the 1980s, a new era started in the Cuban tatamis, characterized by numerous titles and legends, rigor, but specially respect and passion.

Judo, with an irreverent veil, is in mourning. One of its greatest pillars said goodbye to earthly life and bought a ticket to the other world, to the land of the immortals.



Veitía was a magician of creation, a sorcerer capable of lifting myths the size of a temple; of molding them to perfection. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

Global Unrest Predicts the End of an Era

By Teyuné **DÍAZ**

HAVANA.- The world is facing important changes and transformations that allow thinking of a new era, a new order or a new system of international relations, but in process, said Doctor of Economic Sciences Luis René Fernández.

In an exclusive interview with **The Havana Reporter**, the professor of the International Economy Research Center (CIEI) of the University of Havana stated that it is an unfinished process.

It is not even possible to specify what will be the conditions or the shape of the possible system to emerge in the face of the current major crises and challenges, he stressed.

Some people think that everything started with the pandemic, because of its importance and costs, but this only actually aggravated the economic and social problems the world faces.

It is forgotten that the current situation is marked by climate change, whose outbreak began with the accumulation of endogenous contradictions of capitalism, together with economic crises of great significance, such as the one that occurred from 2007 to 2009, for which no solutions have yet been perceived, he recalled.

In that context, the United States implemented significant changes in the economic policy strategy, designed – from their point of view – to revert those crisis, but that had an impact worldwide, said the expert. Those aspects show a relative decline of the U.S. hegemony and a cracking of its system of world domination, he added. As an example, he stated that Donald Trump's assumption of power (2017-2021) and the aggressive policies the current administration has maintained until now reveal the exhaustion of the accumulation pattern that started in the 1980s, "the conservative revolution or counterrevolution."

It is an adjustment on the liberal thinking the United States started with II World War, the researcher commented.

Fernández also noted that in spite of the current changes, neoliberalism and

globalization do not get to an end but are reshaped, readjusted to the new conditions and strategic, political and economic objectives of the political class and the financial oligarchy, to try to recover lost ground.

UKRAINE CONFLICT

The Ukraine conflict has huge consequences for the reshaping of that new international order. A prominent role lies in the confrontation of forces that refuse to accept the United States domination and hegemony, such as China, Russia and other countries that have the vision of keeping their independence and sovereignty.

The flow of weapons and financing are part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the western allies headed by the United States, but time will come when it will not be possible to say who is in dispute, he stressed.

With everyone committed to that war as a matter of life or death, we could think of a world war, said the Doctor of Economic Sciences.

War in Ukraine is not only military but also economic, particularly with Russia, but with China too, with whom the United States started a commercial confrontation and whose measures are on the rise.

Some analysts have predicted for years that the world is heading to bipolarity, assuming the existence of more poles; others, however, predict a change in hegemony, from the United States to China, and even an alliance of two perfectly-shaped blocs.



Luis René Fernández, professor of the International Economy Research Center of the University of Havana. PHOTO: Vladimir Molina

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