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Colombian Government Seeks \$78 Million In Foreign Loans To Finance National Hospital Program

by Barbara Khol

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On Oct. 1, the government authorized the Health and Finance ministries to seek \$78 million in foreign loans to finance the nation's national hospital plan. The four-year medical facility and hospital upgrade program is expected to cost about \$1 billion. Program objective is to modernize equipment and improve hospital services to provide adequate medical care for low-income persons. Meanwhile, the Health Ministry has launched a preventive program targeting 85% of the population, thereby reducing the demand for hospital care. At present, health care providers are dealing with a cholera epidemic, which has thus far affected over 8,000 people. An estimated 3,000 cholera victims have been hospitalized, and the death toll is in the hundreds. On Oct. 7, Ana Milena de Gaviria (president's spouse) told reporters that the US-based Latin American Foundation for Humanitarian Development had donated \$1 million worth of equipment to 33 hospitals and clinics. The equipment had been stored underground in the US for use in the event of military conflict. (Basic data from Inter Press Service, 10/01/91; Agence France-Presse, 10/07/91)

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