

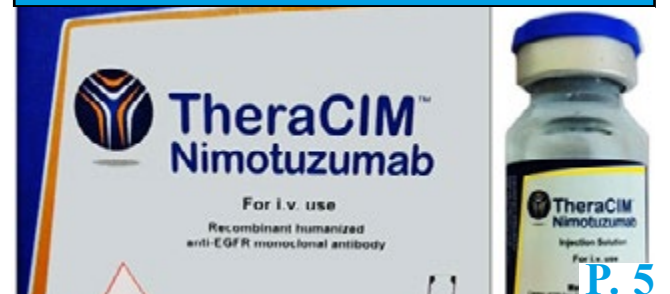
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# Las Damas Mountain Range

Text and photo Raúl GARCÍA

SANCTI SPÍRITUS.-The Las Damas Mountain Range Recreational Center, attached to the Flora and Fauna Company of this central province, is one of the main nature tourism attractions in this part of the country.

The Havana Reporter visited the top of this region, whose biodiversity includes a thick vegetation among limestone rocks and a variety of bird species, some in danger of extinction. The area is divided by the large Zaza River, the main tributary to Cuba's largest hydraulic work.

The center's facilities, at the foot of the mountain range, were built following the Cuban rural traditions and the legends that are still kept alive by the inhabitants of the area, such as that of hermit Cañambrú or El Hombre Rojo (The Red Man): Teodoro Gil, a mysterious and magical man who loved the guitar and the tres (three-string guitar).

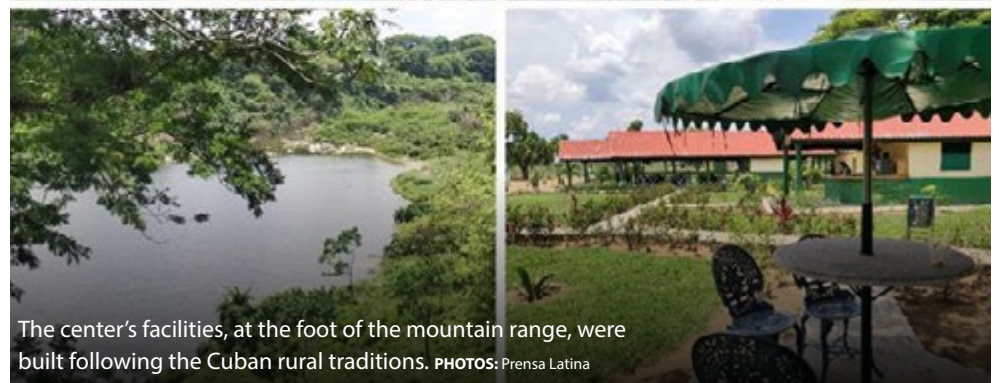
To the Flora and Fauna Company, receiving the Provincial Preservation Award – a prize

granted on occasion of the International Day of Monuments and Sites – represents the commitment to continue carrying on the preservation work of this natural site, a place for the recreation of the family, friends and foreign visitors.

The areas' tracks lead to the over 25 caves discovered until the present, which have a diversity of formations and in which water recreational activities can be enjoyed, in addition to equestrian activities, bird watching, beach volleyball and traditional dishes of the Cuban cuisine.

On the opposite side of this site is the El Cañón peak, the place chosen by Mayor General of the Liberating Army Serafín Sánchez Valdivia (1846-1896) to establish his Headquarters during the War of Independence.

This region treasures the memory of the death – on November 18, 1896, in the area known as Las Damas Path – of this famous General, who fought in all three wars of independence and was a friend and confidant of Cuban National Hero José Martí



The center's facilities, at the foot of the mountain range, were built following the Cuban rural traditions. PHOTOS: Prensa Latina

## Varadero Gourmet International Festival

By Ángel DARIÁN

MATANZAS.-The Plaza América Conference Center, located in this Cuban province, will welcome the XIII edition of the Varadero International Gourmet Festival, an event that will gather professionals of the world in cooking, trade, gastronomy and wine production from different nations.

To be held from September 13 to 16, the festival's program foresees the holding of masterly lectures, tastings, pairings, chefs and sommeliers' contests and products' presentations, in addition to other activities.

The XIII edition of this event will pay special attention to topics such as the fusion of cultures in the Cuban cuisine; current trends in food and drinks management; spirits, cigars, chocolate and coffee pairings, and after-lunch-and-dinner cocktails, the organizers commented.

The holding of the traditional commercial forum, which on this occasion will deal with the topics of food and drinks services and the production and commercialization of such products in different Cuban state and private facilities, will be one of the highlights of the Varadero Gourmet 2023 Festival.

According to sources, the event hopes to promote Cuba as a quality destination in the field of bar and restaurant services, through a combination of new tendencies and in tune with the roots of the national identity.

The XII edition of the Varadero International Gourmet Festival was attended by delegations from five countries and 26 stands with exhibitors from 36 entities and suppliers, both from the state and private sectors – figures that are intended to be increased this year.



The event gathers professionals of the world in cooking, trade, gastronomy and wine production from different nations. PHOTO: Internet.

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# Brotherhood with Africa



Namibian President Hage Geingob decorated the Cuban leader. PHOTO: Estudios Revolución.

By Karina **MARRÓN**

LUANDA.- Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel's visit to Angola, South Africa, Mozambique and Namibia – from August 20 to 28 – strengthened brotherhood ties between the island and the peoples of the African continent, with which cultural bonds and common struggles are shared.

Both in Angola as in the rest of the African countries, the Cuban President received several signs of affection and admiration to the resilience of the Caribbean nation against the economic blockade imposed by the United States and other adversities.

Washington's coercive actions against Cuba and the inclusion of the island in the list of countries that allegedly sponsor terrorism were rejected in each of the nations visited, where commitment to continue fighting in the international arena to lift the siege was also reaffirmed.

In Angola, the visit allowed strengthening bilateral cooperation through the signing of three memorandums of understanding on tourism, medication regulation and investment at the Mariel Special Development Zone in Cuba and Luanda-Bengo.

Díaz-Canel, who held friendly talks with his Angolan counterpart João Lourenço and was warmly welcomed at the National Assembly, described the visit as successful. The President met with some 200 collaborators representing the more than 2,000 who work here, as well as with members of solidarity movements and Cuban residents.

In South Africa, where he later travelled, the President participated in the Brics Summit on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, in the context of which he held talks with the Chinese head of state, Xi Jinping.

In this nation, Díaz-Canel also participated in a mass solidarity gathering in Freedom Park, in the capital city, where tribute is paid in memory of the 2,287 Cubans that fell in combat in African nations fighting for these

countries' freedom and in honor of historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. In the presence of over one thousand people, representatives of the African National Congress, the COSATU Trade Union Alliance, the South African Communist Party and the Society of Friendship with Cuba, among other organizations, stated their firm support to the island.

Mozambique also welcomed the Cuban President in its capital, Maputo, a city that was decked out for the 48th anniversary of the start of relations between both nations (August 27).

Fruitful talks with its President, Filipe Jacinto Nyusi; agreement on the strengthening of cooperation; a meeting at the Republic's Assembly, and a tribute to national heroes, characterized Díaz-Canel's short stay in this country.

The Cuban President also met with collaborators, Cuban residents in this nation and people who studied in the island. In addition, he visited the Marcelino dos Santos clinic, a center for the specialized attention to diabetic patients that will soon start rendering services with Cuban specialists.

The closing of this eagerly-awaited trip, as Díaz-Canel described it, took place in Namibia, where President Hage Geingob decorated the Cuban leader with the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, the country's highest decoration.

The head of the Cuban State was also a guest of honor at the ceremony held on occasion of the National Heroes Day (August 26). He also held talks with Cuban residents in this nation and solidarity friends.

Both parties signed three agreements to strengthen mutually-beneficial cooperation, while the Cuban President proposed to increase, this year – during the sixth bilateral cooperation meeting – the hierarchy of that cooperation mechanism, in addition to implementing the intergovernmental commission and increasing collaboration between the Cuban Communist Party and SWAPO in updating topics.

# Largest Mass Organization Celebrates its 63rd Anniversary

By Ernesto **VERA**

HAVANA.- Cuba's largest mass grass roots organization, the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (CDRs), celebrates its 63rd anniversary immersed in the defense of the ongoing process of economic changes, in the face of the new forms of aggressions by the United States.

Since their creation on September 28, 1960, by the revolutionary leader Fidel Castro, the CDRs have met a crucial role in the organization of the people on essential tasks aimed at the development of the transformation process the country defends since January 1959.

That day, several explosions were heard at the former Presidential Palace while the then Prime Minister Fidel Castro addressed the people after participating at the XV Period of Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, in New York.

"We are going to establish a system of collective revolutionary surveillance," said Fidel in front of the over one million people gathered there, and that same night, the first groups of that organization were created in buildings and blocks, to be quickly extended to all the provinces of the country.

Two days after that call, the rebel leader announced, at the CMQ radio station, the creation of the CDRs, an organization that has been present in the most important events of the country's social and political life.

Its members and structures were essential in the fight against bandits (1959-1965) in the mountainous areas of the Escambray region, where enemy groups that opposed the rising Revolution and committed murders and all kinds of tortures against farmers, took refuge. At the same time the revolutionary surveillance took place, the CDRs strengthened their social function for the development of the community, which included blood donations and productive activities, among others.

Tasks such as the National Literacy Campaign, which in 1961 turned Cuba into the first Latin American country free from illiteracy, were supported by the CDRs.

Their role, as well as that of the Cuban Women Federation, was essential to attain women's full access to education and work and to protect citizens and the economy, in coordination with the National Civil Defense, during the pass of adverse weather phenomenon.

They have also been essential in the country's institutionalization processes and the setting-up of the People's Power bodies.

Today, when the government of the United States strengthens the economic, commercial and financial blockade against the island and uses new forms of aggressions such as Unconventional War, the CDRs renew their tasks to continue being a bastion in the defense of the Cuban Revolution.

With that purpose in mind, assemblies are conducted nationwide before holding of the X Congress, to take place in Havana from September 26 to 28.



The organization was created by the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution Fidel Castro in 1961.

# A Million Signatures for Cuba

By DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- One million signatures to pressure the U.S. Government to review and remove Cuba from the arbitrary list of sponsors of terrorism is the new call launched in unison from the United States and the Latin American and Caribbean region in support of the island.

The Cuban people's sovereignty and dignity have been the target of attacks by the U.S. administration through the "cruel blockade imposed for over 60 years," stated a document published in the social media of The People's Forum, an organization based in New York that is composed of the International Peoples' Assembly.

In addition to the Assembly, the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas, the Sao Paulo Forum, the Continental Day for Democracy and against Neoliberalism, the World March of Women, ALBA Movements, La Vía Campesina (Farmworkers Network) and the Latin American and Caribbean Continental Network, among other organizations, head the call.

The unilateral siege – kept in place by both, Democratic and Republican administrations of the White House – was

strengthened with the unfair inclusion of Cuba in Washington's list, the call stressed.

The demand, based on the campaign 'Let Cuba Live,' asks the current president of the United States "why do you continue endorsing this harmful policy applied by Donald Trump? Do you really believe that Cuba is a State that sponsors terrorism?"

A recent opinion column published by the U.S. daily The Boston Globe recalled that a memorandum dated April 6, 1960 by the then Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, Lester Mallory, revealed the essence of that policy towards Cuba: bringing hunger, desperation and overthrowing the government.

Throughout the decades, the United States has, in fact, increased its efforts to destroy the social and political project freely chosen by the people of the Caribbean nation.

The Torricelli and Helms-Burton acts, which worsens the blockade, not only denies Cuba the ability to purchase needed food and medicine but also punishes third countries for engaging in normal trade with the island, the text said.

The meritless inclusion of Cuba on the U.S. unilateral "State Sponsors of Terrorism"

list further deprives Cuba of the ability to engage in international commercial activities, the document stressed.

Each year for over 30 years, the United Nations General Assembly overwhelmingly votes to condemn the U.S. policy toward Cuba and demand an end to the blockade, the text added.

While this demonstrates how out of touch the United States is with the rest of the

global community, the United States rejects even modest efforts to respect Cuban sovereignty, it concluded.

Over two years after assuming the presidency of the United States, Democrat Joe Biden has not taken distance yet from his Republican predecessor's maximum pressure line, in spite of his promise of changing course in relation to Cuba during his 2020 electoral campaign.



# Neo-McCarthyism in the United States

By DeisyFRANCIS

WASHINGTON.- A new era of persecution against groups and people for their political and social ideas, mostly progressive – as it happened during the Cold War (1947-1991) – could be developing in the United States.

A recent article published by the U.S. daily The New York Times targeted those organizations, identified in the country as advocates of peace and social justice, like Code Pink, founded in 2002.

As one reads the material of the influential New York newspaper, that part of the history in which fear was spread about "the red" and anticommunist harassment promoted by Republican senator Joseph McCarthy (1947-1957), comes to mind.

During his ten years in the Senate of the United States, McCarthy and his collaborators stood out for investigating people in the federal government.

They also targeted others they labeled as Soviet agents or communist supporters infiltrated in the public administration or the army.

By extension, the term "McCarthyism" described the manhunt to which people in the media, government, military and government officials were subjected in the United States from 1950 until around 1956 - when it became popularly known as Red Scare.

"A new McCarthyism targeting peace activists, critics of U.S. foreign policy and citizens of this country of Chinese origin" now rises, Code Pink said in a statement. Political and media establishments, both liberal and conservative, have initiated McCarthy-like attacks labeling peace advocates as "Chinese or foreign agents," denounced the organization, founded in 2002.

Scientists, researchers and service members of Chinese descent have been falsely accused of espionage, often

with cases later collapsing due to insufficient evidence, the text said.

As it happened before, when many were attacked with fact-less accusations, they now come after prominent organizations, including CodePink, The People's Forum and Tricontinental Institute, which have been targeted

with smears and accusations propagated by outlets like The New York Times, stressed the text.

It is not only against the left but against everyone who support free speech and democratic rights, added the declaration, signed by over a hundred organizations, artists, journalists, lawyers, social activists and personalities of different fields.

From The New York Times to Fox News, "there is a resurgence of the Red Scare that once shattered many lives and threatened movements for change and social justice," concluded CodePink.



The persecution of groups and people identified with progressive ideas reappears. PHOTO: Internet.

# China Praises Results of Biotechnological Cooperation with Cuba

By Isaura **DIEZ**

BEIJING.- The Director of the China-Cuba Biotech Pharma (BPL) Joint Venture, Bai Xianhong, praised the biotechnological cooperation between both nations and its impact on the Asian giant.

In statements to **The Havana Reporter (THR)**, the official thanked the Cuban experts for their contribution to the approval of Nimotuzumab, a humanized monoclonal antibody for pancreas cancer treatment.

Clinical studies conducted in 23 centers of this nation allowed validating the efficacy of this medicine, which the Chinese National Medications Administration approved to be used for the treatment of this disease.

The director stressed that Nimotuzumab was the first product commercialized by BPL and the first humanized monoclonal antibody in China since 2008, with positive results in the treatment of nose and pharynx cancer.

"We had a destination population of about 50,000 patients a year, but in the case of pancreas treatment, the figure reaches 120,000," he said.

Bai emphasized the clinical urgency of effective treatments against a disease known as "the king of all cancers," as it is one of the most deadly tumors in the world, difficult to diagnose at an early stage, with limited methods to fight it and a high mortality rate. Hence, the importance of this Chinese-Cuban medicine that can benefit more people and prolong life expectancy, he added.

Deputy General Manager and representative of the BPL Cuban Vice-Presidency, Yanet Borrego, recently told **THR** that the decision taken by the Chinese National Medications Administration endorses the results of years of work.

China's main regulatory agency referred to the good results of this injectable product in clinical studies, including its efficacy to inhibit the growth of malignant cells and its



Bai Xianhong thanked the Cuban experts for their contribution to the approval of Nimotuzumab. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

extended use in Cuba and other countries of the world since 1998.

This helps consolidating the presence of Cuban biotechnology products in the Chinese market and the hope of reaching other places with opportunities of access, the entity affirmed.

On behalf of the Chinese Society of Clinical Oncology, Dr Qin Shukui recently appreciated the China-Cuba joint venture for extending the application of this medicine in this nation.

"The Chinese Communist Party and government attach great importance to tumors' prevention and treatment; for that reason, I believe that the success of clinical research and the launch of products like this respond to the strategic national objective of a healthy China," he stressed.

## Breastfeeding: A Permanent Challenge in Cuba

By Joel **MICHEL**

HAVANA.- Exclusive breastfeeding only reaches 48 percent in the world; in the case of Cuba, it is a permanent challenge, as awareness still has to be increased among the population on the importance of this natural act for children's health. Under the premise that a mother's milk is the best food for a baby's life, the island

recently celebrated World Breastfeeding Week.

Experts of the Cuban Ministry of Public Health and the office of the United Nations Children's Fund in Havana agree to say that this natural process is the first vaccine a human being is given at birth; a protection against several diseases.

They endorse the idea that breastfeeding is not a question of a week, but a relevant topic all 365 days of the year, as it is a right

children have. Thus, it is unacceptable that a baby is deprived of breastfeeding before s/he is six months old.

For that reason, breastfeeding is included in the objectives of the 2020-2030 agenda for sustainable development, including the recommendation of keeping it in the first six months, although specialists affirm that it can be prolonged until the age of two.

In order to be successful in such endeavor, the support of the family, workplaces, health institutions and communities is needed.

Head of the Breastfeeding Commission at the Cuban Ministry of Public Health, Pablo Roque, told **The Havana Reporter** that when a child is breastfed, s/he will not suffer some diseases, which would mean expenses in terms of resources, medication and hospitalization.

Breastfeeding is a global problem; it is not exclusive of Cuba. If you look at the first world, you will notice a similar situation, which started when humanity began canning cow milk and many doctors gave their approval.

Roque regretted the lack of culture on the topic and stressed the importance of the involvement of all actors, in order to know about breastfeeding, undermined by the big industry that proposes varieties of milk, nipples and bottles.

He considered as barriers the non-fulfillment of the breastfeeding's

substitute code and the lack of teaching or scarce details professionals of the health sector provide.

It is unconceivable that a 15-day old baby is recommended to have natural juices or other products following family traditions, with excuses such as 'look at me here' or 'nothing happened to me.' Those actions, that we know still happen in Cuba, are called anti-breastfeeding here, Roque stressed.

According to the medical literature, breastfeeding protects babies from infections such as gastroenteritis, respiratory diseases, otitis, urinary problems and mostly immune diseases, among others. It is also proven that it protects children against Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Experts said that breastfeeding is the first vaccine a human being is given at birth.

PHOTO: Infomed.



# Gibara and the Treasures of a Different Cinema

By Adis**MARLÉN**

HAVANA.- When filmmaker Humberto Solás (1941-2008) conceived the event, 20 years ago, he did not imagine the dimension the film festival would reach; an event that has become a model of cultural animation and local development in the Cuban city of Gibara.

Initially thought up as the International Low Budget Film Festival, the event exhibits different nuances without giving up to the wealth and the brightness that low-resources film creations entail.

The 17th edition of the Gibara International Film Festival, as it currently known for, granted the Lucía Award to the best Fiction Feature Film to *Petite Nature*, a French film by Samuel Theis, while the U.S. film *Fin*, by Fernando Reinaldos, was awarded the best Fiction Short Film.

This section also included the Jury Special Award, which was granted to *Haut et Fort*, a Moroccan-French production directed Nabil Ayouch. Special mentions were also awarded to *El mundo de Nelsito*, by Cuban Fernando Pérez and *Un pasaje sin regreso*, by José Gómez de Vargas, from the Dominican Republic.

In the documentary and animation categories, *Virgilio desde el gabinete azul* (Cuba, Dir. Raydel Araoz) and *Todos los días son 8 de marzo* (Cuba, Dir. Lizette Vila), were selected as the best Full-Length or Animation



The Lucía de Honor 2023 award was given to actor Jorge Perugorría. PHOTO: Ahora

Documentary and Short-Length or Animation Documentary, respectively.

Zinder (Morocco, Dir. Nabil Ayouch) and *Ewéde Òsányìn: El secreto de las hojas* (Animation, Brazil, Dir. Pâmela Peregrino) were granted a Special Award, while *Keradó* (Animation, Colombia, Dir. Andrés Rafael Castillo Garzón) was granted a Special Mention.

The Cuban Film Press Association (ACPC) selected *Foudre* (Switzerland, Dir. Carmen Jaquier) as the best Fiction

Feature Film, while *Abecé* (Brazil, Dir. Cleo Rosa) was selected as the best Short Fiction Film and *La espera* (Cuba, Dir. Daniel Ross) was granted a Special Mention.

Cuba received two collateral awards in the Young Jury category: best Full-Length Documentary and best Short-Length Documentary, which were granted to Alejandra Rodríguez's *Cosme, un enorme juego con el tiempo* and *Todos los días son 8 de marzo*, respectively.

The best Fiction Feature Film and Short Film awards were granted to *Petite Nature* and *París 70* (Spain, Dir. Dani Feixas Roca), respectively.

In the Film Club category, the Cuban Film *Retorno*, by Blanca Rosa Blanco, received the best Full-Length Documentary Award, while Chilean *Fantasmagoría*, directed by Juan Francisco González, was awarded the best Short-Length Documentary award.

A highlight of this edition of the film festival was the granting of the Lucía de Honor 2023 award to actors Jorge Perugorría and Luis Alberto García and costume designer Violeta Cooper, who have made an important contribution to the Cuban cinema.

For five days, the audience enjoyed multicultural proposals that included the photo exhibit *Gibara a través de un celular* (Gibara through a cellphone); the Theoretical Forum *Una perspectiva de género para el audiovisual y las artes* (A genre perspective for audiovisuals and arts), and the performance, for the first time in this city, of the children stage company *La Colmenita*, among other activities.

## Eyeife Electronic Music Festival Summons Creation Contest

By Dai**LIEM**

HAVANA.- The 7th edition of the Eyeife International Electronic Music Festival summoned musicians, DJs and producers resident in Cuba and up to the age of 35 to participate in the Eyeife 2023 Creation Contest.

The purpose of this contest is to foster the creation of original electronic music works that include elements of the rich Cuban cultural heritage and the traditional musical rhythms.

According to the summon, opened until September 8th, participants should send at least one original electronic music theme that combines rhythms, sounds or genres of the Cuban music, in which the island's sound heritage is the protagonist.

Original works should not exceed three minutes and 30 seconds and should be sent by e-mail as attached files, in mp3/m4 format, to

eyeifeconvoca@gmail.com, or handed in at the PM Records offices in Havana.

A jury composed of specialists Edesio Alejandro, Enmanuel Blanco, David Casas and Mauricio



Abad will select the first, second and third places, which will receive a cash prize.

The aforementioned group of specialists will deliberate on the winners from September 11 to 23 and results will be announced one week later through different channels and platforms.

Winners will join performances at the Eyeife 2023 festival, considered the largest of the genre held in the island, which grows stronger every year as a space dedicated to the development of the Cuban music and culture.

In order to offer a space to young talents and new international exponents, each edition of this event hopes to become a world referent among the electronic fusion circuits, combining this type of music with the most autochthonous elements of the Caribbean and Afro-Cuban rhythms.

Eyeife is annually organized by PM Records, the Cuban Institute

of Music and the Cuban Ministry of Culture and is endorsed by the Music Recording and Editing Company and the Electroacoustic Music Lab, among other institutions. The last edition of this event was held in March 2023 and was dedicated to women; hence its name: Eyeife Women. That edition, which welcomed talented female representatives of the genre, was intended at highlighting women's rising role and empowerment.

It was a new project whose mission shares interests with the Eyeife festival, as it tries to rescue, support and promote the work of female artists of the electronic genre and other artists too, while favoring mass exchange with the audience.

Until the present, the festival has held six editions and has consolidated itself as one of the main electronic music events in Cuba and a referent in the world.



# Reading is a Festival, however...

By Marcelo GARCÍA

HAVANA.- They stand in the bookshelf, are covered by a thin layer of dust, are occasionally revived by feather dusters; however, there is nothing like the tickling felt when humans run their fingers down their pages.

Petit Larousse counts itself lucky: it is still the most popular among academicians, although Wikipedia has stolen most of its audience. The luck of others is worst; they suffocate in forgotten boxes in shelves.

A great number of excellent books continue to pile up in the corners of homes. Older people say they would read them when they have a chance; that they are overwhelmed by everyday life.

They also treasure them with their children in mind, but these pay little attention to them. However, last August 9, the world celebrated International Book Lovers Day with an urgent call: Put your smartphone away!

It happens to all of us, either because of work reasons, social commitments or just habit... we spend all day with cellphones in our hands.

Laura is 11 years old and does not want to read. She turns her back and runs away upset when someone talks to her about the topic. Apparently, she thinks that school readings are more than enough.

Her mother is so persistent! "You are missing beautiful stories. When I was your age, I had already read a couple of books..." She has even asked her to fill in a questionnaire on the book of the moment. But the girl answers: "I already know that story, mom, I saw it in a film."

A little bit older than her, her brother Roberto always uses the excuse that "sometimes I see some news in Facebook or YouTube" when his father gives him a talking-to because "I have never seen you with a newspaper or magazine in your hand; you do not know anything about what is happening in the world."

It is scary. According to writer and semiologist Umberto Eco, in our time, if dictatorship is to exist, it will be media dictatorship and not political dictatorship.

Twenty years ago he wrote: "except for some remote Third World countries, tanks are not needed to stage a coup d'état; suffices to take radio and television stations."

The social media and the Internet would be now added, as part of the fourth generation wars."

Different studies report a decline in reading habits as one of the evils of modern time. And it is sad: the school provides the instrument, the ability to read, but if there is no motivation, nothing is attained.

Because that ability is not only necessary to access knowledge; it is a means of improvement, of moral enrichment and fun.

A good reading is a party. Besides, a poor level of reading implies a poor vocabulary; a poor capacity to interpret

things; a lack of skills that allow understanding, thinking, summarizing, comparing, connecting ideas and reaching own conclusions.

In 2022, only 39.3 percent of the Italians over the age of six read at least one book a year – a figure lower to the 40.8 percent registered in 2021, according to a report published by the National Statistics Institute (ISTAT) in May this year in its official website.

Another example is Mexico, where a report of the National Statistics and Geography Institute revealed that the population reads less today than seven years ago.

The document indicated that the number of Mexican readers has decreased by over 12 percent since 2016, when the reading population over the age of 18 reached 80.5 percent – versus 68.5 percent in 2023.



Books suffocate in forgotten boxes in shelves. PHOTO: Internet.



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# Group of 77 Summit, An Essential Meeting

By Milagros **PICHARDO**

HAVANA.- On September 15 & 16, Cuba will host the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China, an essential meeting to strengthen unity among its members and take collective actions.

Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez recently told the press that the meeting is vital amidst

the multi-sectorial crisis the world faces at present. He stressed that the Summit will take place at a time in which the countries of the South try to find a way to solve those problems without giving-up to their independence and sovereignty.

The Minister affirmed that it will be an important event in light of the processes taking place worldwide, and will provide strategies to underdeveloped nations, especially in the context of recovery after the pandemic of COVID-19.

He added that the Summit will provide common and important views for the updating of the multilateral group, because it will be held prior to important international events such as the United Nations General Assembly high-level segment and the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP28). The Havana meeting will be a modest event from the economic point of view but very warm and hospitable, and will leave important marks for the Group and the developing countries in general, he affirmed.

In his capacity as pro tempore president of the developing nations negotiating bloc, Cuba invites participants to this event under the motto "Current development challenges: Role of science, technology and innovation."

On the Summit's main topic, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel stressed at the launch of the call that predictions seem to be more and more clear, as scientific-technical progress, which is key to attain sustainable development, is inaccessible to a large part of humanity.

In that sense, the head of the Cuban State affirmed that changing such a scenario demands building a fairer relationship and a truly democratic and inclusive order, which favor international solidarity and cooperation.

Díaz-Canel emphasized that that's what the members of the G77 and China need, a group that represents 80 percent of the world population and over two thirds of the United Nations member nations.



The Summit will be held in the renovated Palacio de las Convenciones. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

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# Nancy Morejón: A Lucky Woman

By Mario **MUÑOZ**

HAVANA.- “Inspiration has to find me working” is Ernest Hemingway’s phrase that Cuban writer Nancy Morejón constantly repeats; a writer who has said that poetry suits her well. And it is not a lie: she is one of the most prolific and prestigious Cuban authors, who was born on August 7, 1944 and is also an essayist, a journalist, a literary and stage critic, a translator and winner of the National Literature Award (2001).

These days of birthday celebration, I decided to dust off an interview she granted to me and fellow colleague Toni Pradas (Bohemia magazine), which is still valid and in which she confessed that to her, “writing is like breathing.” It does not matter if language is rather colloquial or hermetic: Nancy does not stop writing. In fact, she used to do it at a boring class in the university, with the same intensity as when she started writing, in the final days of a childhood lost in thought.

One night, in childhood, she wanted to put her parents to the test at dinnertime and read a poem with a rather transgressive title. To her surprise, they received it as a big party and hence put her on the rails to literature.

Felipe Morejón (“an agile sailor and loyal black man/of undecipherable lineage”) had seen so much in his journeys through the seven seas – even touched Louis Armstrong in New York – that did not doubt of her daughter’s artist material. Angélica Hernández (“my mother had the singing and the scarf/to rock my heart’s faith”), of mixed Cantonese and African race, swore to tirelessly sew to give her the instruction she deserved.

As an adolescent, the first poet who made flattering comments on her poems was Fayad Jamís, prisoner of the aromas of the Polinesio restaurant, in the Havana’s La Rampa area. Nicolás Guillén went further away. Nancy met him in 1961, in Santa María del Mar, when she volunteered to work as interpreter of a French railroad worker



Guillén assessed Nancy Morejón’s poetry as “Cuban, with a deep root that goes through the other side of the planet.” PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

delegation invited by the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples.

The workers wanted to greet the poet, whom they had met during his exile in Paris. She rubbed her hands with glee thinking she was going to be the interpreter. But what a disappointment: Guillén spoke perfect French.

Years later, in perfect Spanish, Guillén assessed Nancy Morejón’s poetry as “Cuban, with a deep root that goes through the other side of the planet.” A root tied to a stem that grew up in a lively Havana neighborhood.

—**Born in a humble place as Los Sitios, how does poetry grow in you?**

—My parents, trade union members, had a clear conception of their class origin, orphans of families eroded by slavery.

“My mother, a seamstress, was associated to the Sindicato de la Aguja (Needle Trade Union) and my father, a sailor, travelled until I was one year old. He then settled again in Havana and became a dockworker. I was in a world of reading, of culture.

“My father’s main concern was how to pay for my university registration. The first money they got at home, after paying the rent and the food, was to pay the Laplace Academy, a private school. Then, I skipped the higher primary education with a three-month summer course, to enter high school at the age of 11.

“At the triumph of the Revolution, I was at the Havana Institute: I had participated in demonstrations and university students’ political world was very clear to me. Because of my parents’ link with the trade union world, I was informed about many things.

## 4G Signal Reaches Rural Zones

By Cira **RODRÍGUEZ**

HAVANA.- The installation of radio base stations through the use of 700 Megahertz (MHz) bands, to allow the reception of 4G signal and thus connection to the Internet – in order to improve cellphone communication in remote rural areas of the country’s west – already shows its first social benefits in those locations.

Such actions are a priority for the Cuban Telecommunications Company S.A. (ETECSA) in areas in which those services were not present or there were minimum coverage possibilities in the cellphone system and digital connection.

Recent ETECSA-financed projects allow reducing at present, more and more, digital and communication gap between regions with a lower concentration of inhabitants, including several municipalities of the Pinar del Río province.

One of the most important strategies of this project is the implementation of the 700 MHz band in several provinces of the country, in order to improve the service and users’ access to the networks, because of the 2G and 3G limitations; thus, by introducing the 4G, the signal is better received and benefitted people increases in suburban and rural zones.

Those who did not have access to the Internet in the Pinar del Río, Mayabeque and Artemisa provinces, in addition to the Isla de la Juventud municipality, now enjoy that facility with better quality, speed and a higher number of services, with a positive impact on communities and state entities of those territories.

Deputy director of the ETECSA Operation Vice Presidency, Frank Pavón, told **The Havana Reporter** that those investments started last year, with the gradual inclusion of the 700 MHz band used for analogical television in the process of transition to digitization.

He stressed that the idea is to use that technology nationwide, for which tests are conducted in the keys of the central Villa Clara province – which require important investments in places where the signal travels longer distances and frequency is lower because of the topographic characteristics of the terrain.

The installation of radio base stations is an expensive technology whose prices exceed 50,000 dollars in the international market and are, in this case, covered by ETECSA because of the social benefit they represent, Pavón highlighted.

In Pinar del Río, inhabitants of the Paso Real de San Diego, in the Los Palacios municipality and Herradura and Puerta de Golpe, in the Consolación

del Sur municipality, already enjoy all 4G services through their cellphones, either by mobile data or Wi-Fi zones.

There are over 7.7 million cellphone lines activated in Cuba at present, of which 6.6 million use the Internet service, while 5.3 million use 4G, all supported by 5,500 radio base stations.



Those who did not have access to the Internet now enjoy that facility. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

# Cuba's Single Cemetery-Garden

By **SabdielBATISTA**

CIENFUEGOS.- The Tomás Acea Cemetery, three kilometers away from this city, was opened on November 21, 1926 with part of the capital Francisca Tostes García, widow of Nicolás Salvador Acea y de los Ríos, left at her death.

It carries the name of one of the children of this distinguished family from the city of Cienfuegos, who died as an adolescence. None of the Acea family was buried here and even though it was built for the poor, there is a waste of monumental sculptures made of Carrara marble, brought from Italy. Its location was so perfect and its main entrance so monumental that rich people used the high part of the hill for themselves. The work was designed and made by engineers Pablo Donato Carbonell and Luis Felipe Ros.

It is a cemetery-garden inspired by U.S. and European necropolis where tombs, mausoleums and graves are in harmony with the landscape.

The vegetation was planned in sectors that delimit the area, availing of the undulating field. As a result, fruit tree and ornamental plant avenues are named after their

plantations: Pine, Cedar, Palm, Oak and Poplar tree avenues, among others.

The site covers an area of 17.6 hectares and is divided into different sectors that are in turn united through inside streets, with different species of trees.

Personalities of the world of history, culture and sciences of the area lie buried in the Tomás Acea Cemetery, whose exterior appearance stands out for the impressive façade of the central building – an

eloquent expression of the Republican-era architecture in the island.

The cemetery treasures funerary monuments of great cultural value, such as those of famous families and artists of the region, in addition to the monument to the War of Independence Veterans and the Mausoleum dedicated to the sailors and civilians who rose up against the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship, on September 5, 1957.

The monument to the people of Cienfuegos who died in African countries fighting for the freedom of their brothers in the fulfillment of internationalist missions, also stands out.

Another important piece of work is the obelisk recently inaugurated in honor of Juan Luis Lorenzo De Clouet, founder of the former Fernandina de Jagua Village, in 1819 – when French colonists settled here in honor of King Fernando VII.



The cemetery garden was inspired by necropolis where tombs, mausoleums and graves are in harmony with the landscape. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## Foreign Participants Confirm Attendance at the Wine Festival

By **BenjamínMICERINOS**

HAVANA.- Over a dozen wine cellars from several countries will attend the 22nd edition of the International Wine Festival at the Hotel Nacional de Cuba.

The event, to be held from October 4 to 6 at the Salón 1930 of that prestigious Cuban hotel, arouses a great deal of expectation among nations with commercial and tourist ties with Cuba, said the organizing committee.

Hotel Nacional de Cuba sales manager Deivid Silva commented that the festival will be attended by the Freixenet Group, Inversiones Pucara S.A. (IPSA), Bodegas Torres, Masía Vallformosa (VFMS), Joan Sardá and Destilerías MG Cuba, among others – the majority of them from Spain. The participation of a group of Italian and Mexican wine cellars and viticulture companies was also ratified, in addition to several Cuban micro, small and medium-sized companies (MIPYMES) that produce traditional wines.

Some local companies linked to the production of cheese and sausages will also attend the festival to present their products and allow their assessment through their tasting and pairing with wines and cigars.

A highlight of this event will be the opening of the Capablanca Bar at the roof of the hotel, where pairings and blind tastings will be conducted, in addition to the insertion of the La Barraca Restaurant, in the gardens of the hotel.

A specialized presentation of different products and rums of the Havana Club International S.A. company – a joint venture between the Cuba Ron state corporation and the French Pernod Ricard – is also foreseen.

At the closing of the festival, the best design of exhibiting firms' stands will be awarded, as well as winning wines in the Blind Tasting segment and the winner of the cigar and wine pairing.



The event, from October 4 to 6 at the Salón 1930 of Hotel Nacional. PHOTO: Prensa Latina.

## A small island with a lot to show

Text and photos Roberto **CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- Isla de la Juventud (The Isle of Youth), previously known as Isla del Tesoro (Treasure Island) or Isla de Pinos (the Isle of Pines), is one of Cuba's most interesting places; a site that stands out for a charming scenario, perfect for ecotourism.

This small Caribbean island is the second largest in Cuba in relation to its extension, about 3,056 square kilometers.

It is one of the over 600 keys and islets that compose the Canarreos Archipelago, in the south-western region of Cuba, in addition to the Batabanó Gulf. It is about 50 kilometers south of the mainland and 162 kilometers away from Havana.

On June 13, 1494, during his second travel to the New World, Christopher Columbus discovered and baptized the Isla de la Juventud as La Evangelista (The Evangelist).

During the course of the years, it was given different names, such as Parrots Island, Queen Amalia Colony, Pirates Island and even Treasure Island.

It was also known as Deportees Island and later on as the Isle of Pines. The latter was the name the place kept until 1978, when it was called Isla de la Juventud, because of the over one thousand youngsters from different parts of the world who went to study there.

The island has a population of about 79,000 inhabitants and its main economic activity is agriculture, particularly the cultivation of citruses. The extraction of marble, fishing and utilitarian and artistic ceramics are other important activities.

However, Isla de la Juventud is a special site for its tourist attractions, linked to sea trips, diving, fishing and its famous International Diving Centers at the Colony Hotel and Cayo Largo del Sur.



# A Single Voice to Save the Rainforest

By Osvaldo **CARDOSA**

BRASILIA.- Like a rehearsal of the COP 30 (United Nations Conference on Climate Change), to be held in 2025 in the northern Brazilian state of Pará, presidents of the eight Amazonian countries outlined a plan of action on August 8 & 9 in the same territory to foster regional cooperation. For the first time since 2009, the IV Amazon Summit gathered in Belém, the capital of Pará, the Amazon Cooperation Treaty

Organization (ACTO) with the aim of reaching a single and broad agreement on topics going from the fight against deforestation to sustainable development financing.

After two days of intense work, presidents and representatives of Brazil, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, Surinam and Venezuela – ACTO member nations – approved the so-called Belém Declaration, in which commitments and priorities to face together the challenge of Amazonia's comprehensive protection are shared.

The Declaration also focuses on actions to fight poverty and inequalities and promote the region's sustainable development in a harmonic, comprehensive and inclusive way. The document also covers different challenges and areas of interest, such as sustainable development, health, illegal cutting down of trees, mineral resources, science and technology and the social situation the families that live in the forests face.

It also outlines the protection of indigenous people and biome, keeping in mind the reduction of inequalities and the fight against hunger.

The Declaration includes guidelines for the Amazonia to better know its potentials and generate wealth in a sustainable way, for the benefit of the over 50 million people who live in the region.

It also establishes principles such as ACTO strengthening, for this to be the voice of the Amazonia in other international forum, and the full and effective participation of communities living in the forests.

The Declaration also praises the indigenous people and local and traditional communities, while paying special attention to women and youngsters, who

are excessively affected by the negative effects of climate change and environment degradation.

"Their participation in decision-making is essential for sustainable development, for the promotion of peaceful, fair and inclusive societies and for the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions," the text says.

According to Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, host of the event, the Belém Declaration and the joint communique with the invited countries (Indonesia and the Congo and Democratic Congo republics) are a step forward to a definition of a common agenda that paves the way to COP 30.

The president stated that nations will work in two fronts: the creation of a mechanism that fairly and equitably remunerates the environmental services that tropical rainforests give the world, and the definition of an international concept of socio-bio-economics, which leads to the certification of forest-native products.

According to Lula, the IV Amazon Summit will bear fruits and will be remembered in the future as a sustainable development landmark.



The Belém Declaration express commitments and priorities to face together the challenge of Amazonia's. PHOTO: Internet.

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# Bankarization: An Economic Need

By TeyunéDÍAZ

HAVANA.- The new financial measures Cuba has implemented in relation to the bank sector and operations' digitization open a new spectrum of discussions that aims at looking to the future and solving some of the most pressing economic problems.

This idea is looked at differently by economists in Cuba and abroad, thus the need of focusing on the topic and letting time solve many of the related issues.

Cuban financial authorities informed that bankarization rules changed in the country as of August, a decision that was published in the La Gaceta Oficial No.5 de la República (Official Gazette of the Republic, issue No.5).

The national media then announced that as a result of these measures, banking norms related to the limits on national currency cash collection and payments were approved, which evidently try to promote the use of electronic mechanisms in such transactions.

They officially informed that because of the deterioration of the ATM network in the country, one of the actions establishes that these machines will only dispense money to individuals with a salary, saving and pension-associated card, or other personal incomes.

The Central Bank of Cuba (BCC) established a group of new measures to favor bankarization processes, whose principle is to maintain equality among all actors of the national economy and whose main goal is to reorder bank flows.

For that reason, these norms now establish limits on cash collection and payment in national currency, in addition to its deposit, cashing and possession.

According to these changes, the increase of cash use in economic and financial transactions caused a backward tendency in the levels of bankarization in the country – even in the financial levels – in addition to high costs associated to the issuing, transportation, processing and storage of money and the increasing demand of ATMs for money withdrawal.

Hence, authorities' decision to increase financial operations through electronic channels of payment and the adoption of actions that guarantee their implementation and make money collection and payment processes viable, thus revitalizing all economic actors' finances and their relation to the population.

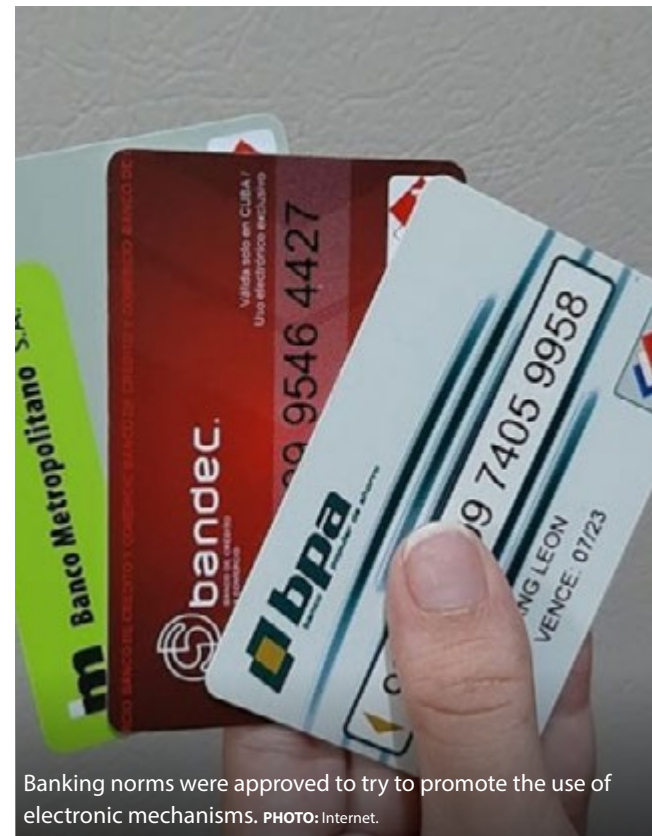
As informed, state companies; higher entrepreneurial management organizations; budgeted units; non-agricultural cooperatives; agricultural cooperatives; agricultural producers; individual farmers; commercial fishermen; micro, small and medium-sized companies, and local development projects are subject to the Resolution.

These measures also include self-employed workers, artists and creators, in addition to foreign investment modalities and those created under the Associations Law.

They are likewise applicable to individuals or legal entities not included in the abovementioned groups if they conduct legally authorized commercial and services activities.

In light of the new regulations adopted by the BCC, several concerns still worry users; for that reason, the BCC official

website clarified the Cuban population's most frequent doubts and stated that such actions will be gradually implemented.



Banking norms were approved to try to promote the use of electronic mechanisms. PHOTO: Internet.

## Anticorrosive and Surfactant Center

By DarianQUEVEDO

MATANZAS.- The Cuban Anticorrosive and Surfactant Center (CEAT) stands out for the variety of products made to treat surfaces and structures, particularly for the conservation of structures through the implementation of science and innovation. In order to protect and prolong machineries' life in different sectors of the economy, there are major industries dedicated to producing substances that protect and prolong machineries' useful life.

In Cuba, in spite of technological limitations, there are centers that make a vital contribution to structures' preservation; that is the case of CEAT, whose backgrounds go back to the creation, at the University of Matanzas (1970s), of a group whose researches were conducted by the Chemical Engineering department.

CEAT director, Harold García, explained that the Anticorrosive and Surfactant Center – previously called the Matanzas Corrosion Group – was founded in 1995 on the precept of developing technologies and having a production scale process to generalize its use in the industrial sector.

In 2016, a new entity was created – the Development and Innovation Unit (UDI) – which, until the present, has allowed implementing technologies of products created in the pilot plant and work on several projects with different

institutions, in order to make an intensive innovation.

At present, CEAT is a local development project; that is, an economic actor within the Cuban economy that has the possibility of getting financing from the provincial government, although the purpose is to create a micro, small and medium-sized company (MIPYME), the official said.

The unit's range of productions, which combines productive works and scientific updating actions with other centers, includes a variety of grease, additives,

conservation oils, stripping and non-stripping phosphate dissolutions, polymer-modified liquid asphalt mastic and polish and waterproof wax, García noted.

### BENEFITS FOR THE ECONOMY

The import of industrial pieces demands important volumes of money; for that reason, the development of projects such as CEAT in Cuba, which allow reducing the need of buying machineries abroad by producing substances that prolong equipment's useful life, is a vital objective for the national economy.

García, who is also a university professor, affirmed that bodies such as the AZCUBA

Sugarcane Group, the Electricity Union and the Cuba Petróleo Union, stand out among the entities that use a variety of CEAT products.

The José Martí Iron and Steel Company – aka Antillana de Acero de La Habana – systematically demands phosphate dissolutions that are used in metals' cleaning, which allows the preservation of their equipment.

The director also commented that in the field of import substitution, CEAT saved the country over 200,000 dollars in the last three years and has made ties with foreign centers such as the Vigo University, in Spain, which favors products' evaluation.



CEAT is dedicated to producing substances that protect and prolong machineries' useful life. PHOTO: TV Yumuri.

# Transnationals' Offensive against Latin America Increases

By Sergio **FERRARI**

BERNE.- In double-quick time, large international entrepreneurial groups continue to be on the offensive against Latin American and Caribbean States demanding payments worth millions as compensation.

Since the beginning of this year and until July 24, the Transnational Institute (TNI), based in Amsterdam (The Netherlands), registered 18 new lawsuits promoted by large U.S. and European corporations against Latin American and Caribbean States.

In total, 364 processes of this type are registered against the region – more than half of them, in the last 12 years. As TNI explains, Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the regions in which the impact of the international arbitration regime included in international trade agreements is felt the most in the world.

Such mechanism, known as ISDS (Investor-state dispute settlement), is transnationals' favorite when solving disputes among investors and States in cases in which the first consider that their interests can be affected.

It is an instrument that allows foreign investors to file a lawsuit against States in international courts if they consider that such nations' public policies – even those conceived for protecting health or the environment – affect their interests and benefits.

Such lawsuits, which do not acknowledge the jurisdiction of the national courts of the countries in which those international corporations operate, end up in a small group of private attorneys.

In their role as arbitrators, these have the legal authority to decide on each case. In general, the benefits of the plaintiffs are more important to these jurists than defendant nations' public interest. History shows that those arbitrations, common in the world, tend to benefit large corporations. As a result, judgement against States guarantee those private groups profits worth millions, in detriment of national coffers.

## ALL AGAINST MEXICO

In the course of the first semester of 2023, Mexico was the Latin American nation sued the most (8 in total), followed

by Honduras (3), Venezuela (2) and Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Belize and Trinidad & Tobago (1 each).

Mexico's case in the first semester of this year is, perhaps, the best-known because of the number and diversity of economic groups that attacked the nation with this kind of arbitration.

One of the lawsuits was promoted by the Canadian mining corporation First Majestic Silver Corp., which contests tax decisions against its local subsidiary, Primero Empresa Minera. Another process against the Aztec nation was promoted by U.S. investors of the Arbor Confections, Inc., Mark Alan Ducorsky & Brad Dukosrsky group, for a value of 80 million dollars – an amount they claim for an unpaid lease of a candy factory in Ciudad Juárez.

The Canadian Silver Bull Resources, Inc. (through its subsidiary in the United States) also attacked Mexico and claims 178 million dollars.

"Arbitrary arbitration;" the increasing debt of the countries of the South; tax evasion by large transnationals; tax haven to lodge them; bank secret; vulture funds, among others, are part of the multiple international financial instruments that do not give a rest to the majority of the world population, poorer every day.

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.



TNI registered 18 new lawsuits promoted by large U.S. and European corporations against Latin American and Caribbean States.

## Store Chain Tries to Regain the Market

By Tom **MIX**

HAVANA.- The Cuban Caracol Store Chain tries to regain the national business market to solve the economic problems the island faces and in response to the recovery of the tourism sector.

Caracol, an entity that mainly targets the Cuban tourism system, tries to consolidate itself in Jardines del Rey, a sun-and-beach tourist destination in which the chain will increase the offer of its main products: rum, cigars and coffee, the company said.

For that reason, the company's top officials have indicated

to conduct studies and revise experiences and expertise as part of the entity's sale strategies, which will be implemented at an international event aimed at increasing the company's commercial management.

In this sense, an activity will take place next November at the Muthu Colonial Hotel, an emblematic facility located in the northern keys of the central Ciego de Ávila province. Representatives of various organizations gathered to show the intersectoriality of an event that is based on diversity and identity.

PhD Elmer Carballo, member of the Organizing Committee, stressed the importance of the links between commercial management – which has to rely on science – and

innovation, essential to assess destinations' entrepreneurial management and promote Caracol offers.

For his part, Caracol manager in Ciego de Ávila province, Alfredo Taboada, said that such a support is crucial to improve rum, cigar and coffee pairings, which combine aromas and tastes.

The event's organizers also announced that humidors made by Ciego de Ávila craftspeople would be up for auction, in addition to other collateral activities, from November 9 to 12 at the abovementioned hotel.

The event will also launch a new digital platform, promoted by the Xetid company, specialized in events' organization and development.

# Baseball: With the Golden Ax

By Norland **ROSENDO**

HAVANA.- The Las Tunas team is the Cuban national baseball champion. Its victory asserts its nickname, Leñadores (Woodcutters), as they won the title by blowing their ax in a scenario in which few have been able to raise their crown, except the hosts: the Havana's Latinoamericano Stadium.

After leading a close qualification phase, the Las Tunas team started sweeping the Ciego de Ávila team in the quarter finals, thus confirming their pretensions of becoming two-time champions.

It was then the time to face their rivals in the post-season series: Matanzas, the team with presence in 11 semifinals in 12 consecutive championships and runner-up in the last two years; the same team that had eliminated them in three seasons.

The two best teams of the tournament would face in an advanced match. Strong in offense, hermetic with the glove and hungry for the gold, they immersed in a match that ended up with the Leñadores victory in six games.

The spell of bad luck against the Matanzas team stayed behind and it was the time for the final crusade against the Industriales

team, the historical winner of 12 titles, with legendary playoffs but with an inferior roster than that of the Las Tunas squad.

There was no room for doubts nor any gap the Leones (Lions) of Havana would enter the Leñadores forest. The team of the mystical 47 year old Dánel Castro –29 seasons and historical hitting leader– inflicted a devastating blow (four in a row) on their

opponents, reaching their second title in the history of the national series.

The Las Tunas team imposed its compact game, supported on a pitching that included no elite name but was in control of the strike zone, with skills to solve complex situations. An individual hero and collective celebrations characterized every game. Abeisy Pantoja, in his debut as manager, reached the podium.

Relay pitcher Keniel Ferraz made a record of 6-0, matching the score of more games won in playoffs. Dánel confirmed his eminent retirement with happiness. He will retire holding the golden ax he helped reach during his sporting career.

The post-season left a pleasant taste, as beyond what happened between both teams, baseball filled stadiums and raised passions. Las Tunas was the winning team, but Cuba won.



The Las Tunas team imposed its compact game, supported on a pitching. PHOTO: Panchito.

## Volleyball, Difficult Road to Paris 2024

By Julio **CÉSAR**

HAVANA.- The Cuban National Volleyball Men's Team started the final path of its race to the qualification for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, with some of its players out and a new technical staff.

The most striking thing is precisely the replacement of technical director Nicolás Vives, who had directed the team for almost 10 years, by Jesús Cruz, with outstanding results at the junior and grassroots levels, including medals of all colors in world and continental championships in the U23, 21 and 19-year categories.

In fact, most of the Cuban squad's current members were under Cruz' direction in the junior categories.

In the next months, the new TD will face coming important challenges that are essential to win the ticket to the Olympic Games in the City of Light: the Northern, Central American and Caribbean (NORCECA) tournament, at the beginning of September – which grants points to the world ranking – and the Pre-Olympic Tournament in Brazil, from September 30 to October 8 – which grants two direct tickets to Paris.

To face such challenges, the new director will not be able to count on veteran Roberlandy Simón (36), who has no doubts been the world's best central attacker in the last 10 years and is recovering from injuries suffered and will not be able to join the squad until the start of 2024.

Other players who will also be absent are Liván Osoria, who underwent surgery months ago and opposite Michael Sánchez (36), who is also undergoing rehabilitation. The news is the reincorporation of central attacker Roamy Alonso (25), who joins the backbone of the team in addition to auxiliary players Marlon Yant, Miguel Ángel López and Osniel Melgarejo; opposite Jesús Herrera; setter Lyvan Taboada, and Javier Concepción, who is also a central player.

An outstanding feature of the team is the large number of young talents, all under the age of 25 –except liberos Yonder García and Alain Gorguet– including central blockers Angel Suárez (20, 2.15 meters high), Endriel Pedroso (21, 2.12) and Jakdiel Contreras (19, 2.04), as well as opposite Alejandro Miguel Gutiérrez (20, 2.07).

Coaches Mario Izquierdo and Ángel González Cobas, main assistants of TD Cruz, also mentioned other players, such as auxiliary Julio César Cárdenas (23, 1.97), José Miguel Gutiérrez (22, 1.94), Yohan León (28, 2.00) and Yusniel Martí; opposite José Carlos Romero (24, 2.00), and setters Adrián Goide and Adrián Chirino.



An outstanding feature of the team is the large number of young talents, all under the age of 25. PHOTO: JIT.

# BRICS Expands its Membership

By Manuel VÁZQUEZ

JOHANNESBURG.- The BRICS group expanded its membership with the incorporation of Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which will join the bloc's founders as of January 1st, 2024.

The announcement was made by President Cyril Ramaphosa on the closing day of the Summit of this economic, political and social grouping inaugurated in June 2009 by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

At the meeting held in this city, the South African president stated that Foreign Affairs ministers were entrusted with the task of continuing developing the BRICS partner country model and a list of prospective partner countries and report by the next Summit.

In this 15th BRICS Summit, as the five member countries, we have reached an agreement on the guiding principles, standards, criteria and procedures of the BRICS expansion and "we have consensus on the first phase of this expansion process, and further phases will follow," Ramaphosa said.



In the Summit, held at Johannesburg, presidents stated their expectations of the economic association. PHOTO: Internet.

In this Summit, presidents stated their expectations of the economic association generating tangible benefits and providing viable solutions to the common challenges the Global South faces.

We shared our vision of BRICS as a champion of the needs and concerns of the people of the Global South. These include the need for beneficial economic growth, sustainable development and reform of multilateral systems, the South African president affirmed.

Ramaphosa reiterated "our commitment to inclusive multilateralism and upholding international law, including the purposes

and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter."

We are concerned about ongoing conflicts in many parts of the world. We stress our commitment to the peaceful resolution of differences and disputes through dialogue and inclusive consultation, he stressed.

He also added that BRICS states "have noted that there is global momentum for the use of local currencies, alternative financial arrangements and alternative payment systems."

As BRICS, we are ready to explore opportunities for improving the stability, reliability and fairness of the global

financial architecture, he noted.

Ramaphosa announced that the 15th Summit agreed to task the BRICS Finance Ministers and/or Central Bank Governors, as appropriate, to consider the issue of local currencies, payment instruments and platforms and report back to the BRICS leaders by the next Summit of Heads of State and/or Government.

The Johannesburg II Declaration demonstrates the shared values and common interests that underlie our mutually beneficial cooperation as the five BRICS countries, he noted.



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