

# CUBA

## Current Affairs

Year I / No.9



### Embassy of Cuba in Cambodia

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#### Facts on Cuba 2018

**May 11:**  
1873-Die in Jimaguayu,  
General Ignacio Agramonte.

**May 19:** Falls in combat of  
José Martí in Dos Ríos.

#### Esteban Lazo, reelected as President of the National Assembly



Juan Esteban Lazo Hernández was elected unanimously as President of the National Assembly of People's Power, on April 18. He is 74 years old, has a University degree and is a member of the Political Bureau. President of the National Assembly of People's Power. Also shows active memberships in PCC, CTC, CDR organizations.

As a young man, he joined the Association of Young Rebels, participated in the literacy campaign and was a

member of the National Revolutionary Militias. Since he became a member of the Party in 1963, he has held various responsibilities, among them organizer of the Regional Party Committee in Colón. In Matanzas, he has been the Ministry of Agriculture's provincial representative, second and first provincial secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba, and first secretary of the Provincial Committee in Santiago de Cuba, subsequently moving to take on the same role in Havana. In 2003, he joined the Political Bureau, in charge of the ideological sphere. Lazo was a member of the Central Committee Secretariat from 2006 through 2013; a delegate to all of the Party's Congresses; a National Assembly deputy since 1981; and a Council of State vice president between 1992 and 2013.

#### Miguel Díaz-Canel: President of the Council of State of Cuba



Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez was elected President of the Council of State of the Republic of Cuba, this Wednesday during the constitutive session of the IX Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP), by 99.83% of the valid votes casted. The new President of the Council of State will also head the Government, as established in the Cuban constitution.

Belonging to the generation born after the triumph of the Revolution, the Electronic Engineer and Master in Management Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez is a member of the Political Bureau of the Party since 2003. In his biography, his work as a student leader stands out, until he became the first secretary of the Provincial Committee of the Young Communist League in Villa Clara and his second secretary in the national leadership. He has vast experience in political leadership in the Party, promoted since 1993 he became a member of the provincial bureau in Villa Clara,

serving as the first secretary in that territory and later in Holguín. He was appointed Minister of Higher Education in 2009, Vice President of the Council of Ministers in 2012 and elected First Vice President of the Council of State a year later.

## The Council of State to the 9th Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power



**Miguel Mario Diaz.Canel Bermúdez**  
President of the Councils  
of State and Ministers  
of Cuba.

A member of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) Political Bureau, Diaz.Canel has also held positions within the FEEM and FEU. He served as First Secretary of the Young Communist League (UJC) at the Las Villas Central University "Marta Abreu" and a member of the Provincial Bureau. He graduated with a degree in Electronic Engineering and later earned a Masters in Management. Diaz-Canel held the positions of first and second secretary of the UJC Provincial Committee in Villa Clara, and second secretary of the organization's National Committee. As a member of the PCC, Diaz-Canel occupied a seat on its Bureau in Villa Clara, and successfully served as first Secretary in the province. He was elected a member of the Central Committee during the Fifth Party Congress and held the position of PCC first secretary in the Province of Holguin. Later, Diaz-Canel was appointed Minister of Higher Education, and in 2012 was elected as a vice president of the Council of Ministers, before being promoted to First Vice President of the Councils of State and Ministers of Cuba in 2013. Diaz-Canel also served on an internationalist mission in Nicaragua.



**Salvador Valdés Mesa**  
First Vice President of the Councils  
of State and Ministers of Cuba

Valdez Mesa is a member of the Communist Party of Cuba (PCC) Political Bureau, and has held a range of responsibilities in local People's Power bodies, the Party, and Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC), where he served as second secretary and secretary general, as well as secretary general of the National Agricultural and Forestry Workers Trade Union. He also held the position of Minister of Labor and Social Security and first secretary of the Party Provincial Committee in Camagüey.

### Vice Presidents



**Ramiro Valdés  
Menéndez**



**Roberto Tomás  
Morales Ojeda**



**Gladys María  
Bejerano Portela**



**Inés María Chapman  
Waugh**



**Beatriz Jhonson  
Urrutia**

### Secretary



**Homero Acosta  
Álvarez**

## Days of combat: April 1961



Fidel proclaimed the socialist nature of the Revolution on the Havana street corner of 23rd and 12th, during the burial of those killed in the airport bombings of April 15,

Rumors of the fighting were heard during the dawn hours. It was at a distance. I went out on the balcony. From the heights of Vedado, militia men ran down the hill as they finished buttoning their uniform shirts. Right away, the news began to spread. They had bombed the Ciudad Libertad airport. We were in the prelude to an imminent invasion, expected since the United States had broken diplomatic relations. We were on the eve of Playa Girón. (on the Bay of Pigs)

Moved by an impulse from the depths of my conscience, I decided to end the convalescence that followed a series of operations. I joined the work. My individual reaction was the same as that of the vast majority of the people who were not on the front lines. On the rearguard, it was our responsibility to assure the normal functioning of the country. And so it was.

With absolute serenity, following the latest news, the collective will to defend the country under attack was made clear in the ongoing provision of services and increase in production. This spirit of resistance concretely supported the combatants who advanced under the bombs toward Playa Girón and the pilots who made decisive strikes from their dilapidated planes. An impenetrable wall was raised to stop the enemy, defeated in 72 hours.

After the bombing of the airports, before a crowd of militiamen holding their weapons high, Fidel proclaimed the socialist nature of the Revolution – the organic result of the process that began with the January 1959 victory, that was itself the continuation of our centenary struggle for national liberation. On the eve of Girón, only two years had transpired since the Batista dictatorship's defeat. That victory, against a professional army backed by imperialism, that seemed so improbable to many, had returned the people's confidence in its own strength.

In the depths of the collective moral conscience, the rebels' triumph reanimated the original sources of inspiration supporting a nation project, counterpoised to the skeptical currents produced by the frustrating impact of the United States' intervention in the war of independence, and the subsequent imposition of the Platt Amendment. In fact, the revolutionary government has closed the door on the traditional interference of U. S. ambassadors in the country's internal affairs, speaking with its own voice in international forums and strengthening ties with Latin American countries which shared a common destiny. The country's resources had been redirected to benefit the nation. With the Agrarian Reform, demanded since the Constitution of 1940, campesinos received titles to the land they worked. The time was over for evictions and the dramatic events retold by Pablo de la Torriente Brau in Rea-lengo 18. In response to reprisals by the U.S. government, the country's oil refineries and banks were nationalized.

Cultural institutions were emerging along the way. Their design reflected the longings forged during the neocolonial republic by the underground work of a layer of intellectuals, who despite the lack of official support, maintained a creative spirit alive, motivated by the search for the recovery of the nation's essence, without renouncing the worthwhile assimilation of the vanguard renovation developing beyond our borders, and productive dialogue with its natural audience, the potential public marginalized at that time. Publishing houses printed books that had been filed away. Theater emerged from miniscule venues to welcome a broader audience. Spectators learned to decipher the language of dance with the National Ballet and the experimental works of modern currents. The Cuban Film Institute (ICAIC) fortified its industrial base to develop a cinema of our own. Folklore research brought to the stage, and legitimized, the living legacy of our African heritage. In this way, some of our historically marginalized essences were exhibited. The Casa de las Américas established bridges of dialogue of unprecedented intensity with all of Latin America.

Only 72 hours had passed since the landing at Playa Girón. In the well known voice of actress Raquel Revuelta, news of the victory was announced. The invader had not been able to establish the beach head needed to justify an OAS intervention. United in resistance, the people displayed the strength that would allow them to confront other battles. The spirit of a nation re-conquered had taken shape in Girón.

Looking to the future, amidst the fighting, the Literacy Campaign continued.

**"The invader had not been able to establish the beach head needed to justify an OAS intervention. United in resistance, the people displayed the strength that would allow them to confront other battles. The spirit of a nation re-conquered had taken shape in Girón "**

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**57 Anniversary of the proclamation  
of the Socialist character of the Cuban Revolution**



## Cuba will not accept threats or blackmail from the U.S.



Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla reiterated before heads of state and government during his speech at the 8th Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru. Source: <http://www.cubanews.acn.cu>

Cuba will not accept threats or blackmail from the U.S. government, Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla reiterated before heads of state and government during his speech at the 8th Summit of the Americas in Lima, Peru.

Speaking at the high-level segment of the hemispheric meeting, which concluded Saturday at the Lima Convention Center, the head of Cuban diplomacy stressed that his country "does not want confrontation, but will not negotiate anything of its internal affairs, nor will it give up an inch of its principles.

During his speech, the FM stated that although they have suffered setbacks today, the progress made in recent years in relations with the United States was tangible when, in addition, it was demonstrated that civilized coexistence within the profound differences between governments was possible and beneficial.

In the current context, he denounced the hardening of the economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed by the US against Cuba, which causes limitations to the people and violates human rights, while at the same time being rejected by the international community and sectors of the northern country itself.

He argued that there is also growing global condemnation of the illegal occupation of the territory at Guantánamo by the U.S. naval base and torture and detention center there.

The pretext to reduce the number of U.S. embassy personnel in Cuba and affect the right to travel of Cubans and citizens of that country suffers total discredit, argued Rodríguez Parrilla in allusion to the alleged acoustic incidents suffered by Washington diplomats in Havana a few months ago.

At another point in his speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs described the Organization of American States and its Secretary General, Luis Almagro, as mere U.S. instruments aimed at restoring imperialist domination in the region.

He questioned whether the theme of the Summit was precisely that of the fight against corruption, when this is aggravated within the circles of prosecutors and judges who act as political parties.

It is hidden in this meeting that corruption prevails among government leaders, parliamentarians, conservative politicians and the electoral systems, and in the northern banks where money laundering occurs, including from drug trafficking, among other crimes, he denounced.

In this scenario, he added that voters are prevented from voting for candidates with strong popular support, such as the former Brazilian president, currently imprisoned Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, "whose freedom we demand," he said.

The Cuban diplomat devoted much of his statement to Venezuela, saying that the seriousness of that country's arbitrary and unjust statement should not be underestimated as "an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security of the US superpower".

The exclusion of President Nicolas Maduro from this Summit is an affront to all the peoples of Our America, and a historic step backwards imposed by the current U.S. government, he said.

Once again, he advocated for the self-determination of the sister Bolivarian nation and reiterated Cuba's unwavering solidarity in defence of the Bolivarian and Chavista civil-military union of the people, headed by its constitutional President.

Referring to the attacks perpetrated against Syria by the US and NATO allies, the FM assured that it was a unilateral, illegal action, without evidence or conclusions from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

This flagrant violation of the principles of international law and the United Nations Charter will exacerbate the conflict in that country and in the region, he said, while expressing the island's rejection of the use of chemical and other mass extermination weapons by any actor or circumstance.

During his speech, the Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed his solidarity with other causes in the region, such as those of Ecuador, for the murder of three journalists, Puerto Rico and the Malvinas Islands, an Argentine territory occupied by the United Kingdom.

**"Cuba will not accept threats or blackmail by the Government of the United States. Cuba does not want confrontation, but will not negotiate anything of its internal affairs, nor will it give up an inch of its principles."**

**57 Anniversary of the proclamation  
of the Socialist character of the Cuban Revolution**

## Another April 19, another victory



The fact that today Cuba has a new President is not only the result of an electoral process. There is a great deal of responsibility, and symbolism, in this transition from one historical generation to another which was not forged in the Sierra or on the plains in the hard-won victory, but one that has risen to the occasion to preserve the victory, without losing the way, to found, transform, triumph...

And there is also disinterest in this act of ceding, that does not imply quitting. There is much humility in those who leave to others the leadership of the great work of the Revolution to which they have given their all - to now accompany those bearing the responsibility, in Raúl's case, as the highest authority in the political vanguard and from his seat as a deputy.

The events were as natural as they were transcendent.

tal.

On the first day of the Assembly's constituent session, we saw Raúl take his seat in the first row, exercise his right to vote, ballot in hand, showing with his unassuming conduct that the time had arrived, the moment that always seemed so distant.

And when Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez was elected as President of Cuba, Raúl stepped up, without any unnecessary protocol or solemn posture, to receive him, embrace him, show his confidence in the man, the future.

Speaking of Díaz-Canel, Raúl emphasized that he is no rookie, noting his work as an engineer, an officer in the Revolutionary Armed Forces, a youth leader and later a professional Party cadre in Villa Clara and Holguín. He spoke of his performance as Minister of Higher Education, and for the last five years, as First Vice President of the Councils of State and Ministers.

The new President spoke of Raúl as a statesman, of his leadership in the development of national consensus on the updating process underway in the country, as well as his rich history as a participant in the Moncada assault, a Granma expeditionary, a guerilla, military commander, and political leader.

"I'm not here to promise anything," Díaz-Canel said, "as the Revolution never did over all these years. I'm here to offer commitment," to continue working and creating tirelessly, in step with the people.

In this endeavor, we are not alone, because "even our dead accompany us."

It may not be easy to do all that needs to be done, but this April 19, there was no parting. The continuity has a face, faces.

## Why do we march? #ForCuba



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This May Day the Cuban people will lead a massive, vibrant, joyful, and conscious march reaffirming to the world the commitment of the island's workers to the new government, Raúl, and the Party.

This, according to Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, a member of the Party Political Bureau and secretary general of the Cuban Workers' Federation (CTC), who added that "In order to talk about the impact of the Cuban Revolution, we must, of course, talk about its workers movement."

Speaking during a press conference held Monday, April 23, Guilarte de Nacimiento noted that the traditional march will be an opportunity to honor Fidel, express support for the updating of the country's socio-economic model of socialist development, and send a message of solidarity to trade union friends worldwide.

According to the Cuban official, "Unity, Commitment,

and Victory," will be the main slogan of the event set to be led by the Education, Science, and Sport Trade Union, with phrases such as "May Day: commitment to the Homeland," "In Cuba, a single Revolution," and "80 years of principles," also featuring on banners.

Guilarte de Nacimiento added that this year workers are being called upon to "Exploit productive reserves; reaffirm our responsibility to the working class by generating the wealth needed by our people; substitute imports and consolidate exports, in order to turn the complex economic situation currently facing the country, into productive victories."



## No Infant Mortality in Cienaga de Zapata since 2015



Zero infant and maternal mortality over the past 39 months are today major achievements in the health sector in the municipality of Cienaga de Zapata (Zapata Swamp), the largest and best preserved wetlands in the insular Caribbean. The Zapata Swamp, a wild area south of western Matanzas province and 180 kilometers southeast of Havana, has a population of 9,000 in 18 communities and covers 1,520 square kilometers.

These demographic and geographic characteristics turn the region into Cuba's largest municipality and, at the same time, in the least populated area in the country. Local Health Director Ariel Alayón told Prensa Latina that the region has 13 family doctor's offices, some of which are in faraway areas and provide specialized medical consults. He mentioned other favorable indicators in the municipality, like a reduction in the number of children

with low weight at birth and zero infections by the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito, which transmits diseases like dengue fever. The expert attributed these positive results to the intersectorial work done in the healthcare field in coordination with local mass organizations and government institutions. We have a staff of 150 experts, including physicians and nurses, in addition to technicians and health technologists who work at family doctor's offices and in two polyclinics, one in Playa Larga and the other one on Cayo Ramona, which are equipped with cutting-edge technology, Alayón noted. We are also using natural and traditional medicine and have a ward for integral rehabilitation, the official concluded.

## U.S. and Cuban companies reach agreement on Heberprot-p



Cuban enterprise Heber Biotec and U.S. company Mercurio Biotec have agreed to work together to make Heberprot-P – a Cuban developed medication to treat diabetic foot ulcers - available to patients in the U.S., once it has been approved by the country's Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Given the success of the product and following the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Ministry of Public Health of the Republic of Cuba, on June 13, 2016, it is hoped that the Cuban developed medication will soon be available to patients in the United States, according to a press release by the BioCubaFarma

enterprise. Meanwhile, "The United States Department of the Treasury, Office of Foreign Assets Controls, authorized Mercurio Biotec to enter into agreements with the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (CIGB), to conduct all transactions necessary to import Heberprot-P to conduct independent clinical trials authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)," according to the Mercurio Biotec website. Almost one million U.S. citizens are diagnosed with diabetic foot ulcers (DFUs) every year; a condition which increases the risk of lower-limb amputations. In just five years the number of people suffering from this condition in the U.S. has risen from 73,000 to 85,000, with a significant economic and social impact on the patient, their family members and healthcare system.

## Neurology Institute Increases its Research



The challenges for the center, reference of Neurological sciences in Cuba, are the development of advanced and minimum invasive neurological surgery techniques for the treatment of tumors of the central nervous system and the increase of research in neurological sciences. The Head of the Institution's Neurological physiology, Dr. Yoel Gutierrez Gil said that among the projections this year is the development of diagnostic technology for neurological ailments through MRI with the construction of a high camp equipment and strengthen a comprehensive attention of patients with epilepsy, movement disorders and neuromuscular ailments. In addition, neurological stimulation and neurological modulation techniques in diseases of the central nervous system and the treatment of pain, among others.

After 56 years in the creation of the institution, the main impacts are related with the following research topics: epidemiology in neurological ailments (Parkinson, Guillain-Barre; epilepsy, vascular diseases and brain tumors. Other inquiries are

discussed on the development of new methods for the prenatal molecular diagnosis and carriers of severe neurological diseases (spine and muscular atrophy); epidemic neuropathy (optic and peripheral) hyperthyroidism, dementia and the study of neurological psychology in neurological genetic ailments. The Neurological and Neurosurgery Institute is a national reference for the diagnosis and treatment of the ailments that affect the central and peripheral nervous system includes specialists in Neurology, Neurosurgery and other disciplines in the field. The center is recognized by its assistance, education and clinical and basic researches, that contribute to stimulating scientific inquiries and offers a better medical attention, achieving a high grade of satisfaction in the patients.

## New medical services offered in 2018



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Photo: Anabel Díaz

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

One of the sector's key achievements has been to maintain an infant mortality rate below five per 1,000 live births for the last 10 years. In 2017, the country achieved a rate of 4.0; proof of its continued efforts to consolidate maternal-infant statistics, to the benefit of Cuban children and families. Meanwhile, heart conditions, cancer and brain diseases are the three main causes of death on the island, where life expectancy at birth is 78.45 years (50.45 for women and 76.50 for men) and the morality rate for seniors over the age of 60 stands at 29 for every 100,000 inhabitants.

Last year, 53 hospitals and 13 medical specialties received new technologies to perform minimal access surgery.

I could quote more statistics from the end of 2017 presented by the Ministry of Public Health, but those already mentioned encapsulate the great human effort undertaken by Cuba to provide quality medical care to the entire population,

despite being an underdeveloped nation and victim of an unjust economic blockade imposed by the most powerful nation on Earth, the United States. Among the healthcare sector's recent accomplishments, it is also worth mentioning exportable products like the vaccine CimaVax, used to treat lung cancer patients and protect those at risk of developing the disease. The medication is currently available across all medical institutions on the island and also registered in various countries.

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

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

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

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

Likewise, the use of Heberprot-P with almost 290,000 patients from over a dozen countries is proof of its effectiveness in healing complex wounds, and ischemic and diabetic foot ulcers. According to its developers, the treatment is an epidermal growth factor-based formulation applied to the affected area with a healing time of around three months. This important achievements, along with a series of other scientific results obtained by Cuban experts, will be presented in Havana, during the 14th International Health for All Fair, taking place April 23-27 at the Pabexpo fairgrounds, with exhibitors from 19 countries and 160 companies, according to MSc. Raquel Acosta Porta, vice president of Development at Medicuba, responsible for exporting Cuban medical products, technologies and equipment, speaking to **Granma International**. "The Health for All Fair is our sector's most important trade fair and the ideal space to bring together Cuban business representatives and professionals from around the world, offering the opportunity to develop networks, establish work agreements and identify new business partners. Likewise, from a scientific perspective, the event allows participants to develop their knowledge around new technologies in the field of medicine," explained the director.

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

## New medical services offered in 2018

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

### RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL HEALTHCARE SYSTEM IN 2017

#### Maternal-infant program

1. Infant mortality: The island achieved its lowest rate in the country's history with 4.040 infant deaths for every 1,000 live births, representing 35 fewer fatalities in children under one year of age as compared to 2016.
2. As a result of the development and continual improvement of the Genetic Network initiative, infant mortality caused by congenital defects stands at 0.9 for every 1,000 live births.
3. Morality among children of school age dropped from 2.1 to 1.7 for every 10,000, with 67 less deaths that year.
4. The rate of under weight infants at birth fell from 5.2 to 5.0 for every 100 births.
5. The maternal mortality rate dropped from 42.6 to 37.8 per 100,000 live births

#### Elderly care program

1. Life expectancy at birth: 78.45 years; 80.45 for women and 76.50 for men.
2. 19.8% of the Cuban population is 60 years of age or older. The mortality rate among the elderly remains 29 per every 100,000 persons aged 60 or older.
3. A continuous decline has been seen in the mortality rate among those aged 75 or older (from 62.4 to 61.9).
4. There are now 287 centers for the elderly (an increase of 11) catering to 9,838 citizens (+390) and 150 seniors homes (+2) with 11,912 beds (+141).
5. There are currently 51 geriatrics departments across healthcare institutions nationwide with 1,049 hospital beds (+22), or one bed per 2,000 elderly citizens.
6. 2017 saw a rise in the availability of health technology and equipment including hearing aids offered at 62 pharmacies across the entire country, as well as wheel chairs, canes, walkers, and hospital beds, among others, benefiting 101,582 patients.

#### Donation & transplant program

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

#### Comprehensive center control program

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



**“Cuba is defending worldwide the promotion and protection of the rights of children”:**  
**Maria Cristina Perceval, UNICEF**  
**Regional Director for Latin America**  
**and the Caribbean.**



## Havana is home to the most African embassies in Latin America



Despite the geographical distance and economic limitations, regionally Cuba is home to the most African embassies, a continent with which it shares many historic and cultural ties. With the opening of the Kenyan Embassy in the Cuban capital, set to take place this Friday March 16, there will now be 22 nations from Sub-Saharan Africa with diplomatic missions in the country, according to information by the Cuban Foreign Ministry.

Although African countries have embassies located throughout the region, there are less than a dozen missions in bigger and economically stronger nations on our continent, like Mexico and Brazil.

Meanwhile, an important event occurred in April last year with the opening of the Embassy of the Republic of the Seychelles

in Havana, the island's first in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Attending the inauguration was the country's President Danny Faure, who studied Political Science in Cuba. In addition to Africa's roots in Cuban society, culture and history, the 1959 Revolution also inspired and supported anti-colonial struggles on the continent.

Cuban soldiers for example, gave their lives to help several African countries secure their freedom, while tens of thousands of doctors, athletes, and teachers have contributed, and continue contributing, to the social and economic development of these nations.

In addition to the vast number of young Africans currently studying on the island, Cuba has also trained thousands of students from that continent who now hold important and even senior political positions in their countries of origin.

**With the opening of the Kenyan Embassy in the Cuban capital, there are now 22 nations from Sub-Saharan Africa with diplomatic missions in the country**

## Cuba, Vietnam Favor More Cooperation between Vaccine Producers



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

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

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

The memorandum was signed by Valdes and Vabiotech President Do Tuan Dat, in the presence of Cuban Ambassador Lianys Torres; Vietnam's Deputy Minister for Science and Technology, Pham Cong Tac; and the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Doan Duy Khuong.

Vabiotech is one of Vietnam's major vaccine producers and, according to Valdes, its relations with the Cuban institute have borne fruits. This time we share the objective of consolidating those ties by identifying new possibilities of mutually advantageous collaboration, including the exchange of technologies, products and expanded markets.

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

(Prensa Latina)

Labiofam Vietnam arrived to its 19th Anniversary, symbol of friendship and brotherhood between both the Countries.



## Common history on the road to socialism



Fidel was the first head of state to visit the liberated area of South Vietnam. Archive Pic.

"Those who live on fish and rice, and wear silk, far away, in Asia, on the seashore, below China," as Cuban National Hero José Martí described the Vietnamese in *Un paseo por la tierra de los anamitas* (A stroll through the land of the Annamites), have always been friends of Cuba.

The ties between the peoples of Cuba and Vietnam go far beyond the historic coincidence of the birth of Ho Chi Minh (May 19, 1890) and the death in combat of José Martí (May 19, 1895), as they were reinforced by the constant struggle of the Vietnamese leader and Fidel to build socialism. Diplomatic relations between the Caribbean island and the Indochinese nation date back to 1960, when barely a year had passed since the triumph of the Cuban Revolution. Since then, the bonds that unite the two nations have been unbreakable. Back in the 1960s, Cuba received thousands of Vietnamese youth who came to study Spanish and train in various specialties.

Cuban youth and technicians also traveled to the land of Ho Chi Minh: the first to learn the language, then to collaborate in the construction of hospitals, roads, and in the development of poultry farms.

Also during that period (1963), the Solidarity with South Vietnam

Committee was founded on the island, an organization born with the mission of divulging the liberation struggle being waged by the people of that Asian country, whose first president was Melba Hernández. Years later, the Cuba-Vietnam Friendship Association was constituted, which continues to function today, serving as a source of constant exchange with its counterpart organization in Vietnam.

### WORTHY OF ADMIRATION

Martí's high regard for this brotherly people was also shared by Fidel. "In war the Annamites have always won," Martí wrote in *La Edad de Oro*. "For Vietnam, we are ready to give even our own blood," the unforgettable Comandante en Jefe stated. In September 1973 – when the war against U.S. forces that occupied the south of the country was still ongoing, which cost the lives of more than five million Vietnamese – the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution was the first head of state to visit the liberated area of Quang Tri. Fidel crossed the 17th parallel (the provisional military demarcation line between North and South Vietnam), met with combatants who fought there and waved the flag of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

Many years later, on recalling that visit, Fidel wrote in one of his reflections: "I did not have the privilege of meeting Ho Chi Minh, the legendary creator of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, the country of the Annamites, the people of whom our National Hero José Martí talked with such a praiseworthy fashion in 1889 in his *Golden Age* children's magazine." Later, referring to the guerrillas he met in Quang Tri, he added: "We met with young Vietnamese soldiers who draped themselves in glory in the Battle of Quang Tri. Serene, resolute, weather-beaten by the sun and hardened by the war, a slight tic was reflected in the battalion captain's eyelid. No one knows how they were able to resist so many bombs. They were worthy of admiration." Today, the sentiment for this people is the same, who, like Cuba, have a rich history of struggle against imperialist powers and refuse to let the banner of socialism fall.

### AFTER THE WAR, THE RENOVATION

In 1986, the Socialist Republic of Vietnam implemented the Doi Moi (Renovation) Policy of economic reforms, which led to the implementation of a socialist-orientated market economy. The 20-year war (1955-1975) that had ended with the reunification of the country in 1975 was left behind. In the first decade of the 21st century, this sister nation focused its efforts on becoming a middle income country. Vietnam managed to lift some 25 million people from poverty in less than two decades.

#### Key figures on the Vietnamese economy at the end of 2017: (Sources: *Granma*, *Radio Rebelde*)

- Gross Domestic Product: grew by 6.81%
- GDP per capita: 2,385 USD
- Exports: above 213.770 billion USD
- Foreign visitors: 13 million
- Foreign direct investment: approximately 36 billion USD
- Poverty rate: reduced to 6.9%

#### Bilateral cooperation between Cuba and Vietnam: (Sources: *Granma*, *Radio Rebelde*)

- Public health
- Agriculture
- Education
- Tourism industry
- Biotechnology
- Pharmacology
- Use of nuclear energy
- Information and communications technology



## Cuban tourism offers more than sun and sea



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from many nations who attended the 9th International Nature Tourism Event, Turnat 2017, held last September, with activities at several locations in the provinces of Holguín and Guantánamo.

The international gathering provided an ideal opportunity to confirm that Holguín is a province with much potential in this arena, beyond the many popular beach resorts, predominate before 2015, according to Manuel Germán Menéndez Pérez, specialist at the Research, Development, Development, and Innovation Tourism Training Center, affiliated with the Ministry of Tourism provincial office. "A bit more than two years ago, the strategy for the development of nature tourism was launched in Holguín, containing as an essential element, the Sustainable Tourism Development Program of the province's protected areas system, that includes 16 sites."

Of these, he explained, ten can be utilized for eco-tourism (hiking, bird-watching, cycling, horseback riding, and camping), as well as adventure tourism including jeep safaris, caving, kayaking, and climbing. "We also evaluated the potential of farms where it would be possible to promote and develop the possibilities of rural tourism, that would allow for interaction with the lifestyles of people in the country; as well as agro-tourism, that would involve sharing agricultural work with the farmer," he said. One special characteristic of Holguín is that two national parks are located her adjacently - the Mensura-Piloto and Pico Cristal - in addition to a portion of the Alejandro de Humboldt World Heritage Site, under the jurisdiction of Guantánamo province. Open now, within the portion of Humboldt National Park in Holguín, is the Farallones de Moa Cave Trail, that provides access to a natural four kilometer long cavity, which has enchanted visitors with its majesty and the river that flows through it in continuous, small waterfalls.

Mensura-Piloto National Park features the Sabina trail, which attracts hiking enthusiasts who enjoy observing plant and animal life, as they make their way over the rolling hills to the Poza Rafael, where a refreshing dip in cool waters awaits them. Another trail facilitates exploration of the Fría Cave, notable for its creation by the Chivera river that flowed over the rock for years, producing one of the area's most interesting geological formations.

The Nature, Adventure, and Rural Tourism technical sub-group is the multi-disciplinary entity currently working on the preparation of a portfolio outlining potential projects in Pico Cristal National Park, which contains Cuba's fifth highest mountain peak. "This area is the main headwaters of the province's northwestern network of rivers. Here ground covering vegetation can be observed, that is woods, pine forests, and charrascos, with abundant wildlife, and the potential to promote bird-watching. There are also signs showing that the area is inhabited by the almiquí, a living fossil," Menéndez explains.

The holding of Turnat 2017 in the region led to the launching of a tour route entitled the Holguín Countryside Grand Adventure, departing from the province's beach resorts (Pesquero, Yuraguana, Esmeralda and Guardalavaca), to rural settlements and farms, the shady coffee plantations of Pinares de Mayarí, with a final stop at coffee and cacao farming areas in Farallones de Moa. The event also led to the organization of the Columbus route, a seven day tour to sites identified by the admiral in his diary, crossing the current province of Holguín during his first journey to Cuba. Other temporary offers on the flatlands exist, as well.

Caletones Ecological Preserve, municipality of Gibara, star attraction the Tanque Azul, a flooded cavity often called a cenote

HOLGUÍN.— The second most popular natural tourist destination in Cuba is the Salto de Guayabo, an impressive vertical waterfall with two drops of 85 and 127 meters. Those who visit the site located in the municipality of Mayarí, near Mensura-Piloto National Park, consider it fascinating, since in addition to being one of the highest in the country and boasting crystal clear waters, it provides an enjoyably cool microclimate, produced by balanced temperature and humidity. Located in the waterfall's surroundings are 36 orchid species and 33 types of ferns, reflecting the area's rich plant life, accompanied by equally prolific fauna, including many birds.

Along the path leading down to the pool formed by the impact of the water, visitors can appreciate the height of the falls and also the recently updated service facilities, as did tour operators, travel agents and nature lovers





## Cuban tourism offers more than sun and sea

Among outstanding natural elements in protected areas are the Karst Hills of Maniabón, near the camping site of La Silla de Gibara, where the Tinajitas trail is found; while located within the Naranjo Bay protected area are the Rocazul ecological park and two trails, the Loma del Templo and Las Guana. Among the ideal areas for adventure tourism is the Caletones Ecological Preserve, in the municipality of Gibara, with its star attraction, cave diving at the Tanque Azul, a flooded cavity often called a cenote. To date, nature tourism options have been offered as additional activities to those enjoying the beach at resorts along the province's coastline, Menéndez said.

He noted that this implies the challenge of stabilizing this type of commercialization, taking action to make these activities regular options for clients, nature lovers, and environmentalists, and marketing them directly to tour operators and travel agents specializing in nature tourism. MSc. Norelis Peña Peña, environmental management specialist with the Ministry of Science, Environment and Technology, Citma, in Holguín, and leader of a research project on the development of sustainable tourism in protected areas in the province, has identified complex challenges like those that appear in the sales process, for which the leisure industry is responsible.

Among the weaknesses she identified were the under-utilization of natural and cultural assets; insufficient eco-tourism offerings; limited availability of infrastructure; poor supervision of visitors and their environmental impact; low levels of investment in improving quality of life for local communities; as well as inadequate conservation and maintenance of sites. Needed is a comprehensive approach that facilitates coordinated work by all persons and entities involved in promoting the enjoyment of beautiful natural areas which have become attractive tourist destinations, she noted.

### MINISTRY EFFORTS

With the goal of expanding extra-hotel activity in Cuba, the Ministry of Tourism (Mintur) has included new projects in its portfolio of foreign investment opportunities, to develop entertainment, recreational activities, and adventure tourism. Included for the first time in this portfolio are the construction of two natural adventure parks, one located in Canasí (near Santa Cruz del Norte, in Mayabeque province), and another in Bahía de Naranjo (Holguín).

Among Mintur's priorities is diversifying tourist offerings beyond sun and sand vacations at resort hotels, positioning Cuba as a destination in the international market to accelerate the development of tourism, the national economy's second most important source of income.

Foreign investment is fundamental to the country's socio-economic progress, and the most recently updated portfolio of opportunities for investors includes 140 tourism projects.



Bahia de Naranjo Nature Park Holguin Cuba

## The 60 Years of Tryp Habana Libre Hotel



With the most central location in Cuba, the Tryp Habana Libre hotel turns 60 years old today, apart from exhibiting a very special value, cosmopolitanism.

Managed in its beginnings by the U.S. chain Hilton, it is now under the tutelage of the Spanish Sol Meliá, and always since 1959 as Cuban property.

The hotel, inaugurated on March 19, 1958, marks the passage of a modern Cuban capital, being the most central and highest hotel of the city at the tip of La Rampa, the busiest street in the capital.

After a capital renovation, it has 572 rooms and innumerable gastronomy services, night-clubs and meeting rooms, special history and intimacy.

After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, its enhancement was such that in the room named La Castellana, the leader Fidel Castro settled the command of those early times.

The establishment has rooms of about 50 square meters of surface, balcony and view of the city or the sea, and a series of amenities typical of a five-star hotel.

This luxury hotel hosted different events such as international chess competitions, gala dinners dedicated to cigars or hosting more than 2,000 reporters from around the world during the visit of Pope Juan Pablo II to Cuba.