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International book fair concludes with tribute to Fidel

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The conclusion of the 26th edition of the 2017 Cuba International Book Fair in this city, which has since its beginning served as special tribute to its creator and number one supporter, Comandante en Jefe Fidel Castro Ruz, saw the presentation by Cuban Minister of Culture Abel Prieto Jiménez of the special book, *Exequias, Fidel Castro Ruz*.

The limited edition, compiled by Vicente González Díaz, which is also available in digital format, contains some 166 photos by eight renowned Cuban photographers of the funeral tributes paid to Fidel; including images of Havana's José Martí Plaza de la Revolución, and the placing of the Comandante's ashes in the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery in Santiago de Cuba.

During the closing ceremony, Juan Rodríguez Cabrera, President of the Cuban Book Institute, reported that 1,084,500 books were purchased by 1,811,629 visitors during the nine week, country-wide fair.

He also announced that the next edition will be dedicated to Havana City Historian Eusebio Leal Spengler, while the People's Republic of China will be welcomed as guest country of honor, bringing its rich culture and arts to the island.

Regarding the results of the fair, Rodríguez Cabrera noted that 25 titles about the life and work of Fidel were presented by over ten Cuban publishers, sold-out editions of which will be re-printed following public demand, while work is also underway to release new materials on his legacy.

He went on to note that another ten works by Armando Hart Dávalos will be published following the success of texts by the Cuban intellectual and politician, to whom the most recent edition of the fair was dedicated; while over 2,500 literary events were held nationwide during the fair, which also saw the participation of a record 510 authors from 46 countries.

Regarding the efforts to organize such an event, Rodríguez Cabrera noted that despite supply problems faced by Cuban publishers, the public was able to get their hands on around four million books, between those already in circulation from the previous edition of the fair and the almost three million copies of 746 new books published this year.

Regarding short-term priorities, the Cuban official mentioned the need to stabilize the country's printing industry, increase the use of new technologies, re-print popular works, and improve availability and accessibility to food stands in the fair's principle venue: La Cabaña Fortress.

Meanwhile, Lázaro Expósito Canto, a member of the Communist Party of Cuba Central Committee and first Party secretary in the province, was presented with the Utilidad de la Virtud award during an act which saw the participation of Party Central Committee members Beatriz Johnson Urrutia, president of the provincial government; Cuban Minister of Foreign Trade and Investment Rodrigo Malmierca Díaz; and Decorated Hero of the Republic of Cuba and Vice President of the José Martí Cultural Society, René González Sehwerert.

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