

Raul Castro Underscores Strategic Significance of Mariel Special Development Zone

Cuban President Raul Castro described the Special Development Zone at the Harbor of Mariel, west of Havana, as the most important project being built on the island.

Raul made his statement during an evaluation of the investment project as he was briefed on the construction of railways, thoroughfares, water-supply infrastructure, and the area dedicated to logistics, among other works.

The Cuban head of state said that the Mariel project is part of the defense of the country's economic future because Cuba cannot continue to depend on the export of a handful of products to achieve its development. "Here is the base for the economic takeoff that we need," he said.

He also praised the big effort at work and called for advancement after congratulating the executives and workers involved in the task.

The evaluation meeting was also attended by first vice-president Miguel Diaz Canel, Revolution Commander Ramiro Valdes, government vice-president Antonio Lusson, and other national and provincial government officials. (AIN)

Raul Castro Stresses Cuba's Pride for Women

Havana, Cuba. - (Prensa Latina) President Raul Castro stressed Cuba's pride for at the closing ceremony of the 9th Congress of the Cuban Women's (FMC).

The statesman also referred to the progressive change of mindset regarding women's inclusion,

gender equality and women's empowerment in Cuba since the revolutionary triumph on January 1, 1959.

In the keynote speech at the event, Cuban Vice President Jose Ramon Machado Ventura stressed the Cuban women's high level of participation and integration in the country's activities, and the importance of FMC in the eradication of negative social conducts by working directly with families and communities.

Machado Ventura added that the main task of the organization is to contribute to the defense of the Cuban Revolution from constant foreign attacks.

The leadership of the FMC, in which Teresa Amarelle was ratified as the organization's general secretary, was presented during the ceremony. She confirmed women's commitment to the country's leadership in the construction of socialism.

FMC members support the socio-economic update being implemented by the country to contribute to prosperity and sustainability of the defended model, she also stated.

Participants in the Congress called to continue the work for women's equal rights and opportunities, as well as for the defense of the country's social achievements, and acknowledged the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro, and President Raul Castro for their work dedicated to dignify women.

They expressed their solidarity with all women worldwide who are still demanding gender equality and full inclusion.

During the plenary session, FMC members approved the documents that will govern the work of the organization until 2015.

Prior to the Congress, which concluded on Women's International Day, the FMC members held

debates at grass-roots delegations and municipal and provincial levels.

Cuban Heroine Melba Hernandez Passed Away in Havana

HAVANA, Cuba, March 10 (acn)The Cuban Communist Party informed that heroine Melba Hernandez, member of the Party's Central Committee and deputy to the National Parliament passed away Sunday, March 9, from complications linked to Diabetes Mellitus, a disease she had suffered from during years.

Melba Hernandez was born July 28, 1921, in the town of Cruces, in the former Las Villas province, today's Villa Clara in the center of the country. Hernandez graduated as a lawyer in 1943 at the University of Havana.

She was among the first women to have joined the revolutionary movement headed by Fidel Castro and she actively fought the Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. She participated in the July 26, 1953 attack on the Moncada garrison, in eastern Santiago de Cuba and witnessed the murder of many of her compatriots.

Melba joined the Rebel Army in the Third Guerrilla Front, under the command of Juan Almeida Bosque and after the victory of the Cuban Revolution she was assigned important responsibilities, such as president of the Cuban Committee in Solidarity with South Vietnam, and later similar committee in solidarity with Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. She was also ambassador to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and Kampuchea, and director of the Center for Studies on Asia and Oceania.

She received countless decorations and national and international distinctions, including Labor Heroine of the Republic of Cuba. Meeting her will, here body will be cremated and her ashes will be temporarily under the custody of the Ministry of the Armed Forces, and later transferred to the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery in Santiago de Cuba, along the mortal remains of her comrades who assaulted the Mocada Garrison.

