

Campbell joins Chavez at political rally

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CARACAS, Venezuela --

Supermodel Naomi Campbell left the glitz and bright lights of the fashion world behind Wednesday and joined Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez at a political rally and toured government-funded housing projects.

Chavez warmly greeted Campbell, planting a kiss on her hand as she arrived at a rally promoting state programs for single mothers in a long white dress.

"I've been here for 24 hours and I'm amazed to see the love and encouragement for the social programs that you have here for women and children in Venezuela," the British fashion model said.

After calling Campbell "a very special woman," Chavez blasted President Bush for maintaining Washington's 46-year trade embargo against Cuba.

Rocky relations between Caracas and Washington could improve, Chavez said, if Americans elect a leader whose foreign policies don't resemble those set by Bush.

"Hopefully, a U.S. president with whom it's possible to talk, converse and discuss the world's problems will come along," Chavez said.

Chavez - a close ally of Cuban leader Fidel Castro - has repeatedly clashed with Washington since taking office in 1999.

Campbell praised Chavez's health and education programs after a four-hour meeting Tuesday at the presidential palace, where she interviewed Chavez for an unspecified publication.

The hot-tempered model, who in January pled guilty to assaulting her maid in New York, is the latest foreign celebrity to visit Venezuela's socialist leader.

Chavez met last month with American actor Kevin Spacey. Hollywood stars Sean Penn, Danny Glover and Harry Belafonte have also made recent trips.