Cuba intensifies recovery efforts following Hurricane Irma
• Hard work is underway in all places hit by the devastating storm • Efforts to reestablish electrical service continue day and night. Fifteen major transmission lines were damaged, along with over 3,600 utility poles and 2,039 kilometers of power lines. The provinces of Villa Clara and Ciego de Ávila face the most complex situations • Over 20,400 construction workers and 855 heavy-duty vehicles are devoted to debris collection, and the repair of roads, bridges, and drains, as well as housing and public buildings • Damaged tourism infrastructure is being reconditioned, and will be ready for the upcoming high season, to begin mid-November.

(More information on pages 3-7)
Alongside Che during the October Crisis

Ronald Suárez Rivas

• PINAR DEL RÍO—Cueva de los Portales, October 1962. In his command headquarters, Comandante Ernesto Guevara analyzed with various officers the composition of the enemy force threatening to attack the country. Lieutenant Luis González Pardo, head of the information section, read data on the 82nd Airborne Division of the United States Army, which would reportedly be responsible for the attacks.

After mentioning the enormous amount of aircraft, Luis commented: “Comandante, they are going to cover our sky.”

Che, however, was not fazed. Following the abrupt defeat of the dictatorship and the mercenary attack on Playa Giron, he had no doubts about the courage of the Cuban people, thus he assertively responded to his intelligence officer: “Even better, kid, we’ll fight in the shadows.”

Recounting the anecdote is Oscar Valdés Buergo, then adjunct sergeant to the military chief of staff of Pinar del Río, and therefore a man close to the Heroic Guerrilla on the occasions when he assumed command of the province, during the invasion of Playa Giron and the October Crisis (Cuban Missile Crisis).

Supported by a folder of notes, newspaper clippings, sketches and photographs, the veteran combatant of the underground struggle in Viñales speaks with nostalgia of those “whirlwind days” when he had the opportunity to work alongside Che.

Now aged 80, Valdés remembers clearly in his fatigue, a pistol at his waist, and his black beret with a star.

“During Giron, the shot that escaped him and injured him in the face made his body move very briefly, but during the October Crisis he stayed with us for several weeks, leading the province,” Oscar recalls.

“At that time, Che established his command in Cueva de los Portales (a cave in the municipality of Laja), which would leave at dawn almost every day to tour the territory and return at night.”

Among the anecdotes that speak for the legendary guerrilla’s personality, Oscar notes that since they never knew what time Che would return, it was proposed that they place a wood stove inside the cave, to keep food warm, and that those who worked late into the night, as the unit’s main kitchen was located at some distance.

“Che at first did not agree, because he thought they were doing it with the intention of preparing a better meal for him in order to tune into foreign stations, and several compañeros who spoke other languages listened to them constantly, so that they could keep him informed.”

In the cave, leaders of units and the principal entities of the province went to see him and to check in. The hustle and bustle was tremendous,” he recalls.

During those tense days, in which the world was on the verge of a nuclear conflict, Oscar recalls that on one occasion Che arrived very annoyed, as a group of militia and soldiers who were digging trenches had asked him how long the exercise would last.

“People liked talking to him. We admired him for this important mission,” he says.

Today, 55 years later, Oscar notes that having had the opportunity to be close to the Heroic Guerrilla at a crucial moment in the history of the Revolution, was one of the most extraordinary experiences of his life.

“I am honored by the confidence he had in me for this important mission,” he says.

“Che was a man who always led by example, and he did not order us to do anything that he was not willing and able of doing himself.”

People liked talking to him. We admired him a lot. It was a very big thing for all of us.”

“A little later he came back and said, ‘I’ve come to get the request.’ He took the book and I never saw it again.”

The outcome of the October Crisis is known. Oscar states that after returning from a meeting in Havana, Che met with the political and military authorities of the province, and explained that behind Cuba’s back, the Soviet Union had reached an agreement with the United States to withdraw the nuclear missiles from the country, and he had very strong words to say regarding this solution.

“People thought that Che would represent and he, but he congratulated him, and he told the others that they had to be informed and know the enemy.”

Although Che was a very strict man, Oscar says he spoke very softly and very politely. “During the time he was the chief political and military leader of Pinar del Río, he toured the entire province, including the Guanahacabibes peninsula, but above all the north coast, near the capital of the country.”

“In the cave, leaders of units and the principal entities of the province went to see him and to check in. The hustle and bustle was tremendous,” he recalls.

However, Oscar explains that there was also free time during the evening, in which Che would go out and talk to people, read, play a game of chess or stop to watch others do so, and he would comment aloud when there was a bad move, to irritate them.

“One night I was reading a book about Latinos’ lives in New York City, and he stopped by my side and said, ‘Lend it to me when you’re done.’

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“In the cave, leaders of units and the principal entities of the province went to see him and to check in. The hustle and bustle was tremendous,” he recalls.

People liked talking to him. We admired him a lot. It was a very big thing for all of us.”
Raúl recognizes hard work done across the country following Hurricane Irma

The President of the National Defense Council led a meeting to assess damage caused by Hurricane Irma and actions to be undertaken during the recovery phase.

Leticia Martínez Hernández

• THE President of the National Defense Council, Army General Raúl Castro Ruz, led a meeting with Party, state and government leaders on Wednesday, September 13, during which the damages caused by Hurricane Irma were evaluated, and the actions to be undertaken during the recovery phase outlined.

Raúl recognized the hard work in each of the areas affected by the devastating meteorological event, which struck virtually the entire island. He noted that if any benefit can be obtained from this difficult situation, it is to immediately collect experiences to better prepare for future events of this nature.

The President warned that the present hurricane season, which has been described as intense, extends until November 30, an evident product of climate change and to which we must adapt.

The Army General called to continue working tirelessly to calmly resolve problems and to keep the people informed by all possible means on the situation facing the country. During the meeting it was highlighted that given Irma’s path across several provinces, authorities were forced to evacuate to 1,738,000 people, of them 86% were sheltered in the homes of neighbors and relatives. The head of the National Civil Defense General Staff, Major General Ramón Pardo Guerra, reported that more than 26,000 people remain in evacuation centers.

As he noted, the National Office of Statistics and Information is working to assess the damages, and preliminary figures are expected to be released in the coming days. Julián Núñez Guzmán, minister of Energy and Mines, stated that the Antonio Guiteras thermoelectric power station in Matanzas had suffered the strongest and most difficult impact to be solved in this sector, as its sea water supply system, a key element in the cooling process, was destroyed by huge storm surges.

Highly specialized staff are working to compensate for damages and to ensure the plant is back in operation in the next few days. In addition, 15 transmission lines suffered damages, and more than 3,600 posts and 2,025 kilometers of power lines were affected. Work is ongoing day and night to restore the more than 3,600 posts and 2,039 kilometers of power lines next few days.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Construction is participating in the recovery efforts with more than 20,400 construction workers and 855 engineering machines, devoted to debris collection, the repair of roads, bridges and drains, as well as the repair of housing and public buildings.

Sector Minister René Mesa Villafañe noted that the major impacts of the hurricane were concentrated on housing, especially damage to roofing. Although the exact figures regarding the damage are not yet available, efforts are already underway to help those whose homes were destroyed, for which cement and roof tile factories are producing at full capacity. The Camagüey tile factory is also expected to begin operations in the coming days.

Meanwhile, the most serious damages to agriculture were seen in the poultry sector, as dozens of egg production sheds lost their roofs. Julio A. García Pérez, first deputy minister of Agriculture, explained that the production of feed, plantain and corn crops, as well as fruit trees, have also been affected.

Work is now intensifying in the reactivation of the varied crops campaign, for which, he said, seeds, fertilizers and pesticides are available.

On this point, José Ramón Machado Ventura, a vice president of the Councils of State and Ministers, considered that, despite the damages, the agricultural sector is in better conditions than in previous situations to recover from Irma’s impact.

Public Health Minister Roberto Morales Ojeda reported that the health system maintained services during the passage of the hurricane, and that to date there have been no outbreaks of communicable diseases in evacuation centers or any territory. Regarding Cuban collaborators working in the Caribbean countries hit by the cyclone, he noted that they are well and have joined the recovery efforts in these islands.

Ojeda revealed that 516 health units were damaged, and work is underway to restore them in the shortest possible time. He added that the current priority is environmental sanitation and vector control, for which all necessary resources are available.

Finally, regarding the effects on tourism, sector Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz explained that more than 51,000 vacations were on the island when the hurricane hit, of these some 45,000 were located on the northern coast.

About 10,000 tourists were evacuated from the Santa María, Coco and Guillermo keys. He noted that the damaged infrastructure is being repaired, to ensure it is ready for the upcoming high season beginning in the first half of November.

On closing the meeting, President Raúl reiterated the need to deal with problems intelligently, taking into account the best experiences put into practice in the face of similar events, especially at the local level. In this regard, he mentioned the efforts deployed in Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, following the impact of hurricanes Sandy in 2012, and Matthew in 2016, respectively.

This time the impact has been very strong and spread throughout most of the country, he said, but with the hard work that is being done, we’ll come through this once again.

Council of State modifies election schedule

• AS was duly published this past June 13, the Council of State indicated that elections to choose delegates to Municipal Assemblies of People’s Power were to be held, with a first round on October 22, 2017, and a second round the following Sunday, October 29.

On Friday, September 15, the severe damage caused by Hurricane Irma in a large part of the nation and the necessity that our state institutions, mass and social organizations concentrate their efforts on the recovery, and with the objective of guaranteeing a high level of participation by electors and the quality of the electoral process, in particular the direct nomination of candidates to Municipal Assemblies of People’s Power, the Council of State has agreed to establish November 26, 2017, as the new date for elections of delegates to Municipal Assemblies of People’s Power, for two and a half year terms, with a second round election, in those constituencies where no candidate receives more than 50% of the valid votes cast, on December 3, 2017.

Additionally, the National Electoral Commission was instructed to adjust the timeline projected for the completion of different activities as part of the first stage of the electoral process.
Camagüey’s antidote to pessimism
Text & photos: Miguel Febles Hernández

CAMAGÜEY—Throughout the vast geography of this Cuban province, especially in the agricultural sector, a categorical and exemplary concept is gaining momentum: beyond talking about Irma, its destruction and the losses everywhere, another hurricane is apace - that of the huge efforts underway to recover.

This is the philosophy gaining ground across these plains, to shake off any lament, pessimism, or inaction, which can be as harmful, or more so, than the deadly ravages of the tropical cyclone itself, in its destructive autumnal “excursion” along the entire northern coast of Cuba.

Such was the view expressed by Jorge Luis Tapia Fonseca, president of the Provincial Defense Council, who, although aware of the considerable damage to the agricultural sector, is certain that the province is capable of responding, and makes clear that none of its productive commitments have been altered.

The strategy going ahead is well defined: after the huge blow of seeing months of efforts in the creation of new root vegetable crops lost, all human and material resources are now destined to the recovery and an urgent food production program.

HARVEST, RESTORE, AND PUSH AHEAD

Each of Camagüey’s productive units is aware that accelerating (rather than getting held up with secondary matters) the collection of as many fruits and vegetables that remain and can be consumed, either by humans or livestock, is the immediate and crucial task.

“This has to be done, especially in the case of plantations, with a lot of agility, as every second of delay in the rehabilitation work can be detrimental to the plantation,” warned Osédel Rojas Gómez, machete in hand, a worker at the Las Flores plantation, in Nuevitas.

Carlos Hidalgo Rodríguez, president of the Niceto Pérez cooperative, located in the same area, agrees with this view. He has transmitted to his fellow members the need to be ready to work hard, taking advantage of the current soil moisture to prepare the land and restart the sowing tasks.

“Today, this is what each campesino must do,” he noted, “in the sense of also using resources optimally, striving to do things well, without any carelessness, and contributing all that we can to minimize, as far as possible, the shortfall that will occur in some types of root vegetable.”

Meanwhile, Hernando Gutiérrez Rodríguez, director of the Nuevitas Agricultural Enterprise, explained that to this end, the winter sowing plan has been readjusted, to grow a greater number of varieties over a greater number of hectares, staggering crops, and applying alternatives that will result in more food for the people.

WE WILL RESOLVE THIS OURSELVES

Clear that there will be no miracles, other than the fruits of their own efforts, Camagüey’s cattle ranchers are taking advantage of the increased water and improvement of pastures to ensure that the last four months of the year contribute to the planned milk campaign of 88 million liters of sales to the dairy industry.

Pig farmers are not far behind, determined to recoup as soon as possible the damages in their specialized units, individual producers’ facilities, and in the province’s feed factory, in order to restart the breeding and raising of pigs and not jeopardize planned growth in meat production.

Workers of the Camagüey Agricultural Unit likewise remain committed to producing 700 tons of honey, with the center and south of the province having committed to making up the production shortfall of the four municipalities in the north, as practically all coastal flowers were lost.

“We will resolve this ourselves,” stated Yoandri Abad Escobar, director of the provincial Poultry Enterprise, referring to the work being carried out, with the support of two brigades of roosters from Santiago de Cuba and Guantánamo, to protect birds and gradually increase egg production.

Workers immediately set about collecting for reuse the roofing sheets that the winds ripped off sheds. Despite damage to roofs, hens were well cared for in Camagüey’s poultry farms.

“Not a minute was wasted here: while all roofing sheets that flew off were collected and straightened for reuse, the women were responsible for ensuring food and water for the chickens,” added Santiago Sierra Pupo, administrator of the Antonio Suárez farm, in the municipality of Minas.

With more than 314,000 layers, this territory is responsible for the distribution of eggs to the entire northern circuit of Camagüey. As such, in addition to repairs, the units are being cleaned to avoid any hygiene or epidemiological complications and reduce animal deaths.

CUBITAS WILL NOT LOSE ITS SYMBOL

Waking up the day after the hurricane passed to see the ground covered with grapefruit and oranges they had grown with such care, in the lead up to the new harvest, still moves the workers of the Sola Agricultural and Citrus Enterprise, in Sierra de Cubitas.

“This is the symbol of this municipality and, therefore, we must give our all so that it isn’t lost,” stated Raúl Bárcenas González, director of the entity, while closely following the collecting of grapefruit in the Cuba-Argentina Friendship basic unit of cooperative production.

“A batch can be saved and is already being sent to the processing plants, or other market destinations, but a large volume was impossible to recover, because the fruit is either badly damaged or fell when still not ready for harvest,” explained José Antonio Ibáñez Soria, head of the Antonio Maceo comprehensive farm.

Accustomed to overcoming adversity, citrus growers are also immersed in clearing the ground, fertilizing, and pruning, to rehabilitate old plantations and protect the 260 hectares of developing plants that will guarantee the permanence of citrus fruits in the red earth of Cubitas.

“We have a lot of work to do, but the important thing is not to let ourselves be traumatized and to impose our will to succeed,” Bárcenas González stated, determined to maintain unchanged, with his feet firmly on the ground, the entity’s development program, in the best interests of the country.”

In the fields of Camagüey, the gathering of all fruit and vegetables still fit for consumption is ongoing.

Much of the citrus fruit blown down in Sierra de Cubitas has been sent to processing plants or other markets.
The Guiteras comeback
The workers' response at this Matanzas thermoelectric power plant, also seen in many other locations across the country hit by Hurricane Irma, is an example of the heroism a people can exhibit when faced with great challenges.

Ventura de Jesús (Text & photos)

• MATANZAS.–The full length of the waterfront in the city of Matanzas, along the island’s northern coast, was one of the prime victims of the hurricane. In this stretch, known as the industrial zone, many of the facilities closest to the water were wiped out. It is here where the Antonio Guiteras thermoelectric plant is to be found.

The sea water circulation station fell like a house of cards. Structures that served as breakwaters, made of seven rings of cement weighing close to 70 tons, were swept forward, landing on top of the station, indispensable to the plant’s operation.

In the blink of an eye, dozens of men and pieces of equipment arrived, moving rapidly as if the plant were on fire. Operators and combined forces began a long effort to reestablish the plant’s generating power, in a whirlwind of activity that has lasted over more than a week.

Capturing a sense of the mood there was easy. It could be read on the faces of workers.

COUNTING THE HOURS

Any time the Guiteras suffers a breakdown or some rare accident, the most highly trained specialists are called in. Always among the members of this select group is Alcides Meana, a lead engineer, now retired, who worked on the plant’s foundation. No one knows the Guiteras like he does; he can describe its smallest detail.

This electrical engineer, a calm man in appearance, barely slept for days. Along with the plant’s managers, he was intent upon getting through the bad moment. Grama spoke with him during the week following Irma, which struck this area September 8.

He recalled that he first arrived here in January of 1982, “This was scrub, coastline, cliffs, with a few vacation houses around. At that time, they were conducting the geological investigations needed to begin the project.

“The country had decided to invest in a thermoelectric power plant, given the increased demand for electricity. This area was chosen because of the bay and the possibility of capturing sea water to cool the system - a single plant capable of generating 330 MWh, and does so at a low rate of fuel consumption. It provides great stability to the national grid, one of its principal bulwarks.

Alcides, why is so much importance placed on the Matanzas thermoelectric plant?

Because it is a unit with a single plant capable of generating 330 MWh, and does so at a low rate of fuel consumption. It provides great stability to the national grid, one of its principal bulwarks.

Could you describe the extent of the disaster caused by Hurricane Irma?

The worst consequence of the hurricane was the collapse of the building housing the circulation station, responsible for extracting sea water to cool the thermal system. Without it, the plant cannot function.

The wave breaking protective system along the coastline collapsed. The power of the waves moved blocks of incredible weight and they struck the pumping station. The hypochlorite plant also suffered damage. The machine room was flooded almost a meter, and of course we have to disassemble the equipment, take out the motors, clean them, and give them some maintenance, remove the humidity, reconnect them, and test them. These are collateral tasks.

What was the strategy taken to resolve the problem, to organize this comeback?

The essential goal was to determine how, in the first place, we could get one of the two pumps going, that would allow for the generation of up to 230 MWh. In a second stage we would repair the second pump and build a provisional shed to protect the equipment, while the permanent building for the pumping station was constructed, which wouldn’t interfere with the plant’s functioning, and could be designed taking into account what happened.

It’s clear that the tasks are not cursory. Thus far, some 5,000 cubic meters of rubble has been removed from the affected area. The most serious challenge at this time is cleaning the four aqueducts to the still water pool. A maritime dredge, with the help of several divers, are working to remove rubble and allow access to the sea - an extremely complex task.

Who is participating in the recovery work and what equipment is available?

Mostly forces from the Varadero Ministry of Construction brigade, and that in Matanzas, as well as Maritime Works, and the Thermoelectric Plant Maintenance Enterprise. We have not been short-handed. Everyone has come together as a single man. The powerful hydraulic hammers for the large demolitions are impressive. Among the pieces of equipment, we have bulldozers, front loaders, and cranes that can lift from 30 to 100 tons.

Is there some situation that could delay the work or aggravate the damage?

The arrival of another hurricane would be very unfortunate. Of concern technically is the work underwater to clear the aqueducts from the sea to the pool, one of which has been 50% opened.

Can any lessons be drawn from this lamentable experience?

Everything gives us some kind of learning. In this case, for example, it can be seen that the circulation station needs a different design, something more resistant, to face stronger weather events. The wave breaker wall could be slightly bigger, but with another more reinforced structure.

It is no exaggeration that all of Cuba is following the developments here at the Guiteras. More than a week after the storm, a ray of hope can be seen. How close are we to the start up?

“The entire area around the circulation pumping station and the hypochlorite plant has been cleared of rubble. The necessary demolition of some wave breaker wall blocks has been completed. The discharge canal is practically cleared, and progress continues on collateral issues, like the bailing of wells and the extraction of motors to again reestablish plant operations.

Things are now seen with more clarity. By the end of this week, we should start up the first pump. What does the Guitera mean to you?

A great deal. The first large project I participated in from start to finish. •

Powerful waves moved giant cement blocks.

A combined workforce is laboring around the clock to reestablish the plant’s operations.
Recovery underway in resort areas hit by Irma

Granma International spoke with Alexis Trujillo Morejón, Cuba's first deputy minister of Tourism, who addressed the recovery of resort areas and tourist facilities.

Alejandra García

• WHEN it became evident that Hurricane Irma would impact the island’s northern coast, steps were taken not only to protect Cuban families but also the thousands of tourists who had chosen Cuba as their vacation destination.

The country’s tourism poles - the majority located along the northern coastline - guests, and workers there immediately became a priority in preparedness and disaster mitigation efforts.

Alexis Trujillo Morejón, first deputy minister of Tourism in Cuba, told Granma International that as a priority, among the measures adopted by the Ministry, along with Civil Defense authorities, was the protection of the 45,827 tourists staying in hotels along the country’s northern coast, a figure that represented 88% of all the international vacationers in the country (51,807), on September 5.

There were additionally 2,216 Cubans at Campismo Popular facilities in the region, who were also evacuated.

The transfer of tourists to more secure facilities began in the province of Camaguey and the northern keys of Ciego de Avila and Villa Clara, which was declared, starting immediately with a short time, and maintained services.

Staying on the keys were 10,625 visitors, 5,134 of whom were evacuated to Havana and Varadero, a process that demanded greater organization and discipline than during such events in the past. The remaining 5,491 were Canadians, whose tour operators returned them to their country before the hurricane arrived.

A tense moment came when Irma’s expected turn to the north toward Florida was delayed, and the hurricane remained practically at a standstill very close to Varadero for several hours.

On the peninsula, as Irma approached, were 16,764 tourists - including those evacuated from the northern keys - as well as 4,179 workers.

Nonetheless, not one person was hurt, given the preparation, organization, and discipline achieved, Trujillo reported with pride.

In terms of the network of hotels in Havana, he recounted that the decision was made to evacuate all facilities located on the northern coast, from Jibaoco in Mayabeque to the HEMINGWAY MARINA on the west side of Havana, given the eminent danger of coastal flooding, adding that on other occasions only partial evacuations were necessary.

THE RECOVERY OF TOURIST POLES WILL BE COMPLETED IN RECORD TIME

Despite the destruction caused by Hurricane Irma along the country’s northern coast, Trujillo said, “The tourist poles did not experience significant damage,” reporting that no installation suffered structural damage, although glass windows, ceilings, and aluminum trim were affected, while some lightweight constructions like beach huts and outdoor eating areas succumbed to the winds.

Tourist facilities in the country’s eastern region, which was not hit directly by the hurricane, are at this time operating normally, he said. Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, and Granma did not suffer damage, while in Las Tunas, hotel accommodations were quickly readied. Holguín, which faced only light damage, recovered within a short time, and maintained services.

This resort area confronted Irma with constructions like beach huts and outdoor eating areas succumbed to the winds. Tourist facilities in the country’s eastern region, which was not hit directly by the hurricane, are at this time operating normally, he said. Guantánamo, Santiago de Cuba, and Granma did not suffer damage, while in Las Tunas, hotel accommodations were quickly readied. Holguín, which

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Santa Lucía resort area will be completely repaired by the end of September, while in the case of the keys where damage was greater, all will be in order by the beginning of the high season.

Varadero maintained operations through out the hurricane’s passage and the country’s most important resort began the clean-up as soon as the recovery phase was declared, starting immediately with the task of replacing glass and other light elements. The international airport was reopened, to complement the resort’s operations, and incoming and outgoing flights reestablished.

The capital will also recover in record time. Several hotels were barely affected, and others have begun repairs.

Likewise, the citywide clean-up is underway, and staff members are working feverishly to ready facilities in order to receive clients immediately.

The full recovery of all tourist poles is a priority, since tourism is a strategic sector for the economy. It has been reaffirmed that facilities will be ready and operating before the beginning of the winter high season. The human and material resources to accomplish this task are in place, Trujillo concluded.

Cuban government decision to aid homeowners

• TAKING into consideration the severe damage caused by Hurricane Irma, and based on the positive experience obtained during the recovery from Hurricanes Sandy and Matthew, the government has decided that the state budget will finance 50% of the cost of construction materials sold to persons whose homes were partially or totally destroyed. Toward that end, the following are stipulated:

1- Defense Councils will verify the magnitude of damage incurred on dwellings and approve resources to be assigned for repairs needed.

2- To acquire materials, those affected may request bank credit at low interest rates, with repayment extended over a greater number of years.

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September 17, 2017 •
Cuba: Medical care guaranteed

Text & photos: Nuria Barbosa León

* SPEAKING to Granma International, Lázara Hernández Arias and Nayari Corrales Medina stated that they "never felt scared" as Hurricane Irma made its way along Cuba's northern coastline. At that time, both were at a medical facility in Havana, with their sons Leovany and César, respectively.

The two women noted how thankful they were to staff at the William Soler Pediatric Cardiology Hospital, for the care they received during those difficult hours of strong winds and persistent rain. Lázara and Nayari explained that the ward remained lit and the television on to keep children calm, and medicines were distributed as usual, while the director of the hospital made several visits.

Nurse María Isabel Rodríguez Miranda, worked a double shift, as her colleague was unable to make it to the hospital given the weather situation. For over 24 hours María cared for and reassured patients and their families.

"Luckily the building didn't suf- fer any major damage, and we all woke on September 10 anxious to get back to normal as quickly as possible," she stated.

This has been the number one aim of healthcare workers across Cuba, who provided medical services in difficult conditions, which resulted in damage to 785 facilities, 62 of which were hospitals, 116 polyclinics, and 314 local doctors' offices, among others.

Partial damage to roofs, broken windows, and fallen trees consti- tuted the main damages caused by the storm.

In this regard Dr. José Emesto Betancourt Lavastida, director of the Ministry of Public Health (Minsap) Defense and Civil Defense departments, stated that the rapidity of the appearance of the dangerous hurricane a series of measures was taken at once, above all to protect the lives of patients, staff, and family members.

Steps were also taken to protect material resources and supplies, to ensure that all healthcare institutions were ready to support post-hurricane recovery efforts currently under- way.

"Pregnant women living in vul- nerable zones and those likely to be affected were evacuated. Patients in hospitals at risk of flooding, such as the Hermannos Ameijeiras and América Arias, were also transferred. Those in centers of dialysis continued to receive treatment in sheltered facilities close to hospitals or other institutions.

A possibility of a break- down in lines of communication, 76 clinical-surgical brigades were mobilized and deployed in communities located in remote or hard-to-reach areas, in order to provide medical attention during and after the hurricane," he stated.

NECESSARY PRECAUTIONS

During this recovery stage, cisterns, wells, and tanks are being cleaned and water chlorinated. In addition, there is specialized monitoring at key points of the water distribution network, to ensure required quality, among other measures.

Dr. López Almaguer explained: "We will continue to undertake educational action through the media and personal intercom- munication activities. Our family doctors will hold talks at sites where the population is con- centrated, not only within health institutions but also in morning meetings in workplaces and student centers, explaining how to maintain hygienic measures to avoid the onset of gastro- intestinal diseases."

She also urged all Cubans to join the sanitation efforts inside and outside their homes, as help collecting debris, fallen trees, cleaning yards, streets and gardens is required, to eradicate vectors such as rats, insects, and mosquitoes.

According to the specialist, despite the magnitude of the hurricane, the joint efforts of health workers and the popu- lation in general was demon- strated, as evidenced in the reigning sense of calm. Even in those places without power and water, no cases of leptospirosis, outbreaks of diarrhoea, or res- piratory diseases were reported.

Medical students and those studying specialties aided these efforts, carrying out door-to-door surveys, inquiring as to the presence of any symptoms, and explaining how to follow the measures they should take to stay healthy.

Like-wise, medical institutions such as doctors' offices, polyclinics, opticians, nursing and maternity homes, located in buildings deemed unfit to withstand the hurricane, were relocated. Some 240 pharmacies were relocated to temporary premises belonging to state agencies and in local homes, in order to protect one hundred percent of their stock. Medical care was organized in all eva- cuation centers and thousands of health workers, including doctors, nurses, and hygiene and epidemiology technicians, worked uninterruptedly along- side Red Cross brigades to provide care to the evacuated population.

Now in the recovery phase, hygiene and sanitary measures are being implemented, and the population has been called on to pay the utmost attention to guidelines issued to prevent the outbreak of disease, Betancourt Lavastida assured.

Yanaris López Almaguer, Minsap Environmental Health director, confirmed that to date no outbreaks of any type of communicable disease, due to contaminated food or water, have been reported in the country. "If a suspected case were to appear, isolation would be carried out in the centers created for this purpose," she noted.

Dr. Enesto Betancourt Lavastida, director of Defense and Civil Defense for the Ministry of Public Health, said vital services were available during and following the storm.

Dr. Yanaris López Almaguer, Minsap director of Environmental Health, emphasized the importance of hygienic measures to avoid the appearance of opportunistic diseases.

Jorge González Pérez, Minsap Teaching director, explained that in the 13 medical universities of the country, classes will be gradually resumed according to the situation in each territory. Meanwhile, students are under- taking social work within local communities.

VITAL SERVICES RESTORED

Minsap leaders emphasized that immediate priorities for institutions and staff across the country are the gradual reestablishment of services in polyclinics and hospitals damaged by the hurricane, and the intensification of hygienic and sanitary efforts.

Granma International visited the Hermannos Ameijeiras Hos-pital located on Havana's waterfront, seriously affected by flooding. Dr. Rigoberto García Gómez, deputy director of Teaching and Research, ex- plained, "We implemented a plan designed for this type of disaster and safeguarded all the equipment, but the flooding caused by the hurricane sur- passed expectations." To recover, help was first sought from the Firefighters Command to extract water from the basement and central cistern, then the entire staff assumed the clean-up of all areas to prepare for the re- sumption of services as quickly as possible.

A similar effort was mounted at Salvador Allende Hospital, in the Havana municipality of Cerro, a complex with several pavilions and 430 beds, 180 of which are for patients in serious condition.

Dr. Mery Torres La Era, deputy director of Medical Assistance, indicated that the principal cause of damage in the hospital, which downed utility lines and banks of electrical transformers. The provi- sion of water during and after Irma, an emergency system of six fuel oil generators was activated to provide electricity. However, even after the national electric grid was restored, a ward serving chronic kidney disease patients remained without po- wer, as a result of a damaged transformer.

These individuals were there- fore transferred to another hospital, but thanks to a quick response, power was restored shortly in this vital area.

Dr. Torres reported that the institution's 1,780 workers stayed on the job before the hurri- cane struck, and were focused on the return to normality, saying, "I thank all the state institutions which supported us during these difficult days, because we know that almost the whole country is immersed in addressing damage similar to ours."

Reinold García Moreiro, direc- tor of Public Health in the province of La Habana, reported that all measures projected in plans for this kind of disaster were adopted in the capital's healthcare centers, thus avoiding greater damage and allowing services to be reestablished quickly in unaffected facilities.

He added, "We have quantified the damages, and already estimated the economic ex- penses. Material resources avail- able have been assigned to reach all the regions.

The main impact, he said, was concentrated in five munici- palities of the capital: Plaza, Playa, Centro Habana, La Habana del Este and La Habana Vieja; while some 367 city blocks were seriously impacted, mainly by coastal flooding.

Now, he emphasized, work must focus on ensuring hygiene in conjunction with authorities and the population, to avoid epidemiological problems."
Computation & Electronics
Youth Club
More than 4.55 million people have earned degrees over the last 30 years

Yisel Martínez García

- In 1987, informatics did not touch every aspect of daily life as it does today, and Cuba was not an exception. Nevertheless, an ambitious social project that aimed to teach computation to the greatest number of children and youth possible was launched.

Thus, on September 8th that year, the Computation & Electronics Youth Club was established, an idea that has reached its 30th birthday, and is being renovated in tune with the times.

"The first 32 Youth Clubs were located in each of the provincial capitals. In the case of the province of Matanzas, one was also constructed in the municipality of Colón, another in Cárdenas, and another in Varadero, and this is the first installations were set up," said Raúl Vantroi Navarro Martínez, director general of the Joven Club.

Over time, services associated with information and communication technologies expanded. Computers began to appear in schools and institutions, and generations that didn't know how to work with the equipment also began to take classes at the Youth Clubs, to acquire these skills.

"The number of Youth Clubs in the country was expanded, reaching 174 facilities in those years. Then in 1981, a former market was converted to become the Palace of Computing, (in Havana) and later in 2000, the number of clubs reached 300. Between 2004 and 2005, 300 more were created, raising the figure to 600 across the entire country. Today there are more than two per municipality," Navarro explained.

"Over the years, Joven Club has experienced rapid development. Today all the facilities have specialized staff, some 5,000 workers. Forty-seven percent of them are university graduates, more than 1,500 have proficiency in another language, and more than 800 have a Masters degree."

"With this skilled personnel, services and courses have been broadened. In addition to basic training, specialized, and post-graduate options, there are courses for children, those with disabilities, and older adults. During these 30 years, we have developed applications, provided assistance and consultation, and more than 4.55 million persons have earned degrees," Navarro added.

SERVICES & PRODUCTS

Cuban families are the focus of the clubs' work. Throughout this period, their products have been of outstanding quality. Such is the case with Ecuered, the Cuban encyclopedia that supplies universal knowledge. With a variety of articles about the country, Ecuered has more than 532 active collaborators and more than 39,000 registered contributors.

"The encyclopedia receives visits from different Latin American countries such as Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala, Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, and others. Plus it is consulted by 250,000 persons daily, and recently received the Espacio prize awarded by the Cuban Association of Social Communication," explained Anamaris Solórzano Chacón, one of the deputy director generals of Joven Club.

Another well-received product is the Mochila (Backpack), a digital cultural entertainment package for all ages. It functions very much like a non-traditional TV station, offering a variety of sections that allow viewers to create their own programming.

"Our domain platform .cu that hosts Cuban blogs is Reflejos (Reflections). We have designed it as an accessible space where bloggers can share their opinions, interests, and needs in text format, images, or video. Thus, Reflejos is a mirror in which Cubans can recognize their common interests and desires," Solórzano said.

Reflejos hosts a total of 3,163 active blogs, some 22,199 users, and receives more than 300,000 visits a month.

El Estanquillo (The Stand) is another platform that functions in real time, offering downloads or viewing in digital format of press media, both international and national. This application facilitates access to current information, fashion trends, arts and crafts, culture, sports, and healthcare, among others.

SUSTAINABLE & POPULAR

Even though the social success of a project like the Joven Club is evident in the interest in its efforts shown by Cubans, maintaining these services is costly for the country. Raúl Vantroi Navarro Martínez explains that every year the entity spends some million pesos to support the effort.

Entities around the world that offer computer services are very costly. Updating software, hardware, and maintaining all the equipment in working condition is fundamental to these facilities. That's why, in 2014, the decision was made to begin raising funds for some services," he added.

For the clubs, this decision was important from a strategic perspective, because the operation is looking to become self-financing. The challenge is to become financially sustainable and continue to improve service.

"A child pays two CUP to play on a computer for two hours, and to play online, with one player in Guantánamo and the other in Pinar del Río, it's just three CUP an hour. Now this costs the country much more than that, but we cannot forego being accessible to everyone, and things must continue this way," Navarro insisted.

"The Joven Club we are imagining now must be 100% self-financing, with rates that the population can afford, and must also maintain the essence of its founding principles, that is to be a people’s organization, having novel, attractive products that are constantly evolving into something better, and a highly qualified staff.

NOVELTIES & CHALLENGES

This past August, the Computation Youth Club launched a pilot project in the city of Santiago de Cuba, specifically in the Caney neighborhood, an area with little access to modern technology. The goal is for people to learn to use technological equipment like cell phones, tablets, and computers.

With the name of Infalilitarización (Info-literacy), the program looks to promote digital literacy among the Cuban population that has not acquired these skills, to be able to use new information and communications technology.

According to María de los Ángeles Pérez Almeyda, deputy director general of Joven Club, families in the area shared their computers and houses for the courses to be offered, thus greatly enriching the experience.

"Joven Club's greatest contribution to the computerization of society is teaching people new technologies. Sixty-eight instructors are being trained in this province, linked to the Ministry of Education, Public Health, Indefer (Sports Institute) and the
Ministry of Culture. In one week, we were able to train 46,651 people, including 1,120 children, 419 older adults, 88 individuals with disabilities, and 19 incarcerated youth,” Pérez added.

The project is to be extended across the entire country this fall and conclude next year, after activities planned to celebrate the club’s 30th anniversary.

“In addition to this big effort, work for 2018 will involve modernization of the network and training for the range of new services more in tune with the times. Plus, we intend to complete work on products in development, for their use in the Joven Club network, and guarantee the sustainability of the portfolio of products and services we offer,” director Raúl Vantroi Navarro Martínez stated.

Thus the Computation and Electronics Youth Club intends to strengthen its ties with Cuban families, as a place for education and entertainment, but above all popular and accessible to all. •
Chappottín y sus Estrellas in Colombia

The band members paid tribute to Miguelito Cuni, the artistic name of the great sonero Miguel Arcángel Cuniill, on the centenary of his birth

Ricardo Alonso Venereo

- THE Conjunto Chappottín y sus Estrellas, a Cuban son group founded 67 years ago, affiliated with the Ignacio Príeto Music and Entertainment Trading Company, recently performed in two important jazz events in Colombia, a country in which they are well known, following their participation in the Cali Fair, in December 2009.

- The first of the events in which they took part was the 21st edition of the MedeJazz International Jazz Festival, which concluded September 16 in the city of Medellín. Cuba’s Chicho Valdés and his quartet, and the Orquesta Aragón and Septeto Santiagouero groups, also performed at the festival.

- The second event was the 21st edition of the Barranquijazz Festival 2017, held in the northern city of Barranquilla September 13-17. The event is globally renowned and one of the most important of its kind in Latin America. Conjunto Chappottín y sus Estrellas performed on Sunday 17, in the Salón Jumbo.

- In both festivals, the band members paid tribute to Miguelito Cuni, the artistic name of the great sonero Miguel Arcángel Cuniill, in the year of the centenary of his birth, and performed emblematic pieces such as “La Guaranachanga,” by Juan Rivera Pevot, sung by Miguelito Cuniill’s son, Miguel Arcángel Cuniill Hernández; “El Carbonero,” by Iván Fernández; and “Sazonando,” by Luis Martínez Gorrión.

- Other Cuban artists participating in the 21st edition of Barranquijazz included, among others, Omara Portuondo, known as the “Diva of the Buena Vista Social Club Iglesias; September 25 and 26 in Moscow’s Stanislavski theatres by the prestigious Bolshoi and Stanislavski Festival in Moscow, on September 25, invited by the DCC, founded 67 years ago, affiliated with the Ignacio Príeto Music and Entertainment Trading Company, representing a company with headquarters situated at No. 410, between Lealtad and Campanario Streets, of Egrem’s Patio Areíto, located on San Miguel Street, Havana every Tuesday from 5:00 pm, in the Salón Jelengue of the National Theatre of Cuba. Founded on September 25, 1959, the DCC has been capturing on film with titles such as Historia de un ballet, El cristal, Súlkari, Historia de un ballet fragmentada and Tocororo. (Edcrud)

Contemporary Dance of Cuba to open festival in Russia

- HAVANA.- Contemporary Dance of Cuba (DCC) confirmed on September 18, that it will be opening the Dance Inversion International Festival in Moscow, on September 25, invited by the prestigious Bolshoi and Stanislavski theatres.

- The DCC will offer performances on September 25 and 26 in Moscow’s Stanislavski Theatre in London. Its work has also been captured on film with titles such as Okantomí, Ecured, Tocororo, and Historia de un ballet. This has already been a successful year for the DCC, invited by the UK based Dance Inversion International Jazz Festival in Russia, on September 25, 1959, the DCC has been capturing on film with titles such as Historia de un ballet, El cristal, Súlkari, Historia de un ballet fragmentada and Tocororo. (Edcrud).

- George Céspedes also from Cuba. Alongside the DCC, the Dance Inversion Festival will also feature other companies such as Toast; Damas de Irland; Spain’s Rocío Molina; the Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company from Germany; Jessica Lang Dance of the U.S.; and the Montecarlo, Monaco; and Marseille companies, as well as others from France and Zurich, Switzerland.

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Alejandro Valdés: I want to make my daughter proud

Jorge C. de la Paz

In less than one month Cuban gymnasts will face their second competition of the year: the 47th Gymnastics World Championships, in Montreal, Canada, a special place for the sport, where the outstanding Nadia Comaneci scored the first perfect 10 in history of the discipline.

Also looking to secure high scores for technique and esthetic, Manrique Larduet, Randy Lerú, Marcia Videaux, and Yesenia Ferrera will represent Cuba, after months of training at the National School of Gymnastics.

For Alejandro Valdés, son of three-time World champion Enrique Valdés, the sport runs in his veins. In less than one month Cuban gymnasts will face their second competition of the year: the 47th Gymnastics World Championships, in Montreal, Canada, a special place for the sport, where the outstanding Nadia Comaneci scored the first perfect 10 in history of the discipline.

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Alejandro Valdés (right) competing for the bronze medal in the Paris World Championships.
Where power and corruption intersect
Guatemala:

Gabriela Ávila Gómez

- TWO years ago, then President of Guatemala, Otto Pérez Molina, made headlines around the world after a corruption scandal came to light involving himself and senior officials of his administration, including then Vice President Roxana Baldetti.

The case, known as “La Línea” (The Line), in reference to the telephone line used by importers to offer bribes to avoid customs duties, was exposed in early 2015 by the country’s Attorney General and the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG).

The scandal, which is reported to have generated 3.6 million dollars between May 2014 and April 2015, led to Baldetti’s resignation and that of Pérez Molina - who refused to step down immediately after the customs corruption ring was exposed - a few months later. Both - in addition to other government officials - are currently standing trial for various corruption charges.

Today, Guatemala is once again in the eye of the storm after President Jimmy Morales declared head of CICIG, Iván Velásquez of Colombia, a persona non grata.

WHAT’S GOING ON WITH CICIG & JIMMY MORALES?

After Guatemala’s second round of presidential elections in 2015, Jimmy Morales expressed his support for Iván Velásquez to continue as CICIG head, stating that if he won the elections he would work to ensure the permanence of the organization.

In fact, during a visit to the United Nations last year, Morales, whose winning campaign slogan was “Neither corrupt nor a thief,” called for CICIG to continue through 2019, a motion which was later approved.

A while later, in early 2017, Jimmy’s son and brother were implicated in a new case of missing state funds, which saw both stand trial for fraud and money laundering in July.

However, the turning point in the conflict came at the end of August, when CICIG and the Attorney General’s Office revealed that the President had received illegal financing during the campaign which saw him elected in 2015. Shortly thereafter, Morales declared Velásquez to be a persona non grata and issued an order for his expulsion from the country, which was later rejected by Supreme Court Justices (CSJ) Magistrates.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres reaffirmed his support for Velázquez as head of CICIG: “No complaints relating to the head of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala have been received... the Secretary-General heartily commends the work of Commissioner Velásquez and looks forward to continuing to support him carrying out his functions at the helm of the Commission.”

Meanwhile, the CSJ began legal proceedings against Morales for illegal campaign financing, a motion which was recently blocked by Congress, meaning that Morales maintains his presidential immunity from prosecution.

President of Guatemala Jimmy Morales is accused of illicit campaign funding during the presidential elections of 2015.

Gabriela Ávila Gómez

Guatemala: Where power and corruption intersect

GABRIELA ÁVILA GÓMEZ

President of Guatemala Jimmy Morales is accused of illicit campaign funding during the presidential elections of 2015.

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Medical Services and other Health services in Cuba

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The UN needs to be reformed, but not unilaterally
It was an unprecedented speech, aggressive, dominating, openly imperialist

Interview with Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, by teleSUR journalist Jorge Gestoso, at United Nations headquarters, September 19, 2017, Year 59 of the Revolution

(Council of State transcript / GLtranslation)

FOREIGN Minister, Thank you for being here with us. Thank you very much.

Your reaction to the speech this morning by Donald Trump?

It was an unprecedented speech, aggressive, dominating, openly imperialist. I was surprised by his manipulation of the issue of sovereignty for the United States, vassalage for the rest; totally ignoring the concept of sovereign equality that inspires the United Nations.

His attack on Venezuela: brutal, unjustified, arbitrary. He called for additional actions against Venezuela. What is he referring to, the armed option, something worse? So then, I would like to condemn his remarks, reiterate Cuba’s absolute solidarity with the Bolivarian, Chavista people, with their civic-military union, with the government headed by Constitutional President Nicolás Maduro Moros.

His threat to destroy a country on the Korean peninsula is extremely serious. He threatens to set the Korean Peninsula on fire with a necessarily nuclear configuration, which could endanger all of humanity. A conflict which cannot, in any way, be solved militarily.

The government of President Trump is a government that lost the popular vote, that has, moreover, a very low approval rate among those who pay taxes in the country, without the slightest moral authority to criticize Cuba, a small country, an island of solidarity that has broad international cooperation, a government of recognized honesty and transparency, a dignified, hard-working people, the site of Columbus’s peace process, a country known for its stability. And it is done by the head of an empire, responsible for the majority of wars taking place today on the planet, and which is a factor in the world’s severe instability, and the very serious threats to peace and international security.

I strongly reject the statements made by President Trump. The possibility that relations with Cuba may be broken is being heard, or that they be significantly reduced. Your reaction? Well, the President did not say that in his speech. These are topics I will address later; I will speak during the coming days in the general debate, and I can briefly refer to issues on the international agenda, including relations with the United States.

Lastly, your reaction to the horrible earthquake Mexico has just experienced, 7.0, and dozens dead thus far... a tragedy! After the recent earthquake, precisely on the anniversary of the terrible quake that destroyed Mexico City, I expressed our heartfelt condolences to the Mexican government, the Mexican people, its delegation here. Also to families of the victims, those affected; and we are at Mexico’s disposal.

In the same way that we are mobilizing our forces to contribute to islands in the eastern Caribbean, in particular Dominica, which has been devastated in a very serious manner. We have 36 Cuban collaborators there and we are finding a way to send more help.

Thank you very much, Minister. Thank you very much for joining us. Thanks to teleSUR. Thank you very much.

Sergio Alejandro Gómez

THE Swedish diplomat Dag Hammarskjold said at one time, “The United Nations was not created to take humanity to paradise but rather to save it from hell.”

Erected on the rubble of WWII, the principal goal of the UN was to avoid another confrontation and conflict that would endanger the survival of the human race. Nevertheless, more than seven decades later, there are many, varied challenges to be faced by the international organization, where almost all of the planet’s nations sit down together to dialogue.

The current world situation is very different from the postwar era, when a handful of nations pulled the strings. The former colonies are now emerging independent nations, which compete in terms of development and resources with those who were once their colonial masters.

Change in the United Nations is imperative to improve effectiveness, eliminate archaic structures, and adapt to a multi-polar 21st century

Also heard repeatedly is criticism of the lack of democracy in the Security Council, which has binding powers, although a small group of countries are granted special prerogatives, including the ability to veto any decision.

The U.S. text, on the contrary, calls for strengthening interference in the sovereignty of states in regards to humanitarian issues, development, and peace, instead of correcting the distortions which have been criticized in the General Assembly. Cuba did not endorse the declaration, and neither did a significant group of countries including Russia and China, permanent members of the Security Council. Beyond the authority the United States presumes to exercise, many fear that the Trump administration is more concerned about its wallet than the future of the organization, which Trump described, as a candidate in 2016, as “a club for people to get together, talk, and have a good time.”

Trump complained again on September 18 that the U.S. contributes too much money to the organization, saying that no member country should be expected to shoulder a disproportionate share of the responsibility, “militarily or financially.” The United States, with the world’s largest economy, funds 22% of the UN’s biennial budget of 5.4 billion dollars for peace-keeping efforts.

Almost no one doubts that, at 72 years of age, the United Nations needs a profound transformation, but what is to be changed, and how, is a question that can only be answered by member states in consensus, not imposed by the few. On the contrary, the paradise they promise could be hell.

Jorge Gestoso interviews Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, in UN headquarters.

Change in the United Nations is imperative to improve effectiveness, eliminate archaic structures, and adapt to a multi-polar 21st century

Hubei, a Chinese province committed to Cuba

Iramsy Peraza Forte, Special correspondent

- HUBEI, China.- To talk about Cuba in Hubei, in southwest China, not only evokes images of paradisical beaches and one of the best rums in the world, but increasingly biotechnology and agriculture, which have earned a place among the leading sectors of the island.

Twisting and turning along the middle and lower course of the Yangtze River, this Chinese territory, with a GDP of 502 billion dollars in 2016, and a level of development almost comparable to that of Sweden, in accordance with World Bank standards, has the desire to further strengthen its ties with Latin America and the Caribbean.

Havana is one of its big bets.

Hubei is currently pursuing two cooperation projects with Cuba, stated Hu Jian, provincial director for Latin American and Caribbean Affairs. “The first is in the biotechnology area, a sector in which the two countries have advanced very rapidly in recent years,” he acknowledged, adding that the second is a joint collaboration program for the establishment of a demonstration farm on the island.

Both projects are part of agreements signed between the two nations in the framework of Xi Jinping’s visit to the island in 2014, which were confirmed last year during Prime Minister Li Keqiang’s stay in the Cuban capital.

We are currently importing and selling Cuban biotechnology products in the province’s local markets, such as PPG, a drug that is well received in the Chinese population especially due to its natural origins, something that we value very much here, Hu explained.

He also noted that plans are to introduce a high-capacity manufacturing line for other highly globally rated Cuban biotechnology products, such as Interferon, for oncological use and to combat viral infections, amines and vaccines, in the Wuhan East Lake High-tech Development Zone, within five years.

Cooperation in the biotech industry between China and Cuba is divided into three stages. The first is the establishment of agencies for the commercialization of Cuban compounds in the country; in the second stage, the Cuban side will provide the technology, while the Chinese side will provide the equipment and facilities to build drug production plants; and the third stage involves the opening of joint development and research institutes to reach a higher level and promote innovation.

The ties between China and Cuba in the sector have been developing for more than 15 years. This important achievement of the Cuban Revolution is already present in the second world power through the Chinese-Cuban joint ventures Biotech, located in the Special Economic Zone of Beijing, and Changshun Heber Biological Technology, located in Jilin, in the north of the country.

AGRICULTURAL COMPLEMENTARITY

With an extension of 187,400 km² and an estimated population of 64 million, Hubei is known as the land of rice and fish, and has an important industrial base and very advanced technology for agricultural development.

As Zhang Xiaojun, Council president of the Nong Ken Lian Feng state agricultural group explained, for this reason, the Ministry of Agriculture of China entrusted the group with the mission of helping establish a demonstration farm in Cuba, a project that will include a grain production center and the construction of an area for rice cultivation, as well as the donation of livestock equipment.

The center was inaugurated in 2014, also during the visit of the Chinese president to Cuba, and is based in the Los Naranjos Genetic-Livestock Enterprise, in the province of Artemisa, an entity created on the initiative of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro Ruz.

“Our ultimate objective is to help the Cuban side to raise the level of its technology and agricultural production management,” Zhang Xiaojun noted. The Nong Ken Lian Feng group was founded in 2006 with the aim of helping to develop agriculture and providing international cooperation.

The Frank Pais International Orthopedic Scientific Complex is the world’s largest and most complete medical complex dedicated to orthopedic, traumatological and reconstructive surgery, and the rehabilitation of bone, muscle, nerve, and joint systems.

The complex offers treatment of spinal cord diseases, fractured discs, traumatic, congenital, or acquired spinal paralysis; peripheral nerve paralysis; bone and soft tissue tumors; fractures and their aftermath; musculoskeletal, bone and joint infections; and congenital and acquired bone deformations.

In addition, the complex performs reconstructive surgery of foot and hand lesions; partial or total bone and joint grafts; prosthetic joint replacement; microsurgery; bone lengthening to remedy congenital or acquired defects; shortness and dwarfism; revascularization surgery, and grafts in the case of spinal cord lesions and joint contractures.

Special services are also offered in external fixation techniques and for sports lesions and trauma.

The complex includes the ORTOFORZA Physical Health and Sports Center devoted to the promotion, recovery and maintenance of physical health through medical care, rehabilitation and sports in a comfortable facility with doctors’ offices, a well-equipped gymnasium, squash and paddlball courts, swimming pool, fitness course, running track, as well as restaurants, gift shop and other services.

Also included in the complex are the Ibero-American School of Orthopedics and Traumatology and the ORTOP Events Center, devoted, respectively, to the organization of courses and assistantships, and hosting of professional congresses and meetings. For such events, well-equipped meeting rooms and technical staff are available.

The complex is already present in the second world power through cooperation.
Catalonia activates plan to separate from Spain

Eduardo Rodríguez-Baz

- MADRID: Catalan authorities activated their self-proclaimed sovereignty process, in which they intend to hold a unilateral referendum on the succession of the autonomous community from the rest of Spain on October 1.

In what many consider an institutional crisis of unpredictable consequences, the Catalan Parliament - with a pro-independence majority - approved the so-called Referendum Law on September 6, which establishes the legal framework to hold the controversial vote.

Despite the flat refusal of the government of Mariano Rajoy and the Spanish Constitutional Court (TC) ruling the referendum illegal, the law was passed with 72 votes in favor from the Juntos por el Sí (Together for Yes) coalition, and the anti-capitalist Popular Unity Candidacy party (CUP); 11 abstentions and the absence of a large part of the opposition, who denounced the illegality of the vote.

For the Juntos por el Sí coalition - including the parties Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (Republican Left of Catalonia) and the center-right Partit Demòcrata Europeu Català (Catalan Democratic Party) - the new law legitimizes a vote on a split from Spain, based on the principle of self-determination.

After the tense, marathon session of the Catalan legislative chamber, the President of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Catalan executive), Carles Puigdemont, signed the decree convening the secessionist referendum.

Puigdemont stated that he would defend Catalonia's right to decide to the end, and called on Catalans to massively participate in the vote.

"To deny this right, treating Catalans as subjects in the service of a state, that fabricates threats at the same rate as violations, this is no democracy, it's something else," the autonomous leader stressed.

In his view, the rich region of 7.5 million people has the opportunity to become a "democratic, modern, and free" state.

Puigdemont stressed that such a decision is up to the people and not to any Council of Ministers or Constitutional Court, "delegitimized, discredited and politicized to improper levels."

Rajoy's administration and the TC deployed their entire arsenal to curb separatist aspirations, which have intensified since 2010.

Rajoy insisted that he will prevent by all possible legal channels the holding of the controversial referendum, with guarantees.

The government may be correct in legal terms, but it is irresponsible to hide behind the law to resolve a political problem, the leader of the third strongest parliamentary force in Spain noted.

Iglesias warned that there are no legal or regulatory solutions capable of resolving Catalonia's position in Spain, urged the Spanish government to moderate the tone of the debate and once again support the holding of an agreed referendum.

What is required now is good sense and calm but, above all, the recognition that political conflicts are not solved by judges, they have to be resolved politically, he concluded. (PL)
Global Cuba solidarity campaign underway
Nuria Barbosa León

- WITH THE aim of generating more support for an end to the economic, financial and commercial blockade imposed by the United States on Cuba for over half a century; days of action entitled, Tenemos Memoria, Solidaridad vs Bloqueo (We Remember. Solidarity vs the Blockade) are taking place in various countries around the world through early November, when the Cuban resolution against the aggressive policy will once again be put to a United Nations General Assembly vote.

Speaking to Granma International, Elió Gámez Neyra, first vice president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), explained that actions kicked-off with a solidarity act commemorating the 20th anniversary of the murder of young Italian Fabio Di Celmo, who died after a bomb placed by Salvadoran mercenary Raul Ernesto Cruz León, exploded in Havana’s Copacabana Hotel; an act of terrorism financed by counter-revolutionary groups of Cuban-origin based in southern Florida.

He also noted that the ceremony served to remember and pay tribute to all victims of terrorism throughout the history of the Cuban Revolution.

According to the ICAP official, organizers of the international campaign are putting together cultural events, rallies, marches, and protests outside United States embassies and diplomatic establishments in various countries.

He went on to note that in addition to tributes, participants will call on parliamentarians and government officials to present motions and documents condemning the blockade and acts of terrorism against the Caribbean island.

All of these activities are being organized by the world Cuba solidarity movement, present in 152 countries, and committed to condemning global terrorism.

"Many events, ranging from lobbying in the U.S. Congress, to a march and solidarity act outside the White House, took place from September 11-16 in Washington," noted Gámez Neyra.

Also held were talks and panel discussions on the damage caused by the U.S. blockade, despite the reestablishment of diplomatic relations.

The 50th anniversary of the assassination of Heroic Guerrilla Ernesto Che Guevara in Bolivia is also being commemorated during these days of action.

Likewise, friends of Cuba in Spain announced a special series of events that will take place October 2-9, while the Che Presente, Cuba Solidarity Encuentro and 25th anniversary of the Socialist Cuba Initiative Friendship Association are set to be commemorated in Argentina.

In Cuba meanwhile, mass and political organizations are joining the campaign with various activities taking place in work and educational centers, including acts, marches, and cultural events, during which participants will call on the international community to condemn the imperialism anti-Cuban policy.

The ICAP official went on to note that various dates are being commemorated on the island in September and October, such as the coup d’état in Chile on September 11, 1973; the anniversary of the unjust imprisonment of the Cuban Five in the United States; the 1976 murder of politician and Chilean Ambassador, Orlando Letelier in the United States; the bombing of a Cubana de Aviación plane over Barbados in October that same year; and the assassination of Argentine-Cuban guerrilla Ernesto Che Guevara, October 8, 1967 in Bolivia.

Meanwhile, Gámez Neyra explained that Committees for Peace and the Defense of the Revolution will hold neighborhood meetings to decry the effects of the economic blockade on the island; a policy which has been almost unanimously condemned by the international community in the United Nations General Assembly.

The event will also serve to denounce and protest the U.S. economic blockade on Cuba and regional oligarchs against revolutionary and progressive policies, as well as Parliamentary coup plotters, backed by Washington, who threaten the political stability and sovereignty of the peoples.

Pastors for Peace and its founder

Lucius Walker honored

- THE 50 years of solidarity and commitment demonstrated by the Interfaith Community Organization (IFCO)-Pastors for Peace was highlighted in a commemorative event at the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) headquarters in Havana.

The legacy of its founder, Reverend Lucius Walker, was honored, seven years after his death, for his commitment to fighting for a change in social relations around the world, to resist the hegemonic power of the United States.

During the event, his daughter Gail Walker, now executive director of Pastors for Peace, recalled her father’s efforts to attract attention to struggles against injustice, and support the revolutionary processes in Nicaragua and Cuba.

Calling Lucius a teacher, pastor, and community organizer, she stated that he was a much-loved son of Fidel Castro; he was the kind of supporting youth who didn’t have the resources to study medicine in U.S. universities, and bringing them to Cuba to be trained as doctors, with the only requirement that, after graduating, they commit to return to provide services in undeserved neighborhods.

He said she was proud to see so many people honor her father in different parts of the world.

Reverend Walker was born August 3, 1930, in New Jersey, and in May of 1964 sponsored the National Committee to Abolish the House Un-American Activities Committee, and in 1967 created IFCO. He held the position of adjunct secretary general of the National Council of Churches 1973-1978, and in 1984 became pastor of the Salvation Baptist Church.

During a stop in Sandinista Nicaragua, he was wounded in an attack by the U.S. backed contras, and received the Pastors for Peace project, which beginning in 1992, organized 21 Friendship Caravans to transport donations to the Cuban people and challenge the blockade. (There have now been 28.) He died September 8, 2010.

Decorated Hero of the Republic Fernando González Llort, ICAP president, referred to the effort made by Lucius to build greater support within churches for progressive organizations fighting for social justice, principally in disadvantaged, Black and Latino communities.

His leadership helped to strengthen initiatives of an international character, such as support for Haitian refugees, delegations and caravans to Central America. The work to gather donations for Cuba served as a way to disseminate the country’s reality among the U.S. population, and build a movement to advocate for an end to hostile U.S. policies, González noted.

He recalled the significance of the second caravan to Cuba, which challenged U.S. authorities crossing the border into Mexico at Laredo, Texas, after touring 90 cities, and collecting 12.5 tons of medicine, powdered milk, bicycles, school supplies and Bibles.

A bus was confiscated there, in an attempt to detain the caravan, leading to a hunger strike until the cargo was allowed to proceed.

"They never imagined that this vehicle would become a symbol of the struggle against the blockade and a genuine expression of friendship between our peoples," González affirmed.

He commented that IFCO participated actively in the struggle to return the child Elián González to his father in Cuba, and joined the worldwide campaign for the Cuban Five, unreasonably imprisoned in the United States. He concluded his remarks expressing gratitude to the organization and Latin American participants to join caravans, saying, "Cuba needs the solidarity of those who stand up united to support our sovereignty."

(Nuria Barbosa León)