

Cuban asks Obama, Google chief for free Internet

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Cuban folk star Silvio Rodriguez, pictured in 2010, urged US President Barack Obama and Google CEO Eric Schmidt on Monday to provide free Internet to developing countries.

Cuban folk star Silvio Rodriguez urged US President Barack Obama and Google CEO Eric Schmidt on Monday to provide free Internet to developing countries.

"It's a simple proposal: the world is very unequal, and a lot of pain could be avoided with action that could turn into a worldwide qualitative step forward," Rodriguez said in a blog post at segundacita.blogspot.com.

"I am sure that it is something within reach of privileged minds (and budgets).

"So you owners of the Internet and President Obama: build a satellite network to give free Internet to the developing world," wrote the 63-year-old singer.

Earlier this month, the Americas' only communist government hailed a new undersea fiber optic cable connecting it to socialist ally Venezuela as a blow to the decades-old US embargo.

Despite the revamped access, authorities say Internet use will be limited to "social" purposes and that priority would be given to a limited set of users in universities and other educational institutions.

Deputy Minister of Information Jorge Luis Perdomo insisted earlier this month that "there is no political obstacle" to Internet access in Cuba.

But the opposition and dissidents charge the government is imposing ideological restrictions that aim to maintain authorities' control on sources of information and expression.

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