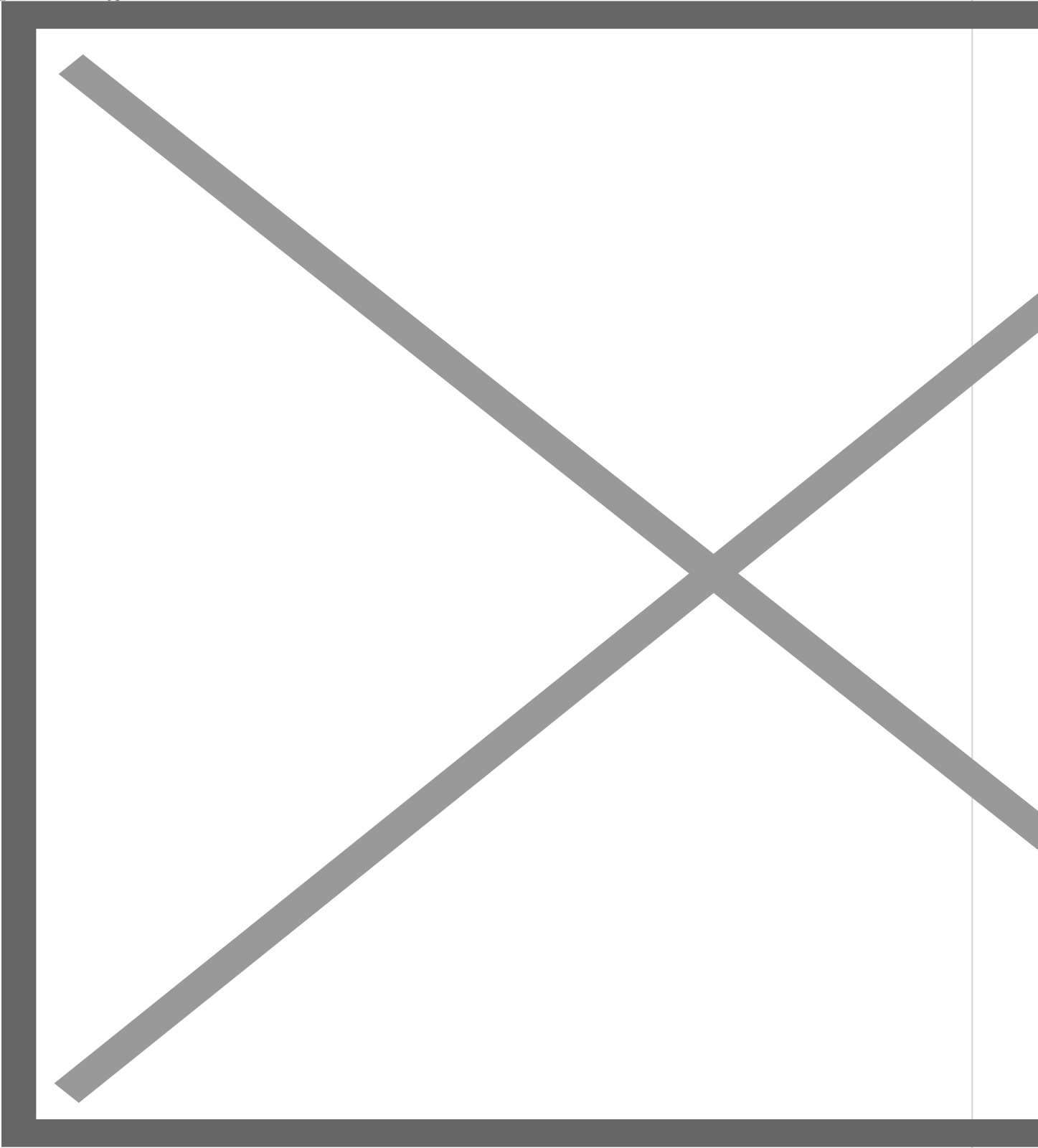


Top Ten national news stories from Cuba in 2022

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With a scientific community that worked non-stop and strained the country's scarce logistical and financial resources, Cuba developed and produced the first anti-COVID vaccine in Latin America. It was the pioneer country in immunizing its pediatric population between the ages of 2 and 18, and this marked a milestone not only for the Caribbean nation but for the world. The universalization of vaccines - three validated out of a total of five - on the island has allowed contagions to be reduced to a minimum, put a zero in death statistics since September, and a return to normality in all territories. These national vaccines have also saved many lives in developing countries that have purchased them as an alternative to the expensive or insufficient options from big capitalist pharmaceutical companies.

The first of the three tragedies that hit Cuba this year occurred on May 6 at eleven thirty in the morning. A devastating explosion, caused by a gas leak while supplying the emblematic Saratoga hotel in Old Havana, wiped out the entire façade of the property, a heritage of the city's eclectic architecture, and also damaged several neighboring buildings. Regarding people, there were: 47 dead and 52 wounded. No tourists were staying at the hotel at the time of the explosion, as it was undergoing renovations for an early reopening. Work is currently underway to rehabilitate the building, but the wounds will still take time to heal for many.

In the sixties and following a sovereign pattern, Mexico was the only Latin American country that did not join the continental isolation of the government of Fidel Castro imposed by Washington with its ministry of colonies, the OAS then and now. Returning to Mexico that tradition of independence and attachment to Cuba, since the days of the romantic poet José María Heredia, in the 19th century, President Andrés Manuel López Obrador made a working visit to Havana, when both countries celebrated their hundred and twenty years of diplomatic relations. The bilateral agenda was broad and substantial, from the contract for Cuban doctors and the trade commitments to the Summit of the Americas and the migratory crisis that has engulfed the entire region and that has the goal coveted by millions on the southern border of the United States.

On the stormy evening of Friday, August 5, lightning struck the fifty-two crude oil storage tanks of the Matanzas Supertanker Base, a city located one hundred kilometers from Havana, causing the largest and most devastating industrial disaster that records the history of Cuba. The incident spread to the left side of the huge warehouses, exploding one of them and collapsing the other three. The black column of smoke extended hundreds of kilometers to the west and was captured by satellites. After five days and nights, and with the help of Mexican and Venezuelan firefighters and technicians, the blaze was finally brought under control, leaving a charred, twisted landscape drenched in water. The brave Cuban firefighters, who came from various provinces, suffered the death of fifteen of their fellow workers. In total, 17 people lost their lives and about 150 suffered burns to varying degrees. "It always hurts to go back to that place. All the honor to the deceased," the president of the republic wrote on Twitter.

A more humane, inclusive, and modern Cuba emerged triumphant on September 25, after a referendum ratified with 66.87 percent of the valid votes and participation in the polls close to 75 percent, the Family Code, which replaced the previous one and surpassed the reality that dated from the seventies.

Submitted to more than twenty versions before the final one, number 25, the new text went through academic and popular discussion and codifies and defends, with a balanced vision, the new forms, needs, and problems of families on the island, from the best interests of the child, equal marriage and adoption by same-sex couples, even gestation in solidarity, gender violence, the progressive decision-making of minors and inheritance and pension rights, among many other aspects.

A monster of nature pounced on the westernmost part of Cuba in the early morning of September 27. With sustained winds of over 200 kilometers per hour and accumulated downpours of up to 108 liters per square meter, Hurricane Ian devastated the province of Pinar del Río, affecting more than sixty percent of its housing stock, the majority of its electrical network and numerous roads and plantations, among them the famous tobacco, in addition to causing a national blackout on the island as a result of an imbalance of loads. A counter-storm of work and solidarity has managed to bring the people of Pinar del Río out of the collapse, but there is still a lot to be rehabilitated, especially in the homes, but not in the electrical network restored in its entirety in a couple of months.

Thirty years, thirty times. Mathematics does not lie, much less the international community when it comes to repudiating the blockade that the United States has officially maintained on Cuba since 1962, and that has failed if a change of the island's regime is what they are looking for. US sanctions, retouched in their perversity with more than two hundred measures during the Trump era, currently cost fifteen million dollars a day, their penalties cut across the lives of Cubans and are the main obstacle to Cuba's development.

He was as big as he could be. He sang of love, heartbreak, homeland, the singer's ethics, the mistakes of some and others, the revolution and the diaspora, the days of glory and days of loneliness, tradition and the renewal, and finally, that Pablo Milanés, who died of cancer at the age of 79 in Madrid, guitar in hand or without it, with a thunderous and delicate voice, accompanied the sentimentality of generations of Cubans, regardless of their geography or creed, to unite them in his most substantial and generous identity, in his deepest essence.

Two international tours by a ministerial team headed by President Miguel Díaz-Canel in November and December confirmed that Cuba is not adrift in the midst of its worst economic crisis in more than thirty years and that its resistance is recognized and cared for by great actors of the world stage.

The president met with his counterparts from Algeria, Russia, Turkey, and China, signing collaboration agreements, in which Cuba offers its scientific capabilities in the medical and pharmaceutical fields with high-impact and value-added products. The same thing happened during his Caribbean tour through Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, where the eighth CARICOM-Cuba Summit was held, and lastly Grenada. In these last territories, the shared strategies from the condition of insularity refer to solidarity programs and reciprocal assistance in the face of common challenges.

And precisely solidarity and integration are the touchstones of ALBA-TCP, the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America – Peoples' Trade Treaty, which in 2022 had two summits in Havana. Number 21 in May and 22 in December.

In the first, this consensus platform sent a strong anti-hegemonic message and rejection of the exclusion of three of its members -Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Cuba- from the ninth Summit of the Americas, held in Los Angeles under the protest and disappointment of the majority of the attendees, with a presidentially absent Mexico in revulsion.

In the second, the ALBA-TCP leaders opted to further integrate the organization of ten countries in the daily life of their peoples, who already know of decisive events such as the fight against illiteracy, the free return of visual health to six million people, the census and protection of disabled citizens and the training of thousands of doctors.

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