

Lat/Am

Lula faces new grilling: Brazil's once hugely popular president Luis Inacio Lula da Silva faces a new grilling Wednesday by the country's chief anti-corruption judge, Sergio Moro, in a case that could decide whether Lula can return to power.

Lula, who is a frontrunner in the October 2018 presidential election despite multiple corruption charges, will be questioned by Moro in the southern city of Curitiba.

The testimony is part of 71-year-old Lula's trial for alleged bribe taking from the scandal-plagued Odebrecht construction giant. He is already a defendant in four other corruption trials.

And in July, Moro sentenced Lula to 9.5 years prison after being convicted in a sixth trial of receiving a seaside apartment from the OAS construction company in return for help obtaining lucrative contracts with the Petrobras oil company.

Lula, the founder of Brazil's leftist Workers' Party, is free pending appeal of that sentence and hopes to string out or defeat the other cases so that he can run for a third term next year.

But problems are mounting for the man whose 2003-2010 presidency made him Latin America's new leftist giant. (AFP)

Copter carrying aid 'down': Civil defense officials say a Russian-built military



A woman walks past pictures of an old car bomb attack by the Shining Path terrorist group, during a ceremony commemorating 25 years of the capture of Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman, outside the National Palace in Lima, Peru on Sept 12. (AP)

helicopter went down Tuesday while carrying relief aid to a quake-ravaged part of Mexico.

The governor of the southern state of Chiapas wrote in his Twitter account that the Mi-17 transport helicopter was heading to the Chiapas town of Jaltenango when it went down. Gov Manuel Velasco didn't give any details on injuries.

But the state's civil defense director told the Milenio television network that seven military personnel and one civil defense worker aboard the craft had made contact with rescue workers and said some had been injured. (AP)

Shining Path leaders no show: A Peruvian court trying Shining Path leader Abimael Guzman and other members of his group over a deadly 1992 bombing in Lima adjourned Tuesday after he failed to show up.

The court hearing coincided with the 25th anniversary of the capture of Guzman, who is serving a life sentence for terrorism offenses.

But it quickly adjourned when it became clear Guzman and other Shining Path leaders on trial had not been transferred to the court from prison. (AFP)

Venezuela

Breakthrough in political standoff

Maduro accepts talks with opposition

CARACAS, Sept 13, (AFP): Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Tuesday his government was prepared to meet the opposition for talks, offering a glimpse of a breakthrough in a political standoff marked by months of deadly protests.

Maduro made the surprise announcement in a televised cabinet meeting in Caracas.

He told his ministers he would accept to undertake talks brokered by Dominican Republic President Danilo Medina and ex-Spanish premier Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

"Zapatero and President Medina know very well that I have been a promoter of this dialogue and I accept this new day of dialogue," Maduro said.

Maduro appointed influential Caracas politician Jorge Rodriguez as his representative at the talks, and said he would leave

for the Dominican Republic "in the next few hours."

The opposition announced in turn that it would hold an exploratory meeting on Wednesday with the Dominican president.

However, it insisted it did not mean it was the beginning of formal talks with the government.

"The time for symbolic gestures is over," the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable said.

"To enter into serious negotiation, we demand immediate actions that demonstrate a real willingness to resolve the national problems and not to win time," it said.

Oil-rich Venezuela is facing a growing economic crisis that has caused shortages of food and medicine as it faces the prospect of default to its Russian and Chinese creditors.

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