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Book Reviews

Book's Title: **Brazil Since 1980.**

Authors: Feinberg, Richard

Source: Foreign Affairs; Jan/Feb2007, Vol. 86 Issue 1, p168-168, 1/2p

Document Type: Book Review

Reviews & Products: BRAZIL Since 1980 (Book)

People: LUNA, Francisco Vidal. KLEIN, Herbert S.

Abstract: The article reviews the book "Brazil Since 1980," by Francisco Vidal Luna and Herbert S. Klein.

Brazil Since 1980. By Francisco Vidal

Luna And Herbert S. Klein.

Cambridge University Press, 2006, 282 pp. \$75.00 (paper, \$21.99).

Abstract

The first in a new World Since 1980 series, which is designed to examine profound change in important countries over the past 25 years, Brazil Since 1980 is an instructive, fair-minded, and generally upbeat primer on the South American giant. Although the book is billed as a survey, experts will benefit from the sensible, broad perspectives of its authors, both prominent economic historians. Their Brazil is characterized by a vibrant democracy, a maturing demography approaching First World standards of high longevity and low fertility, and a technologically cutting-edge agro-industry complex that is now one of the great granaries of the world. Yet striking income inequalities have persisted, which are attributable to the legacies of slavery and racial injustice and to a bifurcated educational system where the wealthy go to private schools and high-quality public universities while the poor languish in overcrowded institutions. Surprisingly, the volume lacks a chapter on foreign policy; it would also have benefited from a fuller exploration of Brazil's place in the global economy. Alas, Cambridge University Press appears not to have committed the resources--for example, to add political cartoons, color illustrations, or innovative Internet-linked resources--to make this new series a clear market leader.

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**By Richard Feinberg**

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### **Abstract Summary**

Since 1980 many profound changes occurred in some important countries of the world, Brazil Since 1980 is one of those important books which examine the country as upbeat in South American giant. Both of the authors are economic historians who compiled this book on the basis of surveys which will be beneficial for the experts. Brazil is characterized as an energetic, enthusiastic and full democratic, full aware of modern technology and agro-industrial society which is now full awoken society. Some problems still exist as inequality in income which are due to the legacy of slavery and racial injustice in the society. Education system is also of great difference between two classes i.e. poor and rich. The children of rich people go to the modern and good schools while children of poor go to the crowded and less developed schools. This book lacks a chapter on Brazilian foreign policy which could clarify Brazil's economic position on globe.

2.

**Book's Title: Trade Relations between Colombia and the United States.**

**Authors:** Feinberg, Richard

**Source:** Foreign Affairs; Jan/Feb2007, Vol. 86 Issue 1, p168-169, 2p

**Document Type:** Book Review

**Reviews & Products:** Trade Relations between Colombia & the United States (Book)

**People:** Schott, Jeffrey J.

**Abstract:** The article reviews the book "Trade Relations Between Colombia and Cuba," edited by Jeffrey J. Schott.

**Trade Relations Between Colombia and the United States.**

**Edited By:** Jeffrey J.Schott.

Institute for International Economics, 2006, 192 pp. \$21.95.

### **Abstract**

With global trade talks moribund, trade negotiators worldwide are turning their attention to bilateral and regional free-trade agreements. This latest Institute for International Economics offering intelligently and thoroughly assesses a next step in Western Hemisphere free-trade

agreements, following on NAFTA and the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA): the U.S.-Colombian agreement that has been negotiated but not yet ratified by the respective legislatures. Schott correctly argues that although U.S. exporters and investors will benefit, the driving U.S. interests are broader: to catalyze further pro-competitiveness reforms and democratic prosperity in Colombia and to cement bilateral political relations. But will congressional Democrats use their new powers to block trade liberalization with developing economies? Kimberly Ann Elliott notes that Colombia has ratified many more international labor conventions than has the United States and that Colombia's labor laws are not far from international norms; of relevance, the bloody antiunion violence that plagues Colombia is mostly against public-service employees, not generally related to trade. Searching for a pragmatic bipartisan compromise, Elliott suggests further judicial reforms in Colombia and U.S. funding for capacity-building programs and labor-standard monitoring and enforcement.

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Abstract Summary

With the failure of global trade agreements, traders are turning to regional and bilateral free trade agreements. The Institute for International Economics is watching in a very careful way that some free trade agreements are going to take place in Western Hemisphere like NAFTA or CAFTA. A similar free trade agreements has been signed between US and Colombia which is to be ratify by the parliaments of both countries. Schott argues that obviously US traders will get benefit of this agreement but this is not the only reason of this agreement as bring political reforms in Colombia by Democratic means and increase bilateral relations with it. He said now we have to see whether Democrats will use their powers to block liberalize trade with developing economies or not. Elliott says the bloody violence in Colombia is against public-service employees and hopefully that would not be harmful or traders of United States or overall trade. Elliott suggests further judicial reforms in Colombia, US funding for capacity-building programs and labor standard monitoring and enforcement.

News Monitoring Argentina

Headlines

Political Issue

- Argentina arrests former economy minister

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

- Naek for closer Pak-Argentina Parliamentary relations

Brazil

Political Issue

- Brazil's new nuclear reactor
- Breaking the Law Brazilian Presidential Candidates Are in Full Campaign
- Serra Still in Lead of Brazil's Presidential Race Despite Lula's Opposition
- Brazil needs two years to restore export levels: finance minister

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

- Brazil to plant palms on cleared Amazon land
- Head of UN food aid agency begins visit to Brazil

Geostrategic Issues

- Lula Boasts Brazil's Trade with South America Is as Big as the One with the US & EU
- Brazil to lend 186 mln USD to debt-laden Greece
- Brazilian president to visit Qatar on May 15
- Erdogan, Lula to visit Iran together
- Africa and Brazil to Strengthen Co-Operation in Agriculture
- List of leaders to attend G15 summit in Tehran released

Health Issues

- Brazil reports 50 deaths of A/H1N1 flu in first quarter

Chile

Political Issue

- Chilean president announces new work plan
- Pakistani man arrested at US embassy in Chile
- Chile cops raid house of Embassy detainee's friend
- Chilean judge orders holding of Pakistani suspect of terrorism

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

- Kuwaiti Ambassador: Kuwait keen on bolstering ties with Chile

Mexico

Political Issue

- Mexican president defends army's crime-fighting record
- Nukes divert needed investments, threaten humanity: Mexico

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

- Mexico sees no quick victory in drug war

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

- Speaker: Mexico must have voice in immigration reform
- Moussa, Mexican FM discuss issues of mutual interest
- Arizona goes too far
- Obama promises to tackle immigration

- Pelosi Announces Mexican President Felipe Calderon to Address Joint Meeting of Congress on May 20
- Mexico extradites politician to U.S.
- Mexican diplomat prepares for Arizona law

Venezuela

Political Issue

- Ex-defense minister, Chavez critic, sentenced to more than 7 years in prison in Venezuela

Economic Issue

Social/Humanitarian Issue

- Hugo Chavez Hires 200 People to Manage His Twitter Account
- Business leaders warn Chavez's economic policies strangling importers, private enterprise

Food, Environment and Energy Issue

Geostrategic Issues

- Chavez: Let's Institutionalize UNASUR

Report Summary/Argentina

Political Issues

Argentina's Supreme Court has sentenced former economy minister of Argentina who had been involved in kidnappings of some Argentineans during military dictatorship from 1976 – 1983. He had never faced trial before but it was his first time he faced trial and sent to the jail. This is not the first case in Argentina some other politicians who were involved in the violation of human rights are facing trials.

Geo-strategic Issues

Pakistan's chairman of senate Mr. Farooq Naek invited Argentinean ambassador to parliament and told that both Pakistan and Argentina have close parliamentary cooperation. Other than this both countries have common stance on various global and international issues. He said Pakistan appreciate Argentina's assistance to Pakistan in socio-economic development

especially in improving culture and health. Argentinean ambassador also appreciated Pakistan's sympathies with Argentines.

Report Summary/Brazil

Political Issues

Brazilian media told that Brazil is going to produce a nuclear reactor at US\$483 million. This nuclear reactor would be used to produce nuclear medicine and to treat cancer disease and it would be created in the north western city near to Sao Paulo. Brazilian president had already announced in February that two new nuclear plants would be started soon.

Brazil's Superior Electoral Court has announced a code of morality that neither a political party could announce a candidate before the end of June nor it can run campaign for its candidate before the beginning of July. But the political parties have started campaigns for their candidates and also they have announced their candidates. Brazil's PSDB has registered a complaint against PT that president Lula is running campaign for his party candidate and supporting her officially. President Lula has to pay fine due to it.

According to the poll of a local media of Brazil, Serra is leading over Lula's handpicked candidate Rousseff with ten points. It is said due to heavy reforms of President Lula the opposition candidate is still leading over Rousseff. But if Rousseff wins the elections, she would be the first female president of Brazil. President Lula admired Ms. Rousseff in his address on the occasion of Labor Day and told that she is very hard lady.

President said in his speech before the labors of Brazil on the May Day that his country was not at this stage as where it is today. He said it is due to strong and successful economic and foreign policies of his administration. He said in the past Brazilian leaders were ignoring its neighboring countries and the trends were more towards US and Europe but now Brazil's trade with South Africa is same as its with US or Europe. The president has also invited a group from the different African countries to participate in Agricultural conference in Brazil. This event will increase the relationships between Brazil and African countries.

Brazil's finance minister said that Brazil will lend US \$280 million to Greece through International Monetary Fund. He said some other countries will also lend money to Greece as Germany, Italy and France. He said the loan is to bring the country out of economic crisis. He said global economic crisis hit many countries of the world but Brazil was very successful to come out of it due to affective economic policies and some countries of Europe are still stuck in it due to their policies.

The finance minister has also said that to maintain the normal growth of Brazilian exports may take two more years which was decreased due to global economic crisis. He said it decreased due to the global financial crisis which overlapped US and other European countries. He said US and European market will take time to recover from economic crisis then the export can be rehabilitating in previous standard.

Geo-strategic Issues

President Lula is going to pay a visit to Qatar and the Brazilian ambassador to Qatar told that the Qatar community is keen to boost their relationships with Latin American countries in every field. He said Brazil is having almost 4 percent Arab population and most of them are from Qatar and Lebanon who migrated in early twentieth century. President Lula visit Qatar last year to attend a Arab-Latin American Summit in Doha and made many agreements with the government of Qatar. Both countries were willing to boost relationships in every field and increase people to people interaction by increasing air flights.

Brazilian president Lula and the prime minister of Turkey Erdogan are going to Iran as they have told before that they will play a role of mediator between Iran and IAEA for peaceful solution of Iranian nuclear program. Brazilian president will go there in 15th May as he has to attend G-15 summit and both Brazil and Iran are the members of this group. Other than this Presidents of Algeria, Brazil, Senegal, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, Sri Lanka will attend the G15 summit in Tehran next Monday. The Syrian president, the Qatari emir, and Turkish prime minister are special guests to the conference. Later Brazil and Turkey will hold talks with Iran over the nuclear issue. Brazilian president has already said he wants a peaceful solution of Iranian nuclear program rather than sanctions.

Food, Environment and Energy Issues

President Lula has started a campaign for reforestation in the Amazon forest areas where deforestation has decreased many trees. President said this campaign not only fill the area where from the trees were cut but it also give us economic benefits in the future. Government is planning to plant palms trees in that area.

The executive director of United Nations' World Food Program is visiting Brazil in next days. She will overview the efforts of Brazilian president to counter hunger in the country as he launched "Fome Zero" (Zero Hunger). Then she will give award to the Brazilian president as "Global Champion in the Battle against Hunger,"

Health Issues

Brazilian health minister told media that almost 50 Brazilians have been died of A/H1N1 influenza in the first quarter of this year. Among them mostly are the women as 76 percent and 32 are pregnant women. Brazilian government could do vaccination to 47 percent people but the target is 81 percent. The disease started in Brazil in May of last year.

Report Summary/Chile

Political Issues

Chilean president Pinera held a meeting with 56 provincial governors to unveil his reconstruction plans. He also described the challenged faced by the government which is hurdles in the quick reconstruction. He was saying that more affected areas by earthquake would be preferred first and the contracts would be given to the big construction companies so that the work could be complete soon. He said his government has planned to boost up country's stagnant economy till 6 percent and create more 1 million jobs for the people and this target will be achieved till 2014.

Chilean police has captured a guy from US embassy in Chile who was alleged of taking explosive material into the US embassy. It is said he came to Santiago three months ago and was working in a hotel. he said he went to US embassy to renew his visa but caught taking explosive TNT stuff along his belongings as that TNT explosive was spread on his cell phone, bag and hands etc. But the guy told he does not know anything about it.

Police raided on Said's apartment and took his computer and some other belongings in their custody. When police asked its colleagues in hotel and other people who are living near to his house, they told Said is a person of tranquility who was also a simple guy. He actually came to Chile to learn Spanish and get experience of hotel management.

US government officials in Chile told that Siad's case is the matter of Chile police because he was captured before US embassy. They said Chilean army should take this case as serious because he was taking explosives into the embassy.

Geo-strategic Issues

Kuwaiti ambassador to Argentina and non-residential ambassador to Chile told Chilean authorities from Buenos Aires that Kuwait is interested to bolster ties with Chile as Kuwaiti people are also interested in increasing relations with Chile so the relationships doesn't only depends between governments but also people to people. He said Kuwait is interested to increase ties in defense field with Chile.

Report Summary/Mexico

Social/Humanitarian Issues

Mexico's security minister said the current drug war is escalating day by day as almost 23,000 people have lost their lives. He said Mexican president has deployed almost 70,000 arm forces to combat drug cartels and seizure their business but the cartels are very strong and they are earning huge money from it so they are fighting with their full effort and giving a tough time to the government. So there is not chance of quick victory in this war as if you take the example of Italy or Colombia which took a long years but in case of Mexico it will be sooner victory with the support of Washington.

Political Issues

A former Mexican foreign office secretary said that it is very hard to make effective new immigration law without the participation of one country. So to make immigration law affective Mexico must cooperate with US and US authorities should make a dialogue with Mexican authorities and to take them under confidence.

President Calderon has extradited Mexico's former state governor to USA which is not the first extradition to USA but 326th. The governor has spent 6 years in Mexican jail as he was charged of money laundering but here he was required to the New York police in the case of cocaine smuggling to the United States.

Geo-strategic Issues

Mexican ambassador to UN said in a Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty Conference that world should not waste sources in making nuclear weapons but other issues are very important like economic crisis and environmental issues. He said Israel, India and Pakistan should adhere NPT now. He was telling how hundreds of warheads could be harmful to us in today's age which can destroy whole world but now the means of investment should change.

Arab League's secretary general met Mexican foreign minister after the NPT meeting and shared mutual interests' issues as disarmament of nuclear weapons by the countries who are having it and secondly on environmental conference which is gonna take place in December in Mexico. He said developing countries should be supported financially to reduce gas emission.

Mexican president and the president of Organization of America States has strictly criticized Arizona's immigration law and both called it discrimination with Mexicans. It is said almost 460,000 Mexicans are living in Arizona which is almost 7 percent of total population. It is said despite passing this immigration law Arizona security itself keep open a little way for the arrival of Mexicans because they can be work as laborer on very cheap rates. Now the police will start capturing Mexicans who are living illegally in Arizona as Mexicans could be identified easily. The Mexican government's chief diplomat in Phoenix asked Mexicans who are living legally or illegally in Arizona that they must stay calm as he is doing something for them. He said he himself is not satisfy with the new immigration law but he respects the new law of Arizona state.

It is also reported that president Obama has made work easier for president Calderon as Calderon is going to Washington on May 19th and it is hoped he will not return back home empty hands. Because President Obama has ensured Mexican president that he will tackle immigration issue this year. For this purpose Speaker of US congress Ms. Pelosi has offered Mexican president to hold a joint meeting in the congress. She said Mexican president will speak on boarder issues, problems faced by the immigrants and other related issues as drug violence etc. She said our culture and living style is same and both country's people have sympathies for each other but border has divided us.

Report Summary/Venezuela

Political Issues

Venezuela's ex defense minister was sent to prison when he was charged of corruption during his ministry in 2007. But the minister said he has not convicted any crime but Chavez is sending me to the prison due to his opposition. Defense minister's daughters also gave statements against the government that his father is charged of the opposition of Chavez otherwise the government could not provide any evidence of allegations.

Social/Humanitarian Issues

Chavez has increased his concerns over Twitter as he hires 200 people to manage his account. Chavez says it is the new weapon to compete our enemy now. He is getting almost 50,000 comments on his single tweet. Internet users have also been increased in Chavez tenure as he promoted such activities as the users were only 31 percent before.

Venezuela's business leaders blamed Chavez of bad economic policies which are disturbing their business. They said Chavez is allowing some companies to sale goods to the government directly which is disturbing their business as they cannot import directly. a former Central Bank's president and professor at the central university of Venezuela also told that Chavez's bad economic policies are disturbing country's economy. While Chavez blames bourgeoisie for spoiling their business as they do not allow small companies to work in the country.

Geo-strategic Issues

President Hugo Chavez wrote in his Sunday column that UNASUR should be institutionalized because the UNASUR countries promised US \$200 million for the rehabilitation of Haiti but the amount is still pending. He said this promise must be materialized. He also criticized the Arizona's immigration law and called it discrimination of Latin American people. Thirdly he said we UNASUR countries are with Argentina on Falkland Island issue so we are supporting Argentina because it has right.

Detailed Report/Argentina

Argentina arrests former economy minister

Buenos Aires: Former economy minister Jose Martinez de Hoz, the economic brains behind the 1976-1983 military dictatorship, was arrested yesterday after an amnesty law was lifted, a court official said.

The arrest follows a Supreme Court ruling last week deeming unconstitutional a 1990 presidential pardon granted to Martinez de Hoz and former dictator Jorge Videla, who justice officials said Monday will face a new trial for kidnapping, torture and murder.

The 84-year-old Martinez de Hoz was arrested at his home in Buenos Aires and taken by ambulance to an area hospital after undergoing a medical examination, the court official added.

Federal judge Norberto Oyarbide issued the arrest warrant and slapped a 500,000-dollar embargo on Martinez de Hoz's assets. Martinez de Hoz is charged with the five-month kidnapping in 1976 of a textile manufacturer and his son, Federico and Miguel Gutheim.

The government's National Human Rights Secretary Eduardo Luis Duhalde said the arrest of "the person responsible not only for the illegal activities but also of the economic plan that laid waste to Argentina.

Unlike Videla, who in 1985 was sentenced to life in prison for numerous human rights violations while at the head of the country's military junta from 1976 to 1981, Martinez de Hoz was released after the amnesty and has never been put on trial. The military dictatorship is blamed for the deaths or disappearance of 30,000 people.

Naek for closer Pak-Argentina Parliamentary relations

Islamabad, May 10 (APP): The Chairman Senate, Mr. Farooq H. Naek has called for closer Parliamentary interaction and cooperation between Pakistan and Argentine. He was talking to H.E. Rodolfo Martin Saravia, Ambassador of Argentine, who called on him here Monday at the Parliament House. 'The two countries have identity of views on many regional and global issues, Pakistan appreciates Argentinean assistance and cooperation in socio-economic development, especially in the fields of culture and health which are instrumental in improving quality of life of the people', he observed.

The Chairman also underlined the need of closer interaction between the Parliament's of the two countries and particularly to increase frequency of visits of Parliamentary delegations. He said more frequent exchange of Parliamentary delegations would help study and understand each other's system and this would in turn promote better understanding between the two countries, their governments and people, he added.

The Argentinean Ambassador said his country valued its relations with Pakistan which is an important country of the region. He also lauded the contribution of Pakistani painters and artists and termed them as among the best in the world. It may be noted Argentina is celebrating its 200 years of independence on 25th of this month. Argentina got independence from Spain on 25th May, 1810.

Farooq H. Naek invited the President of the Argentinean Senate to visit Pakistan along with a delegation at a mutually convenient date. It may be noted that 60 years of, Pak-Argentina bilateral relations will be completed next year.

Detailed Report/Brazil

Brazil's new nuclear reactor

Rio de Janeiro - Brazil is to build a US\$483 million (S\$671 million) nuclear reactor to produce radioactive material for medical use as well as industrial-grade enriched uranium, local media reported Wednesday, citing a cabinet minister.

'The multipurpose reactor has a very important role in the nuclear program' Science and Technology Minister Sergio Rezende said in the daily O Estado de Sao Paulo.

The reactor will be built in Ipero, 130 kilometer from the south-eastern city of Sao Paulo, in an area where the Brazilian navy is developing a nuclear submarine project and building ultracentrifuges to enrich uranium. The reactor will be used for nuclear medicine, producing what are known as radiopharmaceuticals for diagnosing and treating diseases like cancer, Rezende said, as well as produce industrial-level enriched uranium starting in 2014.

The announcement came as senior officials from around the world meet at the United Nations to review the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and ahead of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's May 16-17 trip to Iran.

Lula in February announced that two new nuclear power plants would be built in Brazil's north-east.

Brazil has an ambitious civilian nuclear program, and for more than 20 years, has had two nuclear plants in Angra dos Reis, in Rio de Janeiro state. The country's constitution bans the presence of nuclear weapons on Brazilian territory. --AFP

Breaking the Law Brazilian Presidential Candidates Are in Full Campaign

There will be general elections in October, in Brazil, but the rules established by judges on the Superior Electoral Court (TSE) are that until the end of June there are no candidates and until the beginning of July no campaigning.

The existence of this electoral make-believe world alongside a real world of candidates campaigning earnestly creates an unusual situation where many things are possible. For example, with all the illegal candidates campaigning illegally, one can clog the dockets with lawsuits against other candidates for campaigning.

The PSDB filed at least six complaints against president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva for campaigning for the PT. Two of them actually resulted in fines.

And now the PT has gone to the TSE to complain that the PSDB is placing "negative campaign content" on its website about Dilma Rousseff, the former presidential Chief of Staff who is running for president. Because of the law, Dilma is not the PT candidate, but its "pre candidate."

Closer Decision on Battisti

In what should be the next-to-last step in what has been a very long decision process regarding Italian guerrilla Cesare Battisti, the Brazilian Supreme Court ("STF") has formally notified the ministers of Justice and Foreign Relations of its decisions on the case.

There were three decisions in November 2009: first, the Supreme Court ruled that Battisti was not a political refugee, then the court ruled in favor of extraditing him. Finally, the court ruled that the final decision on extradition was president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's to make. Thus, Lula does not have to follow the majority of the court, but could decide to permit Battisti to stay in Brazil, but not as a refugee.

All of the decisions were close ones (5 to 4, although there are eleven justices on the Brazilian Supreme Court two justices did not participate) and controversial, each decision stirring up heated debate.

Battisti was sentenced to life in prison for killing four people in the 1970s when he was a member of a leftist militant group. Some believe he committed political crimes (killing people to make the world a better place). Others see a common criminal who committed common crimes and should be sent back to Italy to jail.

Serra Still in Lead of Brazil's Presidential Race Despite Lula's Opposition

Dilma Rousseff, presidential candidate of Brazil's ruling coalition will continue with the current economic policies of the Lula administration boosting the role of state corporations if successful in the coming October election, said José Eduardo Dutra, president of the Workers' Party.

Dutra also discarded any major budget cuts or direct intervention in the exchange market with the purpose of having a targeted rate for the real, if Dilma Rousseff becomes Brazil's first woman president.

Government finances will be closely monitored, but the budget is not one of the main issues of the Brazilian economy, added Dutra, a former chairman of the government managed oil

corporation Petrobras, who left the job last February to take over as president of the Workers' Party and be fully involved in the electoral campaign.

During this year's first quarter, Brazil recorded its largest consolidated primary budget deficit in eight years because of a considerable increase in social security layouts and government spending.

The primary budget surplus is closely monitored by foreign investors because it is considered a most valuable indicator to gauge the capacity of a government to honor sovereign debt.

Ms. Rousseff's main rival, former governor of the state of São Paulo, Brazil's power house, belonging to the opposition Brazilian Social Democratic Party (PSDB) has promised fiscal austerity and greater government efficiency in managing public investment and infrastructure financing.

José Serra - according to the latest public opinion polls released by the local media - leads comfortably in vote intention with a ten points lead over Ms. Rousseff.

Meanwhile, an opposition party presented yet another claim before an electoral court accusing President Lula of "advancing" the October presidential campaign, which by law, should start only in July, to bolster Ms. Rousseff.

The claim was presented by the Democrats Party and refers to a recent political rally organized by the Unified Workers' Central (Central Única dos Trabalhadores, CUT) during the celebration last Saturday of International Workers' Day.

At the rally, President Lula made a brief review of his almost eight-year administration and progress achieved by the working classes, adding this would only be continued if his work "has a sequence".

"Dilma have your heard what I said? Sequence, Dilma", said Lula from the stage according to the claim presented before the court, which means "the president made of Workers Day, in an electoral year, a political rally in support of candidate Rousseff."

Lula has been fined twice for similar interventions earlier this year by electoral officials and another four claims are waiting for a judgment. Brazilian president attorneys have appealed all rulings.

Brazil to plant palms on cleared Amazon land

Brazil's government is starting a program to replant deforested areas of the Amazon with palm trees and harvest their oil for biodiesel.

President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva says the project is an example of both preserving the forest and reaping economic benefit from it.

Besides restoring tree cover where it has been razed, officials hope to discourage further deforestation by developing a sustainable alternative to logging and ranching.

Silva did not say Thursday how much terrain will be planted. But some 78.6 million acres (31.8 million hectares) have been identified as suitable for the palms, which are native to the area.

The program will focus on Para state, which has the highest levels of deforestation in Brazil.

Lula Boasts Brazil's Trade with South America Is as Big as the One with the US & EU

Talking to an audience of workers and members of one of Brazil's biggest labor unions, the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT), in a May Day speech, Brazilian president Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva discussed foreign affairs, pointing out that the main focus of his administration has been South America.

Lula declared that in the past that was not the case. Brazil's neighbors were not given the necessary importance they deserved, he said.

"We were colonized, so we always looked outward, toward Europe and the United States, we did not see South America because it was always in the background, behind us."

Lula said that a foreign policy aimed at Brazil's neighbors resulted in the construction of more equal relations and more advantages for South American countries. Today the relations between the nations of South America are very different from the relations each of those nations had with the United States, said Lula.

"How can you compare a commercial relationship with a superpower like the United States and a commercial relationship with a country like Bolivia?" asked Lula.

The president went to say that proof of the success of the change in focus was that today Brazil's trade with South America was on the same level as trade with the US and Europe - in size, volume and dollars.

According to Lula, the increased importance in international affairs is a sign that Brazil has stronger sovereignty. The recognition of the country's importance by the international media shows that Brazil can make the right decisions for its future.

"We have learned to walk with our heads held high," declared Lula. "Brazil knows where it wants to go and how it wants to get there."

Lula went on to say that the October general elections will not mean any change in government policy. "I will not let the elections sink the country," said the president as he promised to maintain control of inflation and public spending.

Lula said that over the last seven years of his administration, the country had progressed in social and economic terms, becoming "an example of financial control." The improvements, he said, were due to decisions and policies implemented by his government.

In closing, Lula declared that the next administration had an obligation to do more and do it better.

Brazil to lend 186 mln USD to debt-laden Greece

Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega announced on Friday that his country will lend 286 million U.S. dollars to Greece through the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to Mantega, the money will come from the country's foreign exchange reserves, which currently amount to 245 billion dollars.

With the aid package, the situation in the financial markets will probably stabilize soon, said Mantega.

Other countries, such as Germany, Italy, and France, will also grant Greece financial aid, in an effort to contain the debt crisis which hit the country and to prevent it from further affecting the rest of Europe.

Mantega expressed his belief that the financial problems which hit Greece will not affect Brazil's economic growth much in 2010, because the country's economy is solid.

"We have a solid situation," he said.

According to the minister, the consequences of the Greek financial turmoil in Brazil are minor, and will be limited to some devaluation of the Brazilian currency real and some losses in the stock market.

He cautioned that Europe will take longer to overcome the problem.

"The recovery of the European countries will be slower, so we will have to wait longer to increase our exports to the region," he said.

Brazilian president to visit Qatar on May 15

Brazil hopes its relations with Qatar will get a big boost with the visit of President Luiz Lula da Silva to Doha next week. Lula will be in Doha on May 15 on a day's visit. Brazilian Ambassador Anuar Nahes said Lula, who visited Qatar last year to participate in the Arab-Latin American business summit, is very keen on improving relations with countries in the region.

Nahes said his country expected a significant increase in trade and travel between Qatar and Brazil. "Already, there is a lot of interest among the people here about Brazil and it was evident when the embassy staged cultural events a few months ago at Souq Waqif." The cultural events which included an exhibition were held to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Arab migration to South America.

"It was a huge success," Nahes added.

Approximately 4% of the Brazilians are descendants of the Arabs, mostly coming from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Palestinian territories.

The ambassador said a joint meeting of Brazilian entrepreneurs, trade officials and other diplomats accompanying Lula and their Qatari counterparts will be held during Lula's visit. Among the issues to be discussed at the meeting includes boosting the trade between the two countries, the envoy said.

The meeting will be attended by Prime Minister HE Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim bin Jabor al-Thani. Later in the day, Lula will meet HH the Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani. The ambassador said the visit of the Emir to Brazil in January was a great success. Nahes said direct flights to Brazil by Qatar Airways starting next month will greatly contribute to enhancing bilateral ties.

"With the starting of the air link to Sao Paulo, Qatar Airways will become the second airline from the region to have operations to Brazil," he said.

Qatar Airways will start the service on June 24.

He said the direct flights will prove to be a boost for travelers from the region who wish to explore Brazil's natural beauty.

The ambassador said the "Please Touch" exhibition the embassy is conducting for a week starting tomorrow at Villagio would be "a totally new experience for the visitors." The proceeds

from the event, designed by visually impaired artists, will go to a centre in Qatar, which is working for the uplift of the visually impaired in the country.

The exhibition should be seen as Brazil's support to the ongoing "Doha, the capital of Arab Culture 2010" celebrations, Nahes said. The exhibition was earlier scheduled for January. "However, it could not be held then owing to the delay in the arrival of equipment from Brazil," he said.

Erdogan, Lula to visit Iran together

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva will visit Tehran together to hold talks on Iran's nuclear program, Press TV reported.

Lula will arrive in Tehran to attend the Fourteenth Summit of the Group of 15 (G-15) on May 17, Mehr news agency reported.

Meanwhile Erdogan's visit to Iran comes as part of Ankara's efforts to resolve Tehran's nuclear issue through diplomatic means.

Brazil and Iran are members of G-15 which was established at the ninth Non-Aligned Movement Summit Meeting in Belgrade in 1989 with a common goal of enhanced growth and prosperity for its member states.

Some sources have told the Mehr news agency that the Turkish and Brazilian leaders will present Tehran a "joint proposal" on a nuclear fuel swap deal, which the UN has brokered.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman on Saturday voiced Tehran's readiness to continue talks on the proposed swap deal.

"Turkey and Brazil are among the countries that have proposed solutions and these solutions indicate that it is possible to reach a swap deal and arrive at mutual understanding," Ramin Mehmanparast said.

Under the proposed deal, Iran would send most of its low-enriched uranium abroad for further processing and conversion into fuel rods. The fuel would be used by the Tehran research reactor, which produces radio medicines for cancer patients.

Africa and Brazil to Strengthen Co-Operation in Agriculture

Luanda — A delegation of African ministers of Agriculture left Saturday for Brazil, at the invitation of President Lula da Silva, to participate this on May 10-12 in a meeting related to food security and rural development.

Dubbed "Africa/Brazil dialogue", the meeting will address ways of increasing co-operation in various agricultural domains, taking advantage of the capacities of countries in terms of investments in the sector, rural extension and commercial exchange.

Speaking to the press at "4 de Fevereiro" International Airport , the Angolan minister of Agriculture, Afonso Pedro Canga explained that each government official will present particular issues and he expects Brazil to offer its capacities of help.

Regarding Angola, the minister said that the country intends to learn from the Brazilian experience in sectors such as scientific research, family agriculture development, entrepreneurial agriculture and organized agro-business and industry since Brazil is a top exporter of foodstuffs.

Brazil needs two years to restore export levels: finance minister

Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega said on Monday that his country will need about two years to restore exports to normal levels.

Noting that the U.S. economy is already showing signs of recovery, Mantega said that this will contribute significantly to the rise of Brazilian exports, which were affected by the global financial crisis.

Commenting on the economic problems currently facing Europe, the minister stressed that Brazil's growth will remain the same despite the European woes.

"The consequences for Brazil were the volatility in the stock market and the capital flight, but nothing worrying," Mantega said. "Brazil remains solid and ready for crises much worse than this one."

To avoid the economy overheating, the minister added that the government is considering cutting governmental expenses and ending some stimulus measures.

"Some say there is overheating. I am not sure if there is, but the economy has certainly warmed up. Because of that, the stimuli are being taken back," Mantega said.

List of leaders to attend G15 summit in Tehran released

The Group of 15, a group of 17 developing countries from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, was set up to foster cooperation and provide input for other international groups.

It is comprised of Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan will attend the summit, Mehrdad Parsa, the head of the Information Committee of the G15 summit, told the Fars news agency.

Parsa said India, Kenya, Egypt and Nigeria will be represented by their foreign ministers, adding the Malaysian finance minister and Indonesian vice president will also attend the summit.

Prior to the heads of state meeting, the G15 foreign ministers will meet in Tehran on Saturday and Sunday.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast had earlier said economic cooperation between G15 members, exploring new avenues for cooperation between the countries in the three continents, and a review of international developments will feature in the high-profile summit.

Brazil reports 50 deaths of A/H1N1 flu in first quarter

A total of 50 Brazilians have died and 361 others have been hospitalized due to the A/H1N1 flu in the country since April 3, Brazilian Health Minister Jose Gomes Temporao said Friday, Xinhua reported.

Among the deaths, 76 percent were women, 32 percent of whom were pregnant, Temporao said.

In the campaign against the deadly A/H1N1 virus, 47.5 million people have been vaccinated so far, about 81 percent of the government's target.

The next stage of the campaign is aiming at the people aged between 30 and 39, with estimated 30 million people to be vaccinated. Up to May 21, all people aged over 60 are recommended to be immunized.

The A/H1N1 flu started spreading in Brazil in May last year and caused 2,051 deaths in 2009.

Head of UN food aid agency begins visit to Brazil

The head of the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) on Sunday kicked off a two-day visit to Brazil during which she will see first-hand the impact of initiatives to combat hunger, as well as honor the nation's President for his leadership in tackling this vital issue.

Josette Sheeran, WFP's Executive Director, is scheduled to visit Fome Zero ("Zero Hunger") projects – a Brazilian Government program to reduce hunger and extreme poverty – near the capital, Brasilia, on Sunday.

On Monday, Ms. Sheeran will meet with President Luis Inácio Lula da Silva and other Brazilian officials.

She will present Mr. Lula with an award honoring him as a "Global Champion in the Battle Against Hunger," for his leadership in the eradication of hunger and child malnutrition in Brazil and other parts of the world.

The Executive Director will also participate tomorrow in the Brazil-Africa Dialogue on Food Security, which brings together agriculture ministers from across Africa.

During her visit, Ms. Sheeran will commend the increasingly active role played by Brazil in humanitarian assistance and for partnering with WFP's operations.

In Haiti, for example, Brazilian UN peacekeepers supported WFP food distributions after the devastating January earthquake. Brazil is also supporting school meal programs in Africa and Latin America to encourage children to attend school and provide essential nutrition.

Detailed Report/Chile

Chilean president announces new work plan

Chilean President Sebastian Pinera met on Friday with 53 provincial governors to unveil his work plan highlighting goals and commitments of the government.

During the meeting held at La Moneda Palace, Pinera stressed the challenges in reconstructing the earthquake-devastated areas and the need to create a new financial plan that underlines the reallocation of resources.

The Chilean president said the new financial plan is intended to request "a special effort to big companies and the wealthier sectors, to give more and better aid to those who suffer the impacts of the earthquake, the poorest sectors, our middle class and our micro, small and medium-sized enterprises."

The Pinera administration has set a target to help the stagnant economy grow by 6 percent and to create 1 million jobs, in the 2010-2014 period.

Eradication of extreme poverty, administrative decentralization, and various reforms at the provincial level are also among the goals announced by the Chilean president.

Pakistani man arrested at US embassy in Chile

Santiago: A Pakistani man will be charged with violating gun control laws in Chile Tuesday after traces of explosives were detected on his body and belongings during a visit to the US embassy, police said.

The suspicious substance was detected when the man identified as Mohamed Said Uf Rejaman, 28, went through a security checkpoint on Monday, prompting embassy staff to notify police. He was arrested on site.

Police experts found traces of a TNT explosive derivative on the suspect's hands, cell phone, bag and documentation.

The man said he did not know where it had come from and he was only at the embassy to renew his visa.

He arrived in Chile about three months ago on a visa and had been working at a hotel in the capital.

Police have raided his home in downtown Santiago.

The arrest came just a week after Pakistani-born naturalized US citizen Faisal Shahzad was pulled off a plane to Dubai and arrested for allegedly leaving a sport utility vehicle rigged to explode in New York's crowded Times Square.

Chile cops raid house of Embassy detainee's friend

Santiago, Chile (AP) -- Police spent hours Thursday searching the apartment of an Egyptian man who was friendly with a Pakistani national arrested at the U.S. Embassy as part of a terrorism investigation.

Officers dressed head-to-toe in white anti-contamination suits carried out a computer, compact discs, an agenda and a cellular phone, police said. The Egyptian man who reportedly befriended Mohammed Saifur Rehman Khan at a Santiago mosque wasn't seen by reporters outside, and police released no information about him.

Khan, 28, is being held for a week under Chile's anti-terrorism laws while being investigated for alleged explosives violations. He was summoned to the embassy Monday because his U.S. visa had been revoked, and arrested after security equipment detected traces of explosives on cell phone and papers.

Authorities have not publicly identified the explosive, but the Chilean newspaper La Segunda reported it was Tetryl, a compound used to increase the explosive power of TNT. Police in white suits also took away Khan's computer earlier this week.

Colleagues and acquaintances say Khan, 28, is a calm and gentlemanly man who doesn't fit the popular image of a terrorist.

At Santiago's EuroHotel, where Khan earned about \$115 a month in a work-study position, workers said he didn't dress luxuriously and had about three suits that he rotated. They were puzzled by the turn of events, which came just over a week after the failed car-bomb attempt in New York's Times Square that has been blamed on a Pakistani man.

"He was a complete gentleman, very proper, like the gentlemen of old," said Alex Garcia, head of the hotel's reception and reservations.

"Someone who is a hotelier recognizes when another person knows the profession, and Khan knew it. He had a vocation for service and was very attentive," said Garcia, adding that Khan seemed "tranquil, very correct and educated, speaking about five languages."

Khan came to Chile in January to study Spanish and the hotel industry after staying with his brother, a doctoral student at Michigan State University, for a month last year, according to the Pakistani Embassy.

"We have many questions and few answers," said Pakistani Ambassador Burhanul Islam, who promised legal and consular support to Khan.

Khan's public defender, Francisco Geisse, said that evidence thus far "doesn't show the existence of a crime."

In Santiago, Garcia worked with Khan daily for almost a month and was also his Spanish instructor.

Khan said he was born in Pakistan on Aug. 21, 1982, and told of being the son of a retired doctor and from a middle-class family, Garcia said.

"I think his father ... must have sent him money," Garcia said.

Mohammed Rumie, secretary-general of Chile's Islamic community and spokesman for the As-Salam mosque, told The Associated Press that Khan "came every Friday to the mosque, like all Muslims."

"He didn't appear a conflictive or problematic person - quite the opposite, he was very silent, very calm," Rumie said.

Asked about reports that Khan belonged to Islam's Salafi movement, Rumie said he did not know where the reports had come from and that his As-Salam mosque doesn't adhere to such movements.

The Salafi movement preaches an ultraconservative Islam similar to Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi strain, strictly segregating the sexes and interpreting religious texts literally. Salafis tend to be nonpolitical, but a minority jihadist stream embraces al-Qaida's call for holy war against the West.

The U.S. ambassador to Chile, Paul Simon, said there was no indication that the embassy was the target of an attack.

Khan was detained nine days after Faisal Shahzad, a Pakistan-born U.S. citizen, allegedly tried to set off a bomb-laden SUV in Times Square after receiving training from the Taliban in Pakistan. But by then, the U.S. had already decided to revoke Khan's visa, State Department spokesman Mark Toner said.

"This issue predates the Times Square incident and we are not aware of a connection between the two," he said.

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley said the U.S. government will cooperate fully with the Chilean investigation of Khan.

"There were solid grounds for apprehending him and he will be charged under Chilean laws," Crowley said.

The Pakistani Embassy said Khan had been called to the U.S. Embassy "to have an interview regarding his documents, in particular his passport and his academic certifications."

Khan "denied the accusations that he possessed explosive materials and the charges of links to terrorist organizations," the statement said.

"The Embassy has not received any details regarding (criminal) charges or any solid evidence that establishes that Saifur Rehman (Khan) has any link with a terrorist organization or that he has the intention of committing a terrorist act at the U.S. Embassy in Santiago," the statement added.

"He would have to be a very bad terrorist to enter the embassy with traces of explosive material, knowing that the embassy is a dangerous place where he would face serious accusations if he were caught," Islam said.

Khan briefly spoke to reporters through the window of a police vehicle before he was taken to the high-security prison where he is being held under Chile's anti-terrorism law. "No, I am not a terrorist. I do not have nothing to do with bombs. I am a working man," he said in strongly accented English.

Chilean judge orders holding of Pakistani suspect of terrorism

A Chilean judge on Tuesday ordered the holding of a Pakistani citizen detained on Monday in the embassy of the United States to Chile on suspicion of terrorism.

The security system of the U.S. embassy detected explosive signs in the man's hands and some items he was carrying.

Chile's Public Works Ministry has accused the 28-year-old Mohammad Saif Ur Rehman of allegedly terrorism. The man had signs of explosives (TNT) in his documents, bags and cell phone, the Chilean Police said.

Saif went Monday to the U.S. embassy to renew his visa, and he was detained when the explosive signs were found.

According to official sources, Saif arrived in the country in January 2010, and he was studying a tourism course and doing practice works in a hotel east of the capital city of Santiago.

Saif lived in a student dormitory in the center of Santiago, which on Monday night was raided by the police who took his computer and clothes for examination by experts.

Meanwhile, U.S. ambassador to Chile, Paul Simons, said on Monday that the detention of Saif was not requested by the U.S. justice, because he was captured outside the embassy.

"We called the military police of Chile immediately and they dealt with the case in a very professional way," Simons added.

"There is always worry at cases like this one, but we trust a lot on the security situation in Chile, it is good and the country is safe," Simons said.

Saif will face a hearing to make official his violation to the Weapons

Control Law of Chile and it is possible that the Public Works Ministry asks for his arrest.

Kuwaiti Ambassador: Kuwait keen on bolstering ties with Chile

Buenos Aires, May 12 (KUNA) -- Kuwaiti Ambassador to Argentina and Non-Resident Ambassador to Chile Saud Al-Roumi said Wednesday Kuwait was keen on bolstering relations with Chile.

This statement came during Al-Roumi meetings with Chile's Foreign Minister Alfredo Moreno and Defense Minister Jaime Ravinet.

A statement by the Kuwaiti Embassy in Buenos Aires noted that Al-Roumi conveyed greetings from Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Dr. Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah to counterpart Moreno.

Al-Roumi noted that both nations should bolster diplomatic and economic ties for benefit of Kuwait and Chile.

Moreno on his part thanked Kuwait government and people for their sincere desires, affirming that Chile and Kuwait should be working on means to better ties in all possible aspects. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Ambassador conveyed greetings from Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah to his Chilean counterpart Ravinet.

Al-Roumi and Ravinet meeting also delved in subjects of bolster defense relations between the two nations.

Detailed Report/Mexico

Mexico sees no quick victory in drug war

Mexico's drug violence that has killed 23,000 people could rage for years before being curtailed, judging by past anti-crime fights in Italy, Colombia and the United States, the government said on Tuesday.

Security Minister Genero Garcia Luna told the Reuters Latin American Investment Summit in Mexico City that his country could not expect a quick victory in the army-backed offensive launched in late 2006 against powerful drug cartels fighting over lucrative smuggling routes into the United States. "In every case, the average is between six and eight years," Garcia Luna said in his headquarters in the Mexican capital. "In the case of Italy, in the case of Colombia, New York and Chicago, the curve was six years on average ... In Italy it lasted almost seven years."

"I hope that in Mexico it will be sooner," he added. With strong support from Washington, President Felipe Calderon has sent more than 70,000 soldiers, elite navy units and federal police across Mexico to take on the cartels.

Despite record drug seizures and arrests, violence has escalated to horrifying levels. Once-quiet manufacturing and colonial tourist towns feel terrorized by day light shootouts between rival gangs and the army.

Some companies are freezing investment along the US border, local business leaders say. Garcia Luna said the government is doing all it can to protect the economy from any drug war impact. "Mexico is working forcefully and institutionally so people keep investing in Mexico," he said.

Mexican president defends army's crime-fighting record

Mexico's President Felipe Calderon Wednesday defended the army's record in fighting organized crime, saying that the soldiers and sailors are fighting for freedom and justice in the country.

The remark was made during a speech in Puebla marking the 148th anniversary of the Battle of Puebla, in which Mexico defeated the invading French army.

However, Calderon noted that despite the good results of their daily work, heroic efforts and sacrifices, they are still criticized by some.

Recently, the military was criticized by non-government organizations for killing innocent civilians during their efforts to crack down on organized crime.

Calderon described organized crime as being transnational, using violence, threats and terror to impose its rules. Therefore, stronger institutions are needed to preserve the integrity and security of citizens, he added.

He said the army is trying to create respect via the legitimate force of the law.

Last week, Mexico's upper legislative house, the Senate, passed a measure to the lower house to boost punishment for soldiers who defect to drug traffickers or sell information to them.

Calderon said he is sure that legislation will evaluate, analyze and enrich the legal framework to boost the action deployed by the state to ensure security.

Fighting organized crime has been a keystone of Calderon's administration, which includes the deployment of the army to the nation's most violent cities.

Speaker: Mexico must have voice in immigration reform

U.S. immigration reform will not work unless Mexico can participate in the dialogue, a Mexican beer industry executive and former diplomat said in San Antonio on Thursday.

"If it is not done jointly, it won't work," Enrique Berruga, vice president for corporate affairs at Grupo Modelo, told more than 160 people attending the annual Mexico Panel luncheon held by the World Affairs Council of San Antonio.

Berruga is a former Mexican foreign affairs deputy secretary, a former Mexico representative to the United Nations and has served in other diplomatic posts, including Costa Rica, Ireland and Washington, D.C.

The U.S. and Mexico must strive toward an integrated labor market, Berruga said, noting that Mexicans have sought U.S. work in varying numbers since the 1940s as the U.S. economic cycle has risen and fallen.

In the first decades, with such little oversight at the border, it was easy for Mexicans to work in the United States for a period — legally or not — and then return home. Now that crossing the border unauthorized is so much more difficult, he pointed out, Mexicans look to come to the U.S. permanently and bring their families if possible.

Berruga said he expects more states will follow Arizona's lead in passing laws that allow local and state law agencies to enforce federal immigration laws, at least until sweeping new immigration laws are approved by Congress.

“It's time to take a fresh review. If it is done in tandem and agreement with Mexico, it will work much better,” Berruga said.

Berruga and another speaker, San Antonio lawyer Mario Melgar-Adalid of Cacheaux, Cavazos & Newton, both said Americans must reconcile Mexicans doing work that U.S. citizens will not do with the presence of undocumented workers.

Melgar-Adalid noted that the North American Free Trade Agreement was incomplete because it did not include labor provisions. “We didn't think beyond NAFTA,” he said.

Nukes divert needed investments, threaten humanity: Mexico

Facing crises such as the economic downturn and climate change, the world should not spend its resources on developing nuclear weapons, Mexican Ambassador to the UN Claude Heller told the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference on Thursday.

"In times of a profound world economic crisis and of great challenges to the international community such as climate change, the enormous expenditure related to nuclear weapons is detrimental to the economic and social development of the peoples," he said on the fourth day of the month-long Review Conference.

Heller said the simple existence of nuclear weapons encourages their production elsewhere and creates "a false assumption" that individual and collective security depends precisely on the possibility of obtaining them.

"As long as nuclear weapons have a relevant role in military and strategic doctrines, and there is no clear commitment to their destruction, there will always be incentives for other states to acquire them for the same purpose," he said. "The existence of nuclear weapons creates the need to possess them."

The Mexican ambassador called on Israel, India, and Pakistan to adhere to the NPT.

Iran, Heller said, must comply with decisions of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), respond to all requests of information concerning its nuclear program, with Security Council resolutions, and renounce explicitly and verifiably to the possession of nuclear weapons.

"Without a doubt, this will contribute to foster dialogue and cooperation as a means to solve controversies in the region," he said.

The 2010 Review Conference, he said, has the potential to make progress on several fronts, including a commitment by nuclear- weapon states to publicly declare the number of atomic warheads in their arsenals, a commitment for a "no-strike first" policy, a commitment to negotiate a legally binding instrument on negative security assurances pending the total elimination of nuclear weapons, and the reaffirmation of the unequivocal commitment by the nuclear- weapon states to completely disarm.

"Forty years after the entry into force of the NPT, there are still more than 23,000 nuclear warheads in the world, hundreds of which could be launched in less than four minutes," he said. "A world that can self-destroy itself hundreds of times will never be safer than one in which no weapons of extermination exist."

Moussa, Mexican FM discuss issues of mutual interest

Cairo, May 7 (KUNA) -- Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa's meeting with Mexican Foreign Minister Patricia Espinosa tackled regional and international issues, an official at the organization said Friday.

Moussa and Espinosa discussed the Cancun Climate Summit, scheduled to take place in Mexico in December, as well as disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation on the sidelines of UN's review summit, said Director of Arab League's Department of North and South Americas Ibrahim Mohieddin.

Espinosa sought the Arab League's support for Mexico's efforts directed towards coming up with a treaty to protect the planet against climate change and global warming, he said.

He added that Espinosa said that her country was working to establish an agreement among countries participating in the summit to financial aid to developing countries, so that they could reduces hazardous emissions.

Meanwhile, Moussa expressed Arab League's support and said that he would arrange for the Mexican foreign minister to meet Arab environment ministers soon to discuss issues tackled in the meeting, he said.

Arizona goes too far

The president of Mexico was furious. "Criminalizing immigration, which is a social and economic phenomena, opens the door to intolerance, hate, and discrimination," Felipe Calderon told a meeting of Mexican immigrant groups. The state of Arizona had gone too far.

Jose Miguel Insulza, the head of the Organization of American States, was equally angry. "We consider the bill clearly discriminatory against immigrants, and especially against immigrants from Latin America," he told the Associated Press news agency.

His point seemed to be that by treating illegal Mexican immigrants as a police matter, the new Arizona law is attacking their human rights.

The new law that is causing such outrage requires Arizona police to question people about their immigration status if they suspect they are there illegally.

Day laborers face arrest for soliciting work if they are in the U.S. illegally, and police departments can be sued if they fail to enforce the law. Illegal immigrants will face jail sentences of up to six months and fines of up to \$2,500 before being expelled from the United States.

Harsh measures, certainly, but suppose I went to Mexico as a tourist and then stayed there illegally, taking work that might otherwise have gone to some deserving Mexican citizen.

That does not figure prominently in my current plans, but if I did it, I would not be treated more gently by the Mexican authorities. Why does Mexico believe that its own citizens who are illegally in the United States deserve better treatment?

The flow of illegal migrants to the United States is important for Mexico. It provides a vital safety valve for the Mexican state, which would otherwise face the discontent of millions of Mexicans who cannot find decent jobs at home, and their remittances are a great help to the Mexican balance of payments.

But the widely held Mexican belief that illegal immigrants have rights in the United States is most peculiar.

It arises from the fact that for a long time the United States has deliberately kept the border with Mexico porous, so that large numbers of Mexican illegal's could enter the United States to provide cheap stoop labor for American agribusiness.

In the cities along the American side of the frontier the border defenses are quite impressive, but out in the desert they are frequently no more than three strands of barbed wire and a dirt patrol track.

Out in the desert, of course, some hundreds of the Mexican border-crossers get lost and die of thirst each year, but that is necessary in order to maintain the fiction that the United States is doing all it can to stop the flow.

It is also assumed that most of the illegals will go home again after the harvest, but of course each year some choose to stay permanently.

Each year the number of permanently resident illegal immigrants grows: even in Arizona, where there is not a huge demand for agricultural labor, there are now an estimated 460,000 illegal Mexican immigrants.

That is about 7 percent of Arizona's total population. Some argue that they are doing jobs nobody else wants, but that is only a possible reason for letting them stay. It certainly does not give them the right to stay.

Yet the Mexican government reacts with outraged indignation whenever the U.S. government, or in this case an American state, talks about enforcing the law against illegal immigrants.

It has come to think of the nod-and-a-wink arrangement that allows large numbers of illegal immigrants to cross the border each year as the natural state of things.

Arizona is calling time on that system, and actually intends to seek out and send home people who are in the state illegally. In most parts of the world, that would not be regarded as unreasonable. What is different in Arizona's case?

The implicit charge is racism. The assumption is that American citizens of Mexican origin, and legitimate Mexican visitors, will also be stopped and asked to prove that they are legally in the United States — and that they will be chosen for questioning on the grounds that they simply look “Mexican.”

President Calderon himself would never be inconvenienced by such a policy, because he does not look “Mexican.” He looks like your average white American, as does a large majority of the Mexican upper class.

But it is true that most poorer Mexicans, including both legal and illegal Mexican immigrants in the United States, are mestizos of mixed white and Indian ancestry.

They look “Mexican,” in other words, and the concern is that they will face constant demands from the police to prove they are legally in the United States.

But the solution for this is simple. Simply enforce the same rules that apply in airport security queues to ensure that nobody feels they are being “profiled” because of their ethnicity.

In the airports, they make sure that heavily bearded young men who look “Middle Eastern” face no greater risk of being selected for special examination than paraplegic grandmothers.

The Arizona police should be instructed to stop 13 white, black and Asian people and check that they are legally in the state for every person they stop who looks “Mexican.”

Then nobody will have anything to complain about.

Obama promises to tackle immigration

Mexico City: President Barack Obama just made life a little easier for his Mexican counterpart. His promise to tackle immigration reform this year ensures Felipe Calderon will not come home empty-handed when he visits Washington in two weeks.

The pledge sets a lighter mood from just a week ago, when Calderon vowed to push immigration reform during his May 19 trip, even while Obama warned “there may not be an appetite” in Congress to take on the sensitive issue.

“Obama making it very clear that he believes in reform is probably something that will make Calderon’s trip a little more successful,” said Peter Hakim, president emeritus of the Washington-based Inter-American Dialogue. “He can say some things that the Mexican

president would very much welcome, and Calderon understands the difficulty of this issue in Washington.”

Obama remained cautious in his comments at a Cinco de Mayo celebration at the White House on Wednesday acknowledging immigration reform would be difficult and making no commitment to finishing the process this year.

Even so, it’s a sign of commitment that Calderon needs amid Mexican outrage over Arizona’s tough new immigration law. His government has protested the bill — even issuing a travel warning against the U.S. state — while trying to assure Mexicans that the Obama administration remains sympathetic to the plight of migrants.

While many Mexicans are skeptical Obama will succeed, his pledge revived some good will.

“I like Obama because he is the first president of color and he wants to help the have-nots,” said Rogerio Cantu, 51, who lives in Hermana, a small farming community in northeastern Mexico where many houses are empty because so many residents have left for the U.S. However, Cantu, who himself has lived illegally in the U.S. several times, had little hope for change.

“I’ve heard the same things during 20 or 30 years,” he said.

Arizona’s new measure — which makes it a crime under state law to be in the country illegally — has thrust immigration to the forefront of U.S.-Mexico relations at a time when both governments seemed content to leave the issue on the back burner.

Attempts to overhaul the U.S. immigration system have repeatedly floundered since former Mexican President Vicente Fox tried to make it a banner issue nearly a decade ago, demanding what became known as “the whole enchilada” in migration reform.

The US economic meltdown has complicated Obama’s election-campaign promise to make immigration a priority, and bipartisan support remains lacking in the Senate. Even Arizona Sen. John McCain, Obama’s former Republican rival for the presidency who once championed an eventual path to citizenship for illegal immigration, has lauded his state’s new hardline law.

Faced with that atmosphere, Calderon has been reluctant to trumpet the cause

Pelosi Announces Mexican President Felipe Calderon to Address Joint Meeting of Congress on May 20

Washington, Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced today that President Felipe Calderon of Mexico will address a Joint Meeting of Congress on May 20 at 11 a.m.

"Congress will warmly welcome President Calderon to the Capitol when he visits the United States next month as part of his state visit," said Speaker Pelosi. "As President of Mexico, our neighbor and friend, we look forward to hearing President Calderon's message to the American people, and his views on ways to strengthen our border communities, fight organized crime, and reinforce the essential partnership between our two nations."

"Our countries may be separated by a border, but we share much in common —our values of faith, family, and love of our respective countries. Relations with Mexico are of utmost importance to the United States. President Calderon's address to Congress will provide us with a renewed opportunity to strengthen our bonds of friendship, discuss our shared challenges, and embrace common opportunities."

In 2001, then-President of Mexico Vicente Fox addressed a Joint Meeting of Congress. Mexican-Americans are the largest Hispanic group in the United States — more than 12 percent of Americans trace their ancestry to Mexico.

Mexico extradites politician to U.S.

Mexico City - Mexico has extradited a former state governor to the United States to face charges of helping smuggle cocaine through Cancun to the U.S., in a high-profile demonstration of the nation's increased willingness to extradite suspects as it battles surging drug violence.

Mario Villanueva, governor of the Caribbean state of Quintana Roo from 1993 to 1999, was in U.S. custody on Sunday, a day after authorities handed him over, Mexico's Attorney General's Office said in a statement.

Meanwhile, two young men were found murdered near the Pacific beach city of Zihuatanejo, and federal police in Morelia were searching for attackers who shot and killed an officer while he was eating at a taco stand.

Mr. Villanueva is charged in New York federal court with helping the Juarez cartel smuggle hundreds of tons of Colombian cocaine to the U.S.

He is the 326th suspect Mexico has sent to the U.S. under President Felipe Calderon, who stepped up the extraditions as part of increased cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking. But he is the first former governor to be extradited.

Mr. Villanueva "gave orders to allow shipments of cocaine to be unloaded and stored in ranches in Quintana Roo, to be later sent to the neighboring country by land or air," the Attorney General's Office said.

Mr. Villanueva was convicted in Mexico of money laundering and sentenced to six years in prison. He was released in 2007, but immediately rearrested on the U.S. extradition request.

Washington has supported Mr. Calderon's military-led offensive against drug cartels with equipment and training under the \$1.3 billion Merida Initiative.

Several top drug lords have been arrested or killed since Mr. Calderon deployed tens of thousands of troops and federal police across the country. But gang violence has surged, claiming more than 22,700 lives in the past three years.

Also Sunday, Mexican police were investigating the killings of a teenager and a young man whose bodies were found tortured near the beachside resort of Zihuatanejo, about 150 miles northwest of Acapulco.

Guerrero state police released a statement on Sunday that said the victims, discovered by relatives, were 17 and 21 years old. Neither a suspect nor a motive had been determined.

The U.S. State Department warned this week that parts of southern Guerrero state could be dangerous for travelers due to drug violence, and on Saturday, police said eight people were found murdered outside Acapulco.

In the central city of Morelia, federal police said an officer was shot and killed while having dinner with a colleague at a taco stand. A second officer was wounded. The suspects fled and have not been caught, police said.

Mexican diplomat prepares for Arizona law

Phoenix, May 12 (UPI) -- The Mexican government's chief diplomat for Arizona and Nevada says he is making plans for Arizona's new immigration enforcement law.

Consul General Victor Manuel Trevino Escudero, 50, says his Phoenix office anticipates an exodus of Mexicans from Arizona when the law takes effect, The (Phoenix) Arizona Republic reported Wednesday.

Trevino Escudero told the newspaper he is urging Mexicans to stay calm and not pull their children out of school.

"But if the school year ends, and the law is enforced, then you have to take proper action," he says.

Trevino Escudero says that as an official of Mexico he respects the sovereignty and laws of the United States, including Arizona's new immigration law.

The Mexican government is reportedly boosting the number of people who work in the consulate to aid Mexicans living legally and illegally in Arizona.

The government is also said to be considering filing legal briefs in support of several lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of Arizona's new law, which requires state and local law enforcement officers to check immigration status if a person is "reasonably suspected" of being in the United States illegally.

Detailed Report/Venezuela

Chavez: Let's Institutionalize UNASUR

Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela, has called for the institutionalization of the Latin American Common Market, UNASUR and has warned that its twelve member states should remember the commitments they made to Haiti.

In his Sunday column, President Hugo Chavez hailed the election of Nestor Kirchner (ex-Argentinean President and husband of its current President, Cristina Kirchner) as the first

Secretary-General of UNASUR, at the Summit on May 4 and called for its additional strengthening and implementation.

For Chavez, Nestor Kirchner is a member of the generation of Latin American leaders who embody a change of season. Welcoming the opportunity for introspection among the 12 member states (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, Uruguay, Venezuela; Panama and Mexico have observer status) Hugo Chavez established a deadline of two weeks for UNASUR to fulfill its commitment to provide the 100 million USD in funds for the rebuilding of Haiti.

Hugo Chavez reminded his colleagues that UNASUR had pledged to provide 200 million USD in reconstruction aid and that they had committed themselves to provide 80 million USD of this by the end of March 2010. This did not materialize.

The Venezuelan President praised the way the Latin American leaders came together presenting a united front in preventing Porfirio Lobo from representing Honduras at the Plenary Session of the Latin American and Caribbean countries with the European Union this May.

He also praised the unanimous stance taken by these nations in condemning the racist law in Arizona, USA, which criminalizes immigrants, which he described as “a real and true attack on human rights”.

Recalling also that the Summit of UNASUR expressed support for Argentina in its exercise of sovereignty over the Malvinas/Falklands Islands and the facilitation provided for the Paraguayan President Fernando Lugo to fight criminal violence in 5 States of his country, Hugo Chavez concluded that the Union of Latin American nations is very much strengthened as the 12 member states start to take steps together.

Ex-defense minister, Chavez critic, sentenced to more than 7 years in prison in Venezuela

Caracas, Venezuela (AP) — A former Venezuelan defense minister and critic of President Hugo Chavez was sentenced to more than seven years in prison on Friday after being convicted of embezzlement and abuse of power.

Retired Gen. Raul Baduel was sentenced to seven years, 11 months in prison by a military court and is barred from running for public office, state television reported.

Baduel was tried on charges that 40 million bolivars — then worth \$18.6 million at the official exchange rate — went missing in 2006 and 2007 while he was defense minister. Baduel has insisted he is innocent and dismissed the accusation as a politically motivated reprisal for his opposition to Chavez.

Baduel retired in July 2007 after Chavez removed him from the defense minister post, and he quickly emerged as a prominent critic of the president. He publicly opposed a package of constitutional revisions proposed by Chavez that would have enshrined socialist ideals in the constitution but were rejected by voters in 2007.

"He was tried without any evidence," his daughter Andreina Baduel said after the sentencing. "My father has been an honest man and he always will be."

In the same case, Col. Hernan Medina Marval was sentenced to 8 years, 11 months in prison.

Another of Baduel's daughters, Rayrin Baduel, told reporters that the main evidence had been the testimony of soldiers who saw Medina carrying some black bags allegedly filled with cash.

"Why didn't they arrest him at that very moment?" she said.

Chavez has denied going after opponents through the legal system, saying Baduel and other government critics are criminals who must face justice.

Baduel had maintained a friendship with Chavez since the presidents' army days and clandestinely aided a failed 1992 coup attempt led by the then-lieutenant colonel.

The general also came to Chavez's aid in 2002, when the president was briefly ousted in a coup. Baduel was a key player in securing Chavez's return to power by sending a team of paratroopers to rescue him from officers who had detained him.

Hugo Chavez Hires 200 People to Manage His Twitter Account

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, who only recently signed up to Twitter, has rapidly risen up the ranks to become the top tweeter in the country despite having previously described the service as a "tool of terror." The leader has also hired hundreds of staffers to reply to tweets.

Chavez ("Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela. Soldado Bolivariano, Socialista y Antiimperialista" according to his bio) has, at the time of writing, 239,994 followers and is included on 7,538 lists. Presumably some of those lists also include people who are "threats to the open web."

With "Verified Account" status on the service, Chavez follows just five others, but it's unlikely the majority in Venezuela follow him — it was recently estimated that only 31% of the country's population have Internet access, although this figure has grown under Chavez's rule.

However, it seems public engagement with the president's new online presence has been high — more than 50,000 messages have been directed to him in the two weeks he's been tweeting. So how does Chavez find time to tweet to the people? A newly appointed team of 200 Twitter aides will help to lighten that load, reports the AP. Chavez said of the new hires, "I'm creating a team due to the avalanche of requests, and some grievances."

Chavez has also changed his tune on Twitter since he joined and rose to become the number one user in Venezuela. He now calls the service "a weapon that also needs to be used by the revolution."

Business leaders warn Chavez's economic policies strangling importers, private enterprise

Caracas, Venezuela (AP) — Business leaders accused President Hugo Chavez on Sunday of attempting to strangle Venezuelan businesses that rely on imports by making them pay more for foreign-made products.

They said Chavez is irresponsibly allowing the black-market rate for U.S. dollars to spiral upward, which increases costs for close to half of the country's importers.

"The government doesn't consider it a priority," said Alfonzo Rivas, a businessman and president of the non-governmental group Cedice, which promotes individual and economic freedoms.

Chavez set a two-tiered exchange rate in January, pegging the Bolivar at 2.60 to the dollar for priority goods such as food and 4.30 per dollar for imports of products the government deems nonessential.

But the government has not distributed enough dollars at the official rate to satisfy demand, forcing close to half of Venezuela's importers to buy much more expensive greenbacks on the black market.

The black-market rate for the U.S. dollar reached 8.00 bolivars last week — almost double the official rate for nonessential imports and triple the rate for essential imports.

For many businesses, "all the products that cannot be imported at the official rate must be obtained on the parallel market, and that's going to create more inflation," Rivas said.

In a televised speech Saturday, Chavez blamed wealthy business owners for soaring prices, suggesting they are conspiring to undermine his government's anti-inflationary measures such as price controls on hundreds of basic products ahead of congressional elections in September.

"There's a conspiracy. The bourgeoisie are very much involved in managing the economy," said Chavez, a close ally of Cuba's Castro brothers. "I warn the bourgeoisie: We are not going to allow ourselves to be pushed around."

Business leaders deny plotting against Chavez, countering that he seems determined to gradually replace private businesses and industries with state-run enterprises.

"The government sees the business community as an enemy," said Rivas, whose own business imports raw materials to produce soups, microwave popcorn, cereal and other goods.

Victor Maldonado, who leads the Caracas Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Services, told Union Radio that Chavez's socialist economic policies — not business owners — are responsible for Venezuela's double-digit inflation. He urged the president to moderate his agenda and seek new advisers.

"Any governing official with good judgment should rethink his ideological principles, economic policies and group of collaborators," Maldonado said.

Last week, the Central Bank and National Statistics Institute reported a 5.2 percent increase in consumer prices during April, driving the annual inflation rate to 30.4 percent.

Jose Guerra, a former Central Bank official who teaches economics at the Central University of Venezuela, said that "the inflation problem is getting out of the government's hands."

Chavez implemented the two-tiered exchange rate to discourage imports of nonessential goods while promoting domestic production of items such as food. Critics argue the initiative has failed.

Opposition leader Julio Borges said inflation is worsening because the government has not curbed the country's dependence on imports. Consumer prices are increasing because Chavez has failed in his effort to boost domestic food production by seizing and redistributing farmland to peasants, Borges said.

"What have the expropriations provided? Has this helped increase domestic production? Has it improved supply? We all know the answer is a firm 'No,'" Borges said.

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