



Embassy of Cuba in Cambodia

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A country that advances based on its roots



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The modification of a country's Constitution entails the subsequent revision of its entire legal system and constitutes one of the most significant processes for its future, due to its scope and complexity. Hence the importance of the approval June 2 by deputies of the 9th Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power (ANPP) of the beginning of the constitutional reform process, during their first extraordinary session; as well as the Commission created for the drafting of the new Constitution,

chaired by Army General Raul Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Cuba.

EFFORTS THAT ADDRESS THE CAUSES OF PROBLEMS

The ten standing committees of the Cuban Parliament, approved on June 2nd, are composed of 380 deputies and among their prioritized tasks are the monitoring of the constitutional reform process; supervising efforts to prevent and tackle crime, corruption and indiscipline; as well as continuing the perfecting of the People's Power system and attention to the proposals of the population.

The members of these committees, 57.6% are women, 82.8% completed higher education, and 17.15% mid-level education. Black and mixed race Cubans represent 42% of committee members, and 62 members are young people up to 35 years of age.

Regarding the work of the standing committees, Lazo Hernández stressed that it is necessary to identify and tackle the causes of problems, and that proposed solutions raise the quality of life of the population, with the certainty that we can be an increasingly hardworking, disciplined, and revolutionary people. During the session, parliamentary and friendship groups with 93 countries were also approved, composed of 179 deputies.

Their work, assured the ANPP president, is to disseminate the Cuban reality, defend the principles of the island's foreign policy and dismantle the media campaigns orchestrated against the country. The deputies also heard expert reports that emphasized the legislative procedures of the constitutional reform, as well as the functions and powers of the National Assembly, the highest government body of the country, and the only body with legislative and constituent powers.

"Deputies of the Ninth Legislature of the National Assembly of People's Power approved the beginning of the constitutional reform process, vital to the nation's future"

Cuba registers the lowest infant mortality rate in its history in 2017



During the first five months of 2018 Cuba reached the rate of infant mortality lowest in its history, with a rate of 3.9 per thousand live births, a tenth less than those reported in the country at the end of last year. The Minister of public health, Robert Morales, quoted by national television, said that the new record evidence the consolidation of the maternal child program and highlighted the Government's efforts in primary care, maternity waiting homes and intensive units Pediatric. The Cuban health system, he said, intends to keep a lower register to the historical minimum of 4.0 in 2017 2018. Morales added that it prioritizes the attention to maternal mortality and strategies to improve neonatal services, prepartum and postpartum in all the Nation.

As he explained, also moves in the acquired techniques in treatment to infertile couples and measures are extreme with its possible causes, among which stands out the abortion. The last year, the achievement of the index of 4.0 meant that the country maintained its under five mortality rate for the tenth consecutive year.

The rights of children in Cuba



Cuba's Constitution recognizes the elemental rights of every child, regardless of sex, race, or social origin, and does not leave their protection to institutional goodwill or individual charity.

This special interest in educating and caring for the young is nothing new for Cubans. Who is not aware that the annual infant mortality rate here is among the lowest in the world? Who doesn't know that education is universally available and free of charge.

This commitment goes beyond the national framework. Cuba has been a signatory to the United Nations Rights of the Child Convention since 1991, and its precepts have been codified in laws regarding the corruption of minors.

The country also adheres to international agreements established to protect children and adolescents from trafficking, prostitution, their use in pornography, and sexual abuse.

It is no accident that the yearly celebration of International Children's Day, on June 1, is followed by Cuba's version on the third Sunday of the month. In both cases, being honored are those that a very wise man, José Martí, called "the hope of the word."

Cuba's Constitution stipulates:

- No child is denied education, food, or clothing (Chapter I, Political, social, and economic foundations of the state)
- Patriotic education and communist development of younger generations, and the training of children, adolescents, and adults to participate in social life, are promoted. (Chapter V, Education and Culture)
- Education for all is a right (...) which implies that every child and youth, regardless of their family's economic situation, is provided the opportunity to study (Chapter VII, Fundamental duties, rights, and guarantees)
- Children and youth enjoy special protection on the part of the state and society. (Chapter V, Education and Culture)
- Families, schools, state bodies, as well as mass and social organizations, have the responsibility to pay particular attention to the comprehensive development of children and youth. (Chapter V, Education and Culture)

The world in 2030

- Some 167 million children could be living in extreme poverty.
- An estimated 69 million children under five years of age could die as a result of curable diseases.
- At least 60 million school-age children could remain without education.

(Sources: Remarks made by Cuba's delegation to the United Nations during discussion of Issue 69: "Promotion and protection of the rights of the child" 72nd General Assembly, Third Commission. New York, October 10, 2017)

Cuba rejects OAS resolution against Venezuela



<http://www.cubanews.acn.cu>

Enriquez demanded that the right of the people to sovereignty and free self-determination be respected, as legitimately expressed in the elections held on May 20, in accordance with the country's legal system. He said that "the U.S. government, and the discredit of the OAS, has no moral authority to give lessons in human rights and democracy."

Washington promoted the initiative, endorsed last Tuesday by 19 of the Organization's member nations, with four states voting against and 11 abstaining. The official from the Cuban Foreign Ministry highlighted the nations "that rejected and did not approve the Resolution" that calls for the application of economic, political and financial measures against the order established in Venezuela. He assured that, in practice, this is a call for unilateral coercive sanctions against Caracas, which contravenes the principles of the Proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace, adopted by heads of state and governments of the region in Havana in January 2014. If these measures were to be implemented, they would affect the Venezuelan people, said Martínez Enríquez, while reiterating the MINREX's full support for the Bolivarian and Chavez revolution, for the civic-military union of the Venezuelan people, for its democratically elected government, led by constitutional president Nicolás Maduro Moros.

The Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX) expressed its strong condemnation of the Resolution on the situation in Venezuela, adopted on June 5 at the 48th General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS).

Eugenio Martínez Enríquez, director general of the Directorate of Latin America and the Caribbean, declared in Havana to national and foreign media accredited to the island that the action was "unacceptable interference in the internal affairs of the South American nation and contrary to the principles of international law and the purposes of the United Nations Charter".

We consider that the resolution does not contribute to dialogue in Venezuela," said the senior official, who criticized the fact that pressure from several of the bloc's member states "prevented the Venezuelan government and opposition from reaching an agreement after months of negotiation". Martínez

USA: unknown explanation, nature and cause of "illness" of his diplomats.



On May 29, 2018, the Embassy of the United States in Havana informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba that, on the 27th of the same month, an official of that Embassy had reported symptoms of health as a result of "indefinite sounds" in their place of residence.

Immediately, the Cuban Government granted the highest priority to the matter and officially requested the Diplomatic Mission of the United States that specialized doctors and investigators, respectively, could interview said official.

The exhaustive and urgent investigation carried out in the vicinity of the residence found no evidence of any sound that could cause damage to health. As in the cases reported previously, the Cuban authorities and specialists have not had any access to the official. Cuba has publicly and officially reiterated its willingness to cooperate seriously in the

joint search for answers, clarification and the solution of the alleged facts.

After more than a year of investigations by specialized agencies and experts from Cuba and the United States, it is confirmed that there is no credible hypothesis or conclusions attached to science that justify the actions taken by the United States government against Cuba in detriment of bilateral relations and with obvious political motivations. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also taken note of the announcement by the Secretary of State, made on June 5, about the creation of a Joint Task Force to respond to what he described as "unexplained health incidents for personnel stationed abroad", specifically in Cuba and the People's Republic of China. The announcement states that "the nature of the damages suffered by the affected personnel has not been established, or if there is a common cause for all the cases."

Guaranteeing the health and safety of Cubans and foreign citizens has been, is and will be a priority that distinguishes the Cuban nation. It is widely known that the Government strictly fulfills its responsibilities in the care and protection of the Diplomatic Corps. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs reiterates that no evidence has been presented of the alleged incidents and maintains its unwavering commitment to cooperate with the authorities of the United States to achieve clarification of this situation and the best medical attention to the persons concerned.

Cuba is and will continue to be a safe, stable and attractive country.

Havana, June 10, 2018.

Negative Impact of US Blockade Extraterritoriality Hurts Cuba



St. John's, Jun 7 (Prensa Latina) US Parcel company FedEx has suspended international courier services to the Cuban embassy in Antigua and Barbuda, due to the blockade imposed by the United States on the island, diplomatic sources said today.

'Cuba is subject to comprehensive sanctions by the United States. Therefore, we could not transport any shipment to/from an embassy of the government of Cuba, and such shipments at this time or in the future will be rejected to be picked up or returned to the sender,' the US company reported in a letter addressed to the Cuban ambassador in this capital, Gustavo Veliz.

The letter, to which Prensa Latina had access, adds that FedEx and its subsidiaries, like US companies, are governed by the laws of that country, which makes it

impossible to negotiate with governments subject to sanctions imposed by the Office of Foreign Assets Control, as part of the legal scheme of export control of the northern country. President John F. Kennedy decreed on February 3, 1962, the total 'embargo' of trade between Washington and Havana, pursuant to section 620 (a) of the Foreign Assistance Law, a policy that in practice equates to an economic, commercial, and financial blockade.

Cuba continues to be prevented from exporting and freely importing products and services to or from that country, it cannot use the US dollar in its international financial transactions or have accounts in that currency in third-country banks. Likewise, it is also not allowed to access loans from banks in the US, its subsidiaries in third countries and international financial institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). As a consequence of the aforementioned, the normal development of the Caribbean country in all spheres of economic, social and cultural life, continues to be seriously hampered, its authorities reiterated. The Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act or Helms-Burton Act (1996) codified the provisions of the blockade, expanding its extraterritorial scope, they recalled.

Antigua and Barbuda Rejects FedEx Blockade Measure Against Cuba



Source: <http://www.plenglish.com>

The Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne, expressed today his strong rejection of the measure of FedEx, a US international parcel delivery company, to suspend services to the Cuban embassy here.

Diplomatic sources indicated the Antiguan president held a fraternal meeting with the Cuban ambassador in this capital, Gustavo Veliz, to whom he confirmed his government's support for the demand to lift the blockade imposed by the northern nation on Cuba more than 50 years ago.

The FedEx Company argued its decision - valued by Cuba as unilateral - based on the policy of economic siege that Washington applies to Havana.

Browne also referred to the pressures faced by other countries in the region, as well as the economic and financial challenges they face given the limitations imposed

by the United States, which prevent them from interacting with their banks anywhere in the world.

The opportunity was propitious for the dignitary to thank, once again, the bilateral collaboration in different sectors and the granting of scholarships to nationals of his country to study in Cuba.

During the meeting, both sides discussed issues of bilateral interest.

An official FedEx document addressed to Ambassador Veliz, to which Prensa Latina had access, reported that 'as the country is subject to exhaustive U.S. sanctions, we could not transport any shipments to or from an embassy of the Cuban government.

As part of the blockade, the island continues to be prevented from freely exporting and importing goods and services to and from the United States and cannot use the United States dollar in its international financial transactions.

All this, denounce the Cuban authorities, hinders the normal development of his country in all spheres of economic, social and cultural life.

Cuba, Vietnam Strengthen Political, Economic Relations



Directives of Cuban and Vietnamese companies signed on Monday five commercial agreements in the framework of the Conference for the Promotion of Investment, Trade and Tourism in the city of Ho Chi Minh. The new accords are aimed at encouraging exchanges of products and services among the promotion trade centers of both nations, Thai Binh Company, Artex Corporation, Nexus Industries S.A and tourism entities.

During the opening of the event, the President of the Peoples Committee of the city of Ho Chi Minh, Nguyen Thanh Phong highlighted the historic solidarity and cooperation ties between Cuba and Vietnam fomented by its maximum leaders. He observed that the Cuban market has great potential for the Vietnamese companies to develop and invest especially in the fields of tourism, agri-

culture, food and consumer goods, while Cuba has potential in pharmaceutical products, medical assistance and construction.

The President of the Cuban Chamber of Commerce, Orlando Hernandez Guillen highlighted the positive increase of economic exchange with Vietnam, second trading partner in Asia. During the encounter, representatives of institutions and entities from both nations exposed experiences and potential to increase the exchanges in the fields of renewable energy, tourism and furniture. The Conference was presided by Vietnam's ambassador to Cuba, Nguyen Hu Thang; the Director of Investments of the Foreign Trade Minister and executives of the participating companies.

Cuban Medical Brigade to Step-up Medical Services in Kenya



A brigade of 101 Cuban doctors arrived in Kenya to strengthen the health system of that African nation, informed the website of the Caribbean island's foreign ministry.

The arrival of physicians to that country is considered an unprecedented fact in the history of bilateral ties, and is the result of the official visit made to the Greater Antilles by the President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, in March 2018. This contingent is composed of 101 experts from different specialties, said the website of the Foreign Affairs Ministry. Diplomatic links between Cuba and Kenya were established on October 19, 1995. In 2002, the Cuban diplomatic mission was opened in the African country. The Kenyan Embassy in Havana was officially inaugurated in March of this year, during the official visit the Kenyan president made to the

island. Cuba maintains diplomatic relations with the 54 countries of Africa and has 32 embassies in that territory, while 25 countries have missions established on the island. Currently, about 5,000 Cuban collaborators provide services in the African continent in different areas.

Cuba and Saint Vincent to renew Medical cooperation



The governments of Cuba and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are working to renew the bases of medical cooperation, after almost two decades of successful Cuban presence in that island nation of the Caribbean. The review takes place when an important number of Cuban health professionals arrive in that country, to work in the Modern Medical Center in Georgetown, along with their Vincentian colleagues. The Permanent Secretary of Health, Welfare and Environment of San Vicente, Cuthbert Knights; the Cuban ambassador in Kingstown, Vilma Reyes, and the head of the Cuban medical brigade, Nelson Vicente Diaz, stand out among the officials who meticulously reviewed the text of the new bilateral cooperation agreement on health. This document calls for adapting and optimizing the efforts of both nations in the expansion and im-

provement of medical services provided to the population in the public sector.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is the first country in the eastern Caribbean to treat the diabetic foot ulcer free of charge with the Cuban drug Heberprot-P, he added. With an important medical center equipped with state-of-the-art equipment and an experienced group of Cuban specialists, 'there are many reasons for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to aspire to become a regional reference in the treatment of a group of pathologies', concludes the Foreign Ministry Cuban.

UNESCO pays tribute to rumba and the punto cubano music



The United Nations for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) venue in Paris, welcomed this Monday homage to rumba and Punto Cubano music. These expressions were declared Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by this international organization.

Great privilege that of Cuba: two of its most important cultural items join a list endorsed by famed specialists from all over the world.

Easy to say, but if one takes into account the large canvass of arts worldwide, the patrimonial heritage of peoples... you must agree that a relatively small country has contributed dearly to the universal legacy.

Rumba and Punto Cubano music are living arts, paradigms of a resistance culture, with high ethical and aesthetic values. They have also been the voice of the those oppressed. A space of popular creativity.

Doctor Miguel Barnet and journalist Pedro de la Hoz spoke about this in their conferences. Barnet's conference was dedicated to the multiple roads of rumba, and that of de la Hoz to the characteristics of the Punto Cubano, with its regional variants.

The fact that UNESCO has acknowledged these two art manifestations it's cause for joy, but also a responsibility, said the ambassador Dulce Buergo, permanent delegate of Cuba before UNESCO. For Miguel Barnet their inclusion in this important list speaks of the strength of the Cuban culture, as well as the creative potential of a people.

Barnet's presence at UNESCO meant a return to the venue of an organization in which he was delegate for several years.

The session this Monday was part of the seventh assembly of the party states of the Convention for the safeguard of Intangible Cultural Heritage. An important moment was the granting of the official certificate of the inscription of Punto Cubano to the registry of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. Gladys Collazo, chairlady of the National Council of Cultural Heritage received it from the hands of Tim Curtis, secretary of the Convention.

There is agreement on something: Rumba music and Punto Cubano are just the beginning. Cuba has much more to offer. "First it was Rumba, after that the Punto Cubano, tomorrow will be Son music, the sprees... Cuba's heritage is wide, I am very proud of being Cuban, of being part of the people that have given so much to the universal art, and that has used art as a means to face all setbacks it has endured throughout history", said Barnet.

International Festival Boleros de Oro to Be Held in Havana



Teatro Nacional de Cuba, one of the venue for the Festival

Dedicated to women in the Bolero and Cuban musicologist Argeliers Leon, the International Festival Boleros de Oro will be held in this capital to show the link between the Latin American countries, according to its organizers.

The event will celebrate the centenary of the birth of the composer, ethnologist and pedagogue, who was awarded the title of doctor of art sciences, and it will pay tribute to him with a conference called 'Argeliers Leon: Impact and Validity of His Work and Thought for Cuban Contemporary Musicology'.

Within the context of this lecture, there will be a discussion on the confluences of knowledge in the Bolero and the influence of the teacher in that field.

The empowerment of women as a necessary link in music to raise the bolero genre will be one of the topics to be discussed in the meeting between bolero guests from Mexico, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Colombia and Puerto Rico, in addition to Japan and Canada, whose visitors will also participate in a contest.

Other contents of the festival program will revolve around the state of research on this musical genre and its transit through different geographies and environments.

The International Festival Boleros de Oro will take place from June 19 to 24 in several venues in Havana, including the emblematic America and National theaters, as well as the Cultural Casa del Alba.

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Cuba Customs Ratifies Zero Tolerance with Drugs



<http://www.cubanews.acn.cu>

Deputy Chief of the General Customs of the Republic of Cuba (AGR) William Perez ratified today the policy of zero tolerance for drugs that rules the country's borders, where this year nine cases of drug trafficking were detected. 'In Cuba, there is no trafficking or consumption of drugs, our policy is to be a wall in confronting the scourge,' he told Prensa Latina at the institution's headquarters in this capital, during a meeting with journalists. According to Pérez, up to May of the current year, nine attempts to introduce drugs to the island were frustrated, and more than five kilograms and 84 capsules were confiscated, mainly cocaine.

Last year, the AGR intercepted 39 traffic operations at the border crossings, with a total of 57 kilograms of narcotics seized. Regarding cases of consumption, so far in 2018, they amounted to 25, while in 2017 they reached 57, although the procedure for

those involved in these events is administrative (warnings and fines), unlike the strong penalties that face in the courts the guilty of drug trafficking. During the first five months of the year, the General Customs of the Republic (AGR) neutralized 34 attempts to smuggle drugs into Cuba, sources from this body reported today in this capital. Of those thirty-four, nine were cases of trafficking, while the remaining detected corresponded to travelers carrying those substances for consumption, according to José Luis Muñoz Toca, director of Customs Techniques. He specified that the quantity of drugs seized during the period was 5.3 kilograms (marijuana and hashish), plus 84 cocaine capsules and 1080.6 grams of synthetic cannabinoids.

The specialist explained that the drugs came from 11 nations, most of them from Latin America, while the points where the attempts were made to introduce these illicit drugs were the airports of Havana, Holguin and Villa Clara, International Freight and postal mail. He said the highest incidence has been from foreign travelers. Several women were caught that had ingested the drugs or concealed it in body cavities, among other methods used to mask it.

In the Caribbean country, the fight against this scourge is manifested in the form of a system, through mechanisms such as the National Drug Commission, various organs of the Ministry of the Interior, as well as other State institutions and agencies. Customs sources have reported that the rise in attempts to introduce drugs into the country is closely linked to the increase in visitors, air operations and cruise ships, the entry of yachts to international marinas, in addition to the decriminalization of marijuana in several nations.

Customs modernizes technologies for greater border security



With the installation of 69 high-tech equipment in its different units, the General Customs Office of the Republic (AGR) creates greater capacities for the detection of illegal activities, and in order to speed up border inspection processes. José Luis Muñoz Toca, director of Customs Techniques, reported at a press conference that these media were acquired for a value of six million pesos, from a Chinese credit until 2021, and investment amounts approved by that body.

Within the park of modern equipment located at airports, marinas and cruise terminals, cargo and the container of the Mariel Special Development Zone, X-ray equipment, intracorporeal and extracorporeal scanners, and detectors of forbidden liquids, metals in footwear stand out, drugs and explosives, he explained. The

specialist added that as part of the improvement of the customs forces they also attach great importance to the development of the canine technique. He stressed that the increase of cinófilas units specializing in drugs and explosives, is introduced into passenger terminals quarantine dogs, as it is called food detectors.

The AGR has among its main missions to face, within its competence, the facts that put at risk the security of the society and the national economy, among them terrorism, enemy activity, drug trafficking and contraband. For this purpose, it has a workforce of 1,500 officials throughout the country, most of whom work directly in customs control at border points, specified the First Deputy Chief of Customs, Nelson Cordovés Reyes. He specified that one of the priorities of that body is the systematic increase of the preparation of its officers, in order to guarantee the confrontation missions.

In contact with the press, it was also reported that in relation to facilitation and control actions, in the 10 airports of the nation, 93 percent of the passengers used the so-called "green channel", traveling alone with their personal effects. The vice-president Idalmis Rosales Milanés highlighted the continuity of the computerization processes, in order to reduce the time of clearance of merchandise and to offer facilities to the commerce, as well as the creation of mobile applications that allow a better understanding of the current customs regulations .

Cuban Hotel Receives Recognition from Expert's Choice Award



The Melia Las Antillas hotel in Varadero, in Cuba's most important resort, received the Expert's Choice 2018 award, said today a business report.

Awarded by TripExpert, the prize took into account more than one million reviews from 85 publications, which estimated the quality of the property and its services as four-star resort only for adults.

According to the Melia hotel chain, the recognition is only given to the world's best hotels and denotes the views shared by experts of the so-called industry without chimneys.

TripExpert is currently developing a new approach to quality ratings based on the criteria of specialists in travel guides, magazines, newspapers and other authorized sources in the global tourism field.

In most recent evaluation by TripExpert, the Melia Las Antillas was placed among the accommodations

of excellence in Cuba and also had the Best Hotel in Varadero award. According to the source, the establishment also achieves increasing indexes of followers in social networks, as well as positive valuations of specialized travel portals.

Official data note that the Caribbean country currently has more than 69,000 rooms in 358 hotels, 63 percent of them in four and five star facilities. Of the total, around 45,300 rooms are under some form of foreign investment, which includes 27 joint ventures.

Kempinski hotel group will increase its presence in Cuba



Written by Lissett Izquierdo Ferrer

The German company Kempinski, based in Switzerland and managing Cuba's first five-star plus hotel, will open other tourist facilities in this Caribbean destination, after exhibiting a successful performance in its first year of operations in Havana.

We have opted for Cuba and we will continue to grow in alliance with the state entity Gaviota, announced Xavier Destribats, General Manager of the Grand Hotel Manzana Kempinski, a six-floor, 246-room building, opened on June 7 last year.

The executive stressed that the firm he represents - the oldest of its kind in Europe - has several projects with that Cuban chain, mainly for the management of hotels located in spas. Destribats described as successful the first year of operation of the Kempinski Block, which - he said - has received clients from several nations, such as France, Spain, Germany, Rus-

sia, China and Austria. The opening of this installation represented the entrance of Kempinski in the Americas and its premiere in Cuba from a contract with Gaviota.

Data provided by the Ministry of Tourism, refer that in the Island there are 21 foreign managers through 95 hotel administration and marketing contracts, responsible for 45 thousand 333 rooms (65 percent of the country). There are also 27 mixed companies that manage more than five thousand bedrooms of four and five star.

The tourism sector groups the largest number of businesses operating in the country with foreign investment, considered an essential element in the nation's socio-economic development strategy.



Two Million Foreign Vacationers have Visited Cuba



Source: <http://www.juventudrebelde.cu>

The arrival of two million tourists to Cuba so far this year ratifies the confidence of tour operators, travel agencies, airlines and vacationers to the Caribbean destination, according to a report on Monday of the Tourism Ministry. The figure was obtained on May 18th, 15 days later compared to the same period last year and amidst Washington reinforcing the economic, commercial and financial blockade against the island.

The press note by the Tourism Ministry says that this has been achieved despite the US anti-Cuba media campaign aimed at placing obstacles for people from visiting and the impact of Hurricane Irma last September. Authorities from the sector sustains that alt-

though the decision of many travelers was due to the perception of the damages inflicted by the hurricane, but the tourism sites were recovered and now have a renovated image of its hotel and recreational installations in particular the keys to the north of the archipelago. The communique adds that there has been an increase in visitors from Canada and the traditional European markets and a sustained growth from Russia, Mexico, Argentina, China and Brazil.

People from the US are still prohibited in visiting Cuba as tourists. The first trimester in Cuba saw a decrease of 7 percent of visitors compared to the previous year, but tourism authorities reaffirmed its optimism of a record 5 million vacationers by the end of 2018. Tourism is one of the main actors in the Cuban economy.

Cuba positions itself as attractive destination for cruisers



Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Diaz / CubaSi Translation Staff

A growing number of cruise companies already include Cuba in their routes. Traveling to the Caribbean island with their luxury, large passenger ships is a sign of the increasing and positive image of our country as a safe destination.

Seventeen companies with twenty five cruisers are operating in Cuba. At the end of last tourist season, more than five hundred thousand visitors had visited the island, which meant a 67% increase from the previous year.

According to the minister of Tourism of Cuba Manuel Marrero, new and exclusive cruisers should start its operations this year with seven hundred thousand tourists expected.

Last February, the luxury American cruise company **Regent Seven Seas Cruises** —sole US cruise company with granted permission to offer

voyage to Cuba— announced more trips to the Caribbean destination in 2019 and 2020. Carnival Cruise also added 23 voyages to the Caribbean with some stopovers in Cuba 2019-2020.

Cuba's main ports are located in Havana, Cienfuegos, Santiago de Cuba, and Cayo Largo del Sur, with international arrivals and departures. Meanwhile, other locations like Casilda, Antillas, Puerto Frances, and Maria la Gorda serve as stopovers. Recently, it was spread the news that a new investment program to augment the two cruise terminals in Havana to a total of six in 2024 is being set into motion.

In the case of Port of Casilda, subordinate to the Center Port Services company, based in Cienfuegos, almost half a hundred of arrivals of cruise ships and six megayachts were reported after rising tourist stage, which came from several Nations such as the Bahamas, France, Panama, Greece, Marshall Islands, Cayman Islands, Malta and United Kingdom. It has been common to see, on several occasions, the arrival of Majesty of Callisto, Harmony V, Pearl Mist, Le Ponant, Panorama and Victory I Cruises to the port. As a trend, boats arrive at the rada in the early hours of the morning, so that its members travel the third villa of Cuba, one of the most stunning jewels of Cuban history and heritage. Then they raise anchor and head bow towards their destination, primarily Cienfuegos, Siguanea, Santiago de Cuba, Havana or Cayo Largo. In order to increase the number of visits and enhance

The management of some of these terminals will be in charge of the Cuban firm **Aries** and world's major cruiser operator **Global Ports Holding**.

Protected Areas in Holguin a Priority



HOLGUIN, Cuba, (ACN) Among some of the achievements of the eastern province of Holguin on the occasion of World Environment Day held each year on June 5th, is the successful management of the Pico Cistal and Mensura Piloto National Parks.

These areas declared protected constitute a refuge for flora and fauna species in the eastern territory, which includes, mollusks, reptiles and plants, whose population is concentrated east of the city of Holguin. The representative of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Norelis Pena told the press that new studies of endangered endemic flora within the ecosystems are underway constituting a reference material to confront the loss of biological biodiversity. Researcher from the Botanic Gardens in Holguin, Raima Cantillo told ACN that the investigations on the vulnerable variety includes, *Tetralix nipsensis*, *Buxus k*

köhlerii, *Siphocampylus ekmanii* and the *Tabebuia pulverulenta* exclusive in the region and do not have common names. Cantillo highlighted that the studies determined that the species population includes between an approximate one and one hundred adult individuals constituting an alert to carry out plans for its comprehensive management. Holguin has some 16 protected areas, of these six are national reference found at the Cerro Galano Natural Reserve, Floristica Manejada Cerro Miraflores Reserve among others.

Viñales, a popular paradise



At the end of last year, after consulting the world's principal travel experts, the Business Insider website posted a list of the 25 most attractive destinations on the planet to visit in 2018. Placed as number two was Viñales, ranked above great cities like Tokyo, and other fascinating places like the Swiss Alps.

Two years ago, the influential U.S. newspaper, The New York Times, included the Pinar del Río valley among its 52 places to visit in 2016. Both recommendations emphasized its beauty, its impressive mogotes, the rural environment, and warmth of its hospitable, cheerful people, who have learned how to take advantage of tourism.

But Viñales is as real as the mountains that surround it. A total of 15,010 hectares make up Viñales National Park, located in the heart of the Sierra de los Órganos mountains, in the province of Pinar del Río, on the western end of the

island. In addition to amazing geological formations - spectacular dome-like limestone outcrops (mogotes) that rise as high as 300 m - Viñales offers history and traditions, great biodiversity, dozens of archaeological sites, and Cuba's two most extensive cave systems. Among its natural treasures is the cork palm, an authentic living fossil that has been declared national heritage given its importance as a plant species, having survived since the Jurassic Period. Numerous endemic plant and animal species thrive here as well, along with a great variety of birds and mollusks, such as the *Zachrysiaguanensis* land snail. Less known but equally beautiful are many of its caves, leading visitors to comment that Viñales is a lovely inside as it is outside. Experts say there are still kilometers of underground galleries which human beings have never seen. This is the case with Palmarito, the largest cave complex in the country, with a verified length of 59 kilometers and many more yet to be explored.

Thus, although residents are happy the place is popular, they are not always pleased by the simplistic manner in which Viñales is sometimes promoted as a destination - as an exuberant valley of mogotes, with colorful houses and tobacco fields. This is, for example, how it is presented by Business Insider and The New York Times on their lists of recommended destinations. It's not that they are not wrong... but Viñales is this, and much more.

A FEW FACTS ABOUT VIÑALES

1. Viñales was declared a National Monument in 1978 and a Protected Area in 1998.
2. UNESCO designated the valley a World Heritage Site in 1999.
3. In 2017 600,000 visitors were welcomed
4. Some 1,200 plant species have been identified in the area, 30% of which are endemic.
5. More than 130 species of mollusks and 70 of birds live in the valley.
6. Viñales is best known for its spectacular karst formations