

THE CUENCA DISPATCH

Ecuador's Original English-Language Newspaper

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Government will still seek "gradual" withdrawal of energy subsidies



Ecuador still maintains the "objective" of "gradual" withdrawal of fuel subsidies after the end of last year's protests, this according to Ecuador's Minister of the Economy Richard Martinez.

"Although we had to withdraw the proposal, the objective [now] is to do it gradually through a specific focus," Martinez said during a visit to the US capital along with President Lenin Moreno.

"The objective does not change, what changes is the way, the speed

and the method," he said, stressing that these subsidies are "a drag on the country, and have a strong fiscal effect."

In the minister's opinion it is "an ethical issue," since "about 75% of subsidies benefit the people who have the most, especially in gasoline."

"What we have to do is expand social protection coverage for people with fewer resources," he said.

cont. page 4.

New ordinance will regulate market stalls throughout the city



A census is being carried out throughout Cuenca to quantify the number of merchants in the various markets throughout the city. At the same time, the Market Management department of the municipality is notifying all the merchants who are behind on their rent that they must pay up soon.

According to the Market Management group, many of the merchants are far behind on their bill—there are merchants who owe more than 50 months of back rent on their stalls—and they are being told that if they do not pay up their back debts now, they will be stopped from selling their products in the markets.

More vendors are behind on

rent in the El Arenal market than anywhere else in the city. Rent for an El Arenal stall costs anywhere between \$5 and \$10 a month, depending on the location and whether the stall is an interior or exterior unit.

The city estimates that there are now 12,000 vendors throughout Cuenca. However, that data is a "best guess;" the new census will help the city establish the real number of people working in the city markets, identify their locations, and record the type of business activity occurring at each business.

At the same time, the Public Services Commission is working on an ordinance cont. page. 11

AustroGas presents mobile app to order propane gas from home

AustroGas—the liquid petroleum gas (LPG) company—has launched a new mobile application called 'Austrogas' that allows citizens to order a cylinder of domestic gas for use at home.

Gerardo Maldonado, general manager of AustroGas, said that this new type of customer service is exclusively for those who have white LPG tanks.

Daniela Fernn, head of AustroGas systems, explained that the application is currently only available for mobile phones with the Android operating system.

cont. page. 4

AUSTROGAS

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Neighborhood collective 'Relocation of Brothels' insist on relocation of brothels- see page >> 5



Taximeter misuse being investigated by EMOV

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Sterilization campaign for domestic animals in Azuay

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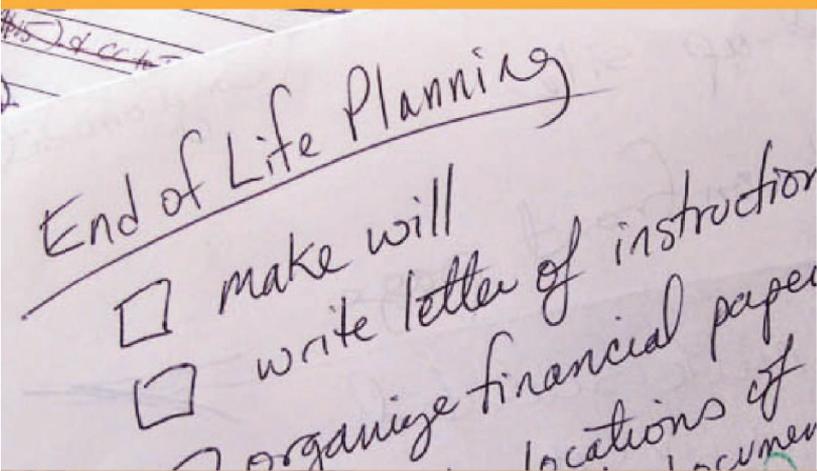
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I'M JUST SAYIN'

By Michael Soares

Version 2.0 is sometimes better

There's an expression that we've all heard that has more meaning for me now than ever before in my life. It's "watching from the sidelines." I was never a person who did much of that. I was always in the mix of things and never really had an off button.

Whether looking back at my athletic achievements as a child, my skiing adventures as a young (and middle-aged) man, or my life in business, I never gave it less than 100% and never would have been accused of watching it from the sidelines, or "phoning it in" (another common saying).

Now though, I get to watch two things from the sidelines, and I have to say, "It ain't so bad."

What I'm talking about is the former restaurant The Vegetable Bar and this newspaper, The Cuenca Dispatch. As probably all of you know, I started both of those things. And last May I turned them over to other people. I really had no choice as my health became a major issue for me last year (I'm much better now and I want to say thank you to all of you who sent me kind messages or asked me in person how I was doing).

The former Vegetable Bar is now called The Good Life Café. It's run by a good friend of mine, Dave Johnson. He took it as The Vegetable Bar and then slowly changed it to his own creation. Much like this newspaper. Jony Mogrovejo took it over and changed it to what he wanted it to be.

In both cases, I've sat on the sidelines and given advice when asked for it, and sometimes when not. Early on it was hard for me to let go of what my vision was for the two enterprises, so my advice was probably not worth much. But now that I've been away from both for nine months, I'm able to sit back and look at both situations and congratulate my friends for what they've done.

And lately they've both also asked my advice on a few things. So, now it's more of a fruitful relationship. I'm happy for both of them. They've taken what I gave them and modified it; in Dave's case, extensively. In Jony's case not so much. But for sure, neither of those businesses are what I created. They are now what my two friends created.

I kind of like this on the sideline role. I don't have any of the problems they face regularly and yet, I still get to feel like my knowledge is worth something. It feeds my ego to be able to offer a piece of advice here, a tidbit of information there. I feel what I did still matters and didn't dissipate when I stepped out of the spotlight.

That's something that I think is important to us all. Every one of us wants to feel that our past life matters to someone. We want to believe that all the hard work we put in during our lives didn't become worthless when we became expats.

That's why so many of the conversations you'll hear when you walk by a table at Dave's Good Life Café, are about what people did before. Because that stuff is important, and it does matter. It made all of us who we are today.

That realization has only come to me as of late. When we owned The Vegetable Bar, I used to think that our customers needed to move forward and stop talking about what they did before if they wanted to make their life here work. I was wrong.

What I realize now, as I walk in their shoes, is that what they did before matters more than even they can imagine. It is part of their "acquired DNA." It is what they picked up over the years that became intertwined with who they are.

Of course, not all of that acquired DNA is good. A lot of bad habits got picked up along the way.

But now that I can look from the sidelines, what I believe is that the bad acquired DNA is what they (we) now have a chance to get rid of. Being an expat now gives them (us) the opportunity to drop the crap in their lives and keep the good stuff that made them who they are.

Being an expat in fact offers a rare chance to change and improve who you are. Because in most cases, other than your spouse (who loves you no matter what crappy acquired DNA you still carry around), no one here knows who you were before.

So, take that opportunity. Become the best of who you are. You'll still be worth something to everyone around you. The best of what you were before will matter to people. They will ask your advice. They will recognize how valuable it is. And you will be able to sit back and be happy to watch others take your knowledge and add it to all that they have learned. It's a treat to see it happen.

For me, seeing Dave and Jony's successes is one of the best things that has happened to me here in Ecuador. They're making what I created better. Even if they are doing things differently than I would. Sometimes the second version of something can really be better than the first. Think about that. Because this is your chance to make a second version of yourself.

I'm just sayin'.

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	8	6		1		7		4
		5			7			
	3	9			5		8	1
				4	3	9		6
		7	1		2	5		
4		8	7	5				
9	7		2			8	3	
			5			4		
6		4		3		2	1	

<http://1sudoku.com>

n° 112622 - Level Easy

See answers on page 11

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Government will still seek "gradual" withdrawal of energy subsidies (Cont.)



He acknowledged that the serious riots and protests, which resulted in a dozen deaths and more than 1,500 wounded, were "complex moments" for Ecuador, "not only in the economic part, but also in the social part."

They also meant subtracting about 1% of economic growth last year, a "very severe blow", in Martínez's words during the meeting at the headquarters of Ecuador's permanent mission to the Organization of American States (OAS).

The Moreno-led government sought to raise about \$1.4 billion annually with the elimination of fuel subsidies, a measure that was finally repealed following the social outbreak that triggered the decision last October.

According to the latest forecasts of the Central Bank of Ecuador, 2019 ended with a negative growth of 0.1% and by 2020 a slight recovery of 0.7% is expected.

"This year will be better than the previous one, but still with many complexities along the way," Martínez said.

The controversial withdrawal of subsidies was announced in the framework of the financial assistance program of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) worth \$ 4.2 billion, which generated criticism of intervention to the international financial institution.

Martínez rejected these accusations, "Many times these kinds of reforms are stigmatized as impositions of multilateral organizations."

"The IMF is part of the solution. Many times, it is believed that it reaches countries, and it is the other way around. Countries go to the Fund when they have a very complex financial stress situation, and that is what Ecuador has done," he said.

Especially, he said, given the difficult global context "with the coronavirus, the fall in the price of oil and the growing nervousness."

"It is there when the agreement with the multilaterals, in these times of stress, takes much more value to have access to timely, cheap and long-term financing," he said.

At the end of last year, the Fund approved a new disbursement for \$498.4 million, within the agency's assistance program until 2021.

"We are looking for several mechanisms to prevent the economy from contracting in the middle of fiscal consolidation," Martínez said.

In this regard, he was surprised by Moody's recent decision to lower Ecuador's credit rating.

"It caught our attention; we don't see anything that has changed. There should have been a very relevant fact. We have not seen it, and it has not been explained. It seems to us that it is early in January 2020 to offer perspectives for 2022. We have a lot of argumentation to show that the work that lies ahead also includes improving debt maturity profiles," he reflected on doubts about the sustainability of Ecuadorian debt.

But that, he warned, "without any hostility" and "all with market operations."

"The process of restructuring the Ecuadorian macroeconomics seeks to regain market confidence, in 2008 a 'default' was made that left the country very badly stopped. We are not under any concept in that line," he said.

Martínez accompanied Moreno in mid-February to the White House meeting with the US President Donald Trump, on the first official visit of an Ecuadorian head of state to Washington in almost two decades.

AustroGas presents mobile app to order propane gas from home (Cont.)

A version for the iOS platform (iPhone) will be available in the coming weeks.

"The user must register his address and his data and request that the nearest vehicle deliver the product. [After] arriving at the address, the driver notifies [the user] of his presence and thus avoids the use of the whistle or the song that is currently used," she said.

So far there are 25 distributor vehicles affiliated with this system, but officials said that the goal is to eventually include the 100 other units that distribute the gas throughout the canton of Cuenca.

Customer service will be available through the app seven days a week during normal working hours.

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Neighborhood collective 'Relocation of Brothels' insist on relocation of brothels



Inhabitants of the Cayambe neighborhoods have had enough. They say they are tired of the security problems they deal with because of the nine brothels located in their section of Cuenca. They've formed a collective called 'Relocation of Brothels' and they are in discussions with the city to have their neighborhood undeclared as a "tolerance zone."

Abel Buestán, President of the collective, said that a delegation formed by Romel Reibán, President of the Alisos del Cebollar neighborhood; Andrés Zambrano, President of the Convention of 45; Janeth Chacón President of the El Cebollar neighborhood; and Patricia Serrano, representative of the educational centers of the sector, met Cuenca Mayor Pedro Palacios last week to discuss the issues related to the problems that revolve around prostitution.

Buestán described the dialogue with Palacios as positive; Palacios delegated Josué Vega, General Planning Director, to expedite the process of the Territorial Planning Plan, in relation to the relocation of the tolerance zone.

The neighborhood leader said they expect that document to set dates for the process of change—he said they won't give in on this issue and their aspirations to just live in peace.

Organization

The 'Relocation of Brothels' collective includes representative from the Cayambe, El Cebollar, Alisos del Cebollar, 'Y' del Cebollar, Tandacatu, Víctor Gerardo Aguilar, Convention of 45, Loma de Cullca, and Las Pencas neighborhoods. They've also included the directors of educational centers and religious communities that are in the jurisdictions of these neighborhoods.

The leaders claim that the presence of the brothels directly affects them because they are adjacent to the Cayambe neighborhood, where the sale of drugs, alcoholism, and crime proliferates, among other social problems.

The group is committed to getting the zoning change completed and approved and say that while other efforts to get their issues addressed have fallen short, they are not going to walk away from the problem.

Taximeter misuse being investigated by EMOV

Civil transit agents of the Mobility Company (EMOV) were out last week looking for taxi drivers who weren't being honest when collecting fares from their passengers. They ran a control operation in Cuenca to make sure that all taxi drivers are using the fare meter as required by law.

They stopped taxis on Ave. de España on Friday the 14th and verified that each vehicle had a taxi meter, that it was calibrated with the correct fare and that it was in a visible place in the taxi.

According to figures from EMOV, so far in 2020 traffic agents have issued 3 citations to drivers for not having a meter in their taxi. In 2019 they issued a total of 19 penalties for this violation.

According to the law, Article 390 states that "fifth-class traffic offenses" sanctions the misuse of the taximeter with a fine equivalent to 15% of a unified basic salary and a reduction of between 4 and 5 points in the driver's license.

Maricela Morocho, a taxi user, suggested that EMOV be consistent in how they punish taxi drivers who alter the meters and who disrespect the rate marked on the screen. She said another problem is that drivers like to "round" the fare when the trip is finished.

Ligia Gutiérrez, Manager of EMOV, says that in January 2020, the institution received 5 complaints, by telephone, for the improper charge made by taxi drivers. In 2019, there were 48 complaints—8 personally, 5 through social networks and 35 via telephone—all for the same cause, improper collection.

She said that the minimum daytime rate is \$ 1.39, and the minimum nighttime rate is \$1.67, with a starting cost of 0.55 cents and a waiting time cost of 0.06 cents. Gutiérrez added that riders can report the misuse of the taxi meters, on the social networks of the EMOV or by telephone.

"It is important that at the time of making the complaint, the user provides the license plate or municipal registration number of the unit," Gutiérrez said.



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Critically endangered bird reemerges due to conservation efforts in Yunguilla valley



An unassuming brown bird, tiny both in body and population size, hovers on the edge of extinction as much of its habitat has been cleared for agriculture and its nests are parasitized by cowbirds. In response, conservation organizations created a reserve expressly for the species' preservation in the late 1990's; now that reserve is being expanded to try to push one of the world's most endangered bird species farther back from the precipice.

The pale-headed brush-finch (*Altapetes pallidiceps*) disappeared for 30 years. But intensive surveys in 1998 turned up a few breeding pairs in southern Ecuador's Yunguilla Valley, initiating a race to save those that remained. The American Bird Conservancy (ABC), in collaboration with Fundación Jocotoco, an Ecuadorian conservation organization, worked to establish the Yunguilla Reserve to protect the brush-finch's habitat – which totals just half a square mile in size (one square kilometer).



Creation of the reserve allowed conservationists to better fend off human encroachment and manage habitat. The Yungilla Valley is particularly affected by agriculture, with natural vegetation felled to make room for crops and pasture, according to ABC.

Scientists also blame another bird species, the shiny cowbird, for taking a toll on brush-finches. The cowbird is a brood parasite, laying its eggs in other birds' nests. Baby cowbirds grow larger and faster than the nesting birds' real offspring, out competing them for food the parents bring back. Conservationists both eradicated cowbirds in the Yunguilla Reserve and banned agricultural activities.

The efforts were a success. From just a handful of birds in the late 1990's, the known population has grown to more than 250 individuals. However, the IUCN still lists it as Critically Endangered.

"Jocotoco's effort to save the Pale-headed Brush-finch is a wonderful example of how successful wildlife conservation can be achieved with expert knowledge and dedication," said Christine Hodgdon, International Conservation Manager for Rainforest Trust. "Rainforest Trust is excited to continue supporting this invaluable project as it continues to expand and develop."

Now, the problem seems to be space. A study conducted in 2009 found that the reserve may be at its brush-finch saturation point, meaning there may not be enough resources to allow the population to keep growing. Also, with all the world's pale-headed brush-finches living in one small area, the species is very vulnerable to external threats. According to ABC, the reserve and its birds already been affected by fires that spread from neighboring agricultural land.

In response, ABC, Fundación Jocotoco, and Rainforest Trust recently purchased 104 acres of land to provide more potential habitat for the brush finches. The new purchase will act as a "satellite area" two miles from the reserve proper.

To conservationists, this may not just be a success story for the pale-headed brush-finch, but a possible protection strategy for other highly threatened, localized species around the world.

"ABC is particularly invested in this species, having financed the expedition that rediscovered the bird in addition to providing early support to build the reserve," said Dr. George Fenwick, President of ABC. "This species is of global significance given that the entire remaining population persists in one location. This project demonstrates that protection of small populations restricted to single remaining sites can be an effective way to halt species extinction. With the addition of this new habitat, we expect the continued improvement of this species' conservation status and prospects for its long-term survival," he added.

Extracted from Mongabay.com



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Sterilization campaign for domestic animals in Azuay begins on February



The "Take Care of the Heart that Beats for You," canine and feline sterilization campaign, was launched last week in the Azuay province.

A cooperation agreement was signed between the Azuay Governorate and the "Activism, Rescue and Animal Consciousness Foundation" (ARCA), for the qualitative and quantitative sterilization of domestic pets in the province.

At the signing were Yaku Pérez, Prefect of Azuay province, Vice Prefect Cecilia Méndez, Valentina León, President of the ARCA Foundation and dozens of citizens who attended with their dogs and cats.

Marianela Irigoyen, who is coordinating "Take Care of the Heart that Beats for You," said that the sterilization of dogs and cats will begin on February 29th.

Those interested can be informed through the social networks of the Prefecture of Azuay, on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Evelyn Saca, current Cholita from Cuenca, said that, "It is worthy to worry about the welfare of domestic animals such as dogs and cats, this initiative will benefit these wonderful beings who share their time with us and give us their love and company," she said.

Ñusta Pérez, daughter of Yaku Pérez, also announced that she will be launching a new project called "Stop for Them," which aims to help prevent domestic animals from being killed on Ecuador's roadways.

Over 79% of women in Azuay were violated at least once in their life

Azuay province records the highest number of cases in Ecuador of violence against women in any field: psychological, physical, sexual and heritage, both throughout her life and in her last year.

This comes from the National Survey on Family Relations and Gender Violence Against Women, whose figures show that 79.2 percent of Azuayan women over 15 have experienced at least one act of violence in some area throughout of their life.

The other provinces with high rates, but less than Azuay, are Morona Santiago, Napo, Cañar and Imbabura.

Blanca Pacheco, director of the María Amor shelter, emphasizes that the survey shows cases identified by the victims, which are not the only ones, and highlights that this type of violence has intensified in the country. "[But] many women have not yet [reported]. They raise awareness and their realities are invisible," and do not appear in these or other indicators.

In January alone, this shelter received 58 emergency calls to its support line from women who felt their lives were being threatened. So far this year, they have received at least 12 women in this situation, along with 35 minors.

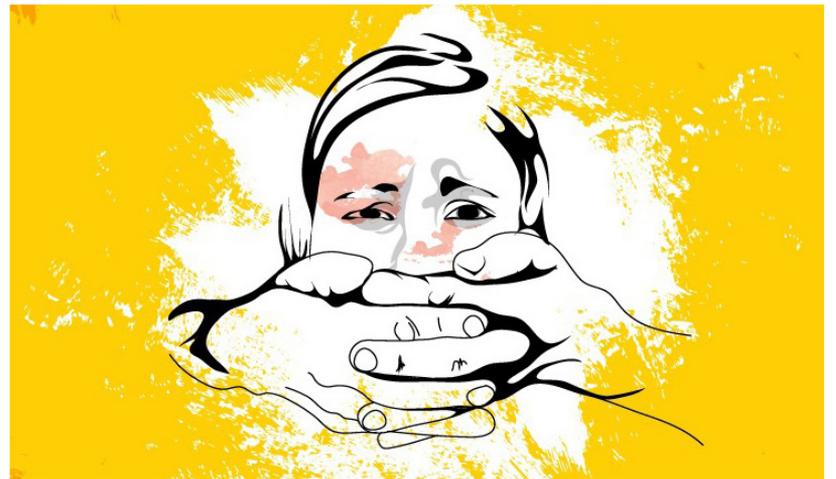
In the Department of Domestic Violence of Azuay, DEVIF, in January of this year, 245 summonses for violence were issued. In this same department throughout 2019, 4,050 police summons were issued in situations of violence.

Perhaps just as frightening is that 27.7% of Azuayan women report that at least once throughout their lives they have experienced violence in an educational area.

This type includes psychological violence, as well as sexual advances and physical aggressions. Of that 27.7%, about 55% of those affected told the fact to an acquaintance. However, 98 percent of all respondents did not officially report what happened.

Psychologist Fernanda Martínez attributes this fact to some women prefer to try to deal with the violence on their own. Because the act of denouncing someone, mostly revictimizes women and exerts a power contrary to what is sought with therapy.

However, the conclusions of the survey highlight that the importance of reporting lies in making the level of violence visible in the country.



Guayaquil gets over 92,000 US Type B Visas, but country rejected 66% of the time

It seems that being from Guayaquil means you're either, more likely to apply for a Type B Visa to visit the United States, or you're more likely to be approved for one if you are from there.

The financial capital of the country had 92,715 people approved for this seemingly hard to get visa. Meanwhile, 86,493 people were approved for the Type B Visa in Quito, the nation's capital. Type B Visas are issued for tourism or travel to do business.

Throughout 2019, the United States approved 8,742,068 visas worldwide, of which more than six million were Type B.

While those may seem like extremely large numbers, there is a significant rejection rate for this sought-after travel visa. According to statistics from the US State Department, the rate of rejection of Type B Visa requests from Ecuadorians was 34.05%. That rate has increased compared to 2018, when the level of rejection for Type B Visa applications from Ecuadorians was 31.38%.

In comparison to other Latin American countries, Ecuador comes in third from the bottom for rejection rate. Only two of its neighbors did worse: Colombia had a rejection rate of 41.93% and Venezuela, not surprisingly, had a rejection rate of 59.53%.

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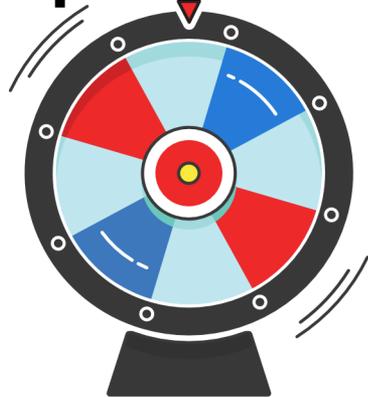
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Labor reform remains stuck in political stalemate while jobs disappear

The labor reform, one of the legal projects that the national government has argued needs to be implemented "urgently," seems to have remain in limbo. There is no date set for submission of the reform to the Assembly and time may be running out.

Government authorities said the labor reform would be sent to the Assembly in April 2019, to generate greater competitiveness and hiring in the productive sector. It was also mentioned as a "key effort" in the letter of intent Ecuador signed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in March 2019.

However, in December in the last report of the technical team of the IMF, it was clarified that this issue is not part of the terms of the agreement. "The fourth reform on the labor market, which is not part of the terms of the agreement, but is important to improve competitiveness, has not yet been submitted," says the report. Nonetheless, fiscal and monetary reforms do have a delivery date.

Adding to that, Alberto Acosta Burneo, editor of Weekly Analysis, believes that after the October protests and because 2020 is an election year, the Government has calculated that there would be no support from social sectors or from the Assembly to finalize it.

Over 115,000 full jobs were lost

Meanwhile, employment indicators have deteriorated. Acosta Burneo explains that the increase in minimum labor costs, coupled with stagnant sales, has led companies to look for ways to reduce payroll.

They have taken advantage of several options: replace expensive labor with a cheaper one; reduce the workforce and improve productivity (give one person the work that two people used to do).

According to National Institute of Statistics and Census(INEC), a net total of 115,782 jobs were lost between December 2018 and December 2019. The Construction sector registered the greatest loss of full-time jobs with 21,647 fewer positions. It was followed by the "Education, social services and health" sector, which lost 18,848 full employment positions.

The table below shows that a total of 117,826 jobs were lost across 14 sectors, while jobs were only gained in one sector: Mail and Communications.

According to Roberto Aspiazu, executive director of the Ecuadorian Business Committee (CEE), the departure of workers in 2019 is a logical consequence of the stagnation of the economy and that companies make the decision to reduce jobs to cut costs for greater profitability.

He maintains that therefore, reform is urgent and must be submitted to the Assembly immediately. He says that it makes no sense to continue to hold up a project that already had consensus and that included the flexibility of the workday and even the withdrawal of surcharges for occasional and eventual contracts.

He disagreed that a new Labor Code is being discussed in the Workers' Commission. He acknowledged that there could be problems in approving the reform, considering that there are Assembly members who have already done their political calculations and would have resistance to bump into an issue considered "taboo."

Fabián Córdova, commercial vice president of Continental Tire Andina, which has 1,600 workers, says it will be difficult for labor reform to enter the political agenda, but says that if this happens, it must be a fair reform for all involved. In the case of his company, not many workers have not been let go because the export market in the USA opened up for them. They have also made efforts to keep workers who are skilled labor. He asks that the Government look for other ways to make the industry competitive. For example, support for exporters, lower tariffs on raw materials that still pay them, improve paperwork at ports and airports.

Canadian company begins drilling phase in Cotopaxi mining area



The Ministry of Energy and Non-Renewable Natural Resources announced that the Canadian Atico Mining Corporation has begun drilling for samples for a second-generation mining project—with prospects for copper, gold and silver—in the Sigchos sector of Cotopaxi.

The so-called "La Plata" project has begun drilling activities to obtain information on the shape, content and quality of the underground minerals.

After obtaining the necessary geological information from sample drilling, Aticowill begin the economic evaluation of the deposit, its technical feasibility and the design of exploitation.

Between 2011 and 2019, Atico Mining Corporation (through its subsidiary La Plata SA) invested \$ 7.4 million to carry out exploration activities. Its prior project generated 124 jobs, between direct and indirect work. The company also invested \$232,908 in its direct community development plan in the area, said the Ministry.

"La Plata" is a small-scale mining project, (i.e., second-generation), and is considered one of the most important for the country behind the large-scale mines "Mirador" and "Fruta del Norte," both located in the Amazon province by Zamora Chinchipe(both opened in 2019).

The Ecuadorian Government has promoted mining in recent years under a shared responsibility plan with world-renowned companies, who are obliged to meet the highest standards of operation, with respect to the environment and communities.

To supervise the work in "La Plata," the Ecuadorian Vice Minister of Minas, Enrique Gallegos-Anda, made a technical visit to the drilling rig and the lab where the geological samples of the project are stored and analyzed, according to the Ministry.

The Government "ensures compliance with regulations in the mining sector" and therefore monitors "in situ" how they are executed and whether they guarantee the social and productive development of its surrounding areas, as established by internal regulations and the 'Covenant Social Energy' promoted by the Ministry," added Gallegos-Anda.

Jaime Vargas reiterates that he is the second president of Ecuador

In a meeting with the Union of Indigenous Communities of Azuay, in Cuenca's Parque Calderón, Jaime Vargas, the president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (Conaie), reiterated that he is the second President of Ecuador.

At the event, whose main theme was the development of the Peoples' Parliament, Vargas was asked about his immigration problem in Guatemala, where he, along with the indigenous leaders María Luisa Lozano and Apawki Castro, where deported from last week.

"We are asking for a report from the President of the Republic of Guatemala (Alejandro Giammattei) on whether there was a request from the Ecuadorian government (to expel them from the Central American country)," said the chief executive of the indigenous communities.

When asked about his expressions in a video after being expelled from Guatemala, in which he said that he was the second President of Ecuador, Vargas replied: "I am the president of the indigenous peoples of Ecuador ... the first President is Lenin Moreno and the second President is Jaime Vargas, president of the Peoples and Nationalities of Ecuador."

At the press conference, Vargas called on the United Workers Front, the National Front and other organizations to participate in the Unity and Resistance Meeting.

He also said they will socialize a proposal presented to the National Government on an economic alternative to improve the situation in the country. The leader indicated that the approach is not only given as an indigenous movement, but with 182 different organizations, peoples and nationalities of the country.



Female scientists and academics battle gender stereotypes throughout Ecuador



Gabriela Vázquez is one of the few scientists in the city. She is in charge of the water laboratory of the University of Cuenca, and among her aspirations is that more women occupy technical positions and break the gender stereotypes in the academic, scientific and professional worlds.

To support Gabriela's belief, a study conducted by the Ecuadorian Network of Scientific Women, REMCI, at the Universidad de Cuenca, Universidad del Azuay and the Universidad Politécnica Salesiana, highlighted both the low percentages of women in relevant academic positions and the difficulties they face in accessing and completing university studies in the country.

Although more women than men in Azuay have a university degree, only 1.92% of them hold academic or scientific positions, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC).

In fact, according to the Gender Atlas of the INEC, 24,157 women in Azuay have professional degrees—compared to 23,381 men. However, only 5,813 women have professional, scientific or technical positions.

This makes the inequality visible, according to Victoria Abril, coordinator of REMCI, who said that according to her registry, only 18 percent of women in the country hold a position as rector in public universities and only 36 percent of professors are of the female gender.

Gabriela Álava, a researcher and professor of the Faculty of Economic and Administrative Sciences of the Universidad de Cuenca, who is a member of REMCI, explained that the offices of the Dean, Assistant Dean, and Career Counselor are occupied by 40 to 45 percent women, meaning there is still a gender gap.

She added that one of the conclusions is that the roles established by society carry the role of caregivers for women, "which causes women to put aside our career during our maternal stage, in many cases unable to recover our scientific production."

CRIME REPORT AND ACCIDENT REPORT

Cuenca and National Criminal Activity

(Cuenca) At noon on Tuesday, at General Torres and Pio Bravo, paramedics of the Fire Department provided first aid to a 55-year-old citizen who was attacked by two criminals who were riding on a motorcycle.

The first responders reported that the victim had two head injuries caused by the grip of a firearm and was taken to the IESS hospital.

The affected told police that he withdrew \$6,000 from a bank located on Avenida Ordóñez Lasso and Avenida de las Américas, then went to his home, but when he got out of his vehicle, he was hit by the thugs who then took his money.

The Police are investigating to find the whereabouts of the criminals who acted under the modality known as "sacapuntas."

(Cuenca) Police reported that at 3:00 PM on Monday at Francisco Goya and Diego de Velásquez, two teenagers of 14 and 15 years were apprehended for the theft of a cell phone from a passerby. According to police information, the suspects beat the victim.

After learning about what happened, residents of the sector apprehended the two subjects and delivered them to the police.

They were identified by the injured party and respond to the names of Martín Fernando C., 15 years old; and Michael Alexander L., 14, neither have a criminal record.

Police officers found the stolen cell phone on one of the subjects.

(Cuenca) National Police personnel recovered three vehicles and two motorcycles reported as stolen in Cuenca. As part of an anti-crime initiative, agents found the that the paperwork for the motor vehicles presented anomalies.

During their review, the automotive owners presented "inconsistency and manipulation in the serial numbering of the chassis and the engine," said a report issued by the Azuay National Police.

The motor vehicles were seized; owners must prove the legality and ownership of the vehicles.

(Cuenca) Four subjects involved in the theft of cell phones to citizens who were traveling through the streets of Cuenca are behind bars.

Among the detainees are two individuals who ripped the cell phone from a young man on Tres de Noviembre Avenue, sector of the Sacred Hearts School.

The victim asked for help from members of the Citizen Guard, who managed to capture them when they escaped through Floreana Street and Doce de Abril Avenue.

On the streets Vega Muñoz and Mariano Cueva, a citizen reported that a man and a woman stole her mobile phone. Judicial Police agents captured the alleged criminals who were identified as José Lucas ZC and Jéssica Alexandra OB

(Cuenca) At noon on Thursday February 13th, at Benigno Malo and Rafael María Arizaga, Christian Ismael SA, 27, was captured when he was caught taking the accessories out of a Suzuki Forsa car.

The individual took accepted his responsibility and the judge who heard the case issued a sentence of one year in prison at the CRS-Turi Social Rehabilitation Center.

(Cuenca) On Thursday February 13th, Merchandise with forged logos and brands was seized during the operation called 'Mercantil'.

Police report that the operation was carried out by personnel of the Customs and Tax Crimes Unit, of the Loja agency, in coordination with the Prosecutor's Office of Azuay and Criminalística de Cuenca.

The intervention was carried out in a building located on Avenida de las Américas and Abelardo J. Andrade, in which fake merchandise with the logos of brands such as Michael Kors, Calvin Klein, Gucci, Tous, Vulgari, Victoria Secret, Hello Kitty, among others, was seized. The estimated value of the fake goods was \$25,000.

The owner could not show proof of purchase to verify the authenticity of the goods. Police are still determining if the owner will be charged with criminal activity.

(Turi) A prison security agent was arrested for trying to enter the Social Rehabilitation Center, CRS-Turi, 39 with hidden telephone chips in his clothes.

The police report notes that at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, the personnel in charge of filter No.1 detected that hidden electronic devices were in the jacket of Thalia Marianela C., 25.

The report details that the agent argued that the chips belonged to his partner Byron Y., 33. The case was brought to the attention of the Azuay Prosecutor's Office for the respective investigations.

According to article 275 of the Organic Comprehensive Criminal Code, the person entering the centers of deprivation of liberty with alcoholic beverages, drugs, weapons, cell phones or communication equipment attached to the body or its clothing, will be sanctioned with imprisonment of one to three years.

Cuenca Area Traffic Accidents

(Cuenca) An accident with fatal consequences occurred at 02:20 last Saturday on Los Cerezos and De la Colina, where a motorcyclist lost his life after a crash.

According to civilian traffic agents, the motorcycle crashed into the curb, which caused the driver to get launched headlong into a streetlight post, killing him.

The body remains in the Forensic Center because there are no relatives to identify it and process the autopsy.

(Cuenca) A Peruvian national died after the overturning of a dump truck at 07:30 a.m. on Saturday at kilometer 62 of the Cuenca-Molleturo-El Empalme road.

Paramedics used extrication tools to free the person who was trapped between the twisted metal of the cabin. The victim was identified as Segundo Andrés Cabrejos, 59.

According to investigators, the victim was a companion of the driver, who was also injured and was transferred to a hospital in a private vehicle.

On the circumstances of the road accident, César Quito, CTE agents said that the driver lost control of the truck on a turn and smashed into a large rock, causing the truck to tip over on the road.



The image is a dark-themed advertisement for Gobig web development. At the top, there is a large, stylized logo consisting of a circle containing the letters 'G', 'B', and 'I', followed by the word 'BIG' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below the logo, the text 'web development' is written in a smaller, lowercase font. To the right of the logo, there is a list of contact information: a phone icon followed by the number '098 482 2495', an envelope icon followed by the email address 'info@gobig.ec', a Facebook icon followed by the page name 'gobigwebdesign', and a globe icon followed by the website 'www.gobig.ec'. At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a row of social media icons for Facebook, Instagram, Google+, YouTube, and Twitter.

Latin America, the most lethal world region for environmentalists and defenders

Latin America is the most dangerous region in the world to defend human and environmental rights. Last year the region registered 200 of the 304 murders documented globally by the NGO Front Line Defenders (FLD).

According to the report "Global Analysis 2019," released last Wednesday in Mexico City, four of the five most dangerous countries to exercise activism in are part of the subcontinent, and accumulate 68% of cases, said Sandra Patargo, coordinator of Protection for the Americas (part of FLD).

"It is the most dangerous (region) in the sense that it is the deadliest, it is where more human rights defenders are killed in the world," he warned.

The five countries with the most murders of human rights defenders and environmentalists in 2019, according to FLD, were Colombia with 106, the Philippines - the only non-American country on the list - with 43, Honduras with 31, Mexico with 23 and Brazil, also with 23.

Patargo stressed that "40% of human rights defenders in the world worked on environmental, land and territory issues and rights of indigenous peoples."

In 75% of the cases documented by FLD, there was a record of previous threats made to the victims.

"Impunity remains the norm in the region," Patargo said, since the cases do not reach comprehensive justice where both the material and intellectual instigators are arrested.

Criminalization was one of the most documented attacks in the region, and, like the murders, it occurs mainly against environmentalists, he added.

Investigation of environmental defender murders ineffectual

Mexico is the most lethal country for environmental defenders—75% of the 23 murders documented in the country were against nature defenders, Patargo said.

"They were directly related (in the fight against) extractive activities of megaprojects of development. In the particular case of Mexico, the promise of President (Andrés Manuel) López Obrador to fight against poverty implies investing in extractive projects and development projects," Patargo explained.

By opposing these programs, she said, defenders face enormous risks, because "there are powerful corporate and public officials interests and possible profits at stake."

FLD continues to document 2019 cases from Mexico, so it's possible that the number of 23 murders will increase, said Patargo.

This "without counting obviously the cases of this 2020, where we have already documented at least 3 murders of defenders (two in Michoacán and one in Ciudad Juárez)".

She added that more than 60% of the murders in Mexico were committed with firearms and in at least 11 cases, investigations have yielded no results to date.

Jesús Peña, deputy representative in Mexico of the UN High Commission for Human Rights, condemned the unfortunate fourth place—along with Brazil—that Mexico occupies in the FLD report regarding attacks on human rights defenders.

"The best way of protection is undoubtedly the fight against impunity in which many of the aggressions are," Peña warned.

Patargo added that 20% of the murders in Mexico were against women, while internationally the figure was 13%.

"Many times, this violence is not visible (against women), but it does not mean that it is not happening," he said. EFE

Extracted from Diario El Mercurio



New ordinance will regulate market stalls throughout the city (Cont)



At the same time, the Public Services Commission is working on an ordinance project that regulate the operation, control and occupation of spaces in the city's markets, as well as the costs of leasing the spots within them.

The current regulations governing the administration of the markets go all the way back to 1989—when Cuenca was a much smaller city—and require updates and reforms.

The Commission's Vice President Roque Ordóñez, says work on the draft ordinance is 98% complete; it will address issues of space occupation, the processes to request a stall, and the leasing arrangements for each assignment.

According to the mayor, this regulation will establish a formula to calculate the cost of leasing the stalls, depending on the business of the merchant, the location of the stall and the overall amount of space used.

"We are in analysis of the formula presented by the Directorate of Markets to establish costs."

Councilor Marisol Peñaloza, said that meetings have been held with each of the current tenants to learn about their businesses and to understand their needs.

"What [has been explained to them] is that the costs will not be excessive, and that their line of business will simply be reviewed."

She added that the allocation of positions will also be analyzed through the regulation. For example, if there is a merchant who has two or more stalls in his name, other merchants who require a site will be prioritized.

There is citizen oversight in the construction of the new regulations

A citizen oversight committee was established in December to verify the construction of the ordinance/reforms. The members of the commission will meet this week to discuss the ordinance proposal and socialize it with citizen oversight.

At the meeting, the Market Management administration will present a new proposal to analyze the formula for the cost of leasing positions in the markets, of several business drafts to determine how much it will cost a trader. "It could be 20 to 50 dollars, a small variation depending on what you sell, the square meters you occupy and the location of the market."

2	8	6	3	1	9	7	5	4
1	4	5	6	8	7	3	9	2
7	3	9	4	2	5	6	8	1
5	1	2	8	4	3	9	7	6
3	6	7	1	9	2	5	4	8
4	9	8	7	5	6	1	2	3
9	7	1	2	6	4	8	3	5
8	2	3	5	7	1	4	6	9
6	5	4	9	3	8	2	1	7

Solution to Sudoku puzzle on page 3

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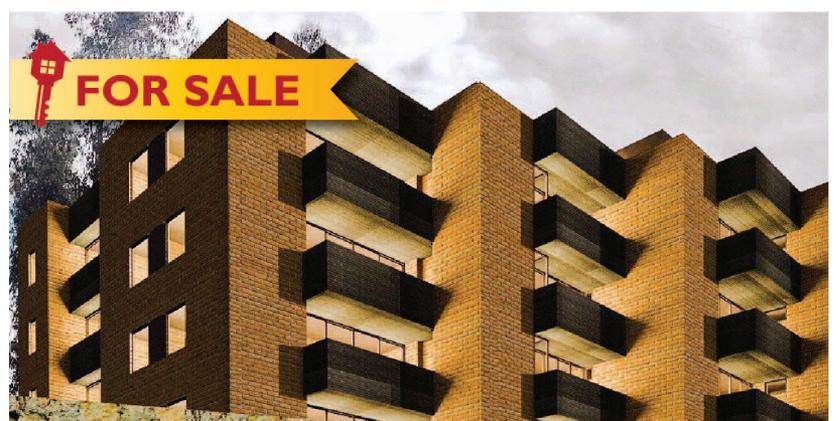
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