

Fidel Castro Meets with Brazilian Theologian Frei Betto

HAVANA, Cuba, Feb 17 (acn) Cuban Revolution leader Fidel Castro and Brazilian intellectual Frei Betto held a prolonged conversation on Sunday about international issues, including youth demonstrations that have taken place in different parts of the world.

The meeting took place in the ambiance that has characterized the fraternal relations between Fidel and Frei Betto for years, Granma newspaper reported on Sunday.

Havana Book Fair Issues Statement of Solidarity with Venezuela

HAVANA, Cuba, Feb 17 (acn)A statement of solidarity with the people and government of Venezuela, following violent actions unleashed by the opposition in that country, was issued by the organizing committee of the 23rd Havana International Book Fair, minutes before the presentation of the book on a conversation between Cuban journalist Rosa Miriam Elizalde and the general secretary of the Union of South American Nations, Ali Rodriguez.

The statement, which was read by the vicepresident of foreign relations at the Cuban Book Institute, Edel Morales, expresses the permanent support of the people and government of Venezuela in their struggle to preserve peace and social justice, Granma newspaper reported on Monday.

"We strongly reject the fascist violence by certain Venezuelan rightist groups, which are linked to the continental and international extreme right circles in their effort to pave the way for a new coup in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.."the statement reads.

Just two weeks from the Declaration of Latin America and the Caribbean as a Zone of Peace at the recent Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the organizing committee of the book fair, presided by Zuleica Romay, rejects all actions against stability and

peace in the region, reads the document issued at the fair, which is gathering authors, editors from 42 nations of the world.

Cuba Condemns Coup Attempt in Venezuela

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Cuba strongly condemned on Thursday the coup attempt against the constitutional government of Venezuela and the most recent violent incidents that resulted in three deaths and over 70 injured in Caracas.

In a statement posted on the website of the Cuban Foreign Ministry, Cuban authorities also blasted the attacks against public institutions, the burning of vehicles and other violent actions organized by fascist groups, as it was denounced by Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro.

The Cuban government expresses its full support of the Bolivarian Revolution and calls for international solidarity based on the conviction that the Venezuelan people will defend its irreversible achievements, the legacy of President Hugo Chavez and the government that they elected in a free and sovereign way, headed by Maduro, the statement reads.

The document also reads that Cuba also affirmed its unconditional support of the tangible efforts by President Maduro and its government to preserve peace and join all sectors in the country to boost social and economic development.

Nicaragua to Host Latin American Student Congress

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The 27 th Congress of the Continental Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students (OCLAE) will take place in Nicaragua on August 17-22, a meeting that will be dedicated to the memory of late Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, on the occasion of the first anniversary of his death.

At the end of the meeting of the General Secretariat of the OCLAE, that wound up on Friday in the Cuban capital, it was also known that members of that regional platform, in their final declaration, denounced the interference and process of destabilization of the Bolivarian process by the imperialism and the Venezuelan oligarchy and urged the people to continue building the legacy left by Chavez.

The document urges the governments of Latin America to continue increasing strategies and efforts for the integration of nations, and acknowledges the work of organizations such as UNASUR, ALBA, CARICOM and MERCOSUR.

The text also points out that the student movement defends the environment and is contrary to exploitation without control of natural resources, and also against all forms of discrimination, whether political, religious, racial or of sexual identity.

Cuba Forced to Suspend Consular Procedures in the U.S.A.

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Cuba was forced to suspend its consular procedures in Washington, the U.S. capital, according to a communique published by the Cubaminrex Web site. The text points out that Cuba's Interests Section to Washington makes reference to its communique of December 9, 2013, which informed about a new deadline given by the M & T Bank to stop bank services to the Section and to Cuba's Permanent Mission at the United Nations. At that moment the date March 1st, 2014, was established as deadline for the closing of accounts and February 14 as the deadline to make deposits.

In spite of the enormous efforts made, due to the current restrictions derived from the U.S. government's policy of economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba, continues the document, it has been impossible for the Interests Section to find a bank based in the United States that assumes the bank accounts of the Cuban diplomatic missions.

For this reason, reads the text, Cuba's Interests Section is forced to suspend consular services on the date of the publication of this note, until bank services are re-established. As informed in November, only cases of humanitarian nature will be received.

Japanese People Learn of Cuban History and Reality

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Cuban ambassador to Japan Marcos Rodriguez gave a lecture in Tokio about the origin of Cuban nationality and the island's realities amidst the economic and social transformations underway on the island.

The Cuban diplomat gave his lecture at the Latin America and the Caribbean Association in Japan before academics, intellectuals and entrepreneurs, according to a news release by the association.

Participants were interested in learning about the economic update in Cuba and relations with the United States, among other issues.

The president of the Japanese association, professor Akira Kudo thanked the ambassador for his detailed information, which he said clearly explained about the realities of the Cuban people.

Washington Shuffles Funds for its Anti-Cuba Policy

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) The US administration withdrew 17, 5 million dollars from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) amidst political disputes and wrong management of such money destined to fund subversive actions against Cuba.

The funds will be allocated for the offices of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, and Western Hemispheric Affairs Office, with the State Department, as well as for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which is considered a CIA smoke screen, PL news agency reported.

The initiative indicates that the US policy aimed at achieving what Washington calls a regime change in Havana will keep intact under the Obama administration.

Secretary of State John Kerry tried to cut the expenses of the US programs against Cuba when he used to head the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee by stating that those funds were useless and unnecessarily risky.

In late 2006, an audit by the General Accountability Office into the USAID anti-Cuba activities revealed the use of funds to purchase items that were not related to what they term the promotion of democracy, such as cashmere sweaters, Godiva chocolate, Sony playstation sets and other products.

Under the Obama administration, the US State Department has allocated 20 million dollars annually to fund anti-Cuba hostile groups inside and outside the island, with the aim of promoting the so-called agenda for democracy.

Cuba Presents New Biotechnological Products in China

HAVANA, Cuba.- (acn) Chinese specialists expressed their interest in Beijing about new products of the Cuban business group Labiofam, particularly those linked to the use of natural insecticides and pesticides, the control of vectors and of peptides against cancer.

Jose Antonio Fraga, president of Labiofam, explained participants in the meeting, organized at the Cuban embassy to Beijing, the progress made by that company founded in the 1960s, which has increasingly expanded its productions.

Venezuelan Government Defends Sovereignty After U.S. Interference

Caracas, Feb 17 (Prensa Latina) The position of Venezuelan Government after right-wing actions, aimed at fostering destabilization in the country, considers defense of sovereignty a priority to face the United States' interference.

President of the Republic Nicolas Maduro refuted a statement issued by U.S. Department of State and said that Venezuela will have a firm hand against fascist groups that boost violence.

Maduro declared that he asked Venezuelan Foreign Minister Elias Jaua to declare three officials of U.S. Embassy "persona non grata", after denouncing their participation in plots against the Government.

Venezuelan Government also rejected statements of U.S. Secretary of State, John Kerry, claiming that they boost and legitimize the attempts to destabilize the country triggered by violent groups in recent days.

The Foreign Ministry said that the United States lies when questioning the existence of human and democratic rights in the country. Venezuelan institutions, established in a State of Law and Justice, guarantee all citizens the exercise of political rights in a scene marked by broad civil liberties secured by the constitution, it also said.

Canadians Celebrate 100 Months of Support to Cuban Antiterrorists

Ottawa.- (Prensa Latina) The Vancouver Committee for the Release of the Cuban antiterrorist fighters unjustly condemned in the United States will celebrate on March 5 100th consecutive months of solidarity actions in such Canadian city.

The 100th rally will be held that day in front of the U.S consulate in Vancouver, province of British Columbia, to demand the immediate and unconditional release of Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando Gonzalez, the group's coordinator Tamara Hansen told Prensa Latina.

Since 2005, the members of that Canadian organization supported by the local population are developing the fifth day of each month similar actions to support the Cuban antiterrorist fighters.

Those men and their compatriot Rene Gonzalez, already released, were arrested on September 12, 1998, while monitoring violent groups based in south Florida, from where actions as those that left more than 3,400 victims in Cuba in the last 53 years were planned.

Rene Gonzalez was released from prison in October 2011, after completing his sentence, and return to his homeland in May 2013, where he resigned his U.S. citizenship, to end a three-year additional punishment under supervised release.

According to Hansen, many activities are expected for March 5-8 in Vancouver, Nanaimo, Kamloops, and in the U.S. city of Seattle, to celebrate the 100th consecutive months of solidarity initiatives with the antiterrorist fighters of the Caribbean country.

Workers' Support to Cuban Updating Process Confirmed

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) The president of the Organizing Committee of the 20th Congress of the Cuban Workers' Union (CTC), Ulises Guilarte, confirmed today here the importance of the coming debates of that meeting for the country-boosted updating process.

Guilarte stated that the Congress, to be held on Feb. 20-22, will be the workers' support to the implementation of the guidelines of the economic and social policy adopted by the Communist Party of Cuba, Granma newspaper states.

We hope the meeting contributes to strengthen the Cuban workers' movement, and promote even more confronting crime, corruption, and illegalities, the daily says.

Granma also highlighted that the Congress will be the summary of more than one year of grass-root meeting, which brought about many statements aimed at improving the organization and were a critical look at the CTC.

According to organizers, prior to the Congress, the island held more than 8,000 executive meetings of union sessions.

Over Five Thousand Patients Treated in Cuba with Stem Cells

Havana, (Prensa Latina) Cuba has treated more than five thousand patients with stem cells, figure that places the country in an important position in the region for the use of regenerative medicine, the Cuban journal Granma published today.

Doctor Porfirio Hernández, deputy director of the Research Institute of Hematology and Immunology, told Granma that this cellular therapy shows a growing national implementation since it is being developed in 13 provinces of the country.

On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the use of this procedure for the first time in Cuba, the Ministry of Public Health and the Cuban Society of Hematology will carry out a scientific event from the next February 28th.

According to the national press, in the meeting they will deal with subjects regarding the advancements in the treatment with stem cells of the peripheral artery disease, Duchenne muscular dystrophy, chronic lymphoedema, as well as other ailments in the fields of angiology, orthopedics, cardiology, among others.

In previous statements to the national press, doctor Hernández noted that research on the potential of stem cells began in Cuba in 2003 and in the case of the cell therapy for regeneration of other tissues, its implementation began in 2004, first in the specialty of angiology and later in heart disease.

Ecuadorian Literature at the Center of Cuban Book Fair

Havana.- (Prensa Latina) The books *Tan solo morir*, *Poso Wells*, and *No es dicha* by Ecuadorian writers Alfredo Noriega, Gabriela Aleman, and Juan Secaira will be launched today at the third day of the 23rd International Book Fair in this capital.

The people attending the fair will also have other books to buy including, *Cuerpo Adentro*, *Historias desde el Closet*, and *Utopica Penumbra*.

Those activities will take place at San Carlos Fortress in this capital, main venue of the event, where a lecture and panel will be held about the work of Ecuadorian writer Pablo Palacio, whose name is carried by the stand of that South American nation, the fair's guest of honor.

The coordination minister of Knowledge and Human Talent of Ecuador, Guillaume Long, will also give a lecture about knowledge production in the People's revolution.

A colloquium about the work of Cuban historian Rolando Rodriguez, to whom this fair is dedicated, will also allow to know about his main literature motivations.

The book fair will conclude on February 23 in Havana and will start its tour nationwide until March 9.