

# EL OBSERVADOR

## Mexico to Host World Water Summit

Focus on restoring health, dignity to people

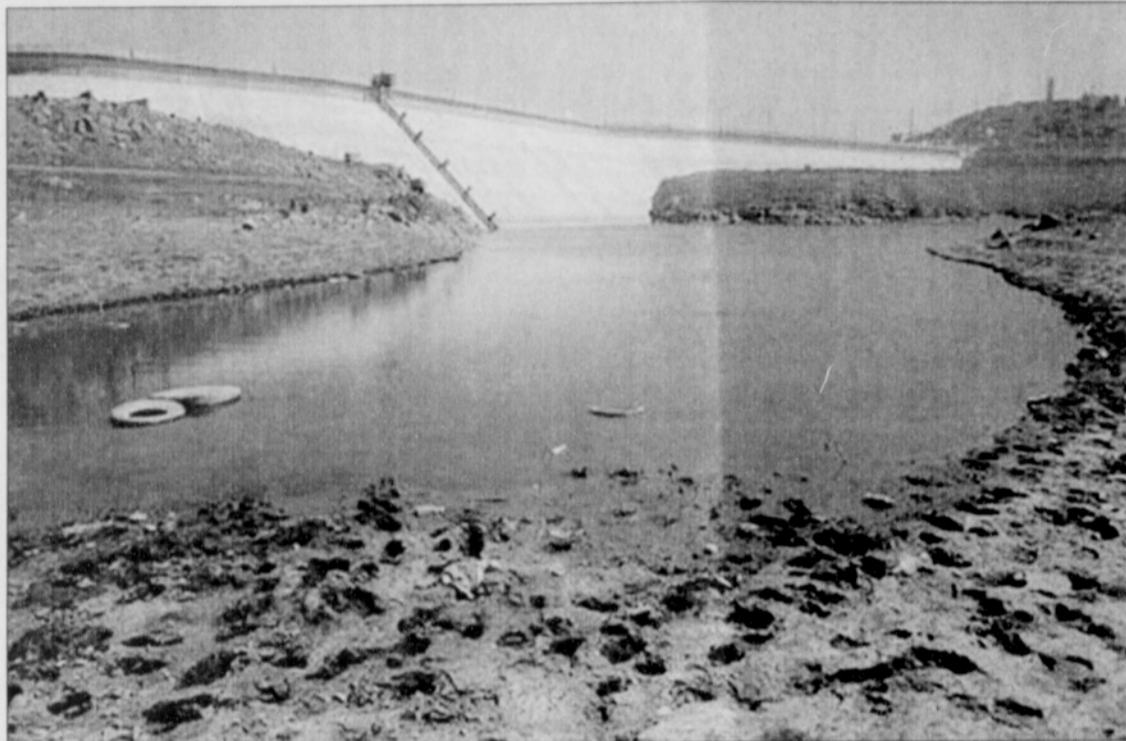
Mexico will host the fourth World Water Forum in 2006, President Vicente Fox said Monday, bringing the weeklong meeting on water scarcity to the Americas for the first time.

The 2006 summit will focus on providing clean water and sanitation to the world's poor - a major problem in relatively water-rich Latin America.

"Water is the great theme of the 21st century. It is our common future," Fox said. "In Mexico, water is a matter of national security."

Tap water is considered unsafe to drink throughout much of Mexico, and bottled water is consumed by much of the population that can afford it. Tourists are consistently warned to not drink tap water because it can cause digestive problems.

A lack of access to sanitation is the most pressing water problem worldwide, said William Cosgrove, president of the World Water Council.



Cow tracks lead up to the water's edge on a section of the Rodriguez dam reservoir in Tijuana, Mexico. Drought and heavy water use has lowered the reservoir to critical levels. (AP photo)

"It's a fundamental issue because it affects the health of people and their dignity," said Cosgrove, noting that more than half the world's population is living without access to basic sanitation. The problem could get worse.

According to a recent U.N. report, as many as 4 billion people could face water shortages by 2025.

Rapid population growth and climate changes are feeding the accelerating crisis that could bring water shortages to 60 countries by the middle of the century if action is

not taken, according to the report.

The U.N. Children's Fund reported Friday that diarrhea diseases - which spread more rapidly in areas without sanitation or where safe water is unavailable - now claim the lives of about 5,000 children per day.

## Asian and Hispanic Populations Boom

Minorities to compose half of Americans in 2050

president of research for the National Council of La Raza, the nation's largest advocacy group for Hispanics.

"But in terms of the message, it's the same story on how we need to

The nation's Asian and Hispanic populations will roughly triple in size by mid-century, when minority groups overall will be nearly equal in number with whites, the Census Bureau says.

Whites, now about 69 percent of the population, would comprise 50.1 percent of U.S. residents by 2050, bureau projections released last week show.

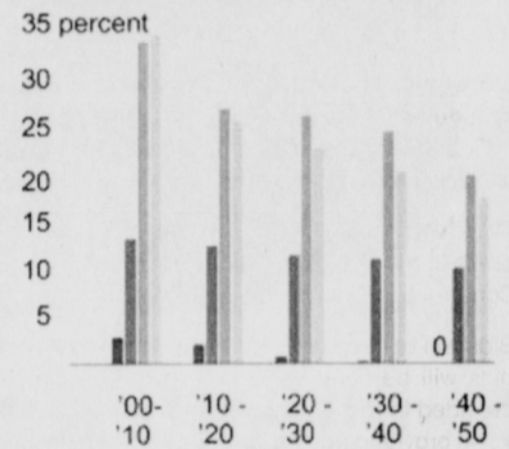
Immigration should continue to play a key role in sparking the explosive growth among Asians and especially Hispanics, said Greg Spencer, a demographer at the Census Bureau.

### Hispanic population could triple by 2050

The Hispanic and Asian population could triple by 2050 nationwide, according to projections by the Census Bureau.

White Black (Non-Hispanic) Asian Hispanic

Percent change of the population, by race and origin



SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau AP

These demographic shifts will occur as the national population balloons to 420 million at mid-century, rising nearly 50 percent from 2000. Americans will getabitgray, too, by 2050 - nearly 21 percent of residents will be age 65 or older, compared with 12 percent now.

The latest estimates update long-predicted trends, though race and ethnic changes are occurring sooner because of higher-than-expected immigration rates.

"These kind of data pushes us to think about the country in different ways, and how we define America," said Sonia Perez, vice

focus on investments in these populations" such as reducing disparities in education and health care, Perez said.

The Asian population is expected to grow 213 percent to 33 million by 2050. Hispanics will increase their ranks by 188 percent to 102.6 million, or roughly one-quarter of the population.

The black population would see a 71 percent increase to 61 million, remaining the second-largest minority.

Meanwhile, the white population would grow just 7 percent to 210 million.

## Workers Send \$14 Billion Home

(AP)—Mexicans will receive an estimated \$14.5 billion this year from countrymen working in the United States, a figure that rivals the nation's most important sources of foreign income, according to a new study.

The study by the Inter-American Development Bank and Pew Hispanic Center found that official estimates overlook money shipped home by mail or carried by migrants and messengers.

It found that 18 percent of Mexico's population currently receives regular income from abroad.

"For a big country, it's enormous," said Donald Terry of the Inter-American Development Bank.

## Fox Proposes Election Reforms

(AP)—President Vicente Fox and opposition lawmakers delivered competing election-reform proposals to Congress on Monday, each citing the need to cut election costs and renew confidence in a campaign finance system shaken by scandal.

Both proposals would shorten the campaign season for presidential candidates to 90 days and limit the amount of money they can spend. The dates for federal, state and local elections would be consolidated.

The Fox administration contends its plan would unlock information about campaign finances and break the legislative deadlock



Mexican President Vicente Fox

that grips Mexico during extended election seasons.

"The purposes is to combat corruption, create transparency in the use of resources, and to increase accountability," the president said Monday.

He said his plan "also would decrease the cost of the democracy

and facilitate legislative agreements."

Lawmakers from the Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI, which Fox unseated in 2000, and the leftist Democratic Revolution Party are backing an election-reform proposal that would place new restrictions on radio and

television advertising. Last year, opposition lawmakers accused Fox of using government-reserved airtime to promote the achievements of his administration during the run-up to mid-term elections - a common practice of the PRI during its 1929-2000 reign.

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