

## IRAN

Iran has the second largest population, after Egypt, in the Middle East and North Africa region. Larger numbers of increasingly well-educated women seek opportunities to participate at all levels of Iran's labor market and civil society; however their labor market participation and employment rates remain limited. The country's health and education indicators are fairly high by regional standards.

The large public enterprise sector dominates Iran's economy, in addition to the quasi-public bonyads which have a large presence in the manufacturing and commercial sectors. Over 60 percent of the manufacturing sector's output is produced by the state-owned enterprises; the financial sector is also dominated by public banks despite the creation of four private banks in the early 2000s. Progress in privatization and the creation of a level playing field for private firms has moved very slowly in the past years.

In recent years, Iran has made some progress in implementing its trade reform agenda by streamlining tariff and non-tariff barriers. Nonetheless, customs duty applies on nearly all goods imported into Iran. Imports of consumer goods generally incur tariffs of 30–50 percent; capital and intermediate goods have slightly lower tariff rates; and tariffs on medicines, wheat and "strategic" goods are at zero. Other reforms that helped to enhance foreign trade are the elimination of the multiple exchange rate system six years ago. In 2005 Iran was invited by the WTO to launch accession negotiations and has been working on its trade regime report to be presented to the organization.

Iran has officially joined Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia (TRACECA) in September 2009, in order to improve its links with international transit markets. The Islamic Republic of Iran Railways (abbreviated IRIR or sometimes RAI) is the national state-owned railway system of Iran. Raja Passenger Train Company is an associate of the IR and manages its passenger trains including international trains. The Railway Transportation Company is an associate of the IR to manage its freight transport. The railway network is almost entirely non electrified, and Iran has recently started an electrification programme. RZD is involved in the electrification works on

the Tabriz-Azarshahr. The 46 km long line will be electrified in alternative current of 25 kV-50 Hz, parameters that will be kept for the future electrification projects on the line to Tehran. The section is also connected to the Culfa (Djulfa/Julfa)-Tabriz line, which was electrified in 1979 as part of a project developed by the Soviet Union.

### Background figures in railways (2009):

7,555 km length of lines

148 km electrified lines

26,000 x 1 000 passengers carried

15,312 x 1 000 000 passenger-km

33,000 x 1 000 tonnes carried

20,540 x 1 000 000 tonne-kilometres

Economics	2008	2009
GDP (current billions US\$)	338.18	331.01
GDP growth (annual %)	2	2
(2007) Exports of goods and services (% of GDP)	32	-
(2007) Imports of goods and services (% of GDP)	22	-
(2007) Industry, value added (% of GDP)	44	-

### Ease of Doing Business Rank 2010

World	rank 137
Middle East & North Africa	rank 15

