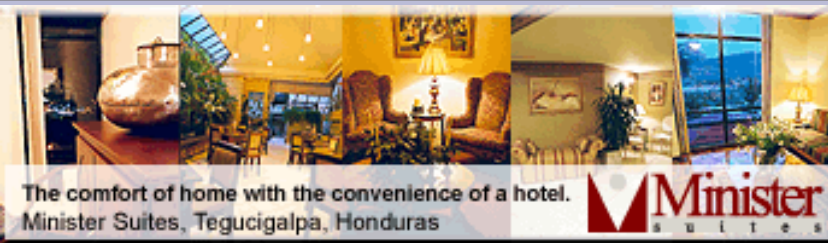


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NATIONAL NEWS



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Monday, February 24, 2003 Online Edition 8

Porfirio Lobo practices social outreach

The President of the National Congress of Honduras, Porfirio Lobo Sosa, with a group of school children on a tour of the legislative palace.



By CLARE HARRISON

TEGUCIGALPA — The president of the national congress, Porfirio Lobo took a break from pressing political engagements on Monday, in order to allow a class of young school children into the main congressional chamber. The children, who were seemingly unaware of all the attention they were generating, were from the bilingual Elvel School, in Tegucigalpa. After a brief explanatory tour the children sat around the debating table and were all assigned a microphone in order to further probe Mr. Lobo about various aspects of congress.

Lobo introduced himself to each of the children and then gave a brief lesson on congress; the various government departments, how many

Energizing the democratic process in Honduras

By CLARE HARRISON

TEGUCIGALPA — The second installment of the Political Parties Institutionalization Program was on Tuesday. The ongoing program is a coalition of several organizations including the Forum for the Fortification of Democracy and the National Congress, and is also in conjunction with the United Nations Development Project - a primary sponsor of the event.

Senior Honduran political figures including representatives from the five main parties again gathered to discuss more reforms to the political system. The conference involved discussions on how to address the monumental task of energizing the democratic process in Honduras. In addition to this importance was

there were and the role they played. The trip was a real treat for pupils as well as staff and gave a class of budding politicians a valuable insight into the day-to-day running of Congress.

Crime and violence in Honduras continues to affect children and young people

By CLARE HARRISON

TEGUCIGALPA — According to a press release from the children's charity Casa Alianza, the number of unprecedented murders of young adults and children in Honduras remains alarmingly high. In addition to the sheer number of deaths Casa Alianza has also observed the lack of priority given to solving the cases by Honduran authorities.

According to the most up-to-date information published in the press release, the legal support program of Casa Alianza in Honduras counted 59 violent deaths of people under 23 during the month of January this year. Of the young persons killed the overwhelming majority (92 percent) were male. Of those young males the highest fatality rate occurred in the 18 and 23-year old age group, 54 percent of those killed were of that age. Just over a third of those killed were 16 years old or younger. The number of girls and boys killed under the age of 11 accounted for the smallest percentage (5 percent) of the total fatalities.

Perhaps, unsurprisingly the highly urbanized areas have the highest proportion of the total killings. Of those killed the largest proportion (27 percent) took place in Tegucigalpa followed by 16 percent in San Pedro Sula.

Casa Alianza established that guns were used in 80 percent of the deaths, knives were the involved in eight percent and four were unspecified. This news has initiated renewed calls for tightening of gun laws, firearms are too readily available, especially in urban areas like Tegucigalpa where their use is common-place.

Casa Alianza has again identified reluctance on the part of the authorities to follow-up the murders with thorough investigations. The charity did manage to ascertain some of those responsible for the deaths but an alarming number of killers remain unknown. In the majority of cases the killers' identities are no known, from the deaths most recently recorded 78 percent of the killers remain unidentified. Despite the wide scale coverage of gang-related crime in the country, a relatively small 14 percent of killings are gang-related. The prevalence of gang culture in Honduras has long been attributed to the killings of juveniles yet the percentage attributable to that cause is relatively small. Eight percent of the children are lost to the death cars and two percent of fatalities are thought to be the work of private security guards.

On the basis of this information provided by Casa Alianza the charity and other organizations like it have arrived at the conclusion that the

stressed on the need to adopt a new political mentality as a sound base for future strengthening of the democratic process.

Among the speeches made on the day was an important contribution from Father Javier Sanin who called for Honduran politicians to "talk about political ethics." He emphasized the need for widespread education on the subject, and was of the opinion that democratic thinking is not inherent; therefore there is a need for citizens to be "taught" about it. In order for a democracy to function properly, he added, what is needed is more openness regarding the relationship between ethics and politics. The link between the two has been somewhat ambiguous of late, as successive administrations have time again proved themselves to be equally corrupt. The only way to rebuild trust between voter and politician, Sanin argued, would seem to be to forge a stronger link between politicians and wider ethical considerations. The overriding opinion seemed to be that politics needs to be tied more specifically to philosophical objectives, and coupled with an increased level of transparency.

Sanin attributed the pitfalls of South American democracies with a lack of democratic tradition in the countries. The democratization process came relatively late to these countries and recent history is littered with the legacies of dictatorial and monarchical rule.

The program is aimed at encouraging the development of civil society in Honduras, citizens need to be better educated and more readily engaged in the participatory process.

authorities are still responsible for a significant number of the deaths. Despite pledges to eradicate the unlawful killing of minors by the police, the amount appears to have increased during President Ricardo Maduro's administration. Admittedly a task force has been set up to eradicate this kind of unlawful conduct within the police force, but many argue it is too little too late for many young people who have suffered at the hands of the authorities.

The organization continues to express extreme concern over the situation. Casa Alianza calls upon people to reflect on the need for immediate action in the search for concrete solutions to the problem. Their main objectives are coordinating efforts from the sectors involved and closely collaborating with the authorities so that the guilty parties are punished and so the deaths are not covered by impunity. The organization has been disappointed so far with the lack of investigations carried out by the authorities. Out of the 24 cases that have been sent to the General Investigative Office of the Special Investigative Unit into the Death of Minors only two have been resolved. The remainder of the cases are still pending justice and Casa Alianza hopes that subsequent investigations will go unhindered with the ultimate aim that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

Widespread participation is welcomed as being not just good for democracy but also conducive to greater unification between factions of civil society. Importance was placed on arriving at a general consensus on clear common objectives that can only be established through participation.



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Monday, February 17, 2003 Online Edition 7

NGOs petition for the First Lady's assistance

The First Lady with one of the children who have benefited from the help of HHH

By LUCY CRISFIELD

DANLI — Representatives from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) met in Danli last Friday with the intention of uniting their forces with the people of Honduras in order to petition the first lady about the obstacles they are currently facing.

The majority of the organizations present were concerned with improving the access to, and knowledge of medicines for the people of Honduras. Organizations included Promesa, who focus on providing the education needed to create a self-reliant health system for the people of the Yeguaré region. Others included Healthy Families, an AIDS project based in Roatan working to diminish the vertical transmission of HIV between mother and child, and Helping Hands for Honduras (HHH), an organization dedicated to helping children receive life saving operations in the United States.

It was partly with the aim of giving these groups a forum in which they could meet for the first time, discuss relevant issues and ultimately to help each other, that the American born Kathy Rubio organized the event. However, she was perhaps compelled to do so by an event that particularly affected her life last October. A large number of health clinics on the north coast were shut down and with nowhere else to go, 100 babies with congenital heart conditions were sent to Kathy's clinic. Kathy knew nothing about the work HHH were doing, and when her own clinic was forced to close down a month later, 84 of these babies died. This was just one of the examples where a closer network of communication between the organizations would have saved lives.

The NGOs are also trying to create a more successful integration between the Honduran civil society and the people from the United States who are founding these projects. Unfortunately the present employment laws in Honduras are making it virtually impossible for this to happen. The current law on severance pay states that after 59 days of work, the employer must put aside a certain proportion of their employees salary every month which can then be claimed if they are fired. This makes it very difficult to dismiss a worker without crippling a non-profit organization. Many have also had recurring problems with people leaving and then claiming that they were fired; it was this difficulty that forced not only Kathy's clinic, but many clinics all over



Phase three of street children project wrapped up

TEGUCIGALPA — On February 10, Casa Alianza Honduras and the Honduran Investment Social Fund (FHIS) terminated the third phase of the innovative "Attention to Street or at Social Risk Children" pilot project.

The project was executed by Casa Alianza and the FHIS, and financed by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). The project's main objective was to contribute to the social integration of street children through the promotion and protection of their fundamental rights. By doing this, they will be able to reinsert the children into their homes and consequently increase the country's productive process.

In the third phase more than 40 children from the Residential Program and the Family Reintegration Program have improved their life conditions by the insertion into the formal education system and have learned a trade that will allow them to generate resources and the opportunity of earning a living honorably.

At the same time, the program has been successfully able to change the children's attitude towards life. Their mothers also received training towards improving their level of human development and increasing their incomes, factors that will allow them to spend more time with their children.

The FHIS Minister Leony Yu Way and the National Director of Casa Alianza, Jose Manuel Capellin, headed up the event, along with the children, who offered testimonials and demonstrated their new skills.

Honduras to close down.

It is also very difficult to find out exactly what the laws are regarding employment and the setting up of charitable organizations. This tends to actively discourage people from taking the risk involved when employing Hondurans, instead encouraging them to look for volunteers. However, employees are also facing problems encouraging volunteers to dedicate a significant amount of their time in Honduras due to a substantial increase in the price for visas. Volunteers from the United States now have to spend 300 lempiras for every 30 days that they wish to remain in the country, a marked increase from the 30 lempiras that they had to pay in June.

The laws involving tax on exports and imports also contain many loopholes and inconsistencies, which seem to be hampering the running of these autonomous groups. Although NGOs are supposed to be exempt from such tax's, many have not been able to receive essential equipment from abroad because they are either waiting the decisions of officials, or have been asked to pay large sums of money. All of these issues were presented to the First Lady who assured that she would "investigate the matter, and discuss the possibility of changes with the appropriate members of congress."

Another clear advantage of uniting forces is that it creates a wider variety of expertise, and therefore a greater chance of receiving the funds that are presently available. One month ago, President Bush sent a letter to all of the NGOs in Central America stating his pledge to give five million dollars of funds to the aid and health projects in this area, of which a sizable proportion will be received by Honduras. In an effort to ensure that the money is used for the purpose that it is intended, the money will not pass through any government officials' hands.

Perhaps the most encouraging result of the meeting was the energy and hope with which these people talked about making a lasting difference for the people of Honduras: nearly all of the schemes are hoping that the projects will eventually be self sustainable. However, this will not be possible without the help and encouragement of the government, and without a clearer integration between the inhabitants of Honduras, and the Americans who are initiating many of the programs.

Reforms needed on the laws regarding NGOs

By CLARE HARRISON

Concerns are being voiced regarding the arbitrary constraints currently being placed upon workers in the country. The concerns are centered around the provisions made to small-scale non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in particular.

Murder of U.S. citizen in Roatan's East End

By CLARE HARRISON

Residents on the largest Honduran bay island of Roatan are in shock this week after the brutal murder of an American resident on the island. American-born Richard Michael Bougerie was killed instantly by a single shot wound to the head on Monday afternoon. Bany Umanzor the investigating officer on the case said that Mr. Bougerie left his home on Roatan's East End at around 1:08 Monday afternoon. Mr. Bougerie was believed to have been shot dead minutes later in his car between 1:15 and 1:30, just meters from his home. Bougerie's wife Barbara heard the shots but remained unaware of the tragedy until locals discovered his body a short time afterwards and alerted the police.

Bougerie was a relatively new resident on the island and was the victim of a feud between him and his neighbors. The feud began after Bougerie's neighbor Clay Dilver who was previously employed by Bougerie was accused of stealing silver and jewelry belonging to Bougerie's wife. Dilver was subsequently found guilty of the theft and was imprisoned in La Ceiba in September of last year. According to Honduran police the neighboring family who were relatives of Dilver began threatening the Bougerie family shortly after Dilver's imprisonment.

The police went to the Dilver's nearby house at around six o'clock Tuesday evening and after conducting a search of the premises arrested five members of the Dilver family. They have since released two of the

The work of non-governmental organizations accounts for much of the work done in Honduras. NGOs are commonly used as a channel of communication between locals and international financial donors. Although some NGOs work in conjunction with the government, many work independently and it is these parties some say that have encountered the greatest problems.

The government is facing a series of issues surrounding the subject, a number of the NGOs in Honduras are pressing for reforms to minimize the current confusion over points of Honduran law.

At present the laws are not readily accessible to expatriates and seeking advice in order to determine the rights and wrongs of employment legislation can be a long and convoluted process.

Small-scale charity organizations are often reluctant to seek legal advice because of the relatively high cost. In the long term however, the cost of not fully understanding the law can work out to be significantly higher, as many have found. Some of the NGOs feel they are the victims of stifling Honduran legislation that is badly in need of reform.

However, although the majority of NGOs are founded with the best of intentions, there are not many safeguards in place to guard against corrupt or badly run NGOs. NGOs are eligible for tax exemption; consequently setting up an NGO can be a relatively easy way for opportunist businesspeople to avoid paying tax. All are in agreement that the government has a duty to defend its people from bad practice and unfair tax evasion, but equally it must strike a balance in order to allow those who want to help the chance to do so relatively unhindered.

The government needs to address the matter imminently, as the potential benefits that the country can reap from NGOs are limitless. Alongside doing this many are calling for the government to put in place measures to ensure that only legitimate NGOs are allowed to work in Honduras.

The British Ambassador Kay Coombes who is currently president of G15 said that although it is "very easy" to set up a non-governmental organization, there is "a lot of bureaucracy" associated with them. She stated that the Honduran government "recognizes NGOs as one of the many loopholes to tax evasion". She emphasized the need for expatriates to work in conjunction with their respective embassies in order to obtain sound guidance on the subject.

When it comes to lack of transparency and corruption NGOs can be as guilty as governments. NGOs can be held even less accountable than politicians can and there is no obligation at present to disclose details of all work undertaken by the organizations. NGOs are by no means compelled to document their spending, and if completely unchecked they can conceivably pose an additional threat to a democracy.

suspects, but are continuing to question the remaining three. The investigations of the local police are being followed up by the FBI who arrived on the island on Wednesday to make further inquiries.

The murder raises obvious concerns over safety on the island and locals hope that the police will resolve the matter as soon as possible in order to send a strong message to criminals in the area that justice will be done. Many tourist operators on the island are fearful that Bougerie's tragic murder could have very negative repercussions on the number of visitors to Roatan. Residents are keen to iterate that the murder was totally unprecedented and a genuine one off. The livelihoods of so many on the island are totally dependent on tourism. Questions over safety on the island could be potentially very damaging to the local economy.



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NGOs do account for a large portion of the work undertaken abroad and the work is undoubtedly invaluable in many cases. Non-governmental organizations often receive international backing, and they can operate as a crucial facet of a multi-lateral project. So given the amount of potential influence they wield, time would be well spent ensuring that projects are able to work continuously and harmoniously in Honduras.

Week in Review

The "Devil" falls

Maria Isabel Martinez, otherwise known as "the Devil", was captured on Tuesday morning in Colonia San Isidro de Comayagüela. The minister of security, Oscar Alvarez orchestrated the vast operation that took place at 3:00 a.m. and involved 250 masked policemen wearing armed with pistols and rifles. She has been wanted since Tuesday February 4, when she shot 52 year old Jose Santos Martinez on a bus in the Comayagüela area of Tegucigalpa. She had just been released for possession of drugs and heavy armory. — La Tribuna

Government to save 700 million lempiras

The Honduran government has decided to freeze the salaries of public employees, and to cancel 50 percent of the current civil service vacancies created as a result of early retirement and the firing of people in government positions. The decision was made after the council of ministers met on Tuesday in order to discuss the propositions made by the IMF (International Monetary Fund). The IMF wants Honduras to decrease expenses, and to increase income in order to lower fiscal deficit. President Maduro has said that his goal is to lower the governments salary from 10.7 to 10.1 percent of the GNP (Gross National Product). — El Herald

1.5 million pupils begin the new school year

President Maduro affirmed on Monday that the malnutrition of the young population, especially in the rural areas is still one of the main causes for truancy. However, he assured that one of his most important goals this year is to increase the amount of food received at school in rural areas, aiming to reach 5,000 children this year as opposed to 3,000 last year. Other goals included reducing the number of schools with only one teacher from the present number of 4,000, to 800 in 2005. In an effort to emphasize the importance of the 200-day school year, it was confirmed that teachers who complete this time will be paid more. — La Tribuna

Maduro meets with Bolanos and Flores

In order to discuss the serious problems that Honduras is currently maintaining with it's neighbors; President Maduro met on Tuesday with the presidents of Nicaragua and El Salvador. Relations are currently tense due to the 35 percent tax, which they are applying to Honduran products. El Salvador and Honduras have also reached a stalemate over their border dispute. The National Congress is planning to decree a reprisal against the tax that Nicaragua is imposing. — La Tribuna

“We aren't corrupt”

Members of the legislative chamber refuted the claims that they are corrupt on Wednesday. The principal members of Congress were responding to the accusation made on Tuesday by anti-corruption official, German Espinal. Espinal quoted the study made by Doctor Mitchell Seligson from the University of Pittsburgh stating that 98 percent of the population perceive the congressmen to be easily bribed. The Minister of Transport, Salvador Pineda said that the concept of perception is not demonstrable, and therefore the study is “totally refutable”. — El Heraldo

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La Ceiba malecon project unveiled in January

The malecon will run east of the dock in La Ceiba, pictured above.

By ROBERT SPAIN

LA CEIBA — “Proyecto Malecon” was unveiled here at the end of January to an audience of politicians, local businessmen, and other invited dignitaries. Mayor Gonzalez (Liberal Party) introduced plans to build a concrete walkway along the front of the town, stretching eastwards from the old docks. The intention is to create an environment similar to the malecons of Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, Pacific Beach, California and that of New Orleans. All these are specifically cited in the initial plans, and elements from each are evident in the preliminary design concept. Spacious, well lit and laden with greenery, “the intention is to create an area that is pleasant for both locals and tourists to spend time” said a local businessman Honduras This Week spoke to. Clearly better than the current plowed up mud that plagues the town’s “beach” - due to the La Ceiba sewage sanitation project - the plan will rejuvenate north of First Street, but it is doubtful that



Week in Review

Mortality of fishes in the Cajon Hydroelectric Dam

In an environmental and economic tragedy, over 1,600 tons of fish were buried on Wednesday. The fish died in the space of 24 hours when the gradually decreasing levels of oxygen in the water got too low. Experts suggest that the cold fronts that braced the country in January are to blame. The manager of the company Aqua Finca Saint Peter Fish said, “the cost of the damage is immense, not only financially, but environmentally.” — El Heraldo

Honduran troops to join the war against Iraq

The minister of defense, Federico Breve Travieso confirmed on

it will have much affect on tourism revenue in what is already considered the "Party Capital" of Honduras.

No one interviewed about the project, including Deputy Tourism Minister Eva Gonzalez, were able to offer evidence of the construction leading to increased visits to the area, though there was nothing but enthusiasm for the project itself.

"Proyecto Malecon will complement the sewage works being built in the town," said Carlos Flores, the civil engineer appointed to defend the interests of the city. Expected to cost over ten times as much as the sewage works (US\$20 million compared to US\$1.75 million) both are being supported by USAID. Proyecto Malecon, however, sees the American organization only paying for preliminary designs. The actual work, expected to start in two to three years, will be paid for by a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank, who wants the Municipality of La Ceiba to submit the application but for the government of Honduras to act as guarantor. This clash has caused problems in the corridors of power, and probably tense moments for Mayor Gonzalez too. Re-elected because of the towns' overwhelmingly Liberal composition, despite being considered to be ineffective during his first term in office, Gonzalez knows that his job may be on the line should he not be perceived to be working hard enough for the town. Traditional party ties have long been disintegrating and people no longer automatically vote for the same party their grandparents supported 100 years ago. Accordingly, should the National Party field a strong candidate, the mayorship of the town may change hands. As the next such election is in 2004, around the time that contracts will be tendered out for Proyecto Malecon, Gonzalez's position may yet be secured.

The hand that feeds them

Caption A, Yaairah at her home in Tamarindo, Choluteca. She has survived two visits to hospital, an example of cases of child malnutrition in the Honduran countryside.

By JONATHAN MARCIANO

CHOLUTECA — The dirt track leading into Tamarindo, Choluteca is impassable. The rocky terrain defeats the four-wheel drive, and the World Food Program team, guiding a representative from a multinational donor, are forced to climb the dust-hep hills in the Honduran oven in the south, leading to a series of poor countryside shanty towns and the most



Monday that the Honduran army would be ready to participate in the possible war against Iraq at any time. Honduras will be the third country in Central America after Guatemala and El Salvador to prepare their troops for such an armed conflict. Travieso declared that "for us and for our soldiers, it will be a real experience to participate in this type of international mission, like we have done in the past." However, the minister of external relations, Guillermo Augusto Perez-Cadalso Arias, was more prudent when referring to the subject. He suggested that Honduras should not be hasty, and should support any decision made by the United Nations. — La Tribuna

Revision of the Penal Process Code

It was decided in a meeting on Wednesday between the authorities of the National Congress, the minister of security and the police, that the areas of the penal process code that present obstacles in the fight against crime should be revised. The new legislation was introduced only a year ago, however in practice various aspects do not work. Revisions will be implemented in the organization of the police, the purchasing of police intelligence equipment, and the anonymity of judges will also be introduced. — El Heraldo

United States pressure Nicaragua to disarm

After the recent scandal in Nicaragua regarding the trafficking of arms to the guerilla forces in Columbia, the OEA (Organization of American States) have

serious child malnutrition cases in the country.

Yaairah is home. 22 months old, she is spread on a mat surface, her frail body slowly and incredulously re-discovering the agility long denied through crippling lack of food. She has been in and out of the hospital twice, returning recently back to these small, cramped dwellings. The program officials, Hyoung-Joon Lim and Miguel Angel Bonilla Caraccioli are overjoyed. "Last time, she was just a bag of bones," says Hyoung, as the infant wraps her still-tiny palm around his finger. Since the team last visited, Yaairah's family has grown, now eight in total. Yaairah has a newborn baby sister. She competes for already scarce food in the house, and is alarmingly still in her cloth cot. Her older infant sister is blind, the pure white eyes looking on aimlessly at the world. The father, typical of many in this region is out of work, taking chances begging on the nearby roadsides.

Their neighborhood is dry and desolate. Many are talking about the possibility of famine. The land has not seen rain for two years. The mango trees are parched. The World Food Program (WFP), operating in Honduras is targeting the desperate food shortages afflicting Honduran children. The latest, pragmatic path of battle is taking place in Honduran schools under the Global School Feeding program. Only a tiny percentage of Honduran school children have access to meals at school. They often face a two-hour walk to school, coupled with a loss of earning power. The WFP scheme is designed to provide school meals for 400,000 kids from first grade through to sixth grade. Tackling the situation in the poorest areas, the project provides children with at least one healthy meal a day. In these locations, WFP aims to reduce school dropout rates by 10 percent, reduce absenteeism by 15 percent and support the local organizations to build community infrastructure, and keep children in school. The idea behind it is to ensure a platform where schoolchildren not only learn to read and write, but have ready access to health care, education and vaccines.

"There are not that many cases of acute malnutrition in Honduras, that is classified as five percent of population facing severe lack of nutrition", explains Claudia von Roehl, Director of WFP in Honduras.

"There is though a serious problem with chronic malnutrition. Babies are not developing according to their age. A child of six years is supposed to be a certain height. It means they have had a lot of deprivations in life. It is a long story of deprivations" adds Roehl.

The Honduran government has put US\$900,000 dollars into the scheme since last year. "There is a general lack of education," explains Roehl. "Mothers think that their child looks healthy when in reality they are severely unhealthy."

Honduras has outlined a 'millennium goal' to end the problem of child poverty, and food shortage.

The WFP for its part sponsors community health monitors, whose volunteers are seen on the same day in the Choluteca area weighing

demanding that the country destroy their missiles. However, the inspector general of the Nicaraguan army, Manuel Salvatierra, has declared that it will not take any action until Honduras reduces its weapons of war. – El Heraldo

Bullet in the neck kills policeman

52-year old Jose Santos Martinez was shot at 5:45 on Tuesday afternoon while going to sit on a bus in the Comayagüela area of Tegucigalpa. The bus was on the 7th avenue, one of the most dangerous areas of Comayagüela where there have already been 10 murders this year. The minister of security Oscar Alvarez has confirmed that the murderess was Maria Isabel Martinez otherwise known as "The Devil". Martinez had just been released from jail after a conviction for possession of drugs and heavy armory. – El Heraldo



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babies, administering vaccines and providing support and education on nutrition. Babies' names are marked with a blue for stable, and a red circle, signifying danger.

In Orocuina, medics Dr. Guifarro, a project director within the Ministry of Health, and Gloria Elber, project co-coordinator oversea the baking of papilla, supplied cheaply to the undernourished. They teach the mothers to cook the one part, vegetable oil, sugar, soy, and water ingredients at home, to be administered as a drip cure to the skeletal children. They also point at the wall diagrams, showing the correct position to breast-feed, and hold the infant.

The WFP interpret Honduran schools as the vehicle for a fast track initiative. "School feeding has acted as a wake-up call to people that do not usually know what happens in the countryside," says Roehl.

To send a donation or sponsor a child for \$18 a year per schoolchild, please contact www.wfp.org.

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Monday, February 3, 2003 Online Edition 5

President Maduro speaks to the nation

By ROBERT SPAIN

President Ricardo Maduro announced that all government salaries will be frozen this year, in a national radio and television broadcast. The Presidential address, which was carried by all stations, laid out Maduro's plans for the final three years of his term in office. His program also includes reforms in the areas of trade, infrastructure, law and order and tourism.

The move to cut public expenditure is in accordance with the demands made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in its recent negotiations with Honduras. Stressing the importance of such aid, the President stated "we have to seek an agreement that will not raise any taxes," instead seeking to comply with IMF regulations by cutting down on tax exemptions and evasions, and limiting government expenditure. This is significant given other promises made in Maduro's speech. The bidding process to build the road linking Puerto Cortes and the Guatemalan border will be opened in March, and work will start of widening the north coast road from three lanes to four.

Although Maduro's cabinet has been more sympathetic than its predecessor to opponents of the hydroelectric power plant proposed for the Cangrejal River, the President announced plans to initiate at least one of three such plants near the Sula valley. "They are important because they have multiple benefits: electricity, flood control, irrigation and potable water" he explained, while highlighting that not one kilowatt hour of hydroelectric power has been created in Honduras since 1985.

Casa Alianza opens shelter for street girls

By ROBERT SPAIN

TEGUCIGALPA — The street children's charity Casa Alianza recently opened a shelter exclusively for girls.

The house, inaugurated on 23rd January, will specifically focus on the needs of young homeless females, who make up approximately a quarter of the 170 children that the charity helps each day.

As Casa Alianza national director Jose Manuel Capellin pointed out, most of these girls "have run away from home to escape violence, sexual abuse or labor exploitation, however the risks they face on the street are greater." Girls such as pregnant, glue sniffing prostitute Maria will now have a home aimed at their requirements, and at the very least away from the cold, violence and dangers of street life.

Taking guests upon a tour of the new

Dealing with other economic questions, plans to give land to poor farmers - with a particular focus on ethnic groups and women - were unveiled, along with the intention to create 10,000 jobs a year. Similarly, the speech highlighted his intention to present a bill to Congress, putting into practice a scheme giving debt relief to working Hondurans.

The President further announced plans for external commerce, affirming that new markets will be opened to Honduran products. "Our businesses will also be favored by the Free Trade Agreements we will sign with Chile, Canada and United States," he added.

Addressing the subject of corruption, the President stated "corrupt people will no longer be adulated or admired." Returning to this theme later on in his speech, Maduro reiterated his decision to punish the culprits involved in recent bank liquidations, though he didn't name them directly. "I won't rest until those implicated are behind bars and the state has recovered its resources" which were spent coping with the resulting financial instability.

Other policies unveiled include a reduction in the age at which teenagers can be prosecuted as adults, along with a pledge to fight to end the deaths of young people. Also promised was an increase in telephone network coverage, with a new cellular phone company and 100,000 extra lines.

"The year 2002 will go down in history as the year in which the national transformation project was begun," said the President, summing up his intentions and achievements across the board.

The policies announced by the President do not differ all that much from those promised during his election campaign in 2001. Well received by even some Liberal Party activists that Honduras This Week spoke to, some of Maduro's disclosures had an unmistakable populist air about them, such as repeated exhortations to end "the cancer of corruption." Skeptics have questioned why Maduro needs to reiterate his strategies for his presidency only a year after being elected. His decreasing approval ratings are considered to play some part in the timing, as is his need to outmaneuver a Congress in which he has no natural majority. Appealing directly to the public, over the heads of even his National Party - which has failed to unify behind him - Maduro seems to be preparing to push through specific domestic reforms. Though Honduran law precludes a second term in the Casa Presidential, should Maduro's program be successful, and more importantly - popular, this will provide a boost to his chances of anointing his own successor as National Party candidate for President. Mindful of the internal problems that kept the Liberal Party from power at the turn of the last decade, Maduro's strategy will also be aimed at fighting the next election itself.

Reservoir of problems tackled by the United

home, Casa Alianza residents and workers showed off the decor of light pastel colors. Over and above the furnishings, the girls who have been so mistreated earlier in their lives seemed proud to finally have a place they can call their own. Most of them have never had the opportunity to play simple games with dolls or pretend houses. Finally being given these opportunities will increasingly aid their rehabilitation into society. Indeed, the new building is accompanied by a program designed to strengthen their personal and academic development and re-adjust to civilization.

Week in Review

Bones found could be those of Jesuit Priest Guadalupe Carney.

Two sets of bones were uncovered in a common grave in the jungle region of Patuca on Monday. They have now been taken to Tegucigalpa so that the director of forensic medicine can examine them in order to verify if they belong to the American Priest James Francis, better known as Father Guadalupe. The priest, believed to have been murdered by the police authorities, has been missing since 1983, and is just one of 185 people officially listed as missing after the Honduran campaign against the leftists in the 1980s. – El Heraldo

New measures to tackle gang culture

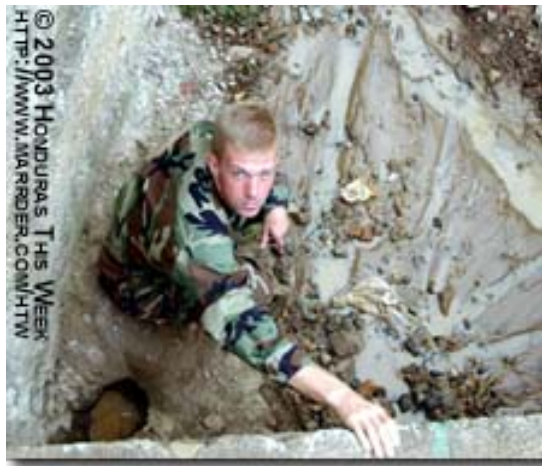
New Legislation for combating social ills was proposed this week by former president of congress, Rafael Pineda Ponce, whose laws would be aimed specifically at gang culture. Under the proposals, 100,000 lempiras would be set aside for a comprehensive rehabilitation program. President

States army

Capt. James Galloway gets dirty as he determines the best way to fix the drainage infrastructure.

By MASTER SGT. G. A. VOLB
Special to Honduras This Week

COMAYAGUA — Tucked away along the back streets of Comayagua's Barrio Abajo is a drainage problem causing local citizens a lot of grief. Time and an ever-increasing population have decimated the current infrastructure, originally built to take rainwater away from residential areas much smaller than they are today. The problem has become so sensitive that the governor of the city, via the Civil Affairs Office here, requested Joint Task Force Bravo's help in trying to rectify it.



"It's a small piece of a larger problem," said Lt. Col. Frank Matheson, civil affairs director. "The drainage is so bad that the water backs up some three to four feet deep in the yards of those living nearby. Of course, this makes for drowning hazards as well as areas ripe for diseases such as malaria and dengue."

The residents of the Barrio know all too well the threats that come with stagnant water resulting from the lack of drainage. "For the past 20 years our back yard has become a swimming pool," said Reynaldo Lanza, 65, the father-in-law of one affected family.

"We have to clean up the trash and try to keep the water flowing, but during the rainy season it's nearly impossible." Rainy season in Honduras lasts from May to July, plus September and October.

Matheson said Lanza pointed out several trouble spots nearby that contributed to the drainage problem and that their initial efforts were, hopefully, just the beginning.

"It's been a high Dengue fever area in the past," he said. "In fact, members of a family across the way have contracted Dengue – even the hemorrhagic version."

Together with the support of base contractor PAE and Army engineers, the first step towards a viable drainage system took place January 15. "We replaced older, smaller pipes, with a larger version," said Army Capt. James Galloway, an Army engineer at JTF-Bravo. "Previously there were two different sizes of pipe which caused a backup – in this case the larger pipe was feeding into a smaller one."

The project, which took a little more than a day to complete, helps provide much needed relief from the drainage problem as the

Ricardo Maduro also supported the far-reaching proposals, claiming that the new legislation would affect some 31,000 gang members. Maduro said that his government was taking the huge number of young people involved with gangs very seriously and that the focus of their scrutiny would be on juveniles. He asked for the help and co-operation from all sectors of society to successfully implement the proposals. – El Heraldo

Son of a cattle-raiser kidnapped

Carlos Medina, 22, was kidnapped on Tuesday while playing pool with his friends in the community of Cañaverl. Six men entered wearing military uniforms and carrying large rifles. They claimed to be from the police, and ordered everyone to turn their backs to the wall before hitting a boy in the face and stealing his mobile phone. They then went straight to the son of Teodoro Medina, grabbed him and threw him into a pickup truck without a licence plate before they drove away. – La Tribuna

The National Party accused of presenting false information

The leader of the Liberal party has called upon the Nationalist government to revise their policies set to resolve the nation's problems. The Liberal members claimed that 2001 was a "lost year," above all because Maduro has not fulfilled the promises he made to combat insecurity, decrease unemployment levels and poverty, improve the education system and to reactivate the economy. The lempira has devalued between four and seven percent every month and the economic activity has grown two percent less than the 3.5 percent programmed. The government also did not fulfil its promise to stabilize prices of the basic shopping basket which went up from

engineers scout out other possible projects.

Congress reviews decree creating Garifuna Cultural Center

The National Folkloric Garifuna Ballet pose offer a group shot.



By IXCHEL GRANADA

TEGUCIGALPA - The Garifuna ethnic group sought Congressional support this week while presenting a proposal for additional responsibilities under the Cultural Center Decree number 18-2001. The center itself has not yet been built following a decree on April 2, 2001 assuring federal support for its construction. The center will serve as a meeting place for educational purposes, cultural exchange and as a source of national pride in indigenous and ethnic groups alike.

The recent Decree states that the artistic, cultural and historical richness which the Garifuna represent are a source of anthropological and national pride and should continue to be protected and supported through both financial and educational means. The building will be located in the nation's capital and will respond to all Garifuna people whose primary jurisdiction lies along the Atlantic coast and the smaller populations which have immigrated to the interior of the country.

Article Four states, "The Center holds the objective to defend, explore, investigate, conserve and share Garifuna culture and values on a national and global scale."

Long-term objectives include: interpretation of Garifuna culture within a social and cultural context whose primary goals are meeting the needs and potential demands of the community; the creation of an inventory of the cultural wealth held by Garifuna. Achieve a reaffirmation and accord concerning Garifuna identity, presenting a history of the African, Caribbean and indigenous language influences; and achieve coordination among institutions whose interests include minority development, economic and community development which will benefit Honduras minority groups, among which include the Garifuna.

It also aims to assure and consolidate files and ethno-historical documents, which will assist the State in recognizing the importance of the cultural richness, which the Garifuna represent.

The administrative components will be made up of the following:

3,400 to 3,455 lempiras in the first six months of this present government. – El Herald



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Traditional Garifuna dances, Linguistic Academic, National Folkloric Garifuna Ballet, Ethno-linguistic History; and Documents, Files and Library containing pertinent information

The Center will be used to represent the Honduran Government and its efforts to continue expanding its representation through the minority community.

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