

Mexico's political scene for almost 70 years. There are two major opposition parties, the *Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD)*, Democratic Revolutionary Party, and the *Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN)*, National Action Party.

The *PRI*'s firm grip on power since its inception in 1929, is attributed mainly to its ability to maintain favour with influential Mexicans. In recent years, the party's notorious electoral practices have come under scrutiny by a disaffected populace no longer willing to accept the overwhelming majority of *PRI* candidates. Calls for electoral reform became more vocal following the questionable victory of Carlos Salinas de Gortari in 1988. Nonetheless, the *PRI* managed to maintain its hold on power with the 1994 election of Ernesto Zedillo. That election was tainted by the assassination of *PRI* candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio. President Zedillo has promised broad political reforms, and the role of the opposition parties in the Chamber of Deputies has gradually begun to expand.

The *PAN* has traditionally been the main opposition, winning support from conservative Catholic elements, traditional landed families and vested business interests. It has a strong backing in some regions, including Chihuahua, Baja California and the Yucatán. The *PRD* is the strongest party to the left of the *PRI*. Although its impressive showing in the 1988 election was not repeated in 1994, the party remains a significant force in some regions.

DOING BUSINESS IN MEXICO

Time and Business Hours

Most of Mexico is on Central Standard Time (GMT-6), although several states in the northwest are

on Mountain Standard Time. Baja California Norte is on Pacific Standard Time.

Businesses are usually open from 09:00 to 14:00; they close for siesta, then reopen from 16:00 until 19:00 Monday to Friday. In some of the hotter regions of the country, mid-day closures may last from 13:00 until 16:00, with the evening closure delayed until 20:00. Banks are generally open from 09:00 to 13:30, Monday to Friday.

Public Holidays

The following is a list of public holidays recognized throughout Mexico. Banks, post offices and government offices are closed most of these days.

January 1	New Year's Day
February 5	Constitution Day
March 21	Birthday of President Benito Juárez
March or April	Holy Week — Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday
May 1	Labour Day
May 5	Cinco de Mayo — Battle of Puebla against the French
September 16	Día de la Independencia — Mexican Independence Day
October 12	Día de la Raza — Columbus Day
November 2	All Souls' Day
November 20	Anniversary of the Mexican Revolution of 1910
December 12	Día de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe — Our Lady of Guadalupe
December 25	Christmas Day

Business Visitors and Work Permits

Access to Mexico for business purposes has been simplified under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Four different categories of visitors are recognized:

- short-term business visitors;
- professionals visiting for longer terms;
- intra-company transferees, who perform specialized management or executive functions; and

- traders and investors, who conduct trade in goods and services.

Each category has specific qualifying criteria which should be considered before leaving Canada. In most cases, persons wishing to visit for the purpose of establishing business ties with Mexico will qualify as business visitors. The following general criteria apply to business visitors entering any of the NAFTA countries:

- a citizen of a member country;
- seeking entry for business purposes;
- the proposed business activity is international in scope;
- no intention of entering the local labour market;

- the primary source of remuneration is outside the country of proposed entry;
- the principal place of business and the accrual of profits remain outside the country of proposed entry; and
- meet existing immigration requirements for temporary entry.

These requirements can best be satisfied by presenting a letter setting out all the circumstances of the business trip to an immigration officer at the point of entry.