



# EL OBSERVADOR

## Venezuela's Chavez May Declare State of Emergency

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Reversing an earlier statement, President Hugo Chavez said he is "seriously" considering declaring a state of emergency to address Venezuela's social and economic problems.

The move would allow Chavez to rule by decree. It also would allow Chavez to suspend most constitutional rights, but Defense Minister Jose Vicente Rangel said earlier this week that Chavez would not do that.

"The social situation in the country is very serious," Chavez

said in a late-night televised address. "I am seriously thinking about it. If someone asked me about the probability of declaring a state of emergency, I would say the probability is getting higher."

There was no immediate explanation for Chavez's apparent change of position and officials were unavailable for comment on his late-night televised remarks.

Chavez said he would ponder the move during his 21-day tour to Russia, Iran, China,

Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia. He earlier tried to downplay Rangel's claim that he was considering a state of emergency to combat corruption and rising crime, saying it was not on the table "for now."

Chavez also broke a two-year alliance with a political party that said it would not support a state of emergency. His break with Movement Toward Socialism, or MAS, cost his Patriotic Pole coalition its two-thirds majority in Congress.

MAS leader Carlos Tablante

said Chavez does not need to declare a state of emergency because he has enough power to deal with Venezuela's problems.

MAS's support was key last year to granting Chavez year-long authority to decree a wide-range of laws on social, economic and political issues.

The 30-year-old party has belonged to the Patriotic Pole since it decided to back Chavez's 1998 presidential candidacy.

Chavez, a former para-

trooper who rose to fame by leading a failed coup in 1992, has rewritten the constitution and stacked congress, the supreme court and state governments with allies through a series of democratic elections and referendums.

He says his political reforms ousted a corrupt and elitist political class and paved the way for a "social revolution" to lift millions of Venezuelans out of poverty and promote patriotism.

Chavez's expulsion of MAS

follows a public admonishment to his own party for its snail-paced legislating. He recently suggested he would seek new allies to form a fresh political movement to reinvigorate his bond with the Venezuelan people. Popular with Venezuela's poor majority, Chavez still enjoys an approval rating of more than 60% but recent polls show Venezuelans are unsatisfied with his government's efforts to reduce unemployment, which is 14%, and combat rising crime.

## Saying 'Hello' In a Foreign Language Brings Higher Standards

STORY CONTINUES FROM FRONT PAGE

executive producer, has been working in foreign language education for 25 years. She says TV has proven effective in teaching language to kids.

"We're finding them right on target. They're really coming back at us

retaining the language," she said. "It really is impressive."

With the help of federal grant money, community donations and school district support, Moshi Moshi, the Japanese program, is its fifth year of production. Hola Hola, the Spanish program, began three years ago.

This style of teaching is not like the futuristic notion that some people have of machines one-day replacing teachers.

"You can never replace the classroom teacher," Bastiani said.

The programs work in partnership between teachers on the screen and

teachers in the classroom.

Each school has a foreign language instructor that helps the other teachers reinforce what the students are learning. The classroom teachers also attend monthly training sessions about how to bring foreign language into the classroom.

This summer, 60 teachers will go to Puebla, Mexico for four weeks for intensive Spanish training.

Even teachers who do not speak the language are not a detriment to the kids, according to facilitator-trainer Marian Flood.

"Some of the best teachers I've seen are those who are learning along with their kids. The kids know they're making mistakes, but they respect them for trying," Flood said.

She said the teachers tend to mix language with the other lessons the kids are learning. During a math lesson, for example, they will say the numbers in Spanish or in Japanese.

The kids also send in artwork to the shows. One example was a draw-

ing of a person's nose with the Spanish word "nariz" written in for the English word "nose".

With Moshi Moshi, volunteer college students, usually Japanese natives, help teachers reinforce the TV lessons. This is helpful because the teachers tend to be a little more "nervous" teaching Japanese than Spanish. Being on TV does not make the job of the cast of "Hola Hola" and Moshi Moshi easy.

"They do everything from the curriculum, to the costumes, to vacuuming the floor," Bastiani said.

The cast does their own make-up, set design, they write their own songs and make their own sound effects.

The entire cast has experience in teaching, and many of them have some experience in television and acting.

"It takes a lot," Bastiani said. "It's very different to teach to a camera than it is to teach to a classroom full of students."

Aside from teaching three live lessons Monday through Thursday, the cast visits different schools in assemblies on Fridays.

"They are so cute," cast member Nurys Herrera said about the kids. The three women from the "Hola Hola" cast giggle and coo over the artwork the kids send them.

"Basically, all of the people who work on this project have to love what they are doing. They can make more money in another job, but this is a commitment to the community," Marisol Rodriguez said.

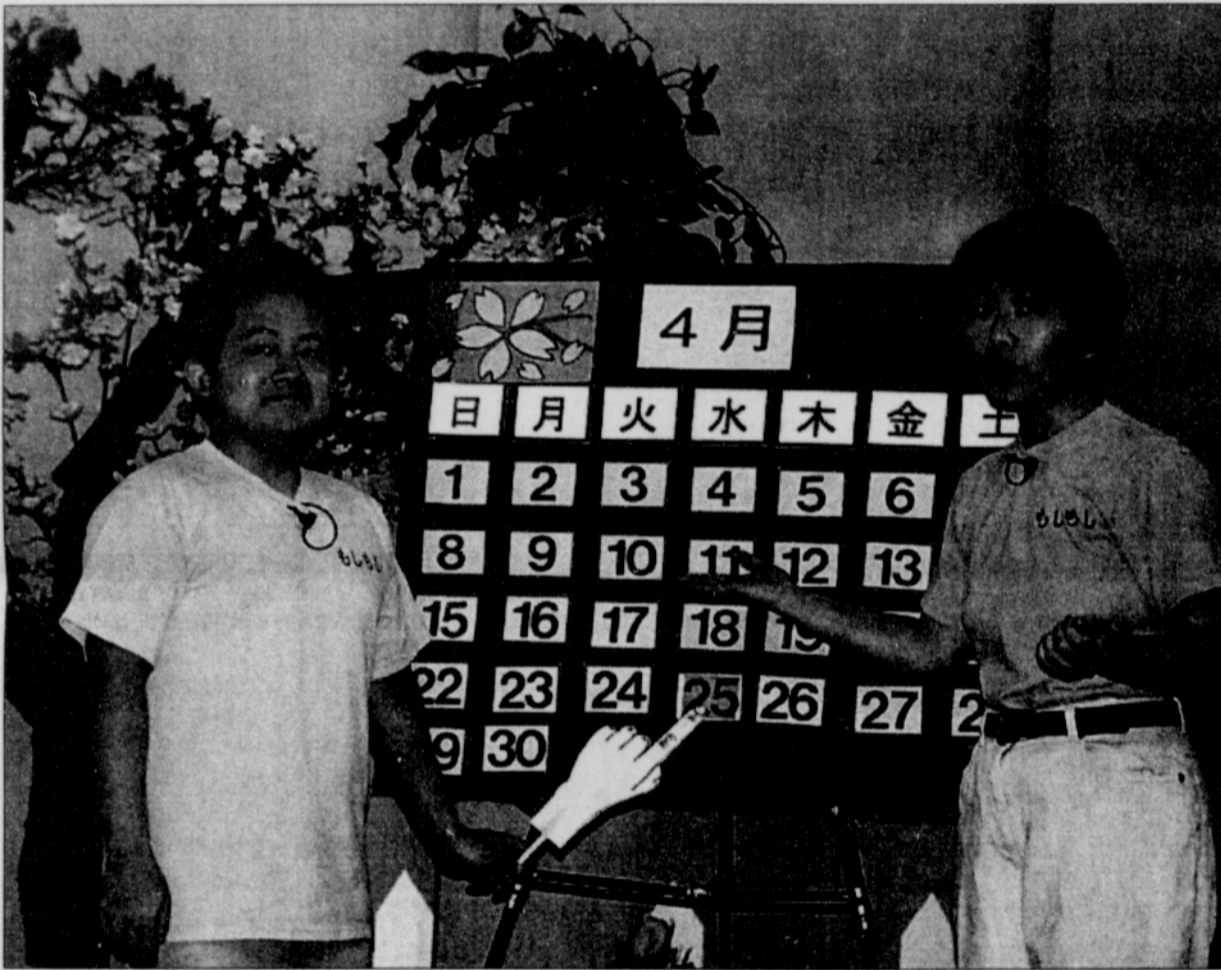
Rodriguez says success comes from being a "team."

"It's like a basketball game. You have to think fast," she said. "You just go, play and you have to win."

All of the programs are completely in either Spanish or Japanese.

The philosophy is that immersion is the best way to teach a language.

"Otherwise you're just teaching translation. We want to teach them how to communicate," Flood said.



(PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER)

Toyo Fujimoto (left) and Reiko Yoshida are instructors in the TV program "Moshi-Moshi," the Japanese language program being broadcast along with the Spanish language program "Hola Hola" in Portland Public Schools.

## Fox Hopes to Lure Mexican Businesses Off Streets Into Formal Economy

MEXICO CITY (AP) — When times get hard, Mexicans take to the streets — not to protest, but to peddle shoes, tacos or luxury goods from streetside stands.

President Vicente Fox hopes to lure Mexicans off the streets and into jobs in the formal economy — but that means taxes and government regulations.

The real challenge in taming an informal economy is improving the low wages and inefficient government that fostered it in the first place.

With a minimum wage of just under \$4.35 a day, jobs that can require applicants to be both young and attractive and paperwork that can hold up a new business for months, many Mexicans prefer to pay a simple bribe for a slice of sidewalk.

They set up a makeshift kitchen or clothing stand and are in business, often making more than those in the formal economy and paying no taxes.

Fifteen years ago, Julio Osorio left his job as an accountant at a bank and opened an electronics stand in the tough neighborhood of Tepito. He pays a street boss 15 per-

cent of all sales, and takes home about \$500 a month — about \$100 more than he could make at a bank.

And he has plenty of company.

But lately, business hasn't been good. Stepped up police raids, competition from retail outlets like Wal-Mart, and Fox's push to end government corruption have thinned the ranks of vendors in the neighborhood.

Fox is also trying to halt the sale of stolen and pirated goods in an effort to make the Mexican market more attractive to foreign investment. Since he took office Dec. 1, police have stepped up raids in the Tepito's contraband market and elsewhere.

Despite those efforts, vendors in Mexico City's crowded streets blast music from stereos, trying to sell pirated CDs for as little as a few dollars. Others hawk stolen goods or knockoff designer fashions, like GUP — instead of GAP — jeans.

Informal jobs have long been a part of Mexican life. Before the country started opening up its economy in the 1980s, markets like those in Tepito were among the only places to

buy good quality imported products at affordable prices.

The informal economy grew in the 1980s and 1990s, when the country suffered a series of economic crises that sent inflation soaring and cost millions of jobs.

According to a recent study by the National Statistics Institute, more than a quarter of Mexican workers are in the informal economy. Other studies put the number at near 40 percent.

Shopkeepers complain the street vendors have an unfair advantage, and have tried for years to get the government to crack down.

But an attempt to clear vendors from Mexico City's downtown streets in 1997 sparked protests that start anew with every effort to end the street trade.

Fox's desire to bring people into the formal economy is part of his plan to create jobs and raise wages, giving Mexicans more options than washing cars or sneaking across the border into the United States.

He has talked of trying to harness the ingenuity of those in the informal economy, helping them get loans to start legitimate small businesses.



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que planeó y hasta otras que no había planeado. Vivir la vida en plenitud es fácil cuando tiene una familia que lo respalda. American Family Mutual Insurance. Llame ahora mismo y platique con nuestros agentes amables.

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