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# San Cristóbal Agency to Open New Office in Cuba

By Yoandry **ÁVILA**

HAVANA.- With the forthcoming opening of a new office in the capital, the San Cristóbal S.A. Travel Agency will increase its sale capacities to all those who want to know more about history, heritage and culture.

Specialized in the promotion of historical and patrimonial tourism, since its foundation 26 years ago, San Cristóbal adds to its current headquarters – in Havana's historical site – a new office, at the Miramar Trade Center.

The agency, attached to the Office of the Havana City Historian, was founded by the late Eusebio Leal with the purpose to provide services as national recipient.

As the management of historical and patrimonial tourism is the entity's main objective, the agency offers thematic

trips on history, culture, patrimonial renovation, social tasks, architecture and religion.

It also offers guided tours in sites such as the National Capitol and the so-called Leal Route, which recalls the legacy of the deceased city historian and his concern for the city's cultural elements.

That route includes those sites in which Leal's presence was stronger, such as the Temple, Plaza de Armas, Palacio de los Capitanes Generales, the San Gerónimo University and Mercaderes street.

San Cristóbal, an agency that also offers lodging, transportation and international airfare services, has offices in the Historical Site, the San José Warehouses, the La Rampa zone (Vedado neighborhood) and the Habana Libre, Telégrafo and Ambos Mundos hotels, all in the capital, in addition to the Santa Clara and Camagüey cities.



The new office is at the Miramar Trade Center. PHOTO: Internet.

## Gaviota Group Signs Agreement with Roc Hotels

By Francisco **MENÉNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The Gaviota Tourism Group and the Spanish Roc Hotel Chain started managing and commercializing a five-star facility in Cayo Santamaría, in Cuba's central region.

The action, materialized at the end of January following a bilateral agreement, is commercialized under the name Hotel Roc Casa del Mar.

The parties decided to cancel a previous contract on the then Hotel Lagunas del Este (today, Hotel Roc Casa del Mar), which could not be inaugurated due to COVID-19 and the complex's refurbishment.

This facility has the Excelsior Club service, exclusive to Roc Hotels, which offers attractive, exclusive and differentiated added values, equivalent to the Roc Plus service that is so successful in the company's four-star establishments.

Spokespersons of the Spanish chain stated that such norms are highly renowned among guests, as shown by reviews on the rest of the Roc hotels in Cuba.

ROC Hotels of Spain, a family hotel chain founded in Palma de Mallorca in 1998, is undergoing a strong expansion at present.

Santa María is the largest key on Cuba's northern coast; covers an area of 18 square kilometers and has 10 kilometers of beautiful beaches.

The key is connected to mainland through a causeway that is about 50 kilometers long and respects the natural

environment. It is also connected to Cayo Ensenachos and Cayo Brujas, a recommended tour because of its beauty.

Promoters say that it is a unique experience, because you have the impression of floating on the water.

Visitors' attractions include Crucero del Sol (Sun Cruise), on board of a catamaran that takes guests to Cayo Brujas and offers the possibility of swimming with dolphins, snorkeling and paying a visit to the dolphinarium.

Other options include a tour of the town of San Juan de los Remedios, where people can enjoy a visit to a cigar factory, in addition to a tour of the Santa Clara city and a visit to a rural area and a Jeep Safari trip.



Hotel Roc Casa del Mar, a five-star facility in Cayo Santamaría, in Cuba's central region. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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# A Race against Time



President Miguel Díaz-Canel, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero and other leaders visited to all 15 provinces of the country. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

By Rafael **CALCINES**

HAVANA.- The highest levels of the Government started 2023 at full speed in the search for alternatives to reverse the serious economic situation faced by Cuba, based on the capacities of the territories and what they intend to be a substantial change in the ways of seeing and facing the problems.

The latter is the main objective of the visits President Miguel Díaz-Canel, Prime Minister Manuel Marrero and other leaders paid to all 15 provinces of the country with the purpose in discussing potential solutions based on the conditions and capacities each territory has and in order to contribute to the improvement of the population's quality of life and attain a noticeable economic recovery.

As known, the deterioration of the Cuban economy worsened since 2020, mainly due to the over 60-year old blockade imposed by the United States, which were strengthened as a result of the over 240 measures imposed during the Donald Trump administration and maintained by the current President.

That asphyxiation policy combined as a perfect storm with the effects of the multifactorial crisis the world faces, strengthened by the pandemic of COVID-19 and the domestic inefficiencies which range from bureaucracy, a galloping inflation and low productivity to a deficient management of many state companies, in spite of the large autonomy reached.

As people say, that's how things are in regards to an analysis with top governmental and political officials in each territory and representatives of state and private companies and the most important economic sectors; apparently, away from slogans and based on concrete issues.

According to press releases, although the agenda of these meetings is based on the national economy plan recently approved, focus of attention lies on the measures and actions presented by each territory to face general and particular

problems, rather than on guidelines. There are also plans to promote debates at the municipal level.

At Cuba's westernmost province, Pinar del Río, Díaz-Canel acknowledged that "there is a blockade that is real, which is cruel, which we denounce everywhere," but there is another mental blockade that must be overcome once and for all, he warned.

In the same line, in Artemisa province, he urged to "make a change in life and we have to do it ourselves; we cannot wait for the U.S. blockade to change, we have to rise to the challenge and overcome that reality," an approach he reiterated in other meetings.

At the debates, the President has insisted that in order to take the leap the country needs for its economic growth, we have talent and will, but generalizing what has been well done and "turning those exceptions into rules" is still pending.

Díaz-Canel has also insisted on the need to put the concept of "creative resistance" into practice, which implies a resilient attitude and the search for solutions beyond merely defensive attitudes, which on most occasions hide conformism and even pessimism.

The most concrete example of that creative resistance was the creation of vaccines, with our own resources and overcoming huge obstacles, to face the pandemic of COVID-19, at a time when doors were closed to the country to access those medications.

Hence, the importance the President attaches, at these and other meetings, to the need of making a maximum use of the scientific potential the country has at the national and provincial levels.

At the closing of the X Period of Sessions of the Cuban Parliament, last December, Díaz-Canel stated that 2023 should be a better year for the country, but warned that "in order for that to happen, more than a comprehensive plan is needed. Getting rid of inertia, eliminating bureaucracy, removing more obstacles and overcoming self-satisfaction are needed."

# G77 plus China, unity and cooperation

By Melissa **KING**

HAVANA.- As the new president of the Group of 77 plus China, for the first time in its history, Cuba's objective is unity and cooperation among the nations of the South.

For a year, the Caribbean nation will be at the forefront of the political coordination bloc that groups countries from almost all of Latin America, Africa, and South Asia with the aim of promoting support in international organizations and the defense of common interests. According to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bruno Rodríguez, during the Cuban presidency, the island will promote the objectives of the 2030 Agenda, as well as promote international solidarity after the Covid-19 pandemic. The Caribbean nation will promote South-South cooperation as a more effective instrument, particularly support for post-pandemic recovery of developing nations.

In addition, it will work for the full fulfillment of the responsibility of the industrialized countries in support, through North-South cooperation and will encourage the advancement of common positions among the members. The Foreign Minister, during the handover ceremony in New York, stated that unity is the watchword for these times and "only by building consensus can we move towards the legitimate realization of our development aspirations."

He stressed that Cuba will promote tangible financial commitments under favorable conditions and the use of science and technology as engines of sustainable development, taking the G77 in this matter as a starting point. He announced the call to celebrate in Havana this year, a summit on science and innovation as a premise for the development and confrontation of future pandemics.

In climate matters, the island will work to consolidate a solid position of the G-77 ahead of COP28, and will defend the achievement of substantive results on issues of special interest to the group, such as the fund for losses and damages, climate finance, and adaptation, Rodríguez said.

He insisted that the foreign debt, already paid several times in its principal amount, has become one of the main obstacles to development and an instrument of financial looting and economic dependence.

In this context, the Cuban Head of State, Miguel Díaz-Canel, urged through a video message to articulate actions and overcome the obstacles to the real progress of the people. Unity is imperative today and the greatest of all urgencies, he pointed out. He also reaffirmed his country's commitment to work for the development of nations with which Cuba "shares a history of abuses against our peoples, but also common goals and hopes."

He pointed out that the Covid-19 pandemic caused three years of delay in the progress of nations, particularly developing countries, "drowned in debt without fiscal space or access to financial resources to invest in recovery." The G77 plus China is currently made up of 134 nations, representing two-thirds of the members of the United Nations and 80 percent of the world's population, although for historical reasons the name has not changed.



For a year, Cuba will be at the forefront of the political coordination bloc.

# Biden, Cuba and Limbo

By Deisy**FRANCIS**

HAVANA.- Perhaps the word limbo accurately defines the current state of U.S.-Cuba relations, two years after the arrival of Democrat Joe Biden to the White House.

At least, that's how Cuban Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Carlos Fernández de Cossío described them at a recent press release with the international media. The official then recalled that during his electoral campaign, Biden bewitched Cuban-American sectors with the promise to revert the policies his predecessor, Donald Trump (2017-2021), had taken against the island.

However, reality is simple: the current occupant of the Oval Office has barely given signs of moving in the direction of rapprochement, or what some observers call "thawing" of relations.

In these 24 months, the Biden administration applied almost to the letter the "maximum pressure" policy Trump had adopted, which meant the strengthening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on the Cuban people for over six decades.

The former Republican president adopted 243 additional coercive measures with the

sole objective of causing discouragement, frustration and hence, the eagerly-awaited change of regime in Cuba.

However, in 2022, some signs seemed to predict the start of a new relationship between Washington and Havana, such as the resumption of migratory talks, suspended since 2018.

As Fernández de Cossío well said, "it is natural that the United States has relations with Cuba in the field of migratory talks. We have a common problem. The United States cannot solve it alone; Cuba cannot solve it alone either."

It is a phenomenon that needs discussion, cooperation and there are agreements in effect for that, he stressed.

Last May, the Biden government also announced a set of initiatives that eased a bit the measures Trump adopted and were a step in the right direction, but the essence of the blockade has remained unaltered.

On January 18 & 19, Cuban and U.S. law enforcement authorities met in Havana with the purpose to have exchanges on cooperation to face the scourges that threaten both countries' security, such as terrorism, illegal people's trafficking and migratory fraud, among others.



The meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of respect and professionalism. PHOTO: Prensa Latina

According to the release published in the media, the meeting was conducted in an atmosphere of respect and professionalism.

"Both delegations agreed that there are common phenomena associated to illegality that require cooperation (,,,). Agreed (...) to conduct other technical meetings between the law enforcement agencies of both countries to materialize bilateral cooperation."

However, it is difficult to think about a change of policy toward Cuba while the blockade is applied with full rigor, or while a list made according to Washington's measuring stick includes the island as a state that sponsors terrorism.

But it is difficult to think that there will be a change in policy towards Cuba as long as the blockade is applied with full force or that a list drawn up according to Washington's standards includes the island as a state sponsor of terrorism.

According to Fernández de Cossío, what describes the U.S. stance toward Cuba is the economic blockade and the maximum pressure policies imposed by Trump, which stamp bilateral relations their distinctive feature.

## Anti-Immigrant Crusade



Under the new measures those who try to illegally enter the U.S. territory will be immediately expelled to Mexico. PHOTO: Internet.

By Ixchel**FUENTES**

HAVANA.- In spite of the enforcement of Title 42, which allows prompt rejection of asylum-seekers in the United States, Joe Biden's new migratory policy adds other restrictions to irregular immigrants, such as veto to re-enter the country in a period of five years.

"Do not show up at the border. Stay where you are and apply legally from there," said the President to those who pretend to migrate to the United States.

In those terms, the President of the most powerful country in the world announced the new measures adopted by his administration and under which those who try to illegally enter the U.S. territory will be immediately expelled to Mexico.

"Individuals without a legal basis to remain in the United States will be subject to prompt expulsion or removal," stated Defense Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas.

The official avoided making reference to how the majority of those who reach the U.S. border escape from poverty and the violence resulting from centuries of colonial

exploitation and the plunder of resources by imperialist powers such as the United States.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) also stated in a press release that new processes would be in force for the Cubans, Venezuelans, Haitians and Nicaraguans, giving them authorization to work in the United States, while adding that there would be serious consequences for those who infringe the paths established.

Up to 30,000 individuals from those four countries would be able to enter the U.S. territory following a legal and simplified way, once requests are studied on a case by case basis, the information added.

Then, a two-year temporary permit would be granted, as long as they pass rigorous national and public security biometric and biographic controls, have a sponsor who commits to providing financial and other type of support, and meet the vaccination schemes and other health requirements.

The DHS stressed that the objective of these provisions is to improve border security, limit irregular migration and create additional safe and orderly processes for people to legally enter the U.S. territory.

However, it is not a coincidence that three of the countries the United States allegedly provides migratory facilities to are at the same time the target of sanctions by Washington, as is the case of Nicaragua and Venezuela, since recent years, and Cuba, for over 60.

In relation to Cuba, the unjustified non-fulfillment, since 2017, of the granting of 20,000 annual visas and the closing of visa processing in the U.S. embassy of Havana, caused a significant accumulation of the migratory potential that affects both countries, and transit nations too.

The above was stated by the Director of Consular Issues and Cubans living Abroad at the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ernesto Soberón, who affirmed that the strengthening of the economic blockade, since 2019, aggravated that situation.

It is known that the worsening of the socioeconomic conditions in any territory becomes one of the main causes of migration, and Cuban immigrants are not the exception, he said.



The plant is the only of its type in Cuba, with advanced technology. PHOTO: ZEDEM.

According to head of the National Gynecology and Obstetrician Group, PhD Danilo Nápoles, actions to reduce that indicator included professionals' training and updating on prenatal care and obstetrician emergency attention. With such a background, 2023 should be a year to consolidate both, measures adopted and the development of PAMI-related specialties, as well to strengthen committees for the prevention and control of infections associated to health care in pregnant women institutions and pediatric hospitals.

# Maykel Herrera, the Painter of Children

By Adis**MARLÉN**

HAVANA.- Painting, as an artistic expression, has the capacity of communicating and expressing emotions through codes: the artist recreates his own visuality on the canvass trying to captivate a lot more than the attention of the viewers.

In the search for that peculiar touch, more sensitive and calm, Cuban painter Maykel Herrera drew inspiration from children, a resource he discovered more than 15 years ago and which has provided a unique hallmark to his visual poetics.

"Children, as a code, have a special meaning to me and to all people. From the formal point of view, it is a different language; their movements and expressions have a psychology that adults do not have," the artist told **The Havana Reporter**.

Since he was a child, he was inspired by his father's creative aptitudes and started to develop a vocation and an affection toward painting that later on turned him into a faithful exponent of that discipline in Cuba and abroad. With lots of dreams and illusion under his arm, he left his native Camagüey to try his luck in Havana, a city that served as a showcase to exhibit his talent to the world.

Those were successful years in which many clients showed their interest in my work; that allowed me to get to a group of collectors I could not access in Camagüey, he said. My works started to join private collections and as a result, projects emerged in Europe and North America, he added. Countries such as France, Germany, Puerto Rico and Colombia, among others, welcome several of his creations. Before finding the identity that characterizes him at present, Herrera went through several stages and made performances for which he has received several awards.

The most outstanding prizes include the Asociación Hermanos Saíz Award at the XV Fidelio Ponce Festival and the World Quality Commitment award in the Gold Category at the BID International Convention on Quality, Innovation and Excellency (France).

"The painter of children," as he is popularly known for, was able to go beyond the borders of art with a unique proposal in which he combines jokes, irony, pain or satire with a common denominator: a child's image.

I do not identify myself with a particular tendency, I simply try to mix everything in my creations; even though I paint children, my work is not for them; they would never understand it, he stressed.



Cuban painter Maykel Herrera drew inspiration from children. PHOTO: Courtesy of the artist.

The artist also commented that every child has a psychology and a personality of his/her own: "they gave me the opportunity of making this path a part of me, which is really important because of the sensitive energy they pass on," he affirmed.

When asked about why children are the center of his attention, he said: Spectators can criticize a painting that portrays a sensual woman or a strong man, but, who can criticize a work because they do not like children? They captivate and invite the audience to stay in front of the painting.

A new exhibition, "Mountain Goat", occupies the visual artist's days, alluding to how rough the road can be, and how easily we can travel it and move on.

My son is present in many of these works. I also studied animals, which are present in my visuality for the first time. It is a fresh proposal that keeps me motivated, he stressed.

## Chaos and the Sons of the Beast

By Jorge**LOZANO**

HAVANA.- The exhibition "El caos y los hijos de la Bestia" (Chaos and the sons of the Beast) will be on display until February, allowing viewers to enjoy 17 pieces that include sculptures accompanied by texts with stories about outstanding painter and engraver Ángel Ramírez.

On show at the Villa Manuela gallery, in Havana, the exhibition "talks about that character, that beast, which is not present but whose descendants actually are and have inherited her features, represented in sculptural wooden objects," Ramírez told **The Havana Reporter**.

Accustomed to dealing with human realities through parodies of characters, the creator knew how to compensate for the ills of the Caribbean island, with didactic messages, marked by a philosophical and ethical charge, said curator and art critic Marilyn Sampera.

The sculptor retakes the use of ancient icons and xylographic features that characterize engraving to build a contemporary beast, the organizers stated.

Ramírez has received several prizes throughout his career, such as the award granted at the VIII Latin American and Caribbean Engraving Biennial of San Juan (1988) and the National Culture Award (1996).

He has also participated in different international engraving biennials, including those held in São Paulo, Brazil.

His work is part of public and private collections in the United States, Spain, Japan, France, Sweden, Germany, Mexico and Venezuela.



The Festival's President, Víctor Rodríguez, announced performances will be broadcasted on Streaming Cuba on the Internet, among others. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.



# Society of Friends of the Country

By Fidel VASCOS

HAVANA.- On January 9, 2023, the Economic Society of Friends of the Country in Havana (Sociedad Económica de Amigos del País) celebrated its 230th anniversary. Created in the heat of the renewing ideas of the European Enlightenment during the 18th century, it has its most direct antecedents in the Societies of a similar nature created in Spain under the reign of Carlos III.

In Cuba, its promoters were Governor Luis de las Casas, Bishop Espada and the Intendant of the Treasury Alejandro Ramírez. The first organized demonstration of this Enlightenment current on the Island occurred in Santiago de Cuba, in 1787.

The work of the Economic Society was not limited to promoting socio-economic development only in Havana. He stimulated the creation of Patriotic Councils in Sancti Spiritus, Puerto Príncipe, Trinidad, Matanzas, San Antonio Abad, Guanabacoa, Güines, San Juan de los Remedios, Cienfuegos and Cárdenas, among other locations.

As a result of his efforts, his merits included boosting the sugar industry and founding dozens of public schools

where hundreds of low-income children studied. The first public library; the School of Chemistry and the Chair of Political Economy, were created, among many others.

But its greatest merit is manifested in the beginning of the thought that began to identify itself as belonging to the Cuban nation, with characteristics and projections different from those of the Spanish metropolis. In this sense, José Agustín Caballero, Félix Varela, José de la Luz y Caballero, José Antonio Saco, Domingo del Monte, Tomás Gener, Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros, among others, stood out.

In the field of contributions of science and technology, Francisco de Arango y Parreño, Tomás Romay, Felipe Poey y Aloy, Tranquilino Sandalio de Noda, Alvaro Reynoso Valdés, Antonio Bachiller y Morales should be noted. José Martí described it as "the highest and most meritorious of the Cuban societies."

In the Republican era that began in 1902, the Society maintained its fundamental objective in the cultural and material progress of the country. Among its ranks there are very prominent intellectuals such as Don Fernando Ortiz Fernández, Juan Marinello Vidaurreta, Salvador Massip Valdés, Elías Entralgo, Luciano Martínez, Adrián del Valle and Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring.

Although its radius of action in this period is not as extensive as in colonial times, it fulfilled an important national mission. Its best-known result is having kept several public schools running, a wide list of historical, economic, social and cultural research, as well as its Library, which houses more than a million documents.

With the triumph of the Revolution, a new era began for the Economic Society of Friends of the Country. In 1994, it was relaunched by Julio Le Riverend Brusone, Salvador Bueno Menéndez, José Antonio Portuondo Valdor, Julio García Olivera and Dr. Daysi Rivero Alvisa, President of the institution at the beginning of this third period.

Today the Economic Society brings together experienced specialists of various professional profiles accredited for their capacity and social commitment that contribute to the construction of a prosperous, democratic, participatory and sustainable Cuban socialism.



The Library of the institution houses more than a million documents. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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# José Martí's Validity in his 170th Anniversary

By José **FERNÁNDEZ**

HAVANA.- The world of arts, academy, politics and especially the Cuban people rendered tribute to National Hero José Martí on his 170th anniversary of his birth, last January 28.

The institutional system of the José Martí Program Office, the International Network of José Martí Departments and the World Council of the International Solidarity José Martí Project summoned a program that paid tribute to the validity of the pro-independence hero's thinking.

Iconic sites related to the life of the author of *Nuestra América* (Our America) were chosen as venue of these events, including the José Martí House, in Old Havana; the memorial that carries his name, in the Cuban capital, and his pantheon at the Santa Ifigenia cemetery, in the eastern city of Santiago de Cuba.

In recent dates and as traditionally done in the Cuban archipelago, children paraded through the main public squares wearing costumes and portraying characters of the literary works Martí wrote for whom he called 'the hope of the world.' Cultural institutions launched books, exhibited documentaries and films on the Cuban National Hero's life and work, and hosted concerts and visual arts exhibitions. The V Conference for World Equilibrium, held from January 24 to 28, was at the core of the celebrations.

In addition to the official program, the Cubans remembered Martí with a silent, daily but sincere tribute, as appreciated in street graffiti and the wreath of flowers laid at every bust of Martí found in Cuban schools, in tribute to a man that is also known as the Apostle of Cuban Independence.

Many of José Martí's phrases are part of the Cubans' oral heritage, as if they were sayings, and what many consider our second national anthem – the universally known *Guantanamera*, by Joséíto Fernández – includes his *Versos Sencillos* (Simple Verses) in the lyrics.

José Martí was born in Havana on January 28, 1853. Since he was very young, he joined pro-independence ideals, as a result of which he was imprisoned, even though he was an adolescent, and then exiled.

Most of his conspiratorial work was carried out in exile where, after studying the reasons that caused the failure of the first Cuban independence war, he understood that it was essential to achieve unity, for which he founded the Cuban Revolutionary Party in April 1892.

His political ideals were characterized by anti-racism, Latin American unity and antiimperialist, which are present in a

vast written and oral work that would show his role as the continent's forerunner.

His pro-independence activity was linked to his work as a writer and a speaker, which turned him into one of the modern movement's forerunners, the first authentic Latin American forerunner in literature.

Martí's ideals were the core of inspiration of subsequent progressive movements in favor of the country's independence. At present, the validity of his thinking is seen from the first lines of the Constitution in force and even in the main social conquests of the Cuban Revolution.



The Cubans remembered Martí with a silent, daily but sincere tribute. PHOTO: Internet.

## Pedagogía 2023: For Quality Education

By Iahdih **IAHDIH**

HAVANA.- The XVIII edition of the Pedagogía 2023 International Congress was held in Havana, from January 30 to February 3 aimed at reaching the Sustainable Development Goal number four and contribute in increasing the quality of education.

On this occasion, lectures included hybrid presentation and fostered socialization of scientific knowledge, dialogue and the exchange of good practices and the results of educational research, under the motto 'A Better World is Possible.'

The most important moments of this event included the meeting of Education Ministers of the Group of 77 + China, who in the context of the Congress spoke about the challenges the developing countries face to guarantee that human right, and the potential alliances to attain that goal.

Personalities such as Secretary General of the Ibero-American State Organization for Education, Science and Culture, Mariano Jabonero; UNESCO Deputy General Director for Education, Stefania Giannini; Executive Secretary of the Andrés Bello

Agreement, Delva Batista, and founder and director of the Ecuadorian Pedagogy Network, Josué Habacuc Villagómez, attended the congress.

Education Ministers of Niger, Guyana, Djibouti, Guinea Bissau, Grenada and Belize, in addition to other invited guests, also attended the event. The Congress, held at its usual venue at the Havana's International Conference Center, included topics such as inclusive, equal and

quality education; preventive work from the educational systems, and perspectives and consolidation of the Technical and Professional Formation and Education.

"The scientific program was organized differently," National Director of Science and Technical Formation at the Cuban Ministry of Education and President of the Scientific Committee, Eva Escalona Serrano, told **The Havana Reporter**.



The Congress included topics such as inclusive, equal and quality education. PHOTO: Cubadebate.

"We wanted debate to prevail, not the traditional presentation of papers. That is, lectures, panels and round tables were organized to respond to the Congress's general topics," she added.

Over 580 works were presented as part of the scientific program, including about a hundred from 21 countries of four continents. Delegates dealt with topics such as environmental education for sustainable development; health promotion and educational challenges in the battle against the pandemic of COVID-19, and science, technology and innovation for a quality teaching, among others.

Pedagogía 2023 also included the II Forum of Business executives and Leaders of Educational Products and Services (EMPREDUC 2023), which allowed exchange between business executives, scientists, technicians, educational TV representatives and companies of the technology, robotics, furniture and educational toys manufacturing sectors, among others.

The idea to host a pedagogy congress in Cuba arose at the end of the 20th century, when the first edition of this event was held, in 1986. On that occasion, educators of the region met in the island to analyze and find new solutions to Latin America's several educational problems.

# Cuban Animated Series to be Premiered in 2023

By Mario MUÑOZ

HAVANA.- The Cuban animated series Titoverse will be premiered this year, affirmed creator, co-scriptwriter and director Daniel Martín Subiaut.

The new proposal, inspired by the popular animated series Tito reacciona (2018) and produced by the Animated Studios of the Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC), will be first screened on the cinema and will then reach the television and the streaming platforms.

In the previous version, a hit in Latin American, the main objective was to render tribute to Latin American and Caribbean culture's ambassadors and to highlight the values of Latin America's artistic heritage through the animated language.

Titoverse will focus on the adolescence of the charismatic character, who will play the role of a youth hero together with a group of friends of different ethnic origins and customs. Together, they will fight evil in different dimensions and historical moments.

"This animated series was a hit in the Asian market, which made us develop a new time line in which Tito is already 15 years old and performs this series full of adventure, humor, culture and martial arts," said the producer.

According to Subiaut, 2022 was a year in which they recorded voices, designed characters, storyboards and everything a production with the rigor the market demands actually needs.

"The universe around Tito brought new characters, dozens of them, as the adventures developed in monothematic episodes led to time and multidimensional travel," stated the online journal of the Cuban Ministry of Culture.

In the new series, a new character appears: Celia, a 15-year old girl from Santiago de Cuba province who defends the Cuban identity and is inspired by the Cuban women fighters, especially Celia Sánchez, who participated in the fights against the dictatorship before the triumph of the Revolution, in 1959.



Titoverse will play the role of a youth hero together with a group of friends of different ethnic origins and customs.

"Her design was made in Latin American workshops, where the girls said the physical features they would like to see in that character, with which they would identify," the producer added.

Another leading character is Xiunela, an "atomic" girl from Havana who combines the seven African powers with the Chinese dragon, "a character we were asked to include so that the series would reach higher popularity in the Asian market," noted Subiaut.

Mini, a cat from another universe that helps humans fight evil, is also included. This character makes reference to the search for tolerance and gives unity within the group of superheroes, while embodying universal feelings.

Tito, who plays the leading role, has double nationality: Cuban-Mexican, which provides many curious elements from both cultures.

"He is fun, has high human values and sense of justice, and although he is the most immature of the group, he will be able to grow as he assumes his increasing responsibility as a leader," said the creator.

The 2D animated series, which will include 26 chapters, has relied on the consultancy of important Mexican, Asian and Cuban specialists.

Actors' direction has been conducted by actress and stage director Ana Nora Calaza, while Sadeth Rumbaut, Vicky Suárez, Lianet Alarcón and Annie Garcés play the role of the four protagonists.

## Havana Seen by Two Cuban Artists

By Jorge LOZANO

HAVANA.- The exhibition "La Habana que me han dao" (The Havana that was given to me), by painter Denys San Jorge and photographer Sonia Almaguer, celebrates the 503rd anniversary of the foundation of the Villa of San Cristóbal de La Habana.

On display at the famous Cuban Hotel Nacional in the capital, both artists combined their visual arts disciplines in this exhibition to show another aesthetic and characteristic perspective of a city known as the Wonder City.

According to art critic Jorge R. Bermúdez, the proposal appeals to a construction-deconstruction resource of the city's architecture upon the basis of the collage technique, of proven expressive possibilities and visual attraction.

"Neither Sonia nor Denys are just another passersby, but rather witnesses of an act of life that is renewed every morning with the rising of the sun: to make the emblematic buildings of the city the central issue of a visual identity that identifies them as art makers," said the professor of Art and Communication at the University of Havana.

The piece highlights buildings such as the Havana Capitol, the Hotel Nacional and the Royal Force Castle, whose design, as part of the exhibition, shows the past-present spatial communication, undressing the Cuban capital's own personality, which identifies the island as one of the most beautiful in the world.

According to the authors, the exhibition is another look at Havana; it is the amusement of two artists who, after so much traveling through the city, have let themselves be conquered by the chaos of a majestic, ancient, charming and surprising city.

"Neither nostalgia nor generational confrontation is present, even less a criticism to its deteriorated image, beyond the wise and still insufficient hands of its restorers," the artists said.

To San Jorge and Almaguer, the game of shapes and colors prevail in the Havana they are lucky to live in, in permanent interaction with simple and sometimes unnoticeable elements its inhabitants provide.

They added that the part of the city "they own" is not enough; for that reason, in order to have the new city they want, they deconstructed it and constructed it again through the collage technique, following the several photographic shots taken and their subsequent changing edition.



Both artists combined their visual arts disciplines in this exhibition to show another perspective of Havana City.

# Natividad Alfaro's Historical Passion

By Marta **CABRALES**

SANTIAGO DE CUBA.- It is not precisely for being a historian that Natividad Alfaro makes important contributions to this discipline in Cuba, particularly in this eastern city, where she enjoys prestige and is considered an authority on the field.

**The Havana Reporter** came to her home, in the Abel Santamaría neighborhood, to talk to the recent winner of the National Editing Award, a prize she enjoys since she

knew about the news, last December, which has allowed her to confirm the satisfaction of "her authors" and many other people.

Still surprised and happy with the prize, endorsed on over 50 years of work, Alfaro shared her experiences since, while on the second year of the architecture career, she decided to change and start working at the Oriente publishing house, the only center in which she has ever worked.

She recalled her initial duty as an editor and her enrollment in humanities, a random decision that became an attraction, to the point that

it was the only work activity she conducted throughout her over 70 years of life.

Since then, she has been involved in the editing of texts on historical facts from different times and contexts, which has turned her into an expert on the national history.

It has been like that, to the point that almost all the Bronze collection, of the Oriente publishing house, was run by her since the beginning, she mentioned.

That catalog of authors includes the signatures of prestigious intellectuals to whom the International Book Fairs have been dedicated in Cuba, who have also received National History and Social Sciences awards, in addition to the Historical Critic award.

The names of those intellectuals include Fernando Martínez Heredia, María del Carmen Barcia and Jorge Ibarra Cuesta.

A sort of fetish writer for her is Dr. Olga Portuondo Zúñiga, National Prize for History and Social Sciences, Historian of the City of Santiago de Cuba.

According to the famous editor, the most recent works in which she worked include a two-volume book on Emilio Bacardí Moreau, the city's first Republican mayor, written by Portuondo Zúñiga.

The clarity, intelligence and tenacity of this beloved professor of the University of Oriente are qualities that facilitate her books' revision and edition.

The title *La aurora de los héroes* (Heroes' dawn) is especially important to this word embroiderer, who had the honor of making this work at the request of Commander of the Revolution Juan Almeida Bosque, the legendary guerrilla fighter and revolutionary leader who at his death, in 2009, left an impressive legacy of songs and several written texts.

After listening to Natividad Alfaro talk about her passion to polish up, organize and bring the hundreds of pages that have reached her hand to a successful end, no other conclusion can be reached than that of a peculiar working method, in which rigor and demand prevail, under a meticulous look that is able to detect the minimum mistake.

Permanent dialogue with authors is one of the methods she uses; communication must be fluent so that the necessary consensus is reached when a paragraph has to be changed, an idea reformulated or certain words used, she explained. "I did not write the book, but I assume it as my responsibility," she concluded.



Natividad Alfaro, winner of the National Editing Award. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## Agritourism and Sugarcane Mills

By Jean **D'LUX**

CIEGO DE ÁVILA.- Agritourism is linked to production, culture and the traditions of different places; in Cuba, the sugarcane production industry is a distinctive example of this.

The Patria Sugarcane Mill, in the city of Morón – in this central Cuban province – is a good example of this modality. Founded in 1849, this mill is at present a museum that shows the history of the sugarcane industry in the island.

In addition to providing interesting data on this activity, guides join a group of actors that recall other times, including slavery. Ancient industrial pieces and a fleet of locomotives that were a landmark at the time complement the exhibition.

By the end of the tour, visitors can even travel on board of what was once a train through a sugarcane field and up to a farm in which they can enjoy lunch and get in touch with rural life, food and traditions.

Visitors are explained about the economic problems the country faced in the 1990s, which prevented the development of the Cuban sugarcane industry, particularly as of 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Socialist community.

Until the 1990s, there were 176 sugarcane mills in Cuba, but from that date and until 2000, more than 100 closed. It was then that the Patria Sugarcane Mill became

a Museum, something many visitors appreciate.

Visiting the place and taking pictures of the machinery on display for tourists, or even sharing with farmers of the area, are part of an interesting tour and a peculiar way of enjoying active holidays in Cuba.



The Patria Sugarcane Mill, Founded in 1849, is at present a museum that shows the history of the sugarcane industry in Cuba. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

# An Outlook of a City in 2023

Text and photos by Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- Tourism, travels and holidays are an important boost to the aspirations of peace and tolerance. For that reason, Havana shows its beauty in its cobbled stone streets and corners.

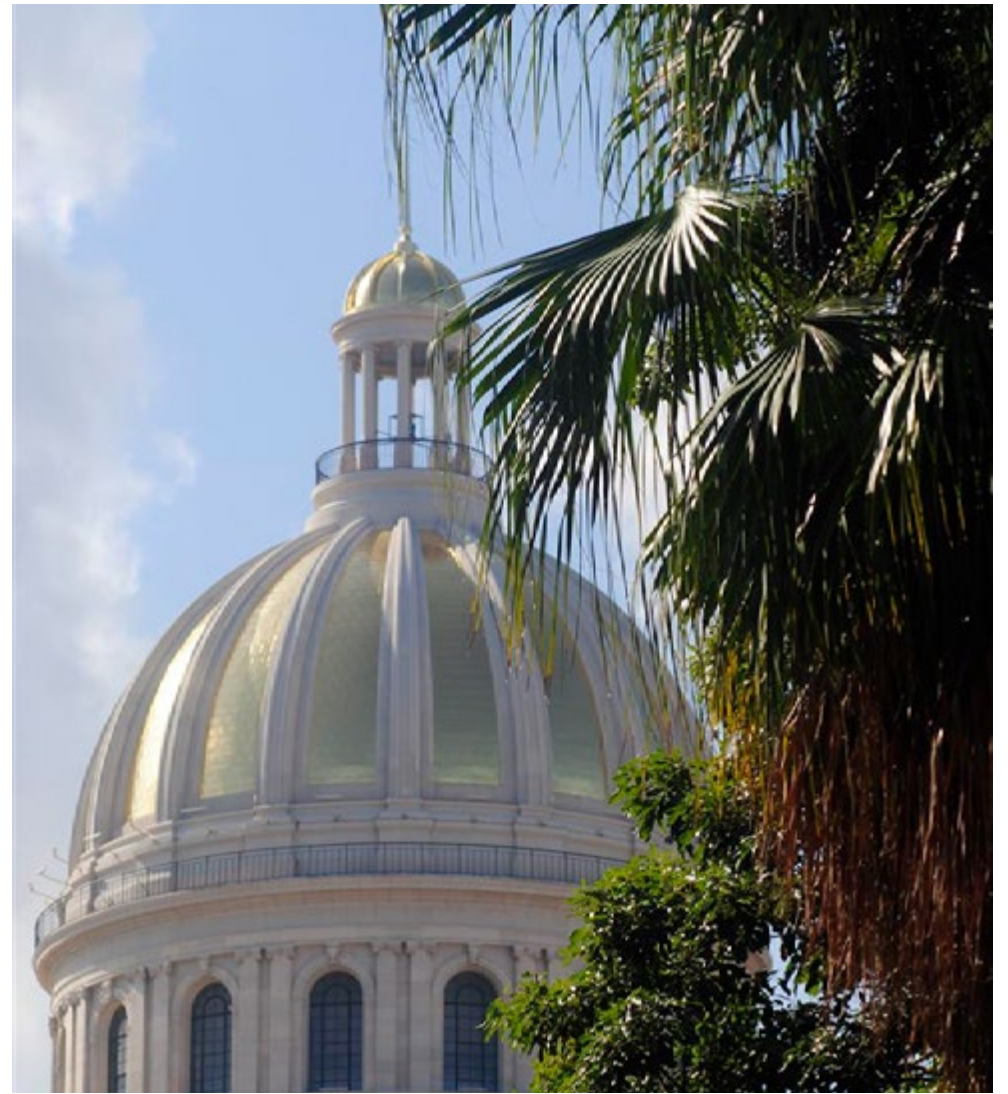
The urban landscape, well-preserved thanks to the Office of the Havana City Historian (Eusebio Leal, 1942-2020) and the endeavors of the Cuban Ministry of Tourism and other entities, looks like a Babel Tower in the field of languages, understanding and people of different

origin, even though after COVID-19, few still visit the island.

Havana, the Cuban capital, was founded in 1519 at the shade of a leafy Ceiba tree. It suddenly became a cosmopolitan city full of travelers from all over the world, eager to know it in depth.

A nice atmosphere is felt in its streets, where people from all five continents walk around, speaking their languages but interacting with locals the only possible way: through cordiality.

In this city, tourism's main attractions are witnessed: unity and the understanding of different cultures and peoples.



# Lula Gains Strength, Bolsonaro near Justice

By Osvaldo **CARDOSA**

BRASILIA.- A week after former mechanical lathe operator Luiz Inácio Lula swore in as President of Brazil, a swarm of extreme right-wing Jair Bolsonaro's radical supporters invaded and plundered the National Congress, the Federal Supreme Court and the Planalto Palace, the seat of the Executive Power.

Armed with sticks and stones, nonconformists with the progressive leader's victory at the polls cried out for a

military intervention at the Tres Poderes (Three Powers) Square, in Brasilia, where they also rejected Lula's assumption of power.

Images of violent break-ins and vandalistic acts toured the world, and even political commentators described the act as the "Brazilian version of the US Capitol's attack," in reference to the assault on January 6, 2021, when followers of former President Donald Trump burst into the seat of the Congress, violating security and occupying parts of the building for several hours.

That event prevented a joint session of the Legislative Power to count the votes of the Electoral College and endorse the triumph of Democrat Joe Biden in the 2020 presidential elections.

The extreme right-wing actions conducted at the Federal District (FD) were strongly rejected by the Brazilian people and the international community.

As a result of the immediate recovery of institutional power, after the prompt reaction of the government and especially Lula's, who ordered the federal intervention of Public Security in the FD, the situation was under control in over four hours, an act praised in and out of the country.

Once the first pro-coup attempt was ousted, Lula, without bulletproof vest and accompanied by heads of the Legislative and Judicial powers, walked down the ramp that joins the Planalto Palace and the Tres Poderes Square to explicitly ratify that the Brazilian democracy will not be defeated, almost 40 years after the end of the military dictatorship (1964-1985).

The former trade union leader recently said at a TV interview that an error on the part of the government's intelligence services did not alert to the pro-coup attempts on January 8.

"We have Army intelligence, GSI (Institutional Security Cabinet) intelligence, Marine intelligence, Aeronautics intelligence; hence, the truth is that none of those bodies served to alert the President of the Republic that that could happen," he stressed.

"If I had known, on Friday, January 6, that 8,000 people would come here, I would have not left Brasilia. I would have not. I left because everything was calm, among other things, because we were still celebrating the joy of the swearing-in ceremony," he explained.

Lula recalled the moments of tension and stated that he was under the impression that on Sunday that day, there was a real coup d'état in Brazil, in addition to complicity of members of the Armed Forces with the vandalistic acts.

In the light of these events, the Federal Supreme Court (TSF) started an analysis on the over 1,400 people arrested in connection with the antidemocratic acts.

STF Minister Alexandre de Moraes presented evidence on the crimes foreseen in the Brazilian legislation and the Penal Code, such as terrorist acts, criminal association, violent abolition of the Democratic State of Right, coup d'état, threat, persecution and incitement to crime.



Bolsonaro's radical supporters invaded and plundered the National Congress, the Federal Supreme Court and the Planalto Palace. PHOTO: Internet.

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# Plans, Measures and Potential Paths

By Yoandry **ÁVILA**

HAVANA.- The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economics and Planning, Alejandro Gil, projects a three percent economic growth in Cuba in 2023.

According to the official, this year will be better for the country in the economic field, because there are conditions for the growth of the gross domestic product (GDP), such as the control of COVID-19 and the results of the international tour President Miguel Díaz-Canel made at the end of 2022.

The Deputy Prime Minister also referred to the business agreements reached in the framework of the FIHAV 2022 International Trade Fair of Havana, held last November, and the resumption of several industries thanks to the improvement of power generation.

Gil added that some of the key work objectives for 2023 include progress in the country's macro-economic stabilization and the gradual re-establishment of the foreign currency financing schemes for main exporters.

Predictions are encouraging considering that the national economy is double-sieged, with effects that are still present in each sector of society.

Government authorities stated that bureaucratic obstacles and the bad use, on the part of some entities, of the possibilities the country offers at present for companies to have higher autonomy, worked against the projections, among other domestic factors.

Key actions to revitalize the national economic scenario and its reflection on the social field include the collection

of incomes in the municipalities and the resizing of the budgeted sector, he stressed. The Minister also urged to continue improving personalized attention to people living in vulnerable situations.

## EXPORT AND FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Gil stated that a two-percent GDP growth was attained last year in relation to 2021, although the pre-pandemic values were not reached, especially in primary and secondary activities such as agriculture, fishing, manufacture, trade and tourism.

The government leader added that the export of goods and services is a key sector in the fulfillment of the country's economic projections for 2023.

In this field, minimum incomes of about 9.7 billion dollars are to be generated – over 1 billion dollars more in relation to 2022, but a figure that is still under the amount reached in 2019.

The tourism sector, which plans to receive 3.5 million visitors this year, will play a key role in the fulfillment of such projections, said Gil.

The Minister made emphasis on the importance of generating incomes in connection with exports, the only genuine source that will allow endorsing essential aspects, such as the acquisition of the subsidized family basket for the Cuban population.

Other areas include the foreign investment field, with commercial agreements at the FIHAV 2022 Trade Fair as main incentives.

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The pre-pandemic values were not reached, especially in activities such as agriculture, fishing, manufacture, trade and tourism. PHOTO: ACN.

## The persistent quality of cigars

By Benjamín **MICERINOS**

HAVANA.- Despite the economic, geopolitical and commercial problems, Habanos, Cuba's Premium cigars, continue an upward trend that convinces the most demanding markets due to its quality.

This criterion is a summary of the efforts of the authorities to keep this luxury product in the foreground, despite a blow as strong as Hurricane Ian, which destroyed a large part of the harvest in the western province of Pinar del Río in 2022, key in the production of the tobacco leaf.

The Habano Festival returns in February, a gathering that usually attracts more than 1,000 people from some 70 nations. The international corporation Habanos S.A., notified that after two years of absence due to Covid-19, this great smoking party returns. Its executives explained that the most anticipated event on the planet of Premium Tobacco returns in its 23rd edition from February 27 to March 3.

It is anticipated that the best specialists, distributors and fans will relive the initiatives that made this annual event famous and that are appreciated by attendees, such as visits to renowned rolling factories, plantations, conferences, contests and three very special nights in which they will know the latest news first hand.

## THE LONG ROAD OF WAITING

Although the tobacco authorities announced the schedule in 2020 due to the pandemic, Habanos S.A. and its representatives kept the fire of Premium cigars alive through digital springs and electronic meetings.

Likewise, exports and the use of various shipping means continued to place the merchandise at the points of demand, since Cuban tobacco continued to be in great demand all over the world.

The precedent of the Habano Festival occurred in 1994 with a dinner, ending

in a cigar tasting, held at the Las Ruinas restaurant, located on the outskirts of the capital, and from that moment on and due to its acceptance, the idea of hosting the annual event as a stage to present news from smokers.

Its organizers call contests, specialized tastings, combinations with wines and spirits, as well as traditional tours of the most important plantations in Cuba. The co-president of the international corporation Habanos S.A., Inocente Núñez, highlighted the inclusion of initiatives and creative ways to continue with exports through shipping companies during the months of the absence of flights.

Habanos S.A. has 27 brands of Premium or handmade cigars, of the highest quality, whose marketing suffered in Duty Free or Duty Free stores, especially in airports, ports and marinas. The most symbolic brand of cigars is Cohiba, with 55 years of existence. Its first models began to be produced in 1968: Lanceros (Great panetela), Coronas Especiales (Corona) and Panetelas (cigarette, despite its name) and its commercialization in 1982.

Since then, Cohiba has presented numerous series such as the 1492, in honor of the fifth centenary of the arrival in Cuba of Christopher Columbus, and in 2010 Behike, when the most expensive cigar in the world (375 euros each cigar), was released.



The Habano Festival returns in February, a gathering that usually attracts more than 1,000 people from some 70 nations. PHOTO: José Tito Meriño.

# Challenges at the Start of a New Year

By Ania**TERRERO**

HAVANA.- The year 2022 marked the first year of consolidation of the new economic actors in Cuba, moving between potential and challenges to achieve integration into the socioeconomic fabric of the country.

Since then and up to the present, 5,985 new actors have been approved, of which 5,854 are private micro, small and medium-sized companies (MIPYMES), 72 are state companies and 59 are non-agricultural cooperatives. Functioning of the self-employed workers (TCP) was also improved in this period.

According to specialist of the Economic Actors Department of the Ministry of Economics and Planning (MEP), Daniel Torralbas, the legal norms approved on September 2021 created new productive forms but also adjusted others to their real nature.

"The idea was to call a spade a spade, because we had TCP that were not considered companies nor had the advantages linked to legal entities and had hundreds of employees," Torralbas told **The Havana Reporter**.

In the case of private MIPYMES, the specialist identified as advantages that they offer more security because their operations are through banks, which allows them to organize the economy and account for their operations, in addition to facilities for contracting from state-owned companies and applying for loans, since they no longer incur debts as natural persons.

Dean of the Faculty of Economics of the University of Havana, Silvia Odriozola, commented that in such a path, they can increase the offer or assume specific stages of the productive process, such as transportation.



The number of MIPYMES and non-agricultural cooperatives approved all over the country reaches 5,360. PHOTO: Trabajadores.

In addition, they create opportunities of legitimate incomes so that people, especially youngsters, find individual life projects in the country, create new jobs and reduce informal jobs, which in the end means more work protection.

With those features as starting point, Torralbas stated that at the end of 2022, the results of the measures started to be seen, and if TCP gathered around gastronomy, transportation and construction before, MIPYMES now gain ground on those sectors, but also in fields such as the manufacturing industry, computer sciences, renewable sources of energy and food production.

## OBSTACLES ON THE WAY

Torralbas acknowledged that there are still many challenges for MIPYMES' organic integration to the socio-economic fabric, including subjective resistance in the state sector; complexities of the economic situation and foreign exchange duality.

The expert also mentioned other challenges, such as studying how to measure the impact of new actors; designing spaces that allow access to foreign currency market; issuing new procedures; reducing bureaucratic arrangements, and designing public policies for their internationalization, among others.

Access to foreign currencies was precisely considered the main conflict these productive forms face, as without them, they can neither import nor buy consumables, and is more difficult to export.

Another problem economic actors and researchers identified is related to the high taxes MIPYMES have to pay – at present, in addition to the 10 percent over the sale of any product, 35 percent is added over utilities.

# Fostering Agricultural Yield

By Roberto**SALOMÓN**

HAVANA.- The Sugar Cane Research Institute (INICA) has attained important achievements in the growing of most of this crop's varieties in Cuba, diversity that have been developed by this center.

Founded in 1964, the institution's objective is to obtain species of high productive potential and resistant to the main plagues and diseases that affect this crop.

In an interview to **The Havana Reporter**, INICA General Director Sergio Guillén explained that the center develops highly-competitive science programs and research and innovation projects to obtain sugarcane, seed and vitro-plant varieties.

INICA also offers scientific and technical services and develops related technology and biological and lab means, which contribute to the sustainable development of the sugarcane agriculture; allowing a variety, and favor weeds' control, fertilization, agricultural extension and irrigation.

## PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

At present, we conduct 28 CITMA-financed research projects and three

sectorial plans linked to agro-ecology and precision agriculture, the official said.

Staff training is one of the tasks that allows us to have a higher influence on sugarcane producers and increase agricultural yields, in addition to innovation and taking science to the fields, he stressed.

The crop's agricultural and productive potential in the country is 60 metric tons (tm) per hectare. The present potential is well below that figure; for that reason, a program is conducted to reach that number by 2030.

All INICA-developed varieties can provide 70 tm per ha in dry conditions and a 12.50 industrial yield (11.00 in a factory), stated Guillén.

INICA has developed 11 commercial sugarcane varieties, with 83 percent of sucrose content, that are being used at the present sugarcane harvest.

In addition, it has 13 provincial experimental stations that conduct research in areas such as genetic phyto-improvement and biotechnological development; nutrition and soil preservation, and phyto-health protection.

The center's radio of action also includes research linked to crops related to the staff's food self-sufficiency.



INICA General Director Sergio Guillén. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

# Central American and Caribbean Games

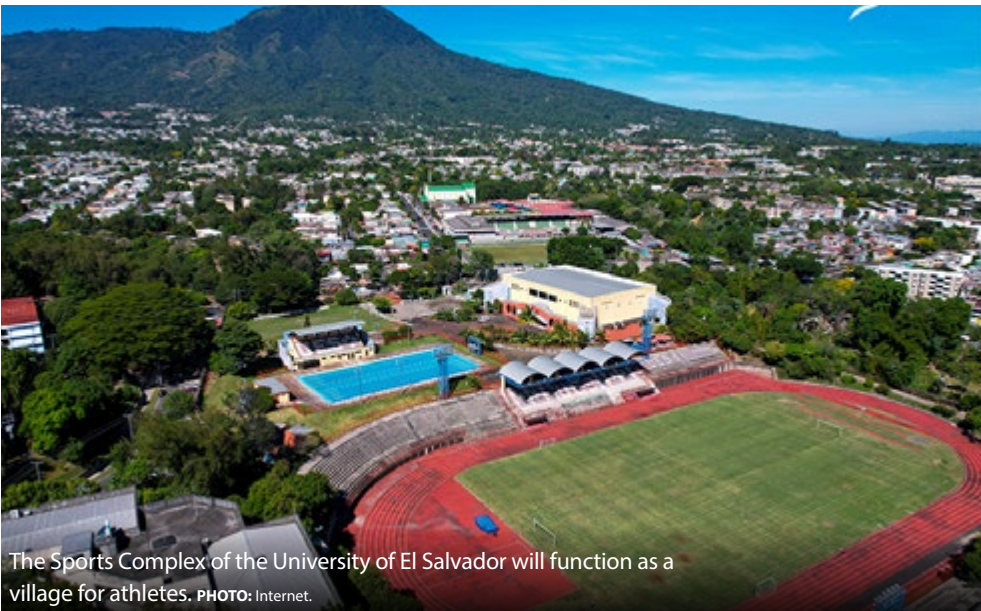
By DionysanABIA

HAVANA.- Will Mexico continue dominating the Games? Will Cuba ever reign again or will it ever increase its advantage as main winner? Will Mexico and Cuba tie? These and other questions come to people's minds when thinking about the XXIV Central American and Caribbean Games. New feats of the muscle and the mind, an inseparable combination in sports, will be seen in the capital of El Salvador and the Dominican Republic sub-venues from June 23 to July 8, 2023. Panama was initially chosen to host, in 2022, the world's oldest regional multiple sport event, but COVID-19 forced to change venue. A quick look at the history of these games, inaugurated in 1926 and almost always held every four years, shows that Cuba and Mexico have been the only winners, on 12 and 11 occasions, respectively. According to specialists and fans, the next edition of these games will continue being characterized by rivalry between both nations, without leaving aside the performance Venezuela and Colombia have had – the latter, the host

of the 2018 edition, held in Barranquilla and other cities. Almost five years ago, with a record participation of 37 countries and territories, Mexico, a country that has never been absent from these games, won 132 gold medals, 118 silver and 91 bronze, at the top of the medal table – followed by Cuba (102-74-60), Colombia (79-94-97), Venezuela (34-48-73), the Dominican Republic (25-29-53), Guatemala (21-22-41), Puerto Rico (20-29-38), Jamaica (12-4-11), Trinidad & Tobago (9-8-13) and the Bahamas (4-2-1). Other 20 delegations reached at least one medal. In relation to San Salvador 2023, Cuban sports authorities acknowledge Mexico's potential to remain at the top of the games, as well as the country's strengths to remain in the second place. "We have made three projections and are convinced that we have to work to turn several silver medals into gold," High Performance General Director at the Cuban Institute of Sports, José Antonio Miranda, told journalists last December. "We work based on reality, without triumphalism. In some cases, training will have to be personalized in order to reach the medals we need," he stressed.

Miranda added that at the closing of the 2022 qualifying events, Cuba had 322 athletes with possibilities to participate in the next Central American and Caribbean Games. Hopes are that this figure ultimately reaches half thousand athletes. Cuba's attendance is guaranteed in swimming (open waters and artistic), water polo, basketball, handball, baseball, canoeing,

cycling, fencing, gymnastics (artistic, rhythmic & trampoline), field hockey, wrestling (Greco-Roman and free), artistic skating, modern pentathlon, rowing, softball, sport shooting & archery and volleyball (indoors and beach). Other disciplines such as athletics, boxing, swimming, racquetball, table tennis, taekwondo and triathlon will grant quotas in future dates.



The Sports Complex of the University of El Salvador will function as a village for athletes. PHOTO: Internet.

## The Ups and Downs of the Elite League

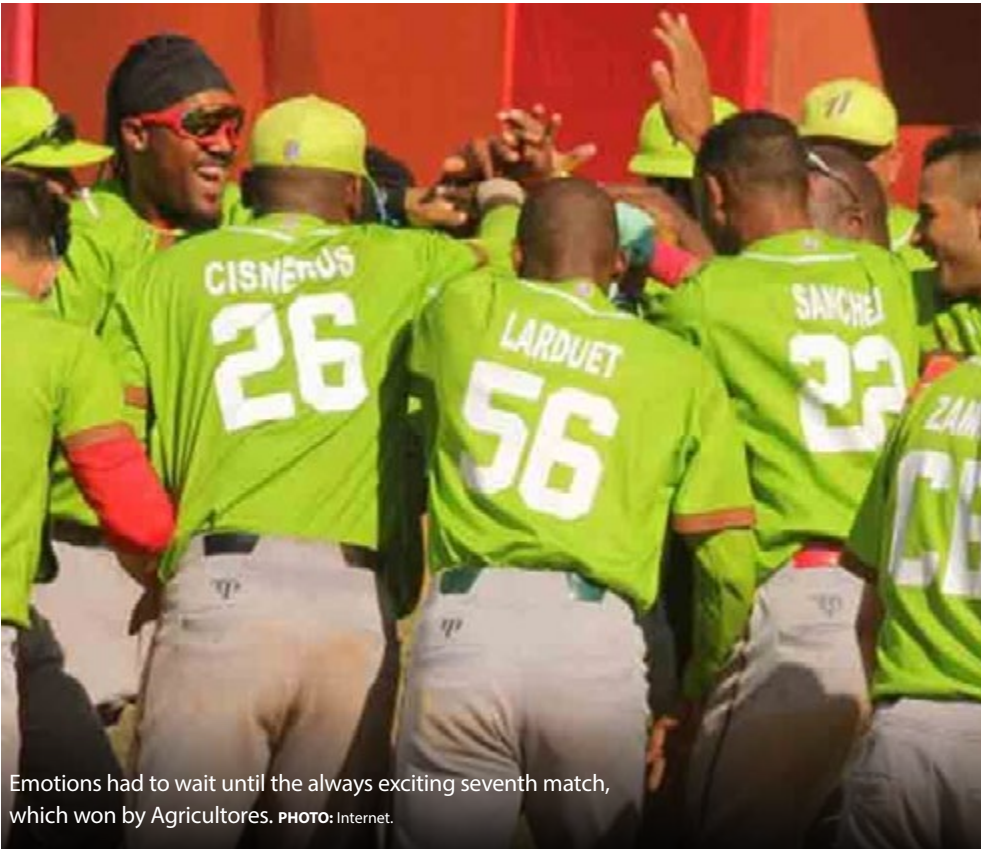
By LemayPADRÓN

HAVANA.- The 1st Elite League of the Cuban Baseball series did not start well; delays in the calendar due to the late arrival to the country of players, technical staff and referees' uniforms and supplies characterized the tournament's beginning. The warmth of the fans was also missed because from the beginning the names chosen for the six teams involved, which brought together the best players in the country, not contracted abroad, were not welcomed. Something else that also conspired against the event was the fact that games were always played during the daytime because of the complex national energy situation, and that affected the fans attendance. On top of that, dissatisfaction prevailed among those involved in the event because of the lack of attention and other logistic problems that affected all venues, a situation that was not in keeping with the name the event carries: Elite. The post-season also started with the same problems, but it was then that the tournament started to win fans' heart. The adrenaline that usually characterizes this period added followers, especially

the fighting spirit of the four teams that went on to the semifinal stage: Agricultores, Centrales, Portuarios and Tabacaleros. Although the latter were swept by the first listed, some games were hard-fought. Temperature actually rose during the Centrales vs. Portuarios games, whose results were not as predicted. The team that included the Industriales and Mayabeque players was placed last during the whole qualifying phase and, according to predictions, had few chances to defeat the squad that was considered favorite to the throne since the 'play ball' voice was heard: the Centrales team, composed of Matanzas, Cienfuegos and Villa Clara players and reinforced in the post-season with foreign league players. However, the blue team was evidently better and qualified for the final, coming from seven runs behind when they were about to be defeated. With that energy they got to the finals, although few thought that they would go beyond the fifth game against the

powerful Agricultores team, the leader of the event from beginning to end. Portuarios not only did that but also made things difficult for Agricultores after winning three of the four first games, forcing the team headed by Carlos Martí to win the three last games in a row, including the first won at the Nelson Fernández Stadium, in San José de las Lajas, as visiting team. Emotions had to wait until the always exciting seventh game, which seemed to

favor only one side, until Portuarios tied six-six in the ninth inning, but was finally defeated by its opponent at the Bayamo Stadium. We could not ask for more! Perhaps that's the only image that would manage to save the series from its previous stains. A lot would have to be improved in the future, focusing on the protagonists, thanks to whom the League actually improved.



Emotions had to wait until the always exciting seventh match, which won by Agricultores. PHOTO: Internet.

# CELAC Champions Strengthening of Unity

By Glenda **ARCIA**

BUENOS AIRES.- With the commitment to strengthen unity and work on its institutionality, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) moves toward a new stage, characterized by the return of Brazil and the support of several social organizations.

The 7th Summit of Heads of State and Government of this mechanism, held on January 24 at this capital, not only marked the conclusion of Argentina's work as pro tempore president, but also allowed gathering delegations from 33 nations, in addition to trade union and political groups and human rights advocates.

The return of South America's giant after three years of absence because of its withdrawal by right-wing extremist Jair Bolsonaro and the presence of president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva were highlighted as elements that strengthen a platform whose relevance in the face of the destabilization and pro-coup actions by

the United States and the right grows stronger.

Two hundred years after the proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine, where Washington's thirst for expansion is evidenced, the response of the leaders, shown in the Buenos Aires Declaration, was clear: defend cooperation, self-determination, territorial integrity, non-intervention in their domestic issues and the declaration of the area as a Peace Zone.

The document also indicated that the region should be a colonialism-free territory, and endorsed Argentina's sovereignty over the Malvinas, Georgias del Sur and Sándwich del Sur islands and the surrounding sea areas.

It also condemned the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for over 60 years and demanded its immediate end.

The Declaration stressed CELAC projection as a community of sovereign nations, able to reach consensus in topics of common interest and contribute to wellbeing and development, as well as to actions aimed at eliminating poverty and inequalities.

At the Summit, Presidents such as Miguel Díaz-Canel (Cuba) and Nicolás Maduro (Venezuela, through a recorded message) denounced the constant attacks against their countries and other nations of the Community, and affirmed that neither threats nor aggressions will be able to prevent the continuity of the democratic processes headed by the peoples.

They also stated that the strengthening of CELAC is a matter of urgency.

For his part, Lula condemned extremism, terrorism and political violence and defended Latin America's cooperation and integration, while Argentinean President Alberto Fernández reiterated the need to preserve unity in diversity and institutionalize that body.

Fernández highlighted the importance of continuing carrying the voice of the South to all international forums and handed in the pro tempore presidency of this platform to Prime Minister of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Ralph Gonsalves.

In spite of the right and the United States-endorsed attempts to delegitimize the Summit and their plans to attack delegations, such as that of Venezuela, the event showed the will to continue moving forward toward the construction of the Patria Grande (Great Homeland).



The Buenos Aires Declaration stressed CELAC projection as a community of sovereign nations, able to reach consensus in topics of common interest. PHOTO: Internet.



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