



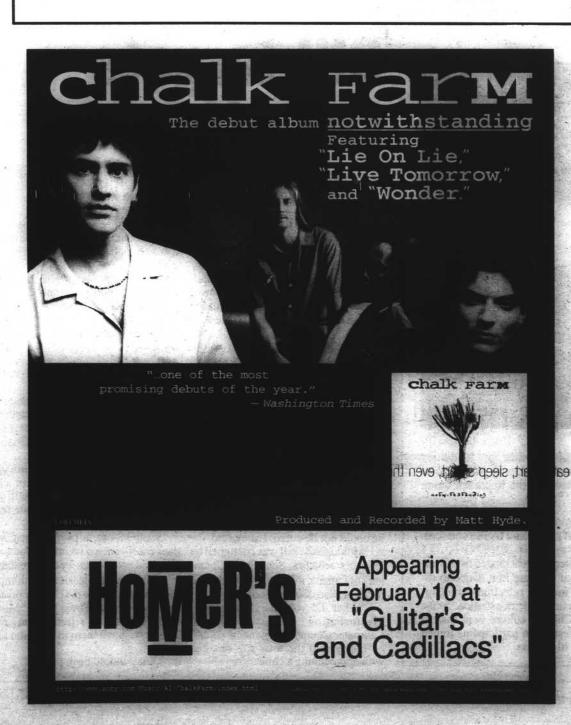
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Ecuador's Congress replaces 'El Loco'

Military-backed move makes Rosalia Arteaga the nation's first female president.

QUITO, Ecuador (AP) — Congress named Vice President Rosalia Arteaga as Ecuador's president early Sunday, in a military-backed move that replaced deposed chief executive Abdala "El Loco" Bucaram.

There were no more official details on the action, but congressional sources told reporters that the agreement called for Arteaga to resign in a few days and for congressional leader Fabian Alarcon to assume the post.

The unanimous vote marked a likely end to a governing crisis that emerged when Bucaram was ousted by Congress on Thursday. He had refused to accept the decision. Both Alarcon and Arteaga also contended for the office and Ecuadoreans turned to the armed forces — Ecuador's final arbiter of power — to resolve the conflict.

Arteaga, 40, was shown on national television on the floor of Congress at 4 a.m. Sunday accepting the new post, making her Ecuador's first female chief executive.

The new president said she had waged "a very important struggle against corruption," and urged political reconciliation among opposing factions.

"The armed forces were prudent,

patriotic and honest in dealing with the crisis. They are an example to Latin America," she said.

Her appointment came after Bucaram conceded for the first time earlier Sunday that he had been left without power.

"Unfortunately, I couldn't finish my term, but let's see if the next government will be able to fulfill the promises I made to increase the salaries of workers and the military by 25 percent," said Bucaram.

The congressional sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the agreement called for Alarcon to call new presidential elections within a year. It was not immediately clear how long Arteaga would remain president or why Congress took the route of first naming her to the job.

Congress leaders first discussed the plan with the military command, the congressional sources said, and then the leaders convened a closed-door meeting of the legislature in the early hours Sunday.

In dismissing Bucaram on Thursday, Congress named Alarcon as interim president. But that designation was ignored by both Bucaram and Arteaga.

In its vote, Congress accused Bucaram of suffering from "mental incapacity." His congressional foes accused him of worsening the country's economic ills with his erratic behavior and political showboating.



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Managing Editor: Paula Lavigne
Associate Joshua Gillin
News Editors: Chad Lorenz
Night Editor Anne Hjersman
Opinion Editor: Anthony Nguyen

FAX NUMBER: 472-1761

The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during summer sessions.

Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling 472-2588. The public has access to the Publications Board.

Subscription price is \$55 for one year.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 34, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448. Second-class postage paid at Lincoln, Neb.

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