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U.N. Projects Historic City Populations by 2007

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UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - For the first time in history, most of the world's population will live in cities by 2007, U.N. demographers said on Wednesday.

They said that 48 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas in 2003 and this was "expected to exceed the 50 percent mark by 2007, thus marking the first time in history that the world will have more urban residents than rural residents."

They projected that the world's urban population would rise to 5 billion by 2030 from an estimated 3 billion in 2003. Conversely, demographers expect the rural population to decline to 3.2 billion from 3.3 billion in 2003 by that year.

Global urban populations would grow at an annual average rate of 1.8 percent and double at that rate in 38 years, according to the U.N. Population Division report, "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2003 Revision."

Tokyo, the world's most populous city with 35 million, was projected to still be the largest in 2015 with 36 million people, followed by the Indian cities of Bombay at 22.6 million and New Delhi at 20.9 million. Next on the list were Mexico City at 20.6 million and Sao Paulo at 20 million.

The population division simultaneously released another report, "World Population Policies 2003," which said high mortality was the most significant concern for developing countries.


"The number one issue that is of concern to the developing world is mortality and for some countries also rapid population growth," U.N. Population Division director Joseph Chamie said at a news briefing. "In contrast, the concern for many and most of the developed countries is low fertility and declining population growth."

The report said more than 90 percent of countries supported providing contraceptives and that developed and developing countries held a similar desire to lower immigration.

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