

Miranda Intelligence – Public Affairs Chatter

Plan B: Cutting Costs Without Cutting the System

President Claudia Sheinbaum has formally unveiled and sent to the Senate her long-anticipated “Plan B” electoral reform, confirming a scaled-down package centred on austerity and administrative changes rather than structural transformation. The initiative, presented alongside Interior Minister Rosa Icela Rodríguez, combines constitutional amendments and secondary legislation with a stated goal of reducing “privileges and excesses” in public office.

Key measures include capping the size and budgets of local congresses and municipal councils, limiting salaries of electoral officials to below that of the president, tightening party transparency and campaign oversight, and introducing earlier electoral vote counts. The proposal also clarifies that the presidential recall referendum could take place in 2027 or 2028 depending on citizen demand, while confirming that judicial elections will proceed in 2027, albeit with fewer candidates and stricter vetting.

Following Morena’s failure to muster enough votes for a broader constitutional overhaul in the Chamber of Deputies last week, the government moved quickly to recalibrate. An agreement with coalition partners—the Partido Verde (PVEM) and Partido del Trabajo (PT)—allowed Plan B to advance as a diluted but politically viable alternative, preserving the narrative of austerity while avoiding the elements that had fractured the alliance. The communication strategy is clear: the reform is framed primarily as a cost-cutting exercise in local governments, with estimated savings of MXN 4 billion to be redirected to infrastructure and services. Notably absent are the most contentious proposals from the original initiative, including cuts to public financing for political parties and changes to the composition of Congress.

In its final form, Plan B revolves around three principal pillars. The first targets the size and spending of subnational legislatures and municipalities, imposing caps designed to reduce administrative overhead. The second modestly expands mechanisms of direct democracy, including adjustments to Article 35 to allow greater use of referendums, though without fully opening electoral system design to popular vote. The third addresses the timing of the recall referendum, enabling alignment with midterm elections in principle, though without mandating it. Additional provisions introduce stricter fiscal oversight of political parties, real-time financial reporting, and enhanced coordination between the electoral authority and financial intelligence units.

Several institutional questions nevertheless remain open. It is still unclear how these changes may affect the long-term role and autonomy of the National Electoral Institute

(INE), particularly if referendums are used in the future to revisit core elements of electoral governance. While earlier discussions included the possibility of postponing judicial elections until 2028, the final proposal maintains the 2027 timeline, suggesting the government has opted for electoral synchronisation over administrative caution. This leaves unresolved concerns about the capacity of the system to manage an already crowded electoral calendar.

More broadly, the most immediate political takeaway is that Morena has succeeded in maintaining unity with its coalition partners after several days of tense negotiations. The willingness to dilute the reform underscores that coalition cohesion—rather than institutional redesign—has become the administration’s overriding priority ahead of the 2027 midterm elections.

When “Ride-Hailing” Meets Federal Jurisdiction

At the centre of the dispute unfolding at Mexico City International Airport (AICM) lies a technical question: whether ride-hailing arranged through digital platforms should legally be treated as a public passenger transport service. If the answer is yes, it falls under the same federal concession regime as airport taxis. If not, it belongs in the more ambiguous category of privately arranged transportation. For now, the airport’s regulatory framework leans firmly towards the former interpretation. Within the federal airport perimeter, transport services may only be provided by authorised operators registered as “postureros” under the airport’s operating rules—a system that requires formal inclusion in the official registry administered by the airport authority and compliance with concession agreements governing access to airport infrastructure and roadways. In short: no permit, no kerbside access.

In practice, this means the airport has begun moving ride-hailing pick-up points beyond the federal airport zone, a setup already familiar in several U.S. World Cup host cities such as Houston, Seattle and Vancouver. Following a blockade by protesting taxi drivers on March 11, the AICM and federal authorities relocated the meeting points for Uber and DiDi to adjacent public roads rather than the terminal forecourts. At Terminal 1, passengers are now directed to Boulevard Puerto Aéreo near the Terminal Aérea metro station, while Terminal 2 pick-ups have been relocated to Eje 1 Norte Fuerza Aérea Mexicana. Operationally, the measure reduces friction inside the airport perimeter; legally, it preserves the regulatory distinction between authorised concession holders and everyone else.

The legal debate, however, remains unresolved. Uber argues that its platform does not constitute public transport and therefore should not be regulated under the Federal Highways, Bridges and Motor Transport Law—a position it defended through an amparo filed in 2025, which obtained a court order preventing arbitrary vehicle detentions. Federal authorities, through the Ministry of Infrastructure, Communications and Transport (SICT), maintain that the ruling merely restricts enforcement tactics and does not confer permission

for platform services to operate within airport grounds. Until the courts deliver a definitive interpretation, the airport has adopted a compromise: platforms are tolerated, but outside the jurisdictional fence. In regulatory terms, the kerbside remains a licensed space.

For passengers and Mexico's huge tourism industry, however, this compromise is a clear loss. Travellers arriving at AICM (run by Mexico's navy) must now leave the terminal and navigate pick-up points on surrounding public roads, often with limited clarity, added walking time, and greater uncertainty after landing. In practice, that inconvenience will push some users toward the authorised airport taxi system, whose fares are much higher due to bloated concession and union fees, and quality of service is often poor. While the arrangement may reduce immediate conflict inside the airport perimeter, it does so by protecting incumbent interests (the airport operator – namely the navy) in this case and shifting the burden onto consumers, who end up paying either in time, confusion, or money.

President Sheinbaum has defended the arrangement as a matter of fairness: airport taxis pay concession fees, Uber and DiDi do not, so they should not enjoy the same access. But consumer activists retort that instead taxi airport concession fees should be brought down to level the playing field. (Mexican airports are the most profitable in the world, so they can certainly afford it.) They argue the measure to protect airport operators and taxi unions reflects a broader producer-first, consumer-last view of the economy by the Sheinbaum government, also visible in its apparent openness to a Volaris–Viva Aerobus merger, where the risk is reduced competition and higher fares.

Pensions Transparency: The Cost of Public Sector Retirement Made Public

Mexico's Secretariat for Anti-Corruption and Good Governance has published a list of former public officials receiving so-called "golden pensions", reopening a debate that has quietly accompanied the broader push for austerity in the public sector. The disclosure, released under the transparency obligations established in Article 65 of the General Law on Transparency and Access to Public Information, details the identities and pension amounts of former employees across a range of state-owned enterprises and development banks. Among the institutions represented on the list are Pemex, the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), Nacional Financiera, Banobras, Bancomext and the now-defunct Luz y Fuerza del Centro, organisations whose historical retirement schemes often reflected a far more generous fiscal era.

According to official data, between 3,404 and 5,600 former executives and senior officials currently receive pensions exceeding the salary of the sitting president. In some cases, the figures reach extraordinary levels: at least four retirees reportedly collect more than one million pesos per month, three of them linked to the former Luz y Fuerza entity. More broadly, around 67 percent of roughly 14,000 pensioners within certain public institutions

receive benefits above the presidential pay cap, highlighting the scale of the disparity that the government is now seeking to address.

The disclosure comes on the heels of a recently approved constitutional reform establishing that pensions for former public officials cannot exceed 50 percent of the presidential salary—equivalent to approximately 70,000 pesos per month. Authorities calculate this measure could generate roughly five billion pesos a year in savings, which the government argues should be redirected toward public services rather than legacy benefit schemes.

Biometric CURP meets judicial scrutiny

A federal Collegiate Court in Mexico City has upheld a provisional suspension protecting a citizen who challenged the requirement to submit biometric data for the new biometric CURP, a national identity mechanism that could eventually be linked to the registration of mobile phone users. The ruling rejects a complaint filed by federal authorities and maintains the injunction issued earlier by a district judge, meaning the plaintiff cannot be forced—at least for now—to provide fingerprints, photographs or other biometric identifiers to the government’s Single Identity Platform while the constitutional case proceeds. The court argued that denying the suspension could irreversibly expose personal data before the legality of the system is fully determined; while granting it does not harm public order or the broader public interest.

The case illustrates the legal tension surrounding the government’s effort to modernise identity systems through biometric integration. Authorities argue that linking identity records to telecommunications databases would strengthen security and traceability in a digital economy increasingly menaced by fraud and organised crime. Critics, however, see the initiative as raising concerns about privacy, data protection and proportionality, particularly if biometric identifiers become a prerequisite for everyday services such as mobile connectivity. For now, the judiciary has opted for procedural caution: the biometric CURP may continue to be debated as public policy, but its compulsory application will remain partially on hold until the courts determine whether it passes constitutional scrutiny.

Chatter box

- **Between Havana and Washington.** President Claudia Sheinbaum reiterated Mexico’s traditional position against the US embargo on Cuba, backing the controversial call to the Mexican public over the week-end by former president Andrés Manuel López Obrador to make financial donations to Cuba to a bank account number he supplied. Speaking during her morning press conference, Sheinbaum noted that Mexico has historically opposed the blockade despite international pressure and confirmed that she would personally contribute to a civil initiative raising funds for the island, although she did not specify the amount. The gesture follows López Obrador’s weekend message,

which was publicly acknowledged by Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel, who thanked Mexico for what he described as its consistent support.

At the same time, Sheinbaum signalled a more pragmatic tone regarding relations with the United States, particularly as the review process of the US–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA) begins to take shape. The president expressed confidence that negotiations with the administration of Donald Trump would reach a “very good outcome”.

- **The reform works, but need fixing.** In an interview with La Jornada, Supreme Court Justice Yasmín Esquivel Mossa gave her assessment of the judicial reform enacted in 2024 and outlined possible adjustments to its institutional design. She said that the reform should be corrected in several aspects, including the elimination of the specialised chambers of the Supreme Court, which previously resolved most routine cases. With all matters now handled by the full bench, she indicated that the number of resolved cases has declined, with the Court issuing 470 fewer decisions in a comparable six-month period under the new structure. Esquivel described the reform as “perfectible” and argued that the current model of deliberation has increased the time required to process cases.

She also presented a set of proposals aimed at modifying the current system. These include the introduction of a national examination for judicial candidates, clearer and more uniform rules for the selection committees involved in judicial appointments, and the possibility of postponing the next judicial election scheduled for 2027 to avoid overlapping with the broader electoral cycle. Esquivel also suggested expanding the ability of judicial candidates to communicate their proposals and increasing the institutional dissemination of the election process. At the same time, she confirmed her intention to seek the presidency of the Supreme Court in 2029.

- **Coordination, Now Official.** Mexico’s Financial Intelligence Unit (UIF) and the National Banking and Securities Commission (CNBV) have signed a new cooperation agreement aimed at strengthening the fight against money laundering. The instrument formalises closer coordination between the country’s financial intelligence and supervisory authorities through enhanced information-sharing mechanisms, joint technical analysis and interinstitutional working groups tasked with reviewing complex cases. The agreement also updates technological tools used to manage and consult the “blocked persons” list, a key enforcement instrument intended to prevent illicit funds from circulating within the financial system. According to the Ministry of Finance, the initiative seeks to modernise supervisory practices and align Mexico with international standards under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) framework—essentially reinforcing a familiar principle in financial regulation: cooperation between agencies tends to become most urgent precisely when financial crime grows more sophisticated.

- **Falling Homicides rates.** Despite the intense publicity surrounding the violence reported in the 48 hours after the apprehension and death of El Mencho, the broader trend in Mexico still points in the opposite direction: homicides are falling. Government data shows the average daily homicide rate dropping from 86.9 in September 2024 to 48.8 in February 2026 — almost half, and the lowest level since 2015. (The per-capita homicide rate in 2025 was reported at about 17.5 per 100,000 people, also the lowest since 2015, though still high by international standards.) That does not mean the picture is uncontested. Some critics argue that part of the decline may reflect a rise in disappearances rather than a genuine reduction in lethal violence. But respected security analyst Carlos Pérez Ricart argues there is no clear evidence of large-scale statistical manipulation, and that crime reporting systems are becoming more transparent, not less. The key point is that headline-grabbing episodes of violence, however real, should not obscure the larger national pattern: Mexico’s homicide rate appears to be on a meaningful downward trend, which for many will be taken as a vindication of the government’s more hard-line policy in going after cartels, and aggressively focusing law enforcement on the municipalities with the most crime, even if the reasons for the decline may in reality be more nuanced and complex.
- **USMCA Talks.** Mexico will enter the start of official bilateral talks with the United States on the review of the USMCA with a clear objective: preserve the agreement and push for the elimination of tariffs that remain outside the treaty framework. Economy Secretary Marcelo Ebrard confirmed that the first round of conversations will take place this week in Washington after a preparatory virtual meeting, noting that Mexico’s strategy—approved by President Claudia Sheinbaum—will focus on maintaining the continuity of the trade agreement while addressing unilateral trade measures.

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