

OFFICIAL NAME: State of Bahrain

CAPITAL: Al Manamah

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Absolute Monarchy

AREA: 678 Sq Km (262 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 585,000



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Bahrain is a group of islands in the Persian Gulf midway between the tip of the Qatar Peninsula and the Saudi Arabian mainland. The island group includes six primary islands which are Bahrain, Muharraq, Sitrah, Umm al Nassan, Jidda and Nabi Salih. Bahrain has a desert topography except for a narrow strip of land along the northern coast. In the interior the land rises gradually towards a central range of hills. Most of the other islands are flat and sandy. A number of fresh water springs or artesian wells are located along the northern coast of the Bahrain. In general, the soil is poor and saline, supporting little or no vegetation. Major Cities (pop. est.); Al Manamah 140,400, Ar Rifa 46,000, Al Muharraq 45,300, Madinat Isa 34,500 (1991). Land Use; pastures 6%, agricultural-cultivated 3%, other including deserts and marshes 91% (1993).

CLIMATE: Bahrain has an arid desert climate characterized by very hot summers with high humidity while winters are relatively cooler. Average annual precipitation is only 76 mm (3 inches). Various winds influence the temperatures and include the Bara from the north, which is a cool wind that sometimes reduces the temperature in June, the Shamal from the northeast which is a moist wind that dominates all year round and the Quss from the south or southwest, which is a hot dry sand laden wind. Average temperature ranges on Bahrain are from 14 to 20 degrees Celsius (67 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit) in January to 29 to 38 degrees Celsius (84 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit) in August.

PEOPLE: Between 73% and 75% of the population are indigenous Arabs with diversity among the ethnic minorities. Around 14% of the

population are Saudi Arabian and Omanis while 9% are Iranians with the remainder divided among the Asians, Baluchis, Pakistanis, Indians and British Europeans.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 745 persons per sq km (1,930 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 83.0% urban, 17.0% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 58.0% male, 42.0% female (1988). Life Expectancy at Birth; 65.0 years male, 68.4 years female (1986). Age Breakdown; 35% under 15, 26% 15 to 29, 26% 30 to 44, 10% 45 to 59, 3% 60 and over (1988). Birth Rate; 26.5 per 1,000 (1988). Death Rate; 3.2 per 1,000 (1988). Increase Rate; 23.3 per 1,000 (1988). Infant Mortality Rate; 23.5 per 1,000 live births (1988).

RELIGIONS: The official religion is Islam with 51% of the population Shiite Muslims while 34% are Sunni Muslims. Some Christian and Jewish communities do exist, although they are definitely minorities.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Arabic which is spoken in its Gulf dialect. English is also widely understood and taught in secondary schools.

EDUCATION: Aged 10 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 27.2%, some reading/writing skills 26.3%, primary 24.9%, secondary 13.3%, higher 8.3% (1981). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 77.4% (1990).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: During 1861 to 1971 the islands were under British protection. In 1971 Bahrain became fully independent and in 1968 as well as 1979 Iran pressed its longstanding claim over Bahrain. In 1981 Bahrain became threatened by Iran's claims

of sovereignty over the islands through a failed coup which was believed to be linked to Iran and resulted in 73 arrests. In the same year and in response, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Qatar joined with Bahrain to form the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). In 1990 Bahrain expanded its military bases following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and Britain's defense secretary, Tom King, announced that three British minesweepers as well as a squadron of Tornado fighter jets would be based in Bahrain as a form of self-defense. In Aug. 1991 a territorial dispute with Qatar over the Hawar Islands flared when gunboats exchanged fire. On June 20, 1992 Bahrain became the first Arab Gulf nation to urge better relations with Iraq since the end to the Gulf War. On July 3, 1992 the Hawar Islands dispute between Qatar and Bahrain entered a new phase, with Qatar rejecting Bahrain's demand for a joint petition to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and continuing with its own unilateral bid to recover the islands. In July 1992, Crown Prince Sheik Hamad ibn Isa al-Khalifah announced his desire to establish closer ties with Iran. Following the death of the Shiite divine Grand Ayatollah Abolqassem al-Khoei on August 8, 1992 there were massive processions for five days. On Dec. 16, 1992 the emir announced the establishment of a consultative council to allow greater citizen participation in the country affairs. On Jan. 16, 1993 the council met for the first time, following which the emir granted an amnesty to eight political prisoners and pardons to eleven exiles in an attempt at healing the rift between the Sunni and Shiite Muslims. In April 1993 Bahrain asserted its claim to the Hawar Islands by announcing a territorial waters claim of 12 nautical miles and its right to exercise its sovereignty over the area.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Dinar (BD) which is divided into 1000 Fils.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$4,283,000,000 (1993). National Debt; USD \$1,810,000,000 (1991). Imports; BD 1,559,000,000 (1992). Exports; BD 1,285,000,000 (1992). Tourism Receipts; USD \$177,000,000 (1992). Balance of Trade; BD 33,000,000 (1994).

Economically Active Population; 226,400 or 44.6% of total population (1991). Unemployed; 6.3% (1991).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are the USA, the UAE, Japan, India, Canada, Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Crude Oil, Dates, Eggs, Fish, Livestock, Lucerne, Vegetables.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Air Conditioning, Aluminum Smelting and Refining, Crude Oil Production and Refining, Flour Milling, Fish Processing, Natural Gas, Oil Well Equipment, Petrochemicals, Plastics, Ship Building and Repairs.

MAIN EXPORTS: Crude Oil, Fish, Petroleum Products.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; nil. Roads; length 2,614 km (1,624 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 90,000 (1989), trucks and buses 8,000 (1989). Merchant Marine; vessels 87 (1990), deadweight tonnage 49,371 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 1,549,000,000 (963,000,000 passenger-mi) (1990), cargo ton-km 44,300,000 (30,341,000 short ton-mi) (1990).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 3 with a total circulation of 43,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 320,000 (1994). Television; receivers 270,000 (1994). Telephones; units 124,000 (1993).

MILITARY: 10,700 (1995) total active duty personnel with 79.4% army, 6.5% navy and 14.1% air force while military expenditure accounts for 5.5% (1994) of the Gross National Product (GNP).