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**SANTIAGO DE CUBA**

**The Ever Hospitable City**

**Text & Photos Roberto CAMPOS**

HAVANA.- While surrounded by incredible mountains, the city of Santiago de Cuba is as cosmopolitan as the Cuban capital and other large tourist cities in the country. This city, however, also encompasses charms that are connected to its history, culture and environment.

Many of the travelers that come to Cuba, especially from Europe and Canada, take great interest in knowing the religious roots and the traditions of this part of Cuba, making the region a must in their vacation plans.

At present, visitors can enjoy a variety of options, including hotels such as the Meliá Santiago, in the city center, or El Salitón, in the heart of the Sierra Maestra mountains.

Well-known personalities and ordinary people join the list of visitors to this part of the country, which always extends its friendly hand, because as an old saying goes: this is an ever hospitable city.

Santiago de Cuba is considered the country’s most Caribbean city, also proving to be the hottest, with summer temperatures over 35 degrees Celsius.

Founded in 1515 by colonial conqueror Diego Velásquez, it was the first capital and archbishopric of Cuba, preserving its historical and cultural charm ever since.

This city is located in the middle of the mountains and for this reason, it is full of steep streets, including the famous Padre Pico, which is a long 45-degree slope staircase that appears all over tourist postcards.

The province, which extends over six thousand square kilometers, has a population of 1,027,912 inhabitants, according to official data. It is a highly industrial area, known in the colonial time for the presence of gold and afterwards for its copper and coffee.

The heat is felt at all times, even during the mild Cuban winters, as average minimum temperatures range from 20 to 24 degrees Celsius, with a maximum range from 30 to 33, and levels of humidity around 74 percent.

When visiting Santiago, going to La Gran Piedra (The Big Rock) is a must. Located about 1,125 meters over sea level, it’s the most important ecological site in the area, which visitors can access after climbing 450 steps.

The rock has an estimated weight of about 70,000 tons, which sits beautifully over a vast mountainous valley.

In fact, the province has a virgin landscape that can be appreciated in the Sierra Maestra mountain range, where thousand-year-old trees and enchanting green foliage transport visitors to another world.

That foliage is also a distinctive feature of natural parks such as the Baconao, which includes a beach area, tourist centers, the Prehistoric Valley – the latter, a site in which cement dinosaurs show how life once was on Earth.

Other establishments include the Club Amigo Carisol-Los Corales Hotel and many other attractions along the sea.

Another important place to visit, regardless of religious beliefs, is the Basílica del Cobre, a church located about 18 kilometers from the province’s capital, near an open copper mine.

Religious Cuban people of different beliefs, including santeros— with roots in Western African traditions – are among visitors interested in experiencing the architectural masterpiece.

European influences present in Santiago include Spanish craftiness, Italian lyricism and French elegance, which complement the Cabildos de la nación (Carabali associations).

Cabildos were a result of enslaved Africans’ rich traditions and culture, the tumba francesa (French drums) and the colonato. Those three ingredients had a huge influence on the creation of the conga and bolero— the latter, by Pepe Sánchez. Back in 1920, the conga and comparsa grew stronger, giving their way to son, and names such as the Trio Matamoros emerged, among others. Other outstanding names of the region include that of the deceased Compay Segundo, who was born in Santiago.

Music, traditions, landscapes and history go hand in hand in Santiago, an area in which the revolutionary processes also emerged, going from the war of independence in 1868 to the Cuban Revolution in 1959.

Santiago is therefore a special, colorful and diverse experience, where visitors can take delight in all that the city offers.
60th Anniversary of La Coubre: U.S. Terrorism in Cuba

By Elizabeth BORREGO

HAVANA.- The tragedy that rocked Havana on March 4, 1960 proved that the United States’ intentions went far beyond just stopping the emerging Revolution.

With the explosion of the French Steamship La Coubre, 60 years ago, the Cuban people corroborated Washington’s warmongering intentions.

In addition to Ernesto Che Guevara’s firm expression, immortalized by photographer Alberto Korda, and the cry of “Homeland or Death!” uttered by Fidel Castro the next day, that tragedy left asimilar lesson as the many other sabotages that occurred before the failed Bay of Pigs invasionin Giron in April 1961.

Around 15:00, local time, the first explosion blew up nearly 31 tons of grenades and 44 tons of ammunition that the steamship had carried from the Amberes Port of Belgium to Cuba, its final destination.

The genocidal character of the action was confirmed with the second explosion, when the aid corps, firemen and the Revolutionary Police had arrived at the site to assist the first round of affected people.

The final number of victims shook the country: 101 people dead, including six French sailors and eight Spanish port workers, and 400 others injured or disabled for life.

“HOMELAND OR DEATH!”

One day after the catastrophe, a mass burial gathered Havana residents at the intersection of the streets 23rd and 12th -close to the Colon Cemetery- to bid farewell to the victims.

The historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, then showed evidence of the U.S. government’s involvement in the crime, and said the words that became iconic, calling for the Cuban people’s resilience:

“We have been through worse. We will get through this.”

“Freedom means much more now. Freedom means Homeland and our fight will be Homeland or Death!” he stated.

La Coubre ship used to set sail with 35 crew members and made stops in Bremen, Hamburg and Liverpool. According to various pieces of information, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) prepared what Cuban authorities called sabotage in one of those locations.

Evidence disclosed by Fidel Castro himself exposed the complicity of the U.S. agencies held responsible for the explosion. The objective was to interrupt the supply of arms and ammunitions from third party countries and leave Cuba defenseless in the face of the increasing hostility.

Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (also known as French Line), which owned the ship at the time of the explosion, still has the French dossier with investigations in a safe.

The release of the juridical services of the ship’s last owners is restricted for 150 years.

However, the truth is a transparent secret: the sabotage was orchestrated and led by U.S. intelligence services, as denounced by the Cuban authorities.

University 2020: In the Face of Neoliberalism

By Mario MUÑOZ

HAVANA.- The Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 agenda, as well as the global impact of neoliberal policies, marked the atmosphere of the 12th International University Congress 2020, held February 10-14 at Havana’s Convention Center.

Over 2,000 delegates from 50 countries got together to share experiences and good practices, but also to discuss the major issues affecting higher education throughout the world, many proving to be consequences of neoliberal policies and the global economic crisis.

Regarding this topic, Brazilian theologian Frei Betto was categorical: Latin America and the Caribbean have no chance at achieving sustainable development in the framework of the capitalist system.

“A century would be necessary to eradicate poverty, not the ten years the UN has set as goal to solve these problems,” Betto addressed during the scientific event, in which nearly 1,550 papers were presented in 15 courses and 25 workshops.

In that context, Betto noted, education is key, characterizing current education systems by poor quality and a lack of resources.

Meanwhile, Spanish journalist and professor Ignacio Ramonet stated that the world panorama in recent years has been characterized by a “general rebellion,” with uprisings that affect both first world countries and developing nations.

The recent demonstrations in Chile, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Bolivia, France, Spain, among others, are a consequence of the failures of neoliberal globalization.

Like never before, the role of youth and women in the uprisings has been fundamental, as they have headed campaigns for their rights and global causes.

Ramonet warned that the world is experiencing a transcendent moment where thinking and theory are more necessary than ever, and where university students must reconsider the changes that have an impact on society.

The Cuban delegates attending the congress shared the progress that the country is making in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, which are interconnected with the National Economic and Social Development Plan (PNDES) as of 2030.

Cuba’s Deputy Minister of Higher Education, Alicia Alonso Becerra, said that education is connected to SDG 4 to ensure inclusive, equal and quality education and to promote learning opportunities for all.

She stressed that the fields of study and development at Cuban universities are linked to practically all the SDGs and are directly connected with the six main objectives of the National Economic and Social Development Plan.

When referring to the achievements of Cuban education since 1959, Alonso commented that 1,503,467 students have graduated from the country’s universities, with 22,803 graduates during the 2018-2019 school year alone.
New York Conference Aims to Bring Cuba and USA Together

By Martha ANDRÉS

WASHINGTON.- The International Conference for the Normalization of Cuba-USA Relations will be held on March 21 and 22 in New York, United States. One of its main objectives is precisely to join efforts to fight the blockade against Cuba.

Taking place at the University of Fordham’s Law Department, the event will advocate for normalized relations between the two countries, which is why calling for the end of the nearly 60-year-long siege is at the top of the organizers’ agenda.

The meeting’s announcement also demands the elimination of all travel restrictions to the island, the normalization of diplomatic relations, the return of the territory being illegally occupied by the U.S. Naval Base in Guantánamo (Eastern Cuba) and to bring an end of the “change of regime” programs.

“Since the blockade was implemented, I do not think we have witnessed a more difficult period for Cuba and the Cuban people than at present,” he said referring to the actions adopted by the Donald Trump administration against the island.

After it took office on January 20, 2017, the Republican government has increased travel restrictions to the Caribbean country, limited the transfer of family remittances, imposed sanctions to avoid the arrival of fuel and activated Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, which authorizes lawsuits against companies and individuals that invest in properties nationalized in Cuba after the 1959 Revolution.

Amid this context, Sharpe said that he hopes to close the conference with a strong action plan that channels the future work of those that want to bring the two countries closer together.
The Calm Before the Quake

By Marta CABRALES

SANTIAGO DE CUBA.- After almost three years of relative calm, 2020 started full-blown with seismic events over the last week of January, both of which left people talking.

The second earthquake was particularly noticeable with a magnitude of 7.1, the highest ever registered in Cuba. It was felt throughout national territory.

The inhabitants of Cuba’s most seismic region in the southeast had enjoyed quiet moments since the beginning of 2016, when an unusual series of earthquakes the island in suspense for some nine days, when multiple tremors were felt over the course of 24 hours.

The 88 years that have passed since February 3, 1932, when an earthquake devastated Santiago de Cuba, hang menacingly over the city. According to scientists, the recurrence interval of that type of natural event is between 85 and 100 years.

It was precisely that day 60 years later that the National Seismic Research Center (CENAIS) was inaugurated.

Before CENAIS, seismic stations opened in 1964 in Soroa, in the western province of Pinar del Río, and another in Río Carpintero, in the foothills of Gran Piedra, in Santiago de Cuba, which opened a year later.

EARTHQUAKE SENTINELS

What the CENAIS experts probably would like is to be able to predict tremors; but science fails to decipher all the mysteries of our earth. Hence, they have no other choice than to scan them systematically and thoroughly.

This is the everyday reality of that institution and in the different stations of the National Seismology Service, with more than 20 spread throughout the country.

The constant monitoring of the seismic activity in the country and nearby areas makes it possible to notify local authorities and the population on time, in close coordination with the general staff of the National Defense System and its provincial representation.

Saving lives and minimizing the material damage is the premise of this interrelated system, which includes educating the population on what to do before, during and after an earthquake.

Despite a shaky start to the new year, Cuba remains calm and ready to confront future storms.

Informática 2020, the Cuban Tech Event

By Laura ARBESÚ

HAVANA.- The Festival of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Cuba will be held March 16-20 at Havana’s Convention Center and Pabexpo exhibition site.

Experts and “technology migrants” curiously await the innovations to be presented during the 18th edition of Informática 2020, the International Information and Communication Technology Convention and Fair. “Towards Digital Transformation” is the conference’s slogan this year, in response to the use of digital technologies and products working to meet the needs of society, said its organizers, who belong to the Cuban Ministry of Telecommunications.

Programmers, software developers, business people and renowned tech specialists from around the world will attend the meeting to discover what is happening in this field around the world.

The scientific program is comprehensive, with 13 events taking place at the same time, including the 5th International Conference on Computer Sciences and Information Technology, the 9th Symposium on Telecommunications and the 6th International ICTs Workshop on Organizational Management.

The 9th International Congress on Technologies and Multimedia Content, the 9th International Workshop on ICTs Quality and the 11th International Congress on Geomatics 2018 are also included in the program.

In times when social networks are prevailing as communication platform, the event will also analyze social media behavior as a universal phenomenon during the 6th International Symposium on Community, Entertainment and Social Networks.

Creating the conditions for the population to have access to internet with ever cheaper tariffs is one of this program’s objectives. Today, 7.1 million Cubans can access the internet – 63 percent of the country’s population when the global internet usage rate is 59 percent, according to the Digital 2020 Global Overview Report.

The new policy on the digitalization of Cuban society, a project of great economic and social importance for the country.

Experts and “technology migrants” curiously attend the meeting to discover what is happening in this field around the world. One of Informática 2020’s greatest attractions will be the trade fair, where the newest products and services will be exhibited at commercial and business stands able to share uses and solutions for the digitalization process in Cuban society.

The Cuban Ministry of Telecommunications.

But the event will not only present new products and services; the delegates will get insight into the history of Information Technology and Computer Science in Latin America and the Caribbean.

According to specialists, the tech convention is a space that complements the new policy on the digitalization of Cuban society, a project of great economic and social importance for the country. Creating the conditions for the population to have access to internet with ever cheaper tariffs is one of this program’s objectives. Today, 7.1 million Cubans can access the internet – 63 percent of the country’s population when the global internet usage rate is 59 percent, according to the Digital 2020 Global Overview Report.

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Despite a shaky start to the new year, Cuba remains calm and ready to confront future storms.
Laura Domingo Graces Literature, Cinema and Dance

By María MARTÍNEZ

HAVANA.- Laura Domingo’s work covers literature, cinema and choreography, as this young Cuban woman finds ease and beauty through interdisciplinary expression. The 29th International Book Fair (FIL) held in Cuba this year, summoned Domingo to read samples of her work with various Latin American poets at the Word of the World International Poetry Festival, the IV International Conference of Poetry Advocates and in the X Meeting of Young Writers of Latin America and the Caribbean, among other events. This all took place in her native home of Havana, reading various poems from her book Invocations and Other Limits, edited in Cuba by the South Collection, in Mexico by Literal Project and in Spain by the Guantanamera Publishing House, within the framework of the fair. In addition, Domingo read texts from Country on Water, a book published on her island by Ediciones Sed de Belleza, in 2019, which she is in the process of editing with an Italian publisher Lebeg Edizioni.

"An artist has such a strong urge to discover, a kind of scientist of emotions, that you can’t be quiet for long," considers the poet-choreographer; she graduated from the National Ballet School and worked for the National Ballet of Cuba and Contemporary Dance Company. However, she prefers not to define herself, as it is natural for a creator to look for different forms of expression; especially in times when communication between cultures and societies can be very intense.

"For me, working on choreography, literature and cinema is all the same. Through choreography, I try to generate visuals and create the structure that I learned from writing narratives and editing film," Domingo told The Havana Reporter.

"The rhythm of dance has also influenced my way of writing and, in cinema, I work as a screenwriter and choreographer; that is, the scenery changes, but I am usually doing the same type of work," she reflected. Domingo is soon to publish the type of work," she said. "I distrust everything and that distrust is essential to my curiosity in life, which led me to art. I know we see only a tiny part of reality," Domingo inquires, "we navigate in constant speculation. How is it that someone can be sure of anything?"

According to the rules of the youth contest, the participants must show technical mastery of the choreographed movements and excellent interpretation of the musical piece. In general, the categories for the contests are: children (11-12); youth (13-14); intermediate (15-16) and advanced (17-19). Most contestants will show their skills in excerpts from the traditional classical repertoire such as The Corsair, Don Quixote, The Flames of Paris, Diana and Actaeon, The Nutcracker, The Sleeping Beauty, Paquita, The Bayadère and Flower Festival in Genzano, among other pieces created in the 19th century.

Technical and artistic execution, musicality and physical proportions are some of the parameters that the judges will take into consideration when assessing by gender and category.

The two contests will close the 26th International Meeting of Ballet Academies, an event that epitomizes the dream of Alicia and Fernando Alonso of having a Latin American school of ballet, in which Cuba would be able to welcome schools from around the world to share in artistic experience.

Cuba Attracts Ballet Academies from Around the World

By Martha SÁNCHEZ

HAVANA.-Ballet students and professors from ten different countries will meet in Cuba from April 4 to 18 to talk discuss ballet. Known as the International Conference of Ballet Academies, this one-of-a-kind event will hold its 26th edition at the Fernando Alonso National School of Ballet in Havana. Like in previous years, the Cuban school will demonstrate how receptive it is to a wide range of dance genres in order to broaden students’ creative horizons.

For ten days, the registered trainees will take different classes including physical training, pointe work, repertoire, choreography, character dance and classical duo, among others. Alongside those classes, optional workshops will cover areas that are complementary to any artistic professions such as acting, makeup, dance critique, folklore, physical training, jazz, Spanish dance, sport dances, dance therapy and character dances.

From April 13 to 18, the event will hold two international contests: one for ballet students in the child/youth category and the other for choreography.

Like in previous years, the Cuban school will hold its 26th edition at the Fernando Alonso National School of Ballet in Havana. Alonso National School of Ballet in Havana.

Alicia and Fernando Alonso of having a one-of-a-kind event that epitomizes the dream of the two contests will close the 26th International Meeting of Ballet Academies, an event that epitomizes the dream of Alicia and Fernando Alonso of having a Latin American school of ballet, in which Cuba would be able to welcome schools from around the world to share in artistic experience.

One afternoon of the International Book Fair, Domingo accompanied poets from Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Argentina, Colombia, Spain, Peru, Canada, Uruguay and other voices from Cuba, to read work at the central strip of Paseo del Prado, a street in the Havana that leads to the entrance of the bay. Below is a sample of Domingo’s work, a poem called “Country on Water”. Not for touching the implacable seeds, not for appropriating other people’s songs, not for sleeping free of whispers, I have opened my hands, for something to slip between them, something that could be saved. "My poetic work thus far points to intimate, philosophical areas of being and experience, because when I read these texts, I reveal myself from a place of doubt," she said.

"I distrust everything and that distrust is essential to my curiosity in life, which led me to art. I know we see only a tiny part of reality," Domingo inquires, "we navigate in constant speculation. How is it that someone can be sure of anything?"

For Domingo, the act of creation is paradigmatic and constitutes "one of the ways to achieve fullness; to be who we truly are." Laura plans to develop several choreographed pieces in Italy throughout the year and hopes to complete, together with Italian filmmaker Roberto Salinas, the documentary Cuban Dancer, a joint-production with Italy, Canada and Chile.
Havana’s Delightful International Book Fair

By Martha Sánchez

HAVANA.- The 29th edition of the International Book Fair (FIL) started its tour of Cuba in Havana, where over 500,000 literary activities were conducted, in addition to dance, music and theater performances alongside the wide-spread book sale.

The most important event of the Cuban publishing movement counted on the Socialist Republic of Vietnam as the guest country of honor. The occasion was appropriate to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between Cuba and Vietnam.

About 346 representatives from 42 countries attended the diverse activities performed at the FIL. This edition rendered tribute to the work of researcher and essayist Ana Cairo, National Social Sciences and Humanities awardee, and the legacy of playwright Eugenio Hernández, National Stage awardee in 2005.

Spain, Mexico and Peru were among the most represented countries, while Guatemala participated in the event for the first time as an exhibitor.

Argentinean Vice President Cristina Fernández arrived in the San Carlos de La Cabaña Fortress, the main venue of this event, to launch her book Sinceramente. Considered a bestseller in spite of being published less than a year ago, this was the first time the book was launched outside of Argentina.

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel and other Cuban authorities attended the launch of the book by the Argentinean Vice President, the first woman to hold such position in her country and mother of two, who has been subjected, together with her family, to persistent media, political and legal persecution.

Fernández thanked the Cuban government and doctors for the attention provided to her daughter Florencia Kirchner, who has been hospitalized in Cuba since March of 2019 due to health problems.

The reputation of the Cuban health system and the humanity of the Cuban doctors are well earned, she said.

In addition to book launches and the exchange among writers, editors, translators, designers and illustrators, the fair also included poetry readings and music, theater and dance performances.

Spain Ignacio Ramonet, one of the authors who attended this edition, said that he came back to participate in this fair because of its festive atmosphere. He also added that he likes the popularity of the event and the intention of many families that consider this fair as an adventure to discover new books.

Ramonet, who again presented his volume El imperio de la vigilancia (The Empire of Vigilance), stated his appreciation for the fact that three of his books have been granted the fair’s Readers Award. He also appreciated the possibility of meeting other authors from the Ibero-American region, and the opportunity of expressing his friendship to the Cuban people.

The International Book Fair will finish on April 12 in Santiago de Cuba, in the country’s east, after touring most of the Cuban provinces. During this edition, it will put over 4,000 titles and more than 4 million books in the hands of curious readers.

New Book Analyzes Cuban National Hero’s Novel

HAVANA.- Cuban bookstores will soon stock their shelves with the work Silencios y recepciones: la novela de José Martí (Silence and Reception: the novel of José Martí), by researcher of the José Martí Studies Center Mauricio Núñez, who was recently awarded with the Alejo Carpentier Essay Award for this text.

According to Núñez, Doctor of Literary Sciences, the volume covers the narrative style in José Martí’s work and emphasizes the only fictional piece Martí wrote, Lucía Jerez, exploring differences and commonalities to the Cuban National Hero’s nonfiction.

The author added that Martí worked on his only novel at a time when he was involved in many different tasks: preparing pieces for Latin American newspapers; translating texts; proof reading newspapers; writing letters to relatives and friends; and brainstorming future ideas and projects.

Amid that intense and creative timeframe, he was asked to write the novel. For that reason, Martí’s discourse is imbedded in that multiple universe and he acknowledged the links between his narrative and the journalistic approach, Núñez commented.

“His training as a reporter was quite useful to finish the novel in one week. His work as a journalist, on one hand, and as a novelist on the other hand, are the expressive needs of a poet,” the author told The Havana Reporter.

A chapter of the essay analyzes the reception of the José Martí’s novel, from its first publication to the most recent studies, including the decades of silence and oblivion followed by overwhelming interest by contemporary critics worldwide, he said.

The research positions Martí’s novel in relation to the other literary creations of the author, and this is not the first text Núñez publishes on the National Hero. In fact, he also published the volume José Martí: narrar desde el periodismo (EUNA, Costa Rica, 2016).

Núñez’s articles and reviews have been published in newspapers and specialized magazines in Mexico, Guatemala, Panama, Venezuela, Chile, Spain and Cuba. Likewise, he has participated in national and international literary congresses and has conducted lectures in Cuba and abroad.

He is also the author of the long-form essay Eliseo Diego y sus Noticias de la quimera (Letras Cubanas, 1997) and edited the most recent edition of the novel Lucía Jerez, by José Martí (Centro de Estudios Martianos, 2000).

When asked what values the modern generations could learn from Martí, the scholar said without hesitation: “His great energy, his tireless diligence, the need to help and work for the good of all, the capacity to not to be overcome by difficulties of any sort, his extraordinary ability to love and forgive, and his capacity to overcome hatred, envy, treason. “His fidelity to a collective project, his rebelliousness against injustices, his capacity to be a tireless reader and consider reading a means of cultural and social growth, as well as the ability to enjoy art, music and literature,” he added.

Núñez was granted the Alejo Carpentier Essay Award on February 10 at the Nicolás Guillén Hall of the San Carlos de la Cabaña Fortress, during the 29th edition of the Cuban International Book Fair.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Havana World Music
2020
(Mar 25 - 27)

Oncology Havana 2020
(Mar 25 - 27)

International Convention of Science, Technology and Innovation
(Apr 13 - 17 2020)

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Venezuela Withstands Coercive Measures

By William URQUIJO

CARACAS.-Venezuela continues to resist the increasingly hostile policy of the U.S. government which, in complicity with an oppositional group, is trying to generate a regime change through the use of anti-democratic methods. The year 2019 witnessed the implementation of U.S. unilateral coercive measures against Venezuela’s oil industry and gold exports, while all Venezuelan assets in U.S. territory were frozen. Now, the Trump administration has extended the scope of the wrongly imposed sanctions. On February 7, the Office of Foreign Assets Control of the U.S. Department of Treasury adopted punitive actions against the Venezuelan Consortium of Aeronautics Industries and Air Services (CONVIASA), representing a new chapter of aggressions against the Venezuelan economy.

The U.S. government justified the measure by saying that President Nicolás Maduro uses the airline to promote his own political agenda. After the new U.S. government’s attack, Venezuelan authorities resorted to the International Court of Justice in The Hague to file a lawsuit against the United States for the damage caused by the coercive measures.

We are convinced that the consequences of the unilateral coercive measures are crimes against humanity; they are generalized and systematic attacks,” Venezuela’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Jorge Arreaza stated. The minister highlighted the fact that those actions, which violate international law and the country’s sovereignty, have one main political goal: a change of government through anti-constitutional methods. According to an analysis conducted by the U.S.-based Center for Economic and Political Studies, the economic attacks requested by the opposition and implemented by the White House are responsible for the death of at least 40,000 Venezuelans.

“If the International Criminal Court investigates and identifies those responsible, it will find out that there are Venezuelan citizens among those asking for the sanctions,” the foreign affairs minister said. The announcement of the punitive actions against CONVIASA was made after opposition leader Juan Guaidó toured several European countries, with the United States as his final stop. Once there, he got the Trump administration’s support for the efforts aimed at overthrowing the legitimate government in Venezuela. Making an aberrant interpretation of the Constitution, on January 23, 2019 Guaidó proclaimed himself as the interim president of Venezuela. That act of usurpation was supported by the White House, while declared by the Bolivarian executive as an attempted coup d’état.

In addition to promoting the implementation of coercive measures against Venezuela, Guaidó headed various destabilizing acts such as the failed entry of humanitarian aid across the Colombian border and the coup attempt on April 30, 2019. Facing a panorama marked by increasing hostility, the leadership of the Bolivarian Revolution fosters actions to strengthen the civic-military alliance, and advocates for the holding of a National Dialogue Table with representatives of the oppositional parties. At the international level, the visit that Russian Foreign Minister Serguéi Lavrov made to Caracas was an example of the strengthened strategic alliance between the two countries in the face of U.S. aggressions. Lavrov said that the meetings held with top-ranking Venezuelan authorities reinforce cooperation on international platforms, as well as economic links and investments in other spheres, despite the coercive measures adopted by Washington. Likewise, Lavrov reiterated his country’s commitment to strengthen technical-military cooperation in order to increase Venezuela’s defense against external threats.
HAVANA.- The first Technological Park of Cuba was inaugurated last November in the neighborhood of Cerro, as part of the celebrations of Havana's 500th anniversary. Quinta de las Delicias, but known by many as Finca Los Monos (The Monkey Farm), the park has a plane, yacht and train with simulators developed by SIMPRO, the Cuban software company. Restaurants, cafeterias and a party area form part of the park as well. Some of the park's most attractive elements are the life-size sculptures of monkeys, peacocks and other birds in their natural environment. Other attractions at the park include game and technology rooms, electronic shooting, augmented reality technology, digital libraries, and online games, to name just a few. Visitors are delighted to see the various options that serve both for fun and learning. The estate's gardens are ideal for outdoor activities for all ages, from traditional children's games to camping. Quinta de las Delicias also holds an eclectic-style castle, built at the beginning of the 20th century. It is considered the first zoo of Havana, as it has provided a home to three generations of monkeys. Its first owner, Rosalía Abreu, lived for many years surrounded by a variety of monkeys, which gave the park its nickname and a great reputation. However, the monkeys were not the only animals that lived on the farm. Other mammals and reptiles, almost all of them brought from Asia and Africa, can be seen there as well. It is said that Rosalía had a peculiar liking for monkeys and she treated them as if they were people. Therefore, she has been the center of many local jokes and even the protagonist of horror stories, like one where the monkeys are servants wearing clothes and eating with cutlery. Iván Barreto Gelles, Director of Cinesoft, explained the importance of the local development programs and emphasized the importance of rescuing Finca de Los Monos, as to provide visitors with a place for recreation and interaction with the technology.
VARADERO, CUBA - Varadero, the most important resort in Cuba, not only hits the headlines of mainstream tourism media in the Caribbean but in many parts of the world as well. It's no wonder this beach resort was chosen to be the venue of the 40th International Tourism Fair of Cuba, FITCuba 2020, set for May. The news was well-received by the tourism delegate in Matanzas province and Varadero, Ibis Fernández, who announced her commitment to FITCuba 2020, an event that this year will be dedicated to Russia and the sun and beach modality.

This amazingly beautiful beach is located some 140 km east of Havana, the Cuban capital. The western province of Matanzas is privileged to feature the Yumuri Valley and the Zapata Wetlands, in addition to Varadero, said Fernández. The province has a total of 60 hotels (22,217 rooms), along with 1,428 privately-owned accommodations. Forty-eight percent of the hotel rooms are located in five-star hotels; 38 percent in four star hotels, and 14 percent in three star hotels. As many as 97 percent of those hotels are all-inclusive. Tourism in the province has registered a sustained an impressive five percent annual growth since 1990.

For two years now, Matanzas has welcomed 1.5 million tourists a year, and eleven renowned foreign hotel chains run 83 percent of the hotel rooms mentioned above.

The main markets of tourism in the province are Canada, Germany, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, Argentina, Italy, Spain and Chile, with Russia showing the highest growth rate.

The province also has an international airport, two international ports, convention centers, an international clinic, a hemodialysis center, a quality of life center, galleries, souvenir markets, a dance academy, over 40 restaurants and 12 nightclubs.

Varadero's beach was selected as the second best in the world by Trip Advisor. It's lined with 52 hotels (21,550 rooms), and hopes to reach number one in the world by TripAdvisor. It's lined with 52 hotels (21,550 rooms), and hopes to reach number one in the world by TripAdvisor.

A new version of the Hotel Internacional de Varadero has recently opened, as the original, built in the 1950s, was too close to the sea and affected the dunes.

The new hotel is operated by Meliá Hotels International (Spain) and has 946 rooms – over 50 percent of them overlooking the sea- and eleven floors. There are two penthouse suites, a gastronomic boulevard and a 1,300 square-meter meeting hall. Varadero is the main tourist destination in Matanzas, as well as Cuba when it comes to the beach and leisure.

A MYSTICAL BEACH

Varadero speaks for itself: concentric circles that symbolize aboriginal evidence; a Spanish fort as proof of colonization, and paintings that show 10 families from Cárdenas – the village’s founders.

Officially founded on December 5, 1887 by the communal fusion named Los Decembrinos, it had several wooden and Spanish-tile houses. The area was especially known for the peak reached by row boats, but also for seashells and sea horses.

Varadero’s geological formation comes from the Quaternary and the name of the peninsula, Hicacos, comes from a green, thorny-leaf tree of the cactus family that covered this 22km long, 700m wide area.

The northern coast stands out for its extraordinary strip of white sand, while the southern coast protects the Cárdenas Bay.

The name Varadero is related to the fact that this is a sandy, shallow coast in which ships ran aground by the tide. Spanish colonial Sebastián de Ocampo discovered the area in 1508 while sailing around Cuba; however, it was first mentioned in 1540 in a map by Alonso de Santa Cruz.

There was mention of a small, primitive aboriginal settlement that was wiped out by the savageness of the colonizers. Later on, that settlement became a refuge for runaway African slaves (Cimarrones) and pirates such as Francis Drake, who stopped there on the way to the British Islands to provision his ships.

Varadero has 15 archeological sites, including caves and caverns, which were used as refuge. One of the most visited of those sites is the Ambrosio cave, in the southern part of the peninsula. According to experts, this five-part, 250-meter cave is home to the Caribbean's largest pictograph.

The Matanzas territory was used as a salt mine from 1587 to 1961, when the production of salt was closed. In 1976, it became a municipality.

The original town of Varadero was established in the “8000 locker park”, and its first hotel, named “Varadero”, was built there in 1915 with 10 rooms. Nine years later, this hotel became the Varadero Nautical Center.

The Torres Hotel was the second built in the area. This facility, named after its owner - Antonio Torres – was constructed downtown (on the corner of 1st and 40th streets) in 1920. The regattas, the main activity at the time, started in 1910 off the Varadero coastline.

According to journalist Roger Ricardo, who wrote a book on the history of the area, the Americans were the ones who discovered the real potential of this destination. For that reason, in 1917, real estate business started and a small wooden palace was built by R.H. Johnson, of Johnson Construction Company, from Wayne, Pennsylvania.

In 1926, U.S. Irenée Du Pont Dehaumors moved to the Xanadú Mansion in Varadero – today the golf course – and founded the Henequen Co. of Cárdenas S.A., among other businesses. The homes of other celebrities were also located in Varadero, such as Mafioso Al Capone’s, whose residency was the current Kawama hotel.

The first big hotel on the beach, Internacional, was built in 1950 at the cost of three million dollars. This hotel maintained its supremacy for over 40 years. Its development plan was completed in 1952 and in 1956, it was granted “Authority by the Varadero Tourist Center”

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Varadero witnessed another period of prosperity with the creation of the National Tourist Industry Institute (INIT), which focused its attention on local tourism.

In 1959, there were only three hotels in Varadero. At present, there are 40, with more than 10,600 rooms. Development is still underway and the destination is key for tourism and recreation in Cuba.
Cuba Includes Belgium in Tourism Agenda

By Waldo MENDILUZA

BRUSSELS.- Deprived of one of its primary markets due to the U.S. blockade, Cuba works towards the diversification of its tourism market, strategizing to focus on Europe. Although Belgium is not included among the top European nations in regards to the number of tourists who travel to Cuba, about 17,400 Belgian vacationers visited the island last year and Cuban tourism authorities think that this country has great potential. Belgian tour operators, travel agents and airlines also consider the island to be an attractive destination. Therefore, Cuba was selected as the guest country of honor in the 62 edition of the Salon de Vacances, a fair held from February 6 to 9 at the Brussels Expo, which annually welcomes about 100,000 visitors. According to a survey conducted by the FISA group, 70 percent of Belgian youth are interested in visiting Cuba. This survey, conducted in December, included people from 18 to 34 years, who said they feel attracted to Cuban towns and beaches. Inaugurating the Cuban stand at the Salon des Vacances, Ambassador Norma Goicochea stated that Cuba is a unique destination, combining natural beauty, cultural richness, legendary history and above all, the hospitality of the Cuban people.

"We invite you to know the country in its entirety, and to choose a travel destination where satisfaction is guaranteed," she said. Many are interested in Cuba for its music, dance, culinary art and other products that are renowned worldwide, such as Habana Club rum, mojitos and cigars. The latter, famous all over the world, was presented at the Brussels tourist fair by a prodigious cigar roller, José Castelar Cairo – internationally known as Cueto – who explained in detail the process of cigar rolling.

Cueto has five Guinness records for the rolling of the world’s biggest cigar, that reached 81.80 meters. However, he is still waiting for the recognition of a 90-meter long cigar, which was dedicated to the 90th birthday of the historical leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, in 2016. In an interview with The Havana Reporter, commercial director of the Ministry of Tourism Michel Bernal confirmed that the Salon des Vacances met their expectations, as it allowed for direct contact with the Belgian public and the exchange among professionals, tour operators, travel agents and airline representatives.

"We were able to analyze ways to foster tourism and improve travel to make better use of existing flights," he commented. According to the head of the Cuban delegation, the country’s hotels and travel agencies had a chance to promote their products and unique features directly with the public.

"The recreational desires of European vacationers, including Belgians, are well identified. They are interested in the circuit modalities and specialized nature, diving and hiking trips," Bernal added. He also noted that they are interested in discovering the nature and patrimony of the country, talking to its people and spending part of their stay on the beach.

The official highlighted that the European tourism market is important at a time in which the U.S. government increases its hostility and strengthens the blockade, in force for over 60 years. This blockade prevents the U.S. people from visiting the island, even though this destination is so close by.

Last year, the administration of President Donald Trump activated Title III of the Helms-Burton Act, aimed at depriving Cuba of foreign investments – a measure that has had an important impact on the tourism industry.

"We had a tough year in 2019, but Washington was not able nor will it be able to stop our tourism industry, which continues to make progress on its short and medium-term plans. Proof of this is the construction of new hotels and the opening of new resorts," he concluded.

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The outbreak of coronavirus 2019n-CoV is having extreme consequences on not just individuals, but also international relations and tourism. The closing of some borders and authorities’ precautions against the virus have meant severe consequences for an industry as sensitive to the international health situation as the tourist sector.

The Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, recently announced that his government is adopting all necessary measures to prevent the coronavirus from spreading and is monitoring its impact on tourism. Not only Japan is worried because of its proximity to China, but the entire Asian continent shows concern. Japan repatriated over 400 nationals from Wuhan, the virus epicenter, and local authorities are following up their health conditions.

According to one of the first reports by the National Health Commission of the People’s Republic of China, more than 3200 people have died of this very peculiar type of pneumonia, while over 93,000 people have been infected. In assessing this problem from an international perspective, the infection has spread, to a lesser extent, to France, Germany, Thailand, Malaysia, Australia, South Korea and United States, among other countries.

The virus that first appeared in China late last year has been introduced into more than ten countries that are somehow connected with China, many of them in Southeast Asia. The outbreak that so far has left more than 600 people dead and some 29,000 others infected, according to latest statistics, forces the authorities to impose travel restrictions and close tourist attractions and facilities, companies and schools. China’s Hubei Province, with its capital Wuhan, where the new coronavirus first appeared, has remained in quarantine since the end of January, together with other cities. A total of 70 million people are being kept in isolation in China at the moment.

On the other hand, big airlines such as British Airways and Lufthansa have canceled flights to China. Other companies such Iberia are analyzing the situation, while American Airlines and United Airlines decided to suspend part of their flights to China beginning in February. In addition, the travel agencies are making contracts more flexible in terms of changes and cancellations, and recommend tourists not to travel to China.

But the reality is that China is the top issuing market of tourists in the world, with a projected number of 200,000,000 tourists in 2020. In recent years for instance, Chinese tourism in Spain grew noticeably, with 869,000 visitors in 2019, compared to the 399,000 registered in 2015, according to the Spain-China Tourism Association (ATEC).

Therefore, the health crisis greatly affects world tourism predictions for 2020, as well as the world economy in general. However, the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA) asked its members to remain calm, and explained that the outbreak is so far considered a remote threat to European travelers.

Regardless, this problem shows the interconnection between tourism and the impact of travel on different economies, in both rich and poor countries.

Russia announced its intention to close nearly 4,250 kilometers of its border with China to fight the spread of coronavirus. Russia also implemented visa restrictions for Chinese people.

The vice governor of the Bank of Japan, Masayoshi Amamiya, said that China’s presence in the world economy must be taken into consideration when assessing the impact that the outbreak might have on world growth. Analysts compare the current coronavirus epidemic to the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2002 and 2003, which left some 800 people dead and caused an economic slowdown in Asia.

The number of Chinese people that visit Japan has been 20 times higher since then. In addition, the virus spread during the New Lunar Year celebrations in China, a high-season for tourism in the region.
CARACAS.- The Venezuelan government is implementing a new curricular program at the National Experimental University of Telecommunications and Information Technology (UNETI) as part of a strategy to fortify Petro and crypto-economies.

This year, the university introduced a new course to provide qualification in crypto-economy to workers that work both in private and public companies offering services that use the digital currency, UNETI rector Carlos Berbeci told The Havana Reporter.

He also announced the beginning of a Master’s Degree in Block Chain, a data system that is essential to the Petro system and other crypto currencies, with the collaboration of bank technologists and other national entities.

Founded in 2018, UNETI hopes to become a reference center for the study of satellite operation management, automation, control and robotics, cybersecurity, database, interoperability and digital economy, Berbeci sustained.

The university has more than seven specialties in telecommunications and four approved postgraduate degrees, including PhD programs to offer comprehensive development in telecommunications and information technology.

Nearly one hundred students are currently working toward the computer engineering undergraduate degree and over 300 will soon join the postgraduate program, the secretary’s office informed.

"We are training high-quality professionals in crypto-economy, trading assets, and sales operations, in order to design economic policies related to that field, Berbeci told The Havana Reporter.

According to the university’s professors, the institution is a long-term Bolivarian project included in the national curricular program that will train professionals according to the needs of national, regional and local development, where Petro and crypto economies stand as the main element within the teaching program.

With a young staff largely trained in China, the university has become a pioneer in crypto-related studies in Latin America, after the new Advanced Training Plan (PFA) was implemented.

Conceived as a long-term social project, UNETI has other generous characteristics: free education and a flexible and dynamic process that allows for feedback between students and professors.

The overarching idea to help strengthen and spread Venezuelan crypto-currency goes far beyond the walls of that institution, as a team of UNETI specialists makes weekly visits to various institutions, companies, small enterprises, and neighborhoods all over the country to advise different sectors of the population on how to use the Petro.

On December 19, 2019, Venezuela became the first country in the world to introduce the mass use of crypto-currency, which is also the only type backed by the country’s natural resources.

President Nicolás Maduro opened the doors to a new phase, protecting Venezuelans’ income by granting a bond worth half of a Petro to pensioners and state workers, also authorizing nearly one hundred businesses to use the digital currency in commercial transactions.

Nevertheless, the project went far beyond the use of that digital asset, because the experimental implementation showed the country’s weaknesses and strengths on the road towards a crypto-economy. Hence, the university plays a key role in creating a strong ecosystem that allows the Petro to position itself as a currency.

In addition to wanting to become a leader in the use of the crypto currency, Venezuela is making its first steps to consolidate its financial independence. That policy represents the road to the end of dependence on the American dollar.
Cuban Baseball Sets Sights on 2020 Olympics

By Fausto TRIANA

HAVANA.-At the end of March, Cuban baseball will either celebrate in style, remain in suspense or, in the worst case scenario, have to give up on its dream of playing in the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. A panorama marked by ups and downs, awaiting a crucial moment in the cities of Surprise and Tempe of Arizona, where the baseball Americas qualifier will practically risk everything on one throw.

So far, Mexico is the only representative of the Americas to have qualified for the games in Tokyo. It won the spot in South Korea during the Premier 12 competition, when it defeated the United States in extra innings.

Hence, the protagonists of the performance can be identified in advance: the U.S. hosts that would feel humiliated if they do not make it to the Olympics, giants of the region such as Puebla, Texas, the Dominican Republic, the wounded pride of Venezuela and Cuba, among others. Stadiums where Major League Baseball teams usually train will be the venues for the Olympic baseball qualifying tournament set for March 22 to 26.

The tournament is the penultimate chance for the countries hoping to get the last two tickets to play baseball at the Olympic Games in Tokyo, Japan, in the summer.

The United States is in qualifying Group A, together with the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and Nicaragua, while Group B is made up of Cuba, Canada, Venezuela and Colombia. The first two teams of each group will advance to the super round.

The champion will be the fifth team to receive an Olympic opportunity in the Japanese capital, while the second and third-place finishers will play in the final Olympic qualifier in June 7 - 21 in Taiwan.

Once in Taiwan, the two Latin American teams will compete against Holland, the People's Republic of China, Australia and the hosts.

The countries that have already qualified to the games in Tokyo are Japan, South Korea, Mexico - during the Premier 12 tournament last November - and Israel, winner of the Olympic qualification games.

The Cuban team, which finished the national series recently, is training at the Latin American Stadium in Havana, currently holding many seasoned players.

In order to win an Olympic spot, the Cubans will rely on several of the players now playing with various leagues overseas.

First base Yordán Samón, veteran outfielder Frederick Cepeda, catcher Yovany Alarcón and Yusielbel Gracial and Alfredo Despaigne –hired by the Japanese league- and infielder Alexander Ayala are the pillars of the Cuban baseball team's defense.

However, the team managed by Miguel Borroto puts its trust in its strong group of pitchers: right-handers Lázaro Blanco, Carlos Juan Viera and Freddy Asiel Álvarez, and lefthanders Yoanni Yera and Liván Moinelo.

Surprise is a city located some 45 minutes northwest of Phoenix and is known for hosting the summer training of the Kansas City Royals and the Texas Rangers. Tempe, on the other hand, welcomes the Los Angeles Angels.

The calendar of the Arizona tournament goes as follows, in local time:

**Sunday, March 22: Surprise Stadium**
- 1 pm Puerto Rico-Dominican Republic
- 7 pm USA-Nicaragua
- 7 pm Colombia-Canada

**Diablo Stadium, Tempe**
- 1 pm Venezuela-Cuba

**Monday, March 23: Surprise Stadium**
- 1 pm Colombia-Venezuela
- 7 pm Canada-Cuba

**Tempe**
- 1 pm Nicaragua-Puerto Rico
- 7 pm Dominican Republic-USA

**Tuesday, March 24: Surprise Stadium**
- 1 pm Nicaragua-Dominican Republic
- 7 pm Puerto Rico-USA

**Super Round (at Surprise Stadium)**
- March 25:
  - A2 vs B1
  - A1 vs B2
- March 26:
  - A2 vs B2
  - A1 vs B1

Weightlifting in Pursuit of Tokyo 2020

By Jhonah GONZÁLEZ

HAVANA.-Cuban weightlifting has its sights set on the Tokyo Olympic Games, with an insatiable appetite for victory and a handful of hopeful athletes that are as powerful as the international competitors.

From July 24 to August 9, in the Japanese capital, thousands of athletes from some 200 countries will challenge angels and demons to achieve glory under the five rings. Among those dreamers, Cuban weightlifters will reach for the stars.

As one can dream, there are possibilities for the Cuban athletes to dominate the Olympic podium – which the national weightlifters haven't attained since Beijing 2008.

However, the World Cup held last February in Rome turned her into the first Cuban female weightlifter to be part of the Olympic program.

Ludia Montero (49), world runner-up in 2019, also stood out in Rome; although this time, she did it in the 45 Kg division. Montero paved the way for the Cuban team with her outstanding performance in snatch (82 Kg), for which she received the bronze medal.

From any angle, she is the athlete with the most opportunities in the race for Tokyo. The small weightlifter has loads of talent and many specialists anticipate that she will have a lot of success in future years, starting this summer.

Saéz, Rodriguez and Montero are still losing sleep over their participation in the Tokyo Games, pending the closing of the qualifying period. However, they are the queens of a sport that has the chance to raise Cuba to the Olympic podium.

The history of the Cuban weightlifting celebrates heroes such as Daniel Núñez, gold-medalist in Moscow 1980, and Pablo Lara, runner-up in Barcelona 1992 and winner in Atlanta 1996. Núñez and Lara head the list of sublime weightlifters who attained victory for their country.

Tokyo 2020 awaits Cuban weightlifters and the magic lies in believing that any day is the right day to make new sport legends.
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Cuban Program for the treatment of diabetic foot with Heberprot-P®

The Diabetes Mellitus is a non-transmissible chronic disease that has a high incidence in the world population. It can bring about important complications to the person who suffers from it. Among them, the diabetic foot ulcer, that is responsible of physical-motor disabilities. This is why an integral and multidisciplinary attention is carried out on these patients, emphasizing in the prevention, control and treatment of the disease. One of the most important elements of this program is the use of a revolutionary and unique drug created in Cuba: Heberprot-P®, prescribed for the therapy of the diabetic foot ulcer (out-of-hospital usage). It has become a worldwide event for the possibilities it offers to face this suffering. Its application allows to reduce the risks of amputation due to those lesions in the 70% of the cases.