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## Cities Continue to Attract Heavy Migration

by LADB Staff

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Population growth in Mexico's largest urban areas since the early 1990s has been highest in cities with a heavy industrial base, particularly those with automobile and maquiladora industries. A study published by Grupo Financiero Bancomer (GFB) in early February said Ciudad Juarez and Tijuana have become the sixth and seventh urban areas in Mexico to reach 1 million or more inhabitants. Both cities have a large number of maquiladora plants.

The other million-inhabitant cities are Mexico City, Guadalajara, Monterrey, Leon, and Puebla. The study said population growth was also very high in the metropolitan areas of Queretaro, Cuernavaca, Toluca, Hermosillo, and Saltillo, all of which are home to automobile- assembly plants or auto-parts factories.

In a related study, researchers at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico (UNAM) said the Mexican population appears to be concentrating in one huge industrial belt in central Mexico, stretching from Nuevo Laredo and Monterrey in the northeast to Guadalajara in the west and Villahermosa and Veracruz in the southeast. The area includes metropolitan Mexico City, Queretaro, San Luis Potosi, Aguascalientes, and Puebla.

The UNAM researchers said this region, which accounts for 80% of Mexico's GDP, comprises several key industries such as manufacturing, fisheries, agriculture, and mining. Rapid growth of industry in that region and in cities near the US-Mexico border has been accompanied by massive migration to the cities. That, in turn, is creating strong competition for local financial and natural resources, such as water.

The GFB study said cities are now home to 57% of Mexico's population, compared with 31% in 1990. "The rapid population growth is turning many cities into major metropolitan areas within a short period of time," said the study.

### *Population growth taxes city resources*

A study released by the government-affiliated Comision Nacional de Poblacion y Vivienda (CONAPO) cited Mexico City, Monterrey, Guadalajara, and Puebla, as "red-flag" cities, with difficulties meeting citizens' needs. CONAPO researcher Rosa Maria Rubalcava said the red flags mean the problem could get out of hand unless steps are taken to control migration flows. "The local, state, and federal governments must work together to find a solution," said Rubalcava.

President Ernesto Zedillo addressed the problem at the second annual World Forum on Habitat in Cancun in late January. "Rapid population growth is creating major risks for environmental balance and social development," Zedillo told forum participants from 70 countries. He said his administration is committed to providing the resources necessary for urban growth. "We have the

means to promote orderly growth in urban areas, but we must double our efforts to provide basic services to these communities."

During 1998 budget negotiations with the Chamber of Deputies and Senate, the administration agreed to a proposal from the center-right Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) for increased funding and greater autonomy for municipal governments (see SourceMex, 12/17/97).

### *State, municipal governments competing for resources*

However, the federal government encountered opposition to its method of resource allocation. In late January, Puebla Gov. Manuel Bartlett Diaz of the PRI pushed through a plan in the PRI-controlled state legislature to change the formula for appropriating federal funds. The plan would distribute funds based on municipal need rather than population.

Bartlett's plan angered PAN legislators, who said the cities with larger populations have a greater need for the funds (see SourceMex, 02/11/98). The PAN and the center-left Partido de la Revolucion Democratica (PRD) plan to bring the issue before the Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nacion (SCJN). The weekly news magazine Proceso said the SCJN will face a new constitutional issue, which could have a profound impact on future relations between the federal government and state and municipal governments.

PAN leaders say they face a similar situation in Tamaulipas and Coahuila states, where PRI governors have proposed plans similar to the one in Puebla. In response, the PRI has accused PAN Gov. Vicente Fox Quesada of Guanajuato of taking similar "authoritarian" decisions with federal funds. In Mexico City, PRD Mayor Cuauhtemoc Cardenas must work with a budget that relies heavily on federal allocations. While Cardenas enjoys a PRD-dominated state legislature, the PRI-controlled executive branch provides about one-third of the city's budget.

Among other things, Cardenas and PRD members of the Asamblea Legislativa del Distrito Federal (ALDF) have placed a high priority on reducing the severe housing deficit in Mexico City. In late January, Cardenas pledged to construct 40,000 low-income housing units over the next three years.

While population growth in Mexico City proper has slowed, surrounding areas continue to boom. Over the past several years, many companies have located plants in Hidalgo and Mexico states. The GFB report said eleven new municipalities have been added to the metropolitan Mexico City area since 1990, which now has a population of about 22 million. The metropolitan area now comprises the Federal District, 37 municipalities in Mexico state, and one in Hidalgo state. (Sources: The New York Times, 12/05/97; La Jornada, 01/19/98; Novedades, 01/28/98; Notimex, 01/28/98, 01/29/98; El Universal, 01/30/98; El Financiero International, 02/02/98; Excelsior, 02/03/98, 02/04/98; Proceso, 02/15/98)

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