

IRAN



Country Dialling Code (Tel/Fax): ++98

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Capital: Tehran Time: GMT + 3

Background: Known as Persia until 1935, Iran became an Islamic republic in 1979 after the ruling shah was forced into exile. Conservative clerical forces subsequently crushed westernizing liberal elements. Militant Iranian students seized the US Embassy in Tehran on 4 November 1979 and held it until 20 January 1981. During 1980-88, Iran fought a bloody, indecisive war with Iraq over disputed territory. The key current issue is how rapidly the country should open up to the modernizing influences of the outside world.

Location: Middle East, bordering the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, and the Caspian Sea, between Iraq and Pakistan

Map References: Middle East

Area: total: 1.648 million sq km land: 1.636 million sq km water: 12,000 sq km

Climate: mostly arid or semiarid, subtropical along Caspian coast

Terrain: rugged, mountainous rim; high, central basin with deserts, mountains; small, discontinuous plains along both coasts

Natural Resources: petroleum, natural gas, coal, chromium, copper, iron ore, lead, manganese, zinc, sulfur

Population: 65,619,636 (July 2000 est.)

Nationality: noun: Iranian(s) adjective: Iranian

Ethnic Groups: Persian 51%, Azeri 24%, Gilaki and Mazandarani 8%, Kurd 7%, Arab 3%, Lur 2%, Baloch 2%, Turkmen 2%, other 1%

Religions: Shi'a Muslim 89%, Sunni Muslim 10%, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, and Baha'i 1%

Languages: Persian and Persian dialects 58%, Turkic and Turkic dialects 26%, Kurdish 9%, Luri 2%, Balochi 1%, Arabic 1%, Turkish 1%, other 2%

Economy: Iran's economy is a mixture of central planning, state ownership of oil and other large enterprises, village agriculture, and small-scale private trading and service ventures. President KHATAMI has continued to follow the market reform plans of former President RAFSANJANI and has indicated that he will pursue diversification of Iran's oil-reliant economy although he has made little progress toward that goal. The strong oil market in 1996 helped ease financial pressures on Iran and allowed for Tehran's timely debt service payments. Iran's financial situation tightened in 1997 and deteriorated further in 1998 because of lower oil prices. The subsequent zoom in oil prices in 1999 afforded Iran fiscal breathing room but does not solve Iran's structural economic problems.

Industries: petroleum, petrochemicals, textiles, cement and other construction materials, food processing (particularly sugar refining and vegetable oil production), metal fabricating, armaments

Currency: 10 Iranian rials (IR) = 1 toman; note - domestic figures are generally referred to in terms of the toman

Railways: 5,600 km broad gauge: 94 km 1.676-m gauge standard gauge: 5,506 km 1.435-m gauge (146 km electrified) (1998)

Highways: total: 140,200 km paved: 49,440 km (including 470 km of expressways) unpaved: 90,760 km (1998 est.)

Waterways: 904 km; the Shatt al Arab is usually navigable by maritime traffic for about 130 km; channel has been dredged to 3 m and is in use

Ports and Harbors: Abadan (largely destroyed in fighting during 1980-88 war), Ahvaz, Bandar 'Abbas, Bandar-e Anzali, Bushehr, Bandar-e Emam Khomeyni, Bandar-e Lengeh, Bandar-e Mahshahr, Bandar-e Torkaman, Chabahar (Bandar Beheshti), Jazireh-ye Khark, Jazireh-ye Lavan, Jazireh-ye Sirri, Khorramshahr (limited operation since November 1992), Now Shahr

Airports: 288 (1999 est.) Airports - with paved runways: total: 112 over 3,047 m: 38 2,438 to 3,047 m: 21 1,524 to 2,437 m: 23 914 to 1,523 m: 24 under 914 m: 6 (1999 est.) Airports - with unpaved runways: total: 176 over 3,047 m: 2 2,438 to 3,047 m: 5 1,524 to 2,437 m: 14 914 to 1,523 m: 123 under 914 m: 32 (1999 est.)

Heliports: 11 (1999 est.)

Visa: required by all

Duty Free: goods permitted: 200 cigarettes, a reasonable quantity of perfume for personal use, gifts on which the import duty/tax does not exceed IR11,150

Health: a yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from all travellers coming from infected areas. Malaria and rabies risk present.

HOTELS•MOTELS•INNS

TEHRAN

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