

Cuban Antiterrorist Appreciates Solidarity with The Five

Havana.- Antonio Guerrero thanked the massive expressions of solidarity with the Cuban anti-terrorists, who like him, remain prisoners in the United States since 1998 for monitoring the actions of extremist groups against the island.

In a message posted today on Cubadebate website, Guerrero, currently imprisoned at the Federal Correctional Institution, Marianna (FCI Marianna) Florida, United States, expressed his gratitude to the many letters of support and other gestures of solidarity in favour of their freedom.

I dare say that any inmate has ever received the amount of letters we have from all over the world. Letters full of brotherhood and love, said Guerrero in his message.

These expressions of solidarity have not stopped nor have decreased since 2001 when our situation was unveiled our people and to the world. We know this huge wave of solidarity will only stop when The Five return home, he added.

Guerrero along with Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González was imprisoned for 15 years and sentenced to long prison terms by the US authorities.

Currently, only René González, one of The Five (as they are internationally known), is in Cuba after complying with his sentence and renouncing to his US citizenship.

Cuba Strengthens Educational Structure

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) More than 3,100 Cuban educational centers were restored in 2013, as part of current works by authorities from the sector to maintain and rehabilitate the country's educational infrastructure.

According to Education Minister Ena Elsa Velazquez, this number almost doubles the 1,900 teaching centers included in the renovation plan.

During a visit to the province of Cienfuegos, in central Cuba, Velazquez said that several polytechnic schools were renovated and have the necessary resources now, a reason why graduates must be better prepared, she said.

Although the work done is not enough, because we still have several schools that need renovation or some kind of maintenance, we intend to improve all centers gradually, she said.

In that reference, she highlighted the work in Cienfuegos and in the eastern province Las Tunas, territories that stand out as regions of great activity regarding renovation of day-care centers, elementary schools and high schools.

She added that other Cuban provinces such as Pinar del Rio, Granma and Camagüey started complex renovation works in classrooms, workshops, administrative buildings and common spaces.

Uptick in Monthly Tourism to Cuba Reported for November

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) The number of foreign visitors to Cuba in November was 234,266, more than October's 167,977, the National Office of Statistics reported today.

From January to November, a total of 2,546,851 foreign tourists visited Cuba, the office (ONEI) reported.

Canada, accounting for 38.9 percent of foreign tourists, was the number one issuing country, followed by the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Argentina.

According to Ministry of Tourism officials, the year should end with a total figures similar to that of 2012 (2.8 million), falling short of the expected total of three million.

Reasons for the shortfall include the situation of source markets due to the current global crisis and mechanisms that are under review so that the industry will pick up again in the 2014-2015 period, officials said.

Positive factors included a larger number of flights, improved services, and investment.

Cuba has some 61,000 hotel rooms, 65 percent of which are in four and five-star facilities.

Cuban National Ballet Company Celebrates 65 Years of Foundation

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) The National Ballet of Cuba (BNC) presented a program similar to the one performed in its debut on stage in 1948 to commemorate 65 years of established.

The main figures of this company tried to offer in the best conditions the Grand pas de quatre, a work in which four dancers represent the glory of the divas of the nineteenth century, with their respective characteristics.

This is one of the beloved pieces for ballet lovers representing elegance, taste, style and romantic because it is reminiscent of four of the greatest dancers in the history of art in Cuba: Josefina Méndez, Loipa Araújo, Aurora Bosch and Mirta Pla, labelled by the critics as jewelry.

Cuban ballet school right now does not have such a strong and versatile generation, but some artists deserve recognition as Viengsay Valdés, the most complete of all personalities, undisputed queen of technical expertise and theater.

The Cuban public reaffirmed his appreciation for The Swan Lake, the famous piece of classicism, whose second act ended the program the first function of BNC, as it closed the presentation yesterday at the National Theatre.

With this gala, the BNC concluded its cycle of performances in 2013, but will not cool the stage. For the upcoming January 1 and in the same theater it will dance Nutcracker in honor to the 55th anniversary tribute to the triumph of the Cuban Revolution.

Cuban Anti-terrorist Held Prisoner in the US Appreciates Spanish Support

HAVANA, Cuba, Dec 21 (acn) Fernando Gonzalez, one of the four anti-terrorist fighters still held in US prisons since 1998 thanked the support and solidarity actions by Spanish citizens, who demand their release from prison.

In a letter addressed to the Catalonian Defense Cuba solidarity group, Gonzalez said that despite the difficult economic situation of most Spaniards, the supportive groups dedicate their time, resources and energy to expressed their support of the cause of the Cuban anti-terrorists.

Despite all that, you express your sense of solidarity with great commitment, said Gonzalez in his letter.

Cuba to Inaugurate First Stage of Special Development Zone

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The first stage of the container terminal at the Mariel Special

Development Zone, west of Havana, will be inaugurated in January.

The announcement was made by President Raul Castro as he closed the second session of the Cuban Parliament's Eight Legislature on Saturday.

Raul Castro described the new project as very attractive for foreign investors and a lab to consider the application of new technologies and entrepreneurial management methods.

The Mariel special development zone is part of the policies and programs adopted by the Cuban Communist Party to update the country's economic model.

Foreign Boats now Have Easy Access to Cuban Marinas

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Foreign yachts cruising near Cuba, which would like to moor at any Cuban marina may do so by just filling out a form available on Cuban web sites.

The requests may be filled at the Cubatravel.cu and Gaviota.cu websites, according to the Cuban Tourism Ministry, explained that once a yacht owner registers at any of the websites and receives authorization to dock his boat, he is authorized to visit other marinas on the Island without any further authorization.

The marinas offer fuel and repair services, as well as stores to replenish food and drink stocks in the boats.

In order to ease procedures for foreign boats dispatch at Cuban marinas, the Cuban Council of Ministers adopted a Decree last October which rules the management of maritime and harbor services in these facilities.

Cruise Ships to Increase Arrivals in Cuba

HAVANA, Cuba, Dec 23 (acn)The number of arrivals of cruise ships at Cuban ports is expected to surpass the figure reported in previous years, said an executive in the specialized tourist

sector.

Norberto Perez, general director of the Aries Transport Company, in charge of commercializing cruise ships operations in Cuba, told reporters that a new company named Cuba Cruises will manage arrivals here of cruise ships, such as Canada's Louis Cristal, which called at the south-central harbor of Cienfuegos on Saturday.

Perez said that 10 cruise ships will call at Cuban ports during the current high tourist season, including the luxurious Europa, the Albatross and the Thompson Dreams, which is the largest of all, with capacity for 785 passengers. The Thompson Dreams visited Havana harbor on December 6.

The international tourist modality is affected in Cuba by the US economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba, which bans American citizens from visiting the island, the executive said.

Brazilian Media Highlights Assistance by Cuban Doctors in Rain-affected Areas

HAVANA, Cuba.- The Brazilian newspaper A Gazeta, published in the state of Espíritu Santo, stressed the outstanding job being performed by Cuban doctors in that area in the assistance of victims of torrential rains that have already caused over thirty deaths and scores of wounded.

Eleven Cuban doctors are working the area where there were no Brazilian physicians. The newspaper quoted doctor Orlando Maure as saying: "The local population needs help and it is our duty to help them".

In the locality where doctor Maure is working, not less than fifteen thousand persons abandoned their homes and looked for shelter in higher ground after the torrential rains caused extensive flooding due to the overflowing of local rivers.

According to A Gazeta, over two hundred thousand inhabitants of that Brazilian area have been affected by the torrential rains.

Belarus and Cuba Willing to Expand Scientific Cooperation

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Belarus'Health minister Vasily Sharko confirmed his country's will to expand cooperation with Cuba's biotechnological and pharmaceutical industries.

During a meeting in the capital Minsk Cuban Ambassador Gerardo Suarez, the Belarusian official reviewed current cooperation schemes in both fields and agreed on the need to increase their scope, since they are considered as vital to medical services.

The top government official of that European country, a former member of the extinct Soviet Union, was accompanied by businessmen and officials in the public health sector. The meeting was held in a very friendly atmosphere, the Cuban Ambassador told the Belarusian press.

Legitimate Cultural Values on the Spotlight of Cuban Intellectuals' Congress

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The defense of legitimate cultural values will be the central subject at discussions during the forthcoming Congress of the Cuban Association of Writers and Artists, to be held April 12 and 13 next year.

Association president Miguel Barnet said that the Congress will consider efforts to recover traditions and values that have deteriorated in recent years, such as the Carnivals, a popular feast that has lost much of its original cultural splendor.

In an interview with national television, Barnet, a poet and novelist himself, said that aesthetic values of the Carnival must be recovered as a means of public education.

Carlos Tamayo, the provincial chairman of the association in the eastern province of Las Tunas, said some foreign cultural influences lacking true artistic values have had a negative effect in the country.

Music and dance groups from neighborhoods –he said-- must recover their splendor and compete, as they did before, for prizes awarded by popular juries at the city carnivals traditionally held in all Cuba.

New Cooperatives enter Operations in Cuba's Recycling System

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn). Twelve new cooperatives will soon start operations in the raw-material collection activity for recycling, a step that experts say will significantly help increase the output of certain products and contribute to environmental protection.

This strategy is included in the economic guidelines approved by the Cuban Communist Party as part of the ongoing update of the Cuban economic model.

With this regard, experiences in the two provinces have had excellent results and have proven that they may be extended to other territories, a spokesman said.

The two cooperatives involved in the experiment increased their sales, with cooperative members witnessing a 25 percent growth of their profits.

Recycling is good business, the spokesman noted: the cooperatives make money and the environment is kept clean.

Cuban Private Farmers Increase Sugar Cane Supply to Current Sugar Campaign

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) At least thirty percent of the sugar cane to be processed during the current sugar harvest is to be supplied by private farmers, marking an increasing participation of that productive sector in this economic field vital to Cuba's economy.

The Chairman of the National Association of Small Farmers, Felix González, said that a leading pack of private sugar cane growers feeding sugar mills is grouped in 304 cooperatives noted for their high yields.

Many farmers have received additional state owned land, which they are exploiting towards increasing sugar cane outputs in the island. The private cooperatives receive ample support from the Cuban state, including fuel, machines, spares and technical assistance at bottom prices. A total of 49 sugar mills will operate this year, and twenty five of them are already in operation

Cuba Launches New Line of Habano Cigars

HAVANA, Cuba.- The first line of Cuban Cigars known as Great Reserve Lusitania, a special production aimed at cigar connoisseurs around the World, was presented in Havana by the world famous Partagas Brand.

The cigars are hand rolled by veteran experts in environmentally controlled conditions, based on first grade leafs cultivated in selected Pinar del Rio plantations, in Western Cuba. The Partagas cigar factory was founded in Havana in 1845 and is one of the best producers in the world, offering cigar smokers unique products that satisfy the most demanding palates.

The Lusitanias, as the new cigars are known, are one hundred and ninety four millimeters long by 49 milimeters gross.

