

EMBASSIES OF CUBA IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC NEWSLETTER



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ABSTRACT

The US-imposed trade embargo doesn't go away and Cuba takes every opportunity to expose its influence — that's our lead story, followed by cautiously optimistic news from the Mariel Economic Zone, a fierce response from our man in Lima to US-led propaganda against Cuba's civil rights record, and diplomatic cooperation with Canada, and Vietnam.

Then in Science & Medicine we hear about Cuba's anti-diabetes and cancer drugs now being trialled in the US and in Cuba and of an important agricultural aid agreement with Japan and new livestock management products on show at the FIA-GROP expo.

Inside Cuba covers the new elections, Art & Culture takes us to a milestone anniversary for artistic and literary promotion company Artex, and finally we get a run-down in Track, Field and Ringside of prospects for the Colombia 2018 regional games with 431 athletes slated so far.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS



Cuba deploras her exclusion from global trade network

Cuba was yet again fighting the pernicious US-imposed trade blockade at an informal ministerial meeting of the member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) held recently in India.

'The blockade (economic, commercial and financial) against my country constitutes one of the greatest violations of the principles of international economic development and contradicts the principles of free trade and the rules dictated by the WTO,' said the ambassador of Havana in New Delhi, Oscar Martínez

Martínez referred to the effort made by the island to achieve entree into the global trading system under the particularly difficult conditions caused by the US-imposed blockade.

The meeting, held on March 19 and 20 at the initiative of the Indian government, was attended by 53 countries represented by ministers, deputy ministers, ambassadors and specialists in international trade, who exchanged ideas on the current policies of the WTO in order to follow up to pending agreements and stimulate global economic growth.

Mariel zone gaining economic momentum

After a little over four years of operations, the Mariel Special Development Zone, located on the western Cuban harbour is on track to becoming a promising platform for foreign investment projects in the region.

Although the zone has not experienced yet a development pace as fast as desired, it does begin to consolidate its performance aiming at replacing imports, increasing



sales at the world market and creating new jobs, all linked to the local economy.

So far, the zone has reported a total investment sum of 1.2 billion dollars with the creation of 888 new jobs.

At present, 34 users from 16 countries, in-

cluding Cuba, operate in the zone, which has relations with nine multi-national companies. The companies operating include five Cuban entities, 19 foreign capital firms, eight joint ventures and two international economic associations.

On the works are ten projects in the areas of industry, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals, logistics, construction, transport, agri-business and real estate.

The development of high-standard infrastructure has been a priority at the zone, with the Cuban state investing some 300 million dollars annually.

Meanwhile, priorities for 2018 include the increase in the number of users at the zone; the implementation of ongoing construction works so that such projects start operating, producing and getting their expected results, as it's been the case of other successful projects, which can now reinvest capital in the Cuban zone.

ACN, March 23

SOLIDARITY

'Don't mess with Cuba,' — Cubans in Peru respond to provocation

Close to 200 members of Cuban civil society, meeting in Havana for the 2nd 'Thinking the Americas' forum, broke into applause when Cuban diplomat Juan Antonio Fer-



nández denounced the provocation set up by an anti-Cuban group in Lima, Peru. 'Don't mess with Cuba,' he warned, referring to the offensive comments of Jorge Luis Vallejo, a member of the so-called Latin American Network of Youth for Democracy and representative of coalition number 26 to the Hemispheric Dialogue, which took place in the Peruvian capital, prior to the upcoming 8th Summit of the Americas.

The event's proceedings were followed live in Havana, on screens in the Cuban Workers Federation theatre, where the 2nd Cuban Civil Society Forum was held simultaneously.

The gathering in Lima consisted of an exchange among representatives from countries in the region and members of 28 thematic coalitions which will be meeting in a civil society forum, during the Summit of the Americas, April 10-11 in Lima. In his comments, Juan Antonio Fernández denounced the composition of coalition 26, which includes among its coordinators 'persons and organizations with dubious histories, and political agendas of provocation and subversion.'

The Latin American Network of Youth for Democracy is a project financed by Washington, and includes a selection of members from the Cuban counterrevolution and the regional ultra-right, all ready to participate in any aggression undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS) \Vallejo, one of the Network's leaders, addressed coalition number 26 to offend Cuba and recall the provocation recently attempted in Havana, involving a prize awarded to a pair of former Latin American Presidents, whose only merit is having attacked progressive governments.

After his official remarks, Juan Antonio Fernández stated, 'Cuba profoundly laments the exclusion of the sister Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and would like to register our inconformity.

'Our America is mutilated by the absence of one the countries on the continent which has contributed the most to liberatory and integrationist ideas in Latin America and the Caribbean,' he continued.

Also followed closely onscreen in Havana were the comments in Lima by Yamila González Ferrer, vice president of the Union of Cuba Jurists, who was representing coalition number 15, which has as its theme, 'For an inclusive, respectful world,' on which the majority of Cuba's delegation participated.

THINKING THE AMERICAS

The meeting of Cuban civil society, parallel with the event in Lima, served to chart a course for participation in activities associated with the Summit of the Americas next month. Some 30 speakers agreed in emphasising that Cuba is not a perfect society but has achieved many successes that should be shared with peers on the continent.

Those commenting included Yuri Pérez, deputy dean at the University of Havana Law School, Marisol Pérez, representing the Federation of Cuban Women, and Fermín Quiñones, president of the Cuban United Nations Association, which organised the forum. He told *Granma* that expectations for the event had been surpassed, with the vitality and diversity of Cuban civil society made clear.

"With the outcomes of this Forum, the Cuban delegation is going to Lima strengthened, and will be able to give timely, well-reasoned responses to any counterrevolutionary provocation or attempt to legitimize those with no legitimacy whatsoever to represent our people," Quiñones said.

Cuba attended the Summit of the Americas for the first time in 2015, for the 7th edition held in Panama. Our inclusion was demanded by the majority of Latin American and the Caribbean countries, clearly demonstrating a lack of support for

the aggressive policies toward Cuba of the United States, where the idea of these gatherings emerged in 1994.

SOLIDARITY

Cuba and Canada discuss immigration issues

This week, the ambassador of Cuba in Canada, Josefina Vidal, presented her credentials in Ottawa.

Before coming to the capital of the northern nation, Vidal played important roles in Cuban diplomacy, including as director general of the United States of the Foreign Ministry, a position from which she participated in the process of rapprochement Havana-Washington. Cuba and Canada celebrated their Migratory Round III this week, a meeting in which they reiterated their commitment to the orderly flow of people and the fight against human trafficking, the chancellery of the island highlights today.



According to the source, the meeting took place on March 22 and 23, and it culminated with the signing of a document that reflects the agreements adopted in the working sessions.

The Canadian part was presided over by the vice president of the Border Services Agency, Jacques Cloutier, while the host delegation was headed by the director of Consular Affairs and of Cuban Residents Abroad (DACCRES), Ernesto Soberón.

According to the Foreign Ministry of the Caribbean country, the round of talks served to analyze migratory problems of mutual interest and continue to develop mechanisms that contribute to the achievement of a regular, safe and orderly migration.

Prensa Latina, March 24

SOLIDARITY



Vietnamese Communist Party secretary to visit Cuba

The General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam (PCV), Nguyen Phu Trong, will carry out an official visit to Cuba from March 28 to 30, it was simultaneously reported in the capitals of the two countries.

Phu Trong will travel to the island on an invitation by the island's president, Raul Castro, who in turn is also the first secretary of the Cuban Communist Party.

The two nations pride themselves on having special bonds of friendship and cooperation.

Cuba was the first Latin American country to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam on December 2, 1960.

Havana and Hanoi strengthened their solidarity throughout the war of the Indochina nation against the American invasion and for independence and national reunification.

Fidel Castro was the only statesman who visited the country in the middle of the war (September 1973), and his phrase 'For Vietnam, we are willing to give even our own blood' strengthened a lasting friendship that will have a new milestone in Nguyen Phu Trong's visit.

The Vietnamese communist leader is traveling to Cuba from France, where he is also paying an official visit, from March 2.

Prensa Latina, March 23

SCIENCE & MEDICINE

Heberprot-P to begin clinical evaluation stage in USA



The Cuban medicine Heberprot-P will begin a clinical evaluation stage in the United States with the aim of reducing the risks of amputation due to diabetic foot ulcer (DFU), business group BioCubaFarma reported today.

Following the procedures of the U.S. authority for the use of drugs (the Food and Drug Administration, or FDA), once this stage has concluded, and that agency has approved it, the distribution and application in that country would begin.

According to BioCubaFarma president Eduardo Martinez the attainment of that purpose responds to the agreement signed on March 14 between Cuban company Heber Biotec and U.S.-based Mercury Biotec.

According to Martinez, recent figures from the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that there are more than 30 million US diabetic patients, representing 9.4 percent of the population of that territory.

He also said that another 84.1 million pre-diabetic patients could become diabetics within a period of no more than five years for that disease, which was ranked seventh cause of death in the United States in 2015.

One of the main complications of this disease is the DFU, and amputations of lower limbs for this disease exceed 80,000 people affected annually in that country, he said. The Heberprot-P, which has benefited about 300,000 patients worldwide, is registered in 23 countries, including Russia, Kuwait, Ukraine, Argentina, Turkey, Vietnam, Colombia, he said.

Specifically, in Cuba, more than 77,300 DFU patients have been treated with Heberprot-P since 2007, which has led to reduce amputation by 70 percent, Martinez said.

Prensa Latina, March 22



Molecular immunology leads anti-cancer drugs in Cuba

Celebrating nearly 25 years the Centre of Molecular Immunology has today 21 new projects, including monoclonal antibodies and anti-cancer vaccines.

'We are working at this time on the development of a product to treat patients with neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's,' Eduardo Ojito, director of the scientific institution, told *Prensa Latina*.

In a clinical trial phase, NeuroEpo, as this drug is called, is an injectable derivative of Recombinant Human Erythropoietin, with 20 years on the market to treat anaemia in patients on chronic renal failure, and a leading product of this field, he said. According to Ojito, about 40 clinical studies are developed not only in Cuba and but also abroad, with a strong presence in Southeast Asia.

He highlighted the results of the therapeutic lung cancer vaccine CIMAvax-EGF, registered in Cuba since 2008 and on clinical trial since 2014 at the Roswell Park Institute in the United States, where more than 5,000 patients have been vaccinated.

The doctor also stated that although trials are still open, this treatment is included since 2012 in the basic medicines in the island.

Services are available today in 31 countries around the world as a result of a network of collaborations with hospitals and universities in nations such as Switzerland, Germany, Singapore, India and others.

Cadena Agramonte, March 2 2018



Japan, Cuba go forward with key agricultural agreements in Camagüey

A trio of collaboration projects between Japan and Cuba in the production and conservation of seeds in urban agriculture was confirmed in the eastern province of Camagüey by its ambassador.

The tour, through several locations in the largest Cuban province allowed Masaru Watanabe to corroborate the plan, financed by Japan, and which promotes the socio-economic development of several communities, in a region with about 800,000 inhabitants.

Both countries currently support more than 100 programs, having the role of the Ministry of Agriculture benefiting from donations of equipment and technologies for the production in a priority sector for the Cuban government.

In searching for better agro-ecological practices, which at the same time guarantee the non-intrusiveness of the crops, the new agreements directly involve the Agricultural Company in Camagüey and the Entomophagous and Entomopathogenic Reproduction Centre.

Camaguey has more than 16,000 fertile square kilometres, where more than 4,000 farmers have already benefited.

About 700 kilograms of seeds have generated productive indexes of up 91,000 tons of vegetables, as of late 2017, according to official figures.

The Japanese ambassador told media to celebrate the success of the projects and 'we are determined to collaborate even more in favour of the Cuban economic and social development,' he said.

Trabajadores, March 22

Cuba presents livestock products at FIA-GROP expo

The National Natural Fibres Company is exhibiting two new products destined to pack hay and for livestock management, during International Agricultural Industry and Food Fair, FIAGROP 2018, taking place in this capital.

This is the 400-1 propylene thread and the 1-8 rope, Xiomara Baños told *Prensa Latina*.



The visitor can appreciate in the stand of the company a dozen kinds of rope from several calibres, used in livestock and other sectors, as well as exhibitions of charcoal now mainly for export.

According to Baños, the entity expects to produce this year about 590 tons of natural fibres, representing a growth of more than four percent compared to the previous one, and reach revenues of 12 million pesos (equal in USD at the official exchange rate).

With a total area of 1,260 hectares, the henequen — *agave fourcroydes* — production recovers and diversifies in the country, taking into account the increased demand for that fibre and its derivatives.

FIAGROP 2018, now at its fourth day at the Rancho Boyeros exhibition centre, the oldest in Cuba, includes a scientific-technical workshop on animal reproduction.

About 22 foreign firms and more than 200 Cuban exhibitors are participating in this international fair, the most important commercial event in the Cuban agricultural food sector.

Prensa Latina, March 22

INSIDE CUBA



Cuban deputies consider new country leadership

All 605 recently elected Cuban deputies are currently considering the proposals for candidates to make up the Cuban Council of State, which includes the new president and vice-presidents of the country, along with the leadership of the island's Parliament.

The information was given by the president of the National Candidature Commission Gisela Duarte in conversation with *Juventud Rebelde* newspaper. Citing the Cuban Constitution, Duarte said that the Council of State represents the Parliament between the two sessions held by the assembly

every year and implements the parliament's accords.

On March 11 Cubans went to the polls to elect the new deputies and according to the National Electoral Commission the turnout was calculated at 7 million 399, 891 voters, standing for 85.65 percent of all voters convened. The election of the new Council of State, including the new Cuban President, will take place April 19.

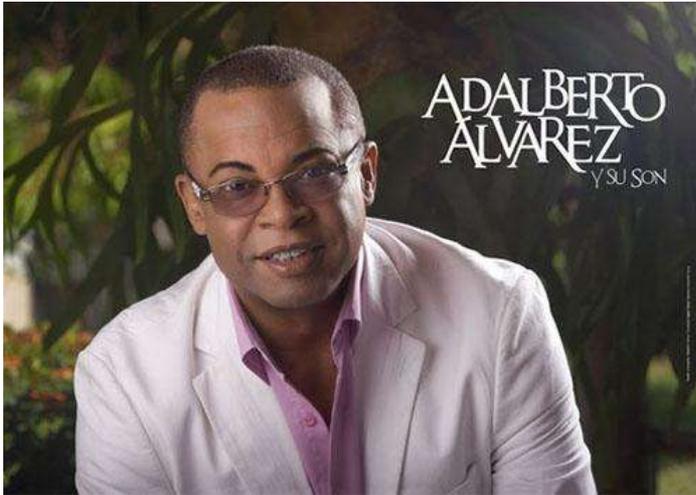
ACN, March 23

ART & CULTURE

Artex: committed to promoting Cuban culture

Artistic and literary promotion company Artex is approaching its 30th anniversary so next year will be one of celebration for the Cuban company.

The holding company's vice president Marta Caballero explained that plans for this year are aimed toward this huge celebration, with emphasis on important dates for groups and orchestras of the Artex catalogs, including NG La Banda and Charanga Habanera (30th anniversaries); Manolito Simonet y su Trabuco (25th anniversary); Azúcar negra (20th anniversary), and renowned Cuban son musician Adalberto Álvarez's 45-year artistic career.



From Artex itself, she added, we are celebrating 25 years of Musicalia and 20 years of Clave Cubana (both artistic agencies); 15 years of the Arte en Casa project and 25 years of Bis Music (Artex record company).

CULTURE AND MARKETING

Artex is involved in more than celebrations. It has an extensive line of work, marketing different cultural products through seven agencies, the first of which is

Paradiso, specializing in cultural tourism.

Next, in terms of its economic impact, is Comercial Lauros, offering new product lines including Patatos (traditional Cuban garments), Baúl de Sueños (children's products) and the exclusive Compay Segundo brand (men's clothing and items for cigar smokers).

One of the most appreciated of Comercial Lauros' projects is Arte en Casa, which combines Cuban arts with useful objects for the home. The collection already includes more than 200 products (plates, doilies, coasters, fans, umbrellas, cup and saucer sets) decorated with works by renowned contemporary Cuban painters and from the National Museum of Fine Arts' Cuban and Universal Art collections.

In line with the latest trends, another of Artex's focuses is the electronic commerce (www.mallcubano.com) of Cuban products (musical instruments, CDs, DVDs, prints, film posters, crafts, clothing), and even music downloads.

Precisely due to its importance in Cuba, the music world occupies another sphere in the holding company, through record label Bis Music, which has its own recording studio, Eusebio Delfín, located in the city of Cienfuegos.

The record company has a catalog of more than 700 albums, from the most traditional to the most contemporary trends of Cuban music. It was also the first in Cuba to win a Latin Grammy – the Award for Best Folk Album went to *La Rumba soy Yo* in 2001.

Since 2015, Bis Music has been committed to digital sales and has positioned most of its products on online marketing platforms such as iTunes, Amazon, YouTube, and Cubamusic.

CULTURAL CENTRES

In addition to a network of more than 250 stores throughout the country, Artex runs 90 cultural centres across the island, in which visitors can enjoy almost all musical genres, including pop fusion, trova, alternative music, popular dance, jazz, boleros, and electronic music.

Havana is privileged to host clubs like El Sauce, Barbaram Pepito's Bar, La Casa de 18, Salón Rosado de La Tropical "Benny Moré," Café Miramar, and Submarino Amarillo.

The latest addition in the capital is Bule-Bar 66, the venue for a recent press conference regarding some of Artex's plans in the lead up to its 30th anniversary.

Artex not only promotes cultural goods. According to its current president, Eladio Marrero, in an interview published in the magazine *Arte por excelencias*, 'We are

included in the Ministry of Culture's closed financing scheme, as the main contributor of foreign currency, hence our great responsibility to increase exports with the objective of self-financing the country's cultural development programs.'

These programs include primary, secondary, and higher education art schools, the purchase of basic study materials, the maintenance or restoration of schools, cinemas, local cultural centres and other cultural sites.

Granma, March 21

TRACK, FIELD AND RINGSIDE



Cuban athletes building team towards 2018 success

431 Cuban athletes have each secured a spot in the regional competition, where the island hopes to retain its crown from its success in Veracruz 2014.

Just over two months before the qualifying events for the Central American and Caribbean

Games in Barranquilla, Colombia end, 431 Cuban athletes have already secured a spot in the regional competition, being held July 19 through August 3.

Cuba's delegation continues to grow after its boxing team recently secured eight winners during the qualifying event in Tijuana, Mexico, where light flyweight Johannys Argilagos, who abandoned the delegation, and Yosvany Veitía, who pulled out at the last-minute citing health issues, were the only members not to advance.

Unfortunately, the island won't have another chance to secure these spots as all qualifying events for boxing have now ended, meaning that representatives of this emblematic Cuban sport will not be able to match the results from the previous edition of the competition in Veracruz 2014, where the team won nine gold medals.

Nonetheless, the island's sporting authorities are still committed to ensuring that Cuba maintains its top spot among nations in this year's Central American and Caribbean Games, 11 editions of which Cuba has won ever since the competition was first launched 48 years ago in Panama, 1970.

In order to do so, the contribution of combat sports will be vital, with judo and taekwondo having already qualified with complete squads, as well as wrestling and karate.

Meanwhile, athletics, nautical events (rowing and canoeing), sport-shooting, artistic gymnastics, and team sports should fare well and contribute to maintaining Cuba's lead in the competition.

However, the island is also facing a big challenge, as it will not be competing in 91 of the 470 events, including women's boxing, various weightlifting events, poomsae taekwondo and some sport-shooting modalities, not to mention bowling, show jumping, water skiing, golf, rugby 7, and squash, which do not feature among Cuba's high-performance sporting disciplines.

EFFECTIVENESS IS KEY

An analysis of the Cuban delegation that has already qualified for Barranquilla 2018 reveals an interesting picture: 46.8% (202) of the 431 athletes will be competing in team sports, meaning that almost half of the entire squad will be working to secure just 16 gold medals in volleyball (men's and women's indoor and beach), basketball (men's, women's and 3X3), baseball, handball, hockey (grass), water polo, and softball competitions, not all of which we have in the bag, as the saying goes.

For example, baseball will be a tough event with a round-robin format and little room for error, while men's basketball, an event Cuba hasn't won since Ponce 1993, water polo (a decade without a medal), softball and volleyball, last won by the island in Maracaibo 1998, will also be extremely demanding disciplines.

As if that wasn't enough, the Cuban representation is relatively weak in multi-medal events such as swimming, speed skating, diving, synchronized swimming, and fencing, which should be dominated by Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela, the three other largest delegations and Cuba's main rivals in the overall competition.

Therefore, Cuban athletes in individual disciplines will come under greater pressure, especially when up against opponents from Mexico or Colombia. For example, all the medals up for grabs in the weightlifting event, dominated by Colombia, will be worth double, with the same going for artistic gymnastics, cycling, and wrestling, as well as taekwondo, which should be led by Mexico.

MORE CHANCES TO QUALIFY?

The majority of the Cuban team members have already secured their spots; however, the island still has other chances to qualify. In addition to wrestling, karate, and racquetball, with tournaments set to be held at the end of March,

Cuba will also have a chance to win spots at Barranquilla 2018 in the synchronized swimming and diving competitions, while the island could see its number of representatives rise once final rankings are decided in the swimming and athletics events.

At the end of this process, the Cuban delegation should feature over 500 athletes, fewer than the squads from Colombia and Mexico, the former with over 700 representatives, and the latter close to 600. Thus far Cuban athletes have qualified for the following events: Open water swimming (4), water polo (26), badminton (8), basketball (24), basketball 3x3 (4), handball (30), baseball (24), boxing (8), canoeing (15), cycling (23), Equestrian sports (2), fencing (18), artistic gymnastics (10), rhythmic gymnastics (8), trampoline (2), hockey (32), judo (16), weightlifting (12), skating (6), modern pentathlon (4), rowing (20), softball (30), taekwondo (16), tennis (4), table tennis (8), archery (6), sport-shooting (21), triathlon (6), sailing (12), volleyball (28) and beach volleyball (4).

Granma, March 20

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>

