

Mexican President Has Spent Almost \$1 Billion in Publicity



Mexico City, June 23 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A new report published by Forbes magazine on Sunday revealed Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto has spent almost \$1 billion in publicity during his three years in power.

Out of the total of 11.2 billion Mexican pesos (\$730 million), one-third has been destined to TV networks -- which critics believe would benefit Televisa, the country's largest station which backed Peña Nieto during the last general elections.

The report comes amid the announcement that the government will make significant cuts on government spending for 2016. The Mexican parliament will have to discuss the budget proposal once the newly elected lawmakers take their seats in September this year.

Finance Minister Luis Videgaray has announced that next year's budget will be cut by over eight percent. The Finance Ministry has also ordered cuts are in vital areas such as healthcare, research and culture.

The budget of health and research centers was cut by 1.4 billion Mexican pesos (some \$94.5 million) while funds destined for promoting culture will be cut by almost 4 billion Mexican pesos (some \$260 million).

However, the ministry expanded spending for the Presidency by over 18 percent in comparison with last year's budget. Despite the huge investment in publicity, the most recent poll showed Peña Nieto's image had only improved in three points in comparison to last year. Still less than 50 percent of the population approves his government's performance. Earlier this year, experts criticized the Nieto administration's spending, saying the federal government is trying to control the media – an issue that has become more urgent for the Mexican president as he faces consistently low approval ratings.

The Mexican government has been highly criticized for its handling of the case of the 43 missing students from Ayotzinapa, and another scandal involving a multi-million dollar home that the president almost purchased but postponed payment after negative public reactions. According to an earlier report, spending on advertising rose sharply in the last month of 2014 amid these scandals.

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