

# After Setback, Chávez Makes the Clocks Fall Behind

The New York Times  
December 10, 2007

CARACAS, [Venezuela](#), Dec. 9 — Venezuelans turned their clocks back half an hour on Sunday, putting them in the company of people in other nations that offset time in half-hour increments from Greenwich Mean Time, like Afghanistan, India, Iran and Myanmar.

“This is a public health measure that benefits the health of Venezuelan men and women and, above all, boys and girls,” the government’s official news agency said.

The time change, which will remain in effect year-round, was initially announced in August, but confusion ensued as to whether clocks would be moved ahead or behind. Senior officials here recently confirmed that clocks would be turned back 30 minutes, arguing that exposing citizens to more sunlight would improve their metabolism.

Venezuela will now be in its own time zone, only a half-hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

The change is part of a set of announcements in recent days showing that President [Hugo Chávez](#) is pressing ahead with policy initiatives despite losing a referendum last week over constitutional reforms aimed at transforming Venezuela into a socialist state.

For instance, Mr. Chávez wrapped up a visit over the weekend with President [Aleksandr G. Lukashenko](#) of Belarus in which the two men pledged military cooperation. Mr. Chávez defended Mr. Lukashenko, whose rule has been criticized by human rights groups over his failure to hold fair elections, from claims that he is a “dictator.”

Mr. Chávez also traveled to Buenos Aires on Sunday to inaugurate the Bank of the South, a project largely backed by Venezuela as an alternative to the [World Bank](#). And in Caracas, a Vietnamese delegation prepared to unveil a symbol fitting of Mr. Chávez’s anti-imperialist fervor: a statue of the Vietnamese revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh. The statue is to go up Monday on a major thoroughfare here next to busts of other revolutionaries like [Che Guevara](#).