

EMBASSIES OF CUBA IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



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ABSTRACT

Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez has spoken at the Summit of the Americas of the newly threatening climate emanating from a Trump-led White House, leading our newsletter, followed by condemnation by Cuba of the US-led strike on Syria and a look at new diplomatic and commercial moves with Angola, the African Union Commission and Vietnam.

Back Inside Cuba the health of the nation shows low mortality at birth and progressive elderly care programs, optimism for better participation by citizens under a new parliament, new links between universities in Camagüey and New York, and news of Cuba's participation in the International Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes.

Finally, to Sport, with coverage of Cuba's unique combination of academia and competitive activity which turns out successful teachers ... and champions.

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY



Cuba warns of threat from aggressive US policies

Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez has stressed that the changes that president Raul Castro claimed for in the previous regional summit in Panama have not taken place.

Rodriguez warned on Saturday last at the Summit of the Americas

in Lima, Peru, there existed the danger of a return to the use of force in Latin America due to the aggressive policies the US is currently pursuing and the rise of the right in some countries in the region.

Addressing the plenary session of the 8th Summit of the Americas, Rodriguez cautioned over a tendency of indiscriminately imposing coercive unilateral measures, including coup d'état.

He urged not to underestimate what he defined as ‘the seriousness entailed in the arbitrary and unjust statement against Venezuela, cradle of the Latin American independence and second in oil and gas reserves, as an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of a super power.

The Cuban foreign minister spoke of the hostile actions against Caracas and his own nation, stressing that the profound changes in hemispheric relations Cuba’s president Raul Castro claimed in the previous regional summit in Panama (2015) had not taken place.

The US authorities —he added— have now invoked the hated Monroe Doctrine of 1823 to exert domination and hegemony over Latin American nations. He cautioned the fight against corruption is being used as a political weapon, prosecutors and judges act as parties, the electorate is deprived of voting for candidates with broad popular support, as it is the case of ‘former president and today political prisoner Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva, whose liberty we demand.’

Rodriguez regretted there were no ethical limits in electoral campaigning, hatred, division, egoism, slandering, racism, xenophobia and deceit, neofascist trends thrived, walls, border closure and massive deportations including children born in the USA were promised.

Furthermore, the hemisphere was witnessing a rise in massive flagrant violations of human, civil, political, social, cultural and economic rights of millions of people who do not speak at nor attend these summits. ‘What kind of democracy are we talking about here?’ he asked delegates.

Escambray, April 14

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Cuba strongly condemns US, UK and French attack on Syria

Cuba has strongly condemned the new attack by the US, United Kingdom and France on the Syrian military and civilian facilities said to be justifying allegations of the use of chemical weapons by Damascus forces in Douma.

This unilateral action ignored the UN Security Council and was a ‘flagrant violation of International Law and the UN Charter, while being an outrage against a sovereign State that worsens the conflict in Syria and the region,’ the Cuban Foreign Ministry said in a statement to media.

The US has attacked Syria — it adds — without the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Damascus government having been proved, and despite the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons already being on the ground to open an investigation in Douma.

Cuba, a signatory nation of the Convention of Chemical Weapons, deplors the use of these weapons and any others of mass extermination by any player and under any circumstance, the foreign ministry emphasises.

‘The Cuban Revolutionary Government conveys its solidarity and sympathy with the people and government of Syria for the loss of lives and material damage as a consequence of this heinous attack,’ the statement concludes.

CubaSí, April 14

Raúl receives Angolan minister of national defence

During a fraternal meeting, the leaders of Cuba and Angola emphasized the excellent relations shared by their countries; the historic, collaborative ties that unite the two peoples, governments, and armed forces; as well as their desire to further strengthen the relationship



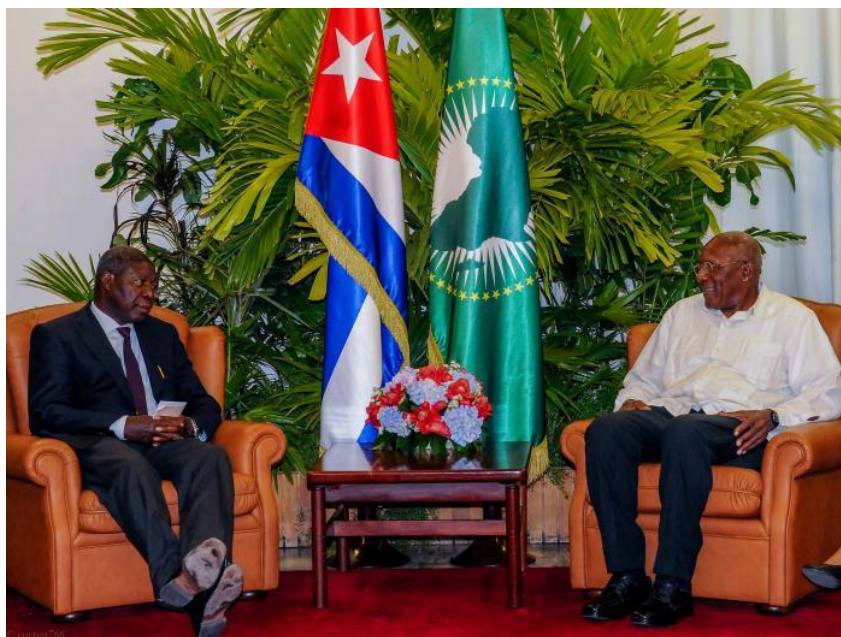
Cuban president Raúl Castro Ruz has received Angola's minister of national defence, Salviano de Jesús Sequeira, who is making an official visit to Cuba, at the invitation of the Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

During the meeting the two leaders emphasised the excellent relations shared by their countries; the historic, collaborative ties that unite the two peoples, governments, and armed forces; as well as their desire to further strengthen the relationship.

The distinguished guest was accompanied by lieutenant generals Carlos Filomeno de Sousa Couceiro and Luis Manuel Da Fonseca Sotto-Mayor Pizarro. Present on the Cuban side were army corps generals Leopoldo Cintra Frías and Álvaro López Miera, minister and first deputy minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, respectively, as well as brigadier general Arnaldo Tamayo Méndez.

Granma, April 13

Cuban vice-president meets African union leader



Cuban vice-president Salvador Valdés has met vice-president of the African Union Commission Thomas Kwesi Quartey, who is on a working visit to the Caribbean island.

The two leaders spoke about the friendship and solidarity between Cuba and African nations and also noted Cuba's collaboration in the fields of public

health, education and technical and professional training, in addition to analysing international matters.

Valdes thanked the African Union for its traditional stance in support of an end to the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba.

Prensa Latina, Apr 14

INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMACY

Cuba, Vietnam favour more cooperation between vaccine producers

The Finlay Vaccine Institute (IFV) in Cuba and its Vietnamese counterpart, Vabiotech, have signed a memorandum of understanding in this capital to boost cooperation relations.



The document establishes the access to new technologies and products in an advanced stage as a key aspect, as well as new markets and possibilities of development, IFV deputy director Yury Valdes told *Prensa Latina*.

As part of an ongoing negotiation, Valdes and his colleague, Nivaldo Linares, the IFV director of clinical research, visited the headquarters of the Vietnamese vaccine producing company and verified its high scientific and technological level, in addition to exploring future possibilities of cooperation.

The memorandum was signed by Valdes and Vabiotech president Do Tuan Dat, in the presence of Cuban ambassador Lianys Torres; Vietnam's deputy minister for science and technology, Pham Cong Tac; and the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Doan Duy Khuong.

Vabiotech is one of Vietnam's major vaccine producers and, according to Valdes, its relations with the Cuban institute have "borne fruit."

'This time we share the objective of consolidating those ties by identifying new possibilities of mutually advantageous collaboration, including the exchange of technologies, products and expanded markets' said Valdes

Valdes and Linares traveled to Hanoi to represent one of 27 Cuban companies attending the 27th International Trade Fair of Vietnam.

Prensa Latina, April 15

HEALTH & MEDICINE

Cuban birth mortality rates further improved

One of the Cuban medicine sector's key achievements has been to maintain an infant mortality rate below five per 1,000 live births for the last 10 years. In 2017, the country achieved a rate of 4.0; proof of its continued efforts to consolidate maternal-infant statistics, to the benefit of Cuban children and families says Granma.

Cuba is among countries which provide the broadest access to healthcare, meaning a longer and better quality of life for its citizens, as well as more medical consultations and surgeries, and the application of new diagnostic methods and treatments through a nationwide healthcare system focused on constantly developing and improving knowledge.



One of the sector's key achievements has been to maintain an infant mortality rate below five per 1,000 live births for the last

10 years. In 2017, the country achieved a rate of 4.0; proof of its continued efforts to consolidate maternal-infant statistics, to the benefit of Cuban children and families. Meanwhile, heart conditions, cancer and brain diseases are the three main causes of death on the island, where life expectancy at birth is 78.45 years (80.45 for women and 76.50 for men) and the mortality rate for seniors over the age of 60 stands at 29 for every 100,000 inhabitants.

Last year, 53 hospitals and 13 medical specialties received new technologies to perform minimal access surgery. I could quote more statistics from the end of 2017 presented by the Ministry of Public Health, but those already mentioned encapsulate the great human effort undertaken by Cuba to provide quality medical care to the entire population.

Despite the punitive economic blockade imposed by the US it is also worth mentioning exportable products like the vaccine CimaVax, used to treat lung cancer patients and protect those at risk of developing the disease. The medication is currently available across all medical institutions on the island and also registered in various countries.

Meanwhile, this year, the final stages of research are being conducted on promising cancer treatments developed by Cuban scientists, including Racotumomab and VSSP. The former triggers an immune response against a tumor antigen present in malignant cells, meaning that the medication could one day be used to treat leukemia, as well as lung, breast, prostate, and colon cancer. While VSSP, which was originally designed as a composite to boost patients' immune system, also shows signs of stimulating the body's immune response against cancer.

Nimotuzumab is also another important medication designed to treat different types of brain and neck cancer, including those which form in the mouth, nose, brain, and throat.

The medication, a humanized therapeutic monoclonal antibody, blocks epidermal growth factor receptors in cancerous cells, stopping their spread and growth.

Then there is Heberferon, a fast and long-lasting medication proven to reduce the size of tumors and wounds in skin cancer patients. With no need for complex surgical procedures, the medication offers positive aesthetic results and better quality of life for the patient. Meanwhile, Policosanol, also known as PPG and created from sugar cane, contains anti-platelet, anti-ischemic, anti-thrombotic and natural properties, making it a versatile medication with few side effects, used to treat various conditions but above all to reduce cholesterol.

Likewise, the use of Heberprot-P with almost 290,000 patients from over a dozen countries is proof of its effectiveness in healing complex wounds, and ischemic and diabetic foot ulcers. According to its developers, the treatment is an epidermal

growth factor-based formulation applied to the affected area with a healing time of around three months. This important achievement, along with a series of other scientific results obtained by Cuban experts, will be presented in Havana, during the 14th International Health for All Fair, taking place April 23-27 at the Pabexpo fairgrounds, with exhibitors from 19 countries and 160 companies, according to MSc.

Raquel Acosta Porta, vice president of Development at Medicuba, responsible for exporting Cuban medical products, technologies and equipment, speaking to Granma International. says 'The Health for All fair is our sector's most important trade fair and the ideal space to bring together Cuban business representatives and professionals from around the world, offering the opportunity to develop networks, establish work agreements and identify new business partners. Likewise, from a scientific perspective, the event allows participants to develop their knowledge around new technologies in the field of medicine.'

INTERNATIONAL CUBA SALUD

Taking place parallel to Health for All air will be the 2018 International Cuba Salud Convention at Havana's International Conference Centre, with the participation of 44 sector ministers, in an event that aims to serve as a space for scientific debate, and to present the latest advances and challenges in topics such as quality of care, international cooperation, medical education, and universal health coverage. Two forums will take place during the convention, one on the clinical trials regulatory body, and another related to foreign investment, organized by the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, with the participation of the BioCubaFarma group which will present new projects focused on the development of medications, and the Cuban Medical Services provider (SMC).

In this regard, Dr. Yamila de Armas Águila, first vice president of SMC, explained that tribute will be paid to Fidel, who pioneered Cuban medical internationalism. Also an assistant professor at Havana's University of Medical Sciences and family medicine specialist, Dr. Armas Águila noted that the event will focus on Cuban medical services for international patients; health tourism centered on wellbeing and quality of life; participation in scientific events; and the training of health professionals in Cuban universities. Meanwhile, a space will also be dedicated to the leading health programs for international clients as well as a new initiative called: The Water Trail, designed to promote thermal and seaside spas. 'We hope to develop a close alliance between medical and eco-tourism,' noted the doctor.

RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IN 2017

Maternal-infant program

1. Infant mortality: The island achieved its lowest rate in the country's history with 4 040 infant deaths for every 1 000 live births, representing 35 fewer fatalities in children under one year of age as compared to 2016.
2. As a result of the development and continual improvement of the Genetic Network initiative, infant mortality caused by congenital defects stands at 0.9 for every 1 000 live births.
3. Morality among children of school age dropped from 2.1 to 1.7 for every 10 000, with 67 fewer deaths that year.
4. The rate of underweight infants at birth fell from 5.2 to 5.0 for every 100 births.
5. The maternal mortality rate dropped from 42.6 to 37.8 per 100 000 live births

Elderly care program

1. Life expectancy at birth: 78.45 years; 80.45 for women and 76.50 for men.

2. 19.8% of the Cuban population is 60 years of age or older. The mortality rate among the elderly remains 29 per every 100,000 persons aged 60 or older.
3. A continuous decline has been seen in the mortality rate among those aged 75 or older (from 62.4 to 61.9).
4. There are now 287 centres for the elderly (an increase of 11) catering to 9,838 citizens (+390) and 150 seniors homes (+2) with 11,912 beds (+141).
5. There are currently 51 geriatrics departments across healthcare institutions nationwide with 1 049 hospital beds (+22), or one bed per 2,000 elderly citizens.
6. 2017 saw a rise in the availability of health technology and equipment including hearing aids offered at 62 pharmacies across the entire country, as well as wheel chairs, canes, walkers, and hospital beds, among others, benefiting 101 582 patients.

Donation & transplant program

1. 145 organ donations allowed for 454 transplants to be performed, 19 more than 2016, including 198 kidney, 22 liver, 34 bone marrow, and 200 cornea.
2. Meeting targets for the blood donation program has been fundamental to supporting medical services and the production of components and other biotechnology and pharmaceutical products. Of the 408 708 target, a total 411 868 donations were made during 2017.

Comprehensive centre control program

1. In order to guarantee cancer treatment for the population, 45 regional oncology centers were opened, 25 specialising in nuclear medicine and nine in radiotherapy.
2. Cancer screening has helped improve early detection, above all for cervical, skin, and breast cancer, allowing for better control and treatment of the disease.
3. The cancer mortality rate has remained the same over the last three years.
4. A reduction was seen in the cancer mortality rate among people aged 19 or younger (-14.2%) as well as those under 69 years of age (breast -4.45%; cervical -2.38%, colon -2.04%)

Granma, April 2018

INSIDE CUBA

New parliament will energize Cubans, asserts legislator

The People's Power National Assembly Ninth Legislature installed next week will have the mission of strengthening unity around the revolution in the island, Parliament member Digna Guerra has told Prensa Latiina.

The director of the National Chorus of Cuba and legislator representative of the capital's municipality of Centro Habana, considered that unity must be a supreme priority, in face of the urgency of facing threats such as the aggression of the Trump-led US administration.

'We see in the White House a real madness that threatens the whole world and, of course, our small island with its revolution,' she added.

On April 19, after inaugurating the 9th Legislature, the 605 parliament members elected last March 11, by a massive 7.4 million Cubans, about 86 percent of those registered, will elect among them the president of the country, together with another 30 members of the State Council.

That day will not change anything, as we are going to advance forward with the revolution, ever stronger, now with the commitment of the historic generation, after so many years of struggle, will put the leadership of this process to the younger generations, she said.

Guerra highlighted the teachings, the force and unity in the people, bequeathed by those who for decades preserved the Project alive with marked social focus that started on January 1, 1959.

Those are vital tools to keep defending the Cuban Revolution, she stressed.

Cuban president, Raul Castro, confirmed on December 21 2017 he would step down from his post in April 2018, when the new Legislature would be in place.

'When the National Assembly will be sworn-in, on April 19, my second and last term at the head of the State and Government will have ended and Cuba will have a new president,' the head of state said then at the closing plenary session of the Parliament.

Prensa Latina, April 13

INSIDE CUBA



Universities of Camagüey and New York strengthen links

Despite the limitations imposed by the United States to prevent the visit of US citizens to Cuba, the University of Camagüey (UC) and Lehman College of the

University of New York (LCNY) are strengthening ties today.

Early April was marked by an important academic scientific meeting between both institutions, as part of the internationalization agenda of the first house of high studies founded by the Cuban Revolution, which supports over a hundred projects with foreign centres.

The International Congress of Higher Education 2018 demonstrated the capacity of the institution to strengthen links with counterparts from different latitudes.

The actions in conjunction with LCNY, which began in 2016, reinforce scientific publications between both universities, and also include this type of specialized meetings.

With the intention of paying tribute to the sustainable development of both nations, US delegation composed of students and professionals from the areas of medical sciences, chemistry, business administration, finance and marketing, shared criteria with its Cuban counterpart, in a program that included the visit to important cultural spaces in the area of the city declared as a World Heritage Site.

In statements to the local press, the director of international relations of the UC, Yailé Caballero, said that after a memorandum of understanding between the two educational institutions in 2017 'several actions have been planned together to strengthen relations, international courses and participation in scientific events. '

The days were taken advantage of to know the specificities of the training work, besides being dedicated to the presentation of projects in the areas of Economics and Biotechnology, with the leading of the students and the teaching staff of both the UC and the LCNY.

The first Academic Scientific Meeting between Lehman College and the UC was also marked by workshops, conferences, artistic shows, sporting events and tours of historical places in a city with over half a millennium of life.

Prensa Latina, April 10



Cuba hosts International Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes

Artists from 18 countries were performing on the streets of Old Havana from today to April 15, as part of their participation at the International

Dance Festival in Urban Landscapes.

The 23rd edition of the event, also known as 'Habana Vieja: ciudad en movimiento' (Old Havana: City in Motion), proposes a series of exhibitions, concerts, audiovisual projections and dance performances in streets, squares, parks and museums of the historical district of Havana.

As every year, the festival — organized by the dance-theatre company Retazos and the Office of the Historian of the City, supported by the Havana Theatre Centre — promotes opportunities for professional development through courses, workshops, lectures and keynote speeches taught by national and foreign teachers.

Some of the techniques addressed will be Afro-Cuban Dances, Mestiza, Arara, Contemporary Dance, Tango, Retazos and Contact Improvisation, by professionals such as Sofia Barriga (Ecuador), John Fandiño (Colombia), Luca Carco and Paula Zacharias (Argentina), Reinado Echemendia, Jhoannes Garcia and Isabel Bustos (Cuba).

According to the director of the event, Isabel Bustos (2012 National Dance Award), this festival promotes ties between the inhabitants of the city with their surroundings through movement and contributes to the culture in a new and enthusiastic way.

Prensa Latina, April 11

A laboratory of champions

More than 95,000 students have graduated from the University of Physical Culture and Sports Science over the past 45 years

Boxers Robeisy Ramírez and Lázaro Álvarez, and gymnast Manrique Larduet are just two of the athletes from whom we expect to see outstanding results in the upcoming Barranquilla 2018



Central American and Caribbean Games, but also students at the Manuel Fajardo University of Physical Culture and Sports Science (UCCFD).

However, it's not just these champions – combining study and competition – but also the UCCFD's teaching staff, today composed of former athletes and retired champions, who lend prestige to the academic work of the institution.

Daniel Núñez (Moscow 1980 Olympic weightlifting champion), Raisa O'Farril (volleyball player and two-time Olympic gold medalist in Barcelona '92 and Atlanta '96) and Mayra Vila (javelin thrower and Central American and Caribbean champion for 1985), share the glory of their sporting achievements and teaching responsibilities.

Over the years the university has made an important contribution to the field of sports science and its research programs have had a significant impact on the development of physical activity on the island.

An example is the Cuban Sports Research Centre, affiliated with the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation (INDER), representing all the university's scientific work over four and half decades.

Meanwhile, its over 25 international collaborative agreements, scientific activity, and events such as the First Scientific Event by the Sports Faculty and Third Scientific Event by the Center for Psychological Studies on Physical Activity and Sport, held in mid-March in Havana, are testament to the high level of international recognition and prestige achieved by the institution.

What is more the UCCFD is also the governing body for the physical culture degree and home of the national program, and scientific degree commissions.

HISTORY OF THE UCCFD

- 1961: The Manuel Fajardo Higher School of Physical Education is founded
- 1973: Physical Education Degree program launched and institution's named changed to the Manuel Fajardo Higher Institute of Physical Culture.
- 2009: Following a decree by the Council of Ministers, the Institute becomes the University of Physical Culture and Sports Science.

THE NEXT STEP

Once students graduate they have four main career options:

- Professor of Physical Education
- Coaching
- Prophylactic and therapeutic physical culture and rehabilitation
- Physical recreation

KEY RESULTS

- Over 95,000 graduates in 45 years
- More than 3,000 students currently enrolled
- Six study plans, including plan E (four-year degrees)
- Continual professional development of staff

- Degree programs taught throughout Latin America
- Over 88% of staff hold a science degree
- High quality teacher training programs

AN INSTITUTION PAR EXCELLENCE

The UCCFD is an accredited institution (awarded by the National Accreditation Board, based on quality assessment criteria for higher education institutions) offering six masters degrees, five of which are accredited and two certified for their excellence.

The institution is currently preparing for an internal review before it applies for an external appraisal in 2019 and re-accreditation the following year.

According to Dr. Francisco Porto López, first vice rector, “The degree program should be reaccredited in 2020 and the institution in 2021. We are working with a strategy and continuing our efforts to obtain an excellence rating in 2020 and 2021.”

DEGREE PROGRAM

The physical education degree is a four-year program that was previously only available to students linked to the National Institute of Sports, Physical Education, and Recreation’s system of institutions.

Today, the degree is one of many other courses open to any high school student in full-time education. Meanwhile athletes and students from provincial schools of physical education and sports academies usually opt for the part-time course. •

COMPETITION AND STUDY

How do national selection athletes balance their university studies with their competitive responsibilities, without this affecting the quality of their education —the solution: the UCCFD’s blended learning course for high performance athletes. The program combines and adapts subjects to help the student catch up on the content he or she missed while competing in national and international tournaments.

This kind of flexibility allows athletes to complete their university education in eight or 10 years, depending on how they manage their studies. Of course, their education is affected during their years of peak sporting activity, however, the program allows Cuba’s finest athletes to earn a university degree, with many going on to take masters or PhD courses.

Granma, April 12

Text edited by David Reade (www.netmedianz.com), on behalf of the Cuban Embassy, Wellington, from Cuban news agency sources.

Embassy of Cuba in New Zealand

<http://misiones.minrex.gob.cu/en/new-zealand>

