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Government to Award 16 Port Management Concessions By September

by LADB Staff

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During March, the Communications and Transportation Secretariat (Secretaria de Comunicaciones y Transporte, SCT) announced that bids for private management of 16 major Pacific and Gulf of Mexico seaports will be awarded by September. The privatization of port management services is part of a plan by President Carlos Salinas de Gortari's administration to eliminate the state port agency (Puertos Mexicanos, PM) during 1994. The PM functions would be transferred entirely to the different private management units hired at each port.

According to the National Maritime Transportation Industry Chamber (Camara Nacional de la Industria del Transporte Maritimo), management concessions will be announced first at three ports: Veracruz; Puerto Madero (Chiapas state); and Manzanillo (Colima state). Jaime Corredor, coordinator of the SCT's Ports and Merchant Marine Unit (Unidad de Puertos y Marina Mercante), told reporters that the PM will remain in existence for the next several months to guarantee that services are provided to port users until the new private management units are fully in place.

Corredor said the government has allocated about 75 million nuevo pesos (US\$22.4 million) to compensate workers who lose their jobs as a result of the privatization of ports, although he said most of the workers will probably be hired back by private companies taking the place of the port entities that will be eliminated.

Corredor estimated that Mexican ports will handle about 30.5 million metric tons of cargo in 1994. In contrast Mexican ports handled 28.7 million MT of cargo in 1993, a slight decline from the 29.8 million MT in 1992. The statistics do not include shipments of salt, petroleum, and gypsum, which are handled at specialized terminals.

Corredor said private companies have projected expenditures of 300 million nuevo pesos (US\$89.4 million) over the next two years at the ports of Ensenada (Baja California), Guaymas (Sonora), Topolobampo (Sinaloa), Manzanillo (Colima), Coatzacoalcos (Veracruz), Progreso (Yucatan), Mazatlan (Sinaloa), and Zihuatanejo (Guerrero). According to a report produced by Banamex-Accival, the most promising terminals in terms of profit are Guaymas and Lazaro Cardenas (Michoacan), Manzanillo (Colima), and Salina Cruz (Oaxaca) on the Pacific Ocean; and Veracruz, Coatzacoalcos, and Tuxpan (Veracruz), Tampico (Tamaulipas), Altamira (Tamaulipas), and on the Gulf of Mexico. These ports account for 89% of Mexico's total sea-based cargo.

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