

KEY FACTS

Official name: Al Mamlakah al Bahrayn (Kingdom of Bahrain)

Head of State: King Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa (ruler since Mar 1999; King since 14 Feb 2002)

Head of government: Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa (from 1971; re-appointed Oct 2010)

Ruling party: There is no ruling party

Area: 676 square km (35 islands)

Population: 1.15 million (2012)* (1,234,571; 2010 census figure)

Capital: Manama

Official language: Arabic

Currency: Bahraini dinar (BD) = 1,000 fils

Exchange rate: BD0.38 per US\$ (fixed) (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$23,477 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 3.85% (2012)*

GDP: US\$27.03 billion (2012)*

Unemployment: 3.44% (2012)*

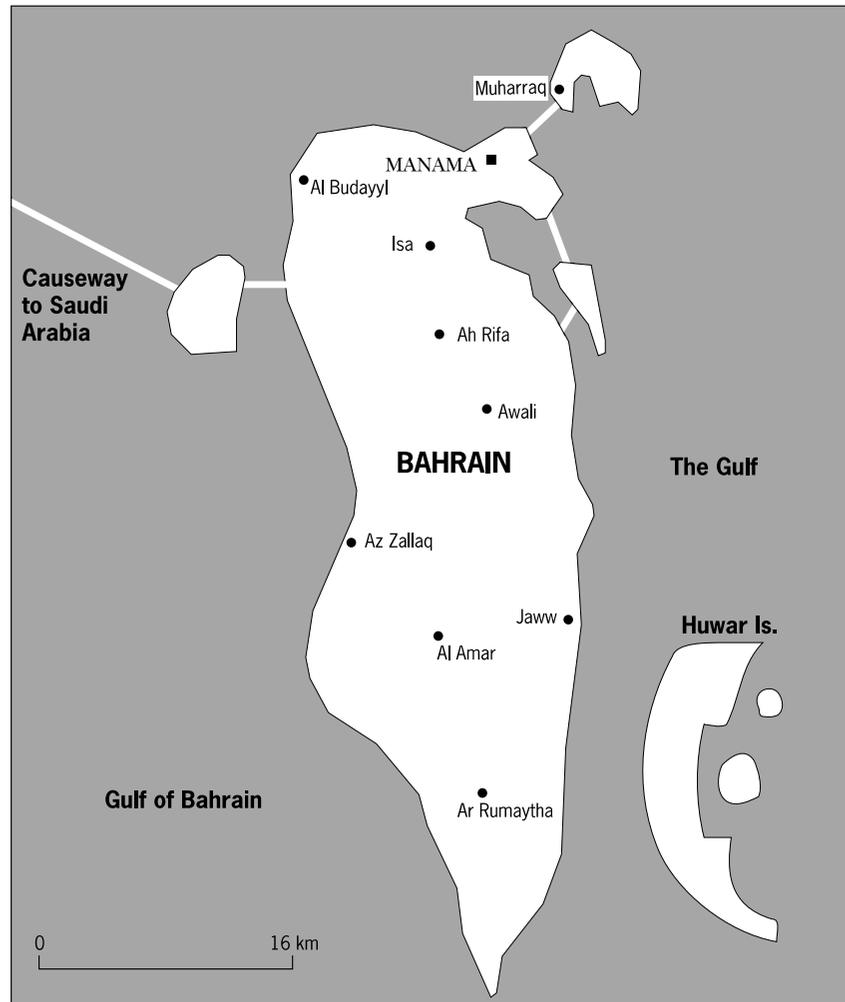
Inflation: 1.20% (2012)*

Natural gas production: 14.20 billion cum (2012)

Balance of trade: US\$7.54 billion (2011)*

* estimated figure

Bahrain



In June 2013 a number of human rights organisations asked the European Union (EU), ahead of its ministerial meeting later in the month with the Gulf Co-operation Council, to call for the release of those ‘currently detained and imprisoned for peacefully exercising their rights’. The organisations’ statement highlighted the continued crackdown by the authorities in Bahrain on human rights defenders and peaceful opposition activists. It also deplored the failure of the EU to make what it termed ‘explicit calls for the immediate and unconditional release of human rights defenders, Twitter activists and bloggers and leaders of peaceful

protests.’ Specific reference was made to the cases of imprisoned human rights defenders Naji Fateel, Abdulhadi al Khawaja, Nabeel Rajab and human rights defender Zainab al Khawaja who, only days before the GCC/EU meeting was sentenced to two additional months in jail in relation to charges of assault against two policewomen inside prison.

Interfere, Restrict, Control

Following the meeting, the EU delegation issued a cautious statement, lamely noting that ‘We do have honest and open discussions on issues, for instance on human rights. We may have different

perspectives at times, but we're able to have that honest dialogue.' The acting president of the independent Bahrain Centre for Human Rights, Maryam al Khawaja (whose father, Abdulhadi al Khawaja was sentenced to life imprisonment for his part in the 2011 democracy demonstrations and whose sister Zainab is imprisoned) said she was 'very disappointed' by the comments, made by the EU's Catherine Ashton, not generally known for her familiarity with Middle Eastern affairs. Ms al Khawaja said that 'The regime barely received a slap on the wrist' from the EU.

The US based non-governmental organisation (NGO) Human Rights Watch (HRW) was altogether more forthright in its criticism of the Bahraini government. In its June 2013 report, entitled *Interfere, Restrict and Control*, HRW noted that 'Since independence from Britain in 1971, social, cultural and sports clubs, as well as civil and professional organisations, have been pivotal in shaping political debate. With political groups of any sort prohibited until 2001 NGOs have often served as forums for discussing social, economic and political issues.'

However, government actions and legislation have often undermined the ability of such groups to function. Despite a limited flowering of civil society since 2001, civic, political, and labour organisations have functioned with difficulty, with authorities harassing, arresting and prosecuting their leaders and members. This has intensified in the wake of widespread pro-democracy demonstrations that took place throughout much of the country in February and March 2011. In particular, the ministry of social development has far exceeded international standards in its restrictive scope and 'routinely exploited its oversight role to stymie the activities of NGOs and other civil society organisations', said HRW.

Today, freedom of association is under even greater threat due in part to draft legislation that is even more restrictive than the current Law of Associations (No 21/1989), which authorities use – in the words of one Bahraini activist – 'to interfere, restrict and attempt to control the activities of civic organisations.'

Adding to the international criticism of the régime, the Paris-based European Union Institute for Security Studies was quoted by Judy Dempsey in the *International Herald Tribune* (IHT) as saying that Bahrain's prime minister, Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa – who has been in power since 1971 – showed no

willingness to change. According to the Institute's report 'Bahrain is caught between reforms it is not willing to undertake and an uprising it is unable to suppress.' Feeling itself to be on the back foot, it also emerged that the Bahraini government had cancelled an official visit scheduled to be made by the United Nations' special *rapporteur* on torture and other abuses, Juan E Méndez. On the Transparency International *Corruption Perceptions Index* Bahrain ranked 53 in 2012, well down on the 36 position achieved in 2006 when it was ranked 4 among Middle East countries, behind only the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Israel.

Conflicting loyalties

In 2013 Bahrain was still feeling the effects of 2011 – Bahrain's *annus horribilis* – when this small Arabian Gulf state had been shaken in February by protests which became known locally as the Pearl Revolution. Seen as a Gulf manifestation of the Arab Spring, the more confrontational aspects of the Pearl Revolution had ended when Saudi led GCC forces had intervened. The Sunni government (of a Shi'a majority) had pledged reforms but both the US and Britain have repeatedly criticised it for moving too slowly. Bahrain is home to the US navy's Fifth Fleet and is a key strategic asset in any confrontation with Iran. By 2012 Bahrain appeared to be simultaneously paying lip-service to a reform agenda while endeavouring to crack down on continuing unrest, even though King Hamad bin

Isa al Khalifa had announced constitutional reforms intended to bring about greater accountability. The King had also ordered the rebuilding of mosques knocked down by the government and appointed two distinguished British lawyers to begin an overhaul of the judicial system. The government claimed that it was reinstating those people – for the most part Shi'a – who had lost their jobs following their support of the protests. Bahrain's trades union representatives disputed the government's claims that this was the case. The measures had been intended as much as anything to reassure Bahrain's Western allies, notably the US. To a lesser extent, the proposed reforms were aimed at placating a restive Bahraini population.

King Hamad's government had also appointed a Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI), chaired by the Egyptian lawyer Professor Cherif Bassiouni. The Bahraini government could hardly have expected to be congratulated on its handling of affairs, but whether it had expected such a critical assessment, however, was unlikely. The report highlighted human rights abuses and the torture of detainees by the police and other security forces as they confronted the 2011 protests.

The economy

According to Reuters, Bahrain's underlying economic strategy is – or at least was – based on becoming a regional financial hub, a decision it had been obliged to take as it lacks much of the petrodollar wealth of its Arab and Iranian neighbours.

KEY INDICATORS		Bahrain				
	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	0.78	*1.04	1.12	*1.13	*1.15
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	21.20	20.20	22.40	26.10	*27.03
GDP per capita	US\$	27,248	19,455	20,259	23,132	*23,477
GDP real growth	%	6.1	3.1	4.5	1.8	*3.9
Inflation	%	3.5	2.8	2.0	1.0	*1.2
Unemployment	%	–	–	3.6	4.0	*3.4
Natural gas output	bn cum	13.4	12.8	13.1	13.0	14.2
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	17,491.2	12,051.9	13,833.2	19,650.3	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	14,246.3	9,613.0	11,190.4	12,105.9	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	3,244.9	2,438.8	2,642.8	7,544.4	–
Current account	US\$m	2,256.9	560.0	770.1	3,247.3	4,170.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	–	–	–	–	5,205.0
Foreign exchange	US\$m	–	–	–	–	4,898.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	0.37	0.38	2.66	2.66	2.66
* estimated figure						

However, the political unrest that manifested itself in 2011, in which the government confronted mainly Shi'ite-led pro-democracy protests, hit Bahrain's economy hard and, *inter alia* raised pressure on the government to boost spending. As outlined in the 'Energy' section below, output in the hydrocarbons sector, which accounts for a quarter of Bahrain's US\$30 billion economy, grew by 1.3 per cent in the January–March 2013 period compared to the meagre 0.4 per cent rise seen in the final three months of 2012. Hydrocarbon output jumped 8.0 per cent on an annual basis in the first quarter after falling by the same amount in October–December. Last year, Bahrain reported a drop in crude oil output from its key Abu Safa field, which it shares with Saudi Arabia and which contributes nearly 67 per cent of budget revenue.

Growth in Bahrain's financial industry, which accounts for roughly 16 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), slowed to 0.3 per cent quarter-on-quarter in January–March 2013 from 1.4 per cent in the previous three months. In the hospitality sector, which had nose-dived during the 2011 turmoil, output crept up by 0.5 per cent in January–March, after a 0.1 per cent rise in the fourth quarter of 2012. In the view of the analysts polled by Reuters in April 2013, Bahrain's GDP growth was expected to ease slightly to 3.3 per cent in 2013 from the 3.8 per cent registered in 2012.

In its May 2013 assessment of the Bahraini economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), noted that the economic situation had improved in 2012 following the downturn in non-oil GDP seen in 2011, due largely to the continuing crisis in the euro-zone and the persistent domestic political unrest. As oil production for the year contracted, (for the most part because of a disruption in the Abu Safa field that was rectified by the end of 2012), non-oil economic activity rebounded, supported by government spending. According to the IMF, activity in manufacturing, hotels and restaurants and insurance picked up significantly, accompanied by a moderate recovery in construction and retail banking. Inflation was again in positive territory after the 2011 deflation, supported by the improvement in housing rents.

In the view of the IMF, Bahrain's external position also seemed to improve in 2012 due to a decline in capital outflows and as the current account position remained strong with an estimated surplus of 18.2 per cent of GDP. Official reserves

increased from US\$4.2 billion at end-2011 to about US\$4.9 billion in 2012 (18 per cent of GDP and close to 10 months of import cover, excluding imports of crude oil).

Financial market developments reflected the rebound in the wider economy. Private-sector credit and deposit growth were solid at 6 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively. In addition, there were tentative signs that investor confidence had improved. The deleveraging in the wholesale segment of the banking sector appeared to have stabilised and several market-based indicators had moved into more positive territory. The government's bond issue of US\$1.5 billion was four times over-subscribed at a coupon of 5.8 per cent; both bond yields and CDS spreads were back to pre-2011 levels. In January 2013, Standard & Poor's revised Bahrain's outlook to stable from negative. Nevertheless, the stock market index declined by 7 per cent in 2012.

The fiscal outcome in 2012 was estimated to have been better than expected. The overall fiscal deficit for 2012 (excluding extra-budgetary operations) was estimated at 1.0 per cent of GDP, reflecting high oil prices, a consolidation in capital spending and a reduction in subsidies and transfers that resulted from scaling back gas subsidies for industrial users. Including extra-budgetary operations, the overall deficit was estimated at 2.6 per cent of GDP.

Energy

Bahrain is, along with Oman, one of only two countries bordering the Arabian Gulf that is not a member of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec). Bahrain produced 48,000 barrels per day (bpd) of total petroleum liquids in 2012, the least of any country in the Gulf. It has set a goal of increasing total petroleum production to 100,000bpd by the end of the decade. Bahrain's refinery capacity far exceeds domestic crude oil production capacity. Bahrain has a 254,000bpd export refinery at Sitra. Most of the feedstock is imported from Saudi Arabia, so that net exports for Bahrain are only about 5,000bpd. Plans are under way to expand the refinery's capacity by 100,000bpd by 2017.

Saudi Arabia and Bahrain share production of the 300,000bpd Abu Safa offshore field in Saudi Arabia, which is connected to Bahrain's Sitra refinery via pipeline. Bahrain intends to replace the ageing pipeline system from Saudi Arabia with the planned New Arabia pipeline, a

71-mile, 350,000bpd pipeline running between the Abqaiq complex in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain's refinery at Sitra.

As with oil, Bahrain is a small producer of natural gas and produced 14.2 billion cubic metres of natural gas in 2012, an increase of 6.9 per cent on 2011. In order to meet future natural gas needs, Bahrain plans to import gas from a number of sources, either via pipeline from Qatar or via imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG) following the awarding of a contract to construct a new LNG terminal. Bahrain has over 3 gigawatts of electricity generating capacity, almost all of which is conventional thermal fired. The Kingdom has recently begun to develop solar and other renewable power. It is also taking part in the GCC's plan to integrate the electric power grids of all GCC countries.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Poor

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1816 Bahrain's first treaty with Britain was signed

1861 The second treaty made it a British protectorate.

1869 Sheikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa was named ruler.

1913 A treaty between Britain and Turkey recognised Bahrain as an independent state, but the country remained under British administration.

1923 After more than half a century of peace and stability, Sheikh Isa bin Ali al Khalifa abdicated in favour of his son, Sheikh Hamad.

1928 Iran claimed ownership of Bahrain; the dispute was not resolved until 1970 when Iran accepted a UN report stating that the vast majority of Bahrainis wanted their complete independence.

1932 Bahrain became the first country in the Gulf to strike oil.

1942–61 Sheikh Hamad died in 1942 and his son, Sheikh Sulman bin Hamad al Khalifa ruled Bahrain until his death in 1961, when he was succeeded by Sheikh Isa bin Sulman al Khalifa.

1968 Britain announced its intention to withdraw from the Gulf by 1971.

1971 Bahrain and Qatar became independent states. Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa became prime minister.

1973–74 Bahrain's constitution was promulgated; it limited the Sheikh's powers and established an elected 30-member National Assembly.

1975 The National Assembly refused to ratify a bill to arrest and detain people for

up to three years without trial, and was dissolved by the ruler, Sheikh Isa. The government subsequently ruled by decree.

1981 The political and economic union, Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG) (known as Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC)) was formed by Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

1986 The opening of the 25km King Fahd Causeway between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia gave a boost to business and tourism.

1991 Bahrain actively supported the allied forces against Iraq in the Gulf military conflict.

1994 The majority Shi'ites staged demonstrations demanding better living conditions and the return of an elected parliament. The Sunnis, although once the majority but now in a minority, are dominant in both politics and business.

1999 Sheikh Isa bin Sulman al Khalifa, who had ruled since 1961, died and was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa. Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman al Khalifa continued as prime minister.

2000 For the first time, non-Muslims and women were appointed to the 40 member Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council).

2001 A referendum on political reform was approved, under which Bahrain would become a constitutional monarchy with an elected lower chamber of parliament and an independent judiciary.

2002 Hamad bin Isa al Khalifa was declared King, and the state became a constitutional monarchy. As part of the reform process, legislation was approved to allow women to vote in elections and run for national office. In legislative elections (the first since 1973), parliament became a mix of secular and Islamic candidates. The Shi'ite opposition boycotted the election resulting in a Sunni dominated parliament.

2004 The first woman to be appointed head of a government ministry, Nada Haffadh, was made health minister. A free trade agreement was signed with the US.

2005 King Hamad called for increased global co-operation to combat international terrorism. Thousands protested in favour of a fully elected parliament.

2006 Legislative elections were held in which Sunni representatives won 22 seats (out of 40) and Shi'ites won 18.

2007 There were several days of rioting in majority Shi'a areas with protesters demanding compensation for human rights violations between 1980–90.

2008 A common market was created between Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the six wealthiest Gulf States. Citizens of these countries are allowed to travel between and live in

any of the six states, where they may find employment, buy properties and businesses and use the educational and health facilities freely.

2009 Iraqi Airways began flights to Bahrain, after a gap of 20 years. The Nation Bank of Kuwait – Kingdom of Bahrain (NBK Bahrain), posted record profits of US\$88.9 million for the first two quarters of the year (an increase of 55 per cent over the same period in 2008).

2010 The authorities suspended the news network Al Jazeera's operations in Bahrain and barred its workers, following the broadcast of documentaries on the treatment of Asian labourers and poverty in Bahrain. In parliamentary elections, the Shia Al Wifaq National Islamic Society (Al Wifaq) won 18 seats (out of 40), the combined Sunni block won 22 seats, including 17 independent delegates.

2011 In March, protesters marched on the council of ministers – the authorities asked Saudi Arabia to supply 1,500 troops to help their own forces restore order. A day later, security forces used tanks to oust protestors from Pearl Square, ending its two-week occupation. Ambulances were blocked from entering the square to provide aid. Later security militia carried out a sweep of hospitals, arresting any trauma patients being treated. The UN criticised Bahraini officials for commandeering all hospitals and the arrest by various security forces of protestors receiving medical treatment. In April, the Turkish foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, held talks with both the opposition group al Wifaq and King Hamad. In May, Moody's downgraded Bahrain's sovereign credit rating to 'negative'. In June, the King decreed that the state of emergency that had been imposed in March was to be lifted. Legal trials began before the Court of National Safety of 47 medical personnel arrested for treating demonstrators during the civil unrest; 20 were charged with possessing unlicensed weapons, inciting others to overthrow the monarchy, unauthorised occupation of the hospital and stealing medical equipment; 28 others were accused of spreading false news and lying about the medical condition of some patients (one accused was tried *in absentia*). In July, in a BBC interview, a doctor claimed that he had been subject to torture and coerced into making a false confession while under arrest; the families of other doctors made similar claims. National reconciliation talks began between the Sunni-led government and Shi'a opposition, al Wifaq, in which the King said that all the dialogue process would be inclusive. However, later al Wifaq withdrew from the talks, saying the national dialogue 'was not serious' and that they had been allocated too few seats. In

September 20 medical staff from the Salmaniya Medical Complex, who had treated injured persons during the February and March demonstrations, were found guilty by the National Safety Court. The security court gave long jail sentences to some 80 protesters. Elections to replace 18 Al Wifaq (Shi'ite) members of parliament, who had resigned in February, were held on 24 September. The opposition boycotted the elections and voter turnout was very low with fewer than one in five voters casting ballots; four candidates were re-elected due to the lack of any opposition candidate. There were skirmishes between the security forces and opposition youths attempting to reach Pearl Roundabout. In October, after international condemnation on the harshness of the sentences by international medical associations and human rights campaigners, the attorney general announced that after studying the court's judgement the 20 medical staff would be retried by the country's highest civilian court. In November, the government acknowledged that 'excessive force' had been used on pro-democracy demonstrators by security forces and 20 members of these forces were charged with abuse. An official inquiry established that there had been 'instances of excessive force and mistreatment of detainees'.

2012 A demonstration called for 14 February, the first anniversary of pro-democracy protests at the now demolished Pearl Roundabout in Manama, was thwarted by a heavy security presence. Police fired tear gas and rubber bullets at rock-throwing youths. Up to 70 people were arrested, including foreign activists. In April the government endorsed a decision to retry 21 activists, convicted by a military court in June 2011, of plotting against the state. On 14 June, an appeals court convicted nine medics that took part in the 2011 pro-democracy protests for up to five years in prison; nine other medics were acquitted. The most serious charges against all the medics were dropped from all charges. The government established Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry (BICI) found that the medics had been tortured while in custody. On 1 October, the sentences of nine convicted medics were upheld by the Court of Cassation (the highest appeal court). A new visa system (similar to the European Schengen agreement) allowing multiply entry for foreigners to the six Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries was introduced in November.

2013 The 2013 Bahrain Grand Prix took place on 21 April after being cancelled in 2011 due to the political unrest. On 24 June parliament finally approved the 2013/14 budget. It had been delayed by

several months over demands for extra spending to raise public sector salaries by 15 per cent. The measure had been opposed by the cabinet and in the end parliament passed the plan without the pay rise, but with rises in pension payments for both public and private sector retirees, and higher subsidies for food and other items. The 23rd session of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting of the CC and the EU was held in Manama on 30 June. Some 50 Shi'a Muslims were sentenced on 30 September for up to 15 years for forming a clandestine movement, the 14 February Coalition.

Political structure

Constitution

The 1973 constitution was suspended in 1975 and reinstated by royal decree, with significant amendments, in February 2002.

By a charter, agreed by referendum, Bahrain was declared a constitutional monarchy in 2002, with a bicameral parliament and independent judiciary. Women were given suffrage and although political parties remained illegal, eleven new political societies were licensed in 2001.

The King is the symbol of the country and is inviolate.

Independence date

15 August 1971

Form of state

Constitutional monarchy

The executive

Executive power rests with the King, who is Head of State, he appoints a prime minister and members of the Consultative Council, which is an advisory body that, since 2002, is empowered to make laws. The King may dissolve or extend the term of the Consultative Council. The King has the right to initiate, ratify and promulgate laws.

The King is the head of the armed forces and head of the Judiciary.

National legislature

A bicameral National Assembly consists of the Majlis an Nuwab (Chamber of Deputies (sometimes translated as 'Representatives')) (lower house) which has 40 popularly elected members and the Majlis al-Shura (Consultative Council) with 40 members appointed by the King. Membership of both houses is four years. The King may renew membership of the Council and dissolve the Chamber of Deputies by decree. Terms of both houses may be extended by the King for up to two extra years.

The King and prime minister present bills to the Chamber of Deputies for consideration before they are passed to the Consultative Council.

Legal system

The judiciary is a constitutionally independent body, whose function and organisation is regulated by law. It is a mixture, based on English common law and Sunni and Shi'a Sharia (Islamic law) traditions, where Sharia is the principal source of law.

The Supreme court is the final court of appeal for all civil, commercial and criminal matters.

Last elections

23 and 30 October 2010 (parliamentary, first and second round)

Results: Parliament (lower house, after two rounds): Al Wafaq National Islamic Society (Al Wafaq) won 18 seats (out of 40), Al Asalah Islamic Society (Al Asalah) three, Al Menbar National Islamic Society (Al Menbar) two, independents 17.

Next elections

2014 (parliamentary)

Political parties

Political parties in Bahrain are formally banned; MPs are members of political 'societies' of which the National Democratic Action Society (Wa'ad) represents an informal opposition.

Ruling party

There is no ruling party

Population

1.15 million (2012)* (1,234,571; 2010 census figure)

Bahrain is the smallest country in the Gulf region and the only island state and has the smallest population in the region.

Last census: 27 April 2010: 1,234,571

Population density: 966 inhabitants per square km, one of the highest in the world. Urban population 89 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 4.7 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Bahrain's inhabitants are mostly Arab, with a sizeable minority of Iranian descent.

Approximately 38 per cent of the population are foreign residents, mostly from South Asia and other Arab countries,

Religions

According to the constitution, Islam is the state religion. Approximately 98 per cent of the indigenous population are Muslim – two-thirds Shi'as and the remainder belonging to the Sunni branch of Islam.

There is no exact figure for the number of each; the Sunnis were in the majority up until the mid-1950s but are now in a minority, although remaining in power. The government have attempted to adjust the difference by a programme of naturalising Arab and non-Arab Sunnis for work in the police and military. The remaining 2 per cent are Jewish and Christian.

About half of the foreign population are non-Muslim, including Christians, Jews, Hindus, Baha'is, Buddhists and Sikhs.

Education

Primary schooling lasts for six years between the ages of six and 12. Secondary education lasts for three years and offers students a choice of three main branches: the general, the technical or the commercial.

The government is seeking to establish Bahrain as a regional centre for human resource development. In addition to several universities, there are a number of training centres, such as the Bahrain Training Institute (BTI) and the Bahrain Institute of Training and Finance (BITF) that are designed to prepare local graduates for the modern, technology driven workforce.

There are both government-owned and private schools.

Literacy rate: 91 per cent and 82.6 per cent for males and females respectively (World Bank).

Compulsory years: 6 to 15

Enrolment rate: 105 per cent boys, 106 per cent girls total primary school enrolment of the relevant age group (including repetition rates) (World Bank).

Health

Health services in Bahrain are of a high quality and all Bahrainis receive free health care from the state. There are a mixture of government and private hospitals, with additional government health centres and maternity hospitals.

Life expectancy: 75 years, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.5 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef 2012)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 10 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

Welfare

The government provides direct financial assistance to those considered needy in addition to assistance provided by religious organisations and local charitable societies. There are seven social centres operated by the ministry of labour and social affairs (MoLSA) that provide training and assistance, especially to needy women. Public and private facilities for the elderly, handicapped and orphaned provide first class care, using the latest professional methods, approaches, and equipment. The number of needy families on government assistance lists has been growing for the past decade at double the rate of the population growth.

Family support

The social assistance programme provides approximately BD30 (US\$80) per month to every family being assisted.

Main cities

Manama (capital) (estimated population 297,509 in 2012), Muharraq (176,583), Madinat Hammad (133,550), Ah Rifa (115,495), A'al (100,553), Jid Hafs (66,588), Isa (61,293).

Languages spoken

English is widely spoken. Persian (Farsi), Hindi and Urdu are also frequently used.

Official language/s

Arabic

Media

While press laws guarantee the independence of journalists, criminal penalties may be imposed for infringements, such as insulting the King; self-censorship is widespread.

Bahrain is striving to achieve a status as the primary media centre for the Middle East in competition with Dubai in United Arab Emirates.

Press

Dailies: In Arabic, *Akhbar al Khaleej* (www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com), *al Wasat* (www.alwasatnews.com), *al Ayam* (www.alayam.com), *al Meethaq* (www.almeethaq.net) and *al Waqt* (www.alwaqt.com). In English the *Bahrain Tribune* (www.bahraintribune.com) and *Gulf Daily News* (www.gulf-daily-news.com).

Weeklies: In Arabic, *Layalina* (www.layalinamag.com) and *Sada al-Ushbu'*. In English, *Gulf Weekly* (www.gulfweekly.com), has general news and information.

Business: In Arabic, *Akhbar al Khaleej* (www.akhbar-alkhaleej.com) has a business section. In English, the online website *Trade Arabia* (www.tradearabia.com), has a comprehensive range of business information topics and a hard copy *Gulf Industry* in English and Arabic, concerning the petroleum industry.

Periodicals: In Arabic, *Huna al Bahrain*, published by the Ministry of Information. In English, *Bahrain This Month* (www.bahrainthismonth.com).

Broadcasting

The state-owned Bahrain Radio and Television Corporation (BRTC) (www.bahrain.tv) operates the national public broadcasting networks.

Radio: BRTC operates Radio Bahrain (www.radiobahrain.fm) over three wave lengths, in the English language, offering news and current affairs, popular music and classical music. The Radio Bahrain Second Programme broadcasts general and cultural programmes including sports events and the Qur'an in Arabic. There

are other private radio stations including Voice FM (www.voicefmbahrain.com), and, via satellite, Radio Sawa Gulf (www.radiosawa.com) and Monte Carlo Doualiya (www.mdc-mo.com) broadcasting in Arabic and French.

Television: BRTC operates five channels. The private and independent Orbit Satellite Television and Radio Network (www.orbit.net) operates 48 channels in Arabic and English by subscription. Residents also have access to hundreds of regional channels broadcasting via foreign satellite or cable TV companies.

National news agency: Bahrain News Agency

Economy

Since Bahrain is the least wealthy of the six Gulf states and as its small hydrocarbon reserves are shrinking, it has had to adapt and diversify its economy to provide an income. The service sector, essentially banking and finance, now constitutes over 55 per cent of GDP. Industry and manufacturing constitutes over 40 per cent and agriculture less than 1 per cent of GDP. Alba, one of the world's largest alumina smelting plants is state-owned in partnership with the German company, BBS Krafffahrzeugechnik, produces finished aluminium products for the automotive industry. There is also an automotive industry in performance car manufacturing using aluminium components. Bahrain is a major Middle Eastern banking centre and is a leading Islamic financial centre, with the largest concentration of Islamic commercial, investment and leasing banks, as well as Islamic insurance (*Takaful*) companies.

As the global economic crisis cut trade, GDP growth weakened to 3.1 per cent in 2009. By 2010 the economy had picked up and had a growth rate of 4.5 per cent, although in 2011 GDP growth had fallen back to 1.8 per cent.

Large-scale tourist resorts and projects have become a significant source of revenue, with further development designed to attract greater regional tourism. Bahrain was the first Middle East country to build a Formula One racing circuit; Abu Dhabi was the second.

Infrastructure development has included a new port and expanded airport, strengthening Bahrain's position as a regional hub. The Economic Development Board (EDB) has been active in attracting foreign investment.

The Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) was planning to issue a common currency in 2010, but the economic crisis and the experience of the fluctuating euro on the economies of the euro-zone gave the GCC pause for thought. If the currency is introduced it may have the effect of

changing the medium of oil transactions from the US dollar to the new currency. The anti-government riots in early 2011 set back the economy. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) dropped over the year and the banking sector stagnated.

External trade

Bahrain is one of six members of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) free trade agreement (FTA), a common market between Bahrain and the other five members of the GCC, which was launched in 2008. Citizens of these countries are now allowed to travel between and live in any of the six states, where they may find employment, buy properties and businesses and use the educational and health facilities freely. Bahrain is also a member of the Greater Arab free trade area, which co-ordinates shared standards and specification of Arab products, inter-custom fees and provides a platform for communication between members. A customs union was established whereby tariffs within GCC FTA are reduced by a percentage each year, until none remain.

The export of goods and services accounts for around 80 per cent of GDP. In the face of falling oil reserves the government has invested in processed aluminium which has become a major export commodity, while supporting many domestic downstream industries.

Imports

Main imports are crude oil, machinery, raw materials, chemicals and foodstuffs.

Main sources: China (13.4 per cent of total in 2011), Brazil (12.4 per cent), US (8.2 per cent).

Exports

Main exports are petroleum and related goods, aluminium, vehicles and automotive parts, and textiles.

Main destinations: Saudi Arabia (23.2 per cent of total in 2011), Qatar (11 per cent), Oman (10.9 per cent).

Agriculture

The agricultural sector typically accounts for less than 1 per cent of GDP and employs 5 per cent of the workforce.

Apart from being a small island, development of agriculture is limited by labour shortages, lack of water and salinity of the soil. The major crop is alfalfa for animal fodder, although farmers produce modest amounts of crops including dates, watermelons, pomegranates, bananas, potatoes, eggplants and tomatoes for the local market.

Government agricultural plans emphasise drainage to reduce salinity, improvement of the soil and new irrigation and cultivation techniques; there have also been experiments with hydroponics.

The land tenure system, under which over 60 per cent of cultivable land is held on

three-year leases, discourages the stability needed for development.

The lack of grazing inhibits livestock production. One large dairy has annual milk production of 500,000 litres. Small dairy farmers, responsible for 15 per cent of production, have established a co-operative and constructed a milk pasteurising plant.

The waters surrounding Bahrain have traditionally been rich fishing grounds, with more than 200 varieties of fish, many of which constitute a staple of the local diet. The discovery of oil in 1935 led to a steady decline in the fishing industry, which has been unable to meet domestic demand, noticeably since the 1970s. Moreover, pollution in the Gulf, since the 1980s, has increasingly threatened fish production and the shrimp industry. Fish catches have dropped amid claims of illegal fishing, habitat destruction from land reclamation and environmental pollution that threatens overall fish stocks. Pearl diving was once a major industry with 40 per cent of Gulf pearl exports coming from Bahrain. Diving has declined sharply since the 1930s, but Bahrain has been a leading pearl testing centre since 1990, and a new pearl and gem testing laboratory was opened in 2008.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributed 39.6 per cent of GDP in 2004, of which manufacturing was 10.8 per cent. The sector typically employs 34 per cent of the labour force.

Bahrain's most prominent non-oil industry is the Aluminium Bahrain (Alba) plant, which supplies various downstream manufacturing plants as well as the Gulf Aluminium Rolling Mill Company (Garmco). Aluminium exports are one of Bahrain's biggest earners as a result of increased world prices. Alba dominates the manufacturing sector with a production capacity of 500,000 tonnes per year. More than 50 per cent of the aluminium produced at Alba is sold on the local and regional market, while the remainder goes mainly to the Far East.

Export-oriented small- and medium-sized industries have been attracted to free industrial zones established at Mina Sulman, Ma'amir, Abu Gazal and North Sitra, which enjoy tax and duty incentives. Industries located in these areas include plastics, paper, steel-wool and wire-mesh producers, marine service industries, aluminium, asphalt, cable manufacturing, prefabricated building and furniture. Iron and steel production is increasing. The Bahrain Ispat Company, under the control of the Indian Ispat Group (based in London), operates a plant with a

capacity of 1.2 million tpy of iron briquettes produced from iron pellets.

Tourism

Bahrain as a regional destination is the key strategy for its tourist industry. Government national plans include marketing Bahrain as a 'high-quality leisure and business tourism destination' for visitors primarily from the Middle East, but also Europe and Asia. Over seven million people visited the island in 2009, with visitor expenditure of over US\$1.7 billion. Many visitors cross the causeway from Saudi Arabia for day-trips. The government is concerned that its traditional, historic towns are an asset that could easily be damaged by unfettered development. In July 2012, the coastal and island sites on Muharraq Island, which are the traditional home of the pearling industry, were added to Unesco's World Heritage List. The civil unrest and news reports of battles in the streets of Manama, together with the cancellation of the annual Grand Prix Formula One race resulted in tourism being adversely affected in 2011. Before the turbulence, the prospects for tourism had been good with travel and tourism directly providing 6.6 per cent of total GDP (16.5 per cent of indirect GDP), it had also been forecast to directly provide 33,000 jobs (7.1 per cent of total employment) and 79,000 jobs indirectly (16.9 per cent of total employment). Investment committed to tourism development in 2011 had been BD241.4 million (US\$9.1 million). Bahrain will need a period of sustained peace and a serious promotional campaign to regain its reputation as a suitable destination.

Manama was designated as the Capital of Arab Tourism for 2013 in a move it was hoped would help restore confidence in the sector and encourage visitors. Proven oil reserves were negligible by 2011. Oil had accounted for around 65 per cent of government revenue and more than 60 per cent of exports, but the government has been diversifying the economy.

Hydrocarbons

The Bahrain Petroleum Company has responsibility for all aspects of the hydrocarbon industry including exploration, production, refining and distribution in both domestic and international markets. Bahrain had 300 billion cubic metres (cum) of natural gas at the end of 2011 and produced 13.0 billion cum, a fall of -0.8 per cent on the 2009 figure. Unless further gas fields are found, current reserves are expected to be depleted by 2015. With the imminent loss, Qatar has signed an agreement to supply Bahrain with natural gas in the future. Bahrain does not produce or import coal.

Energy

Bahrain has over 3 gigawatts of electricity generating capacity, almost all of which is conventional thermal fired. The Kingdom has recently begun to develop solar and other renewable power. It is also taking part in the GCC's plan to integrate the electric power grids of all GCC countries. Construction of Bahrain's largest power plant, to provide around 30 per cent of Bahrain's total output, located at Al Dour, was begun in 2007. At a total cost of US\$1 billion, it will provide an additional 1,250MW of electricity and 181,680 kilolitres of desalinated water. The US electrical engineers GE Energy are contracted to provide five gas turbines, equipped with advanced emission control technologies. Further plans to increase production in other existing plants should increase generation up to a projected need of 3,500MW by 2020.

A Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) project to link the six member states (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates) to an integrated power-grid began in 2005. The first phase of the GCC power grid was completed in July 2009 at a cost of US\$1,095 million, linking Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and Qatar through 800km of transmission lines. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will each receive an extra 1,200MW of power capacity and later, the UAE will receive 900MW, Qatar 750MW, Bahrain 600MW and Oman 400MW. In the first phase, a 400kV overhead line links Kuwait's Al Zour power station with Doha, and a 400kV submarine line to Saudi Arabia with Bahrain. The second phase will link the UAE with Oman. The resulting two mega-grids will be joined in the final phase.

Financial markets

Bahrain has a solid reputation as an international financial hub. It remains attractive as a result of a combination of factors, including its relative political stability, open and tax-free business climate, central geographical position, low costs, excellent communications and an accommodating government. The financial sector is one of the most diverse in the region and has the largest volume of transactions in the Middle East. The International Islamic Financial Market (IIFM) has attracted a number of major financial institutions to deal specifically in Sharia compliant deals. Bahrain Islamic International Rating Agency (IIRA) is the sole credit ratings agency set up (in 2005) to provide a ratings system of capital instruments and Islamic financial products in predominantly Islamic countries. IIRA is sponsored by several multilateral development

institutions, major banks, financial institutions and ratings agencies. It operates in 11 countries in which it also has shareholders as the *Sharia* complaint board of directors maintain an independence service

Stock exchange

Bahrain Stock Exchange (BSE)

Banking and insurance

In 2008 there were some 370 offshore banking units and representative offices in Bahrain, as well as 32 Islamic commercial, investment and leasing banks. Bahrain reportedly has the largest concentration of Islamic financial institutions, including *takaful* (insurance) companies, in the Middle East. The Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) has full regulations for its Islamic banking community.

An agreement was reached between Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar to establish the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) Monetary Council to be established (originally in 2009), marking plans to set up a regional central bank, to be based in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia). The GCC Monetary Council will oversee the introduction of a monetary union, due to be in operation by 2013.

Central bank

Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) replaced the Bahrain Monetary Agency on 7 September 2006. It is responsible for maintaining monetary and financial stability.

Main financial centre

Manama

Time

GMT plus three hours

Geography

Bahrain is an archipelago of 33 islands. Only three of the islands are inhabited. The main island of Bahrain contains most of the population and is linked by a causeway to the island of Muharraq. Another causeway links Bahrain to Saudi Arabia.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Summer temperatures are hot and humid, reaching 49 degrees Celsius (C) in the shade, while January, the coldest winter month, has temperatures ranging from 3 degrees C to 28 degrees C. Humidity, particularly on the coast, can be extreme. Between December and the end of March the climate is temperate, with temperatures ranging between 19–25 degrees C.

Dress codes

A lightweight suit or lightweight jacket and trousers are advised. A long-sleeved shirt with a tie should be worn at business and official meetings but a jacket need not be

worn. Women should dress modestly.

However, bikinis may be worn on certain beaches and at international hotel swimming pools. The dress code for women is less severe than in Saudi Arabia or some other Islamic countries.

Entry requirements

Passports

Passports are required by all.

Visa

Visas are required by all except nationals of Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

For details of requirements for business and tourist visas visit:

www.bahrainembassy.org/visareq.html.

Tourist visas can be obtained on arrival at Bahrain airport, business visas must be applied for in advance. Journalists must make prior arrangements with the Ministry of Information.

Women arriving in Bahrain alone and without a visa could be refused entry.

Lone female travellers are advised to obtain a visa before departure.

A new visa system (similar to the European Schengen agreement) allowing multiply entry for foreigners to the six Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries was introduced in November 2012.

Prohibited entry

Israeli nationals or anyone holding a passport with an Israeli visa/stamp may be denied entry.

Currency advice/regulations

Any currency, including Bahraini, may be freely imported and exported.

Customs

Personal effects are duty free. The duty free allowance is 400 cigarettes or 50 cigars and two bottles of alcoholic beverages, for non-Muslim passengers only, and 227ml of perfume for personal use. Jewellery, drugs, firearms and ammunition are subject to import permits.

Prohibited imports

Pornographic and obscene literature and pictures, cultured or undrilled pearls, and goods of Israeli origin are prohibited.

Health (for visitors)

Medical services in Bahrain are of high quality with a good general hospital in Manama and modern health centres in smaller communities. Medical insurance is advised. Consultations are offered at the American Mission Hospital, 133 Isa Al-Kabeer Avenue, Manama (tel: 17-253-447; internet: www.amh.org.bh).

Mandatory precautions

Yellow fever certificate, for visitors arriving from infected areas.

Advisable precautions

Recommended immunisations are hepatitis A and B, polio, tetanus and typhoid.

There is a risk of rabies.

Hotels

There are plenty of first class hotels. A 12 per cent service charge is usual. Major hotels and most restaurants are licensed.

Credit cards

All major credit cards are accepted.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 16–17 Dec (National Day).

Variable dates

Eid al Adha (three days), Eid al Fitr (three days), Islamic New Year, Ashura, Prophet's Birthday.

Islamic year 1435 (5 Nov 2013–24

Oct 2014):: The Islamic year has 354 or 355 days, with the result that Muslim feasts advance by 10–12 days against the Gregorian calendar each year. Dates of the Muslim feasts vary according to sightings of the new moon, so cannot be forecast exactly.

Working hours

Thursday and Friday are weekly holidays. Regular hours are subject to change during the month of Ramadan. Some banks and businesses close on Saturday.

Banking

Sat–Wed: 0730–1200; Thu: 0730–1100; some branches are open three days weekly in the afternoon; some offshore banking units close on Sunday; 1000–1330 during Ramadan.

Business

Sat–Thu: 0800–1530 or 0800–1300, 1500–1730.

Government

Sat–Tue: 0700–1415; Wed: 0700–1400. During Ramadan government offices open 0930–1430.

Shops

Sat–Thu: 0830–1230, 1530–1830; large superstores are open Sat–Thu: 0800–1900; late opening Wed and Thu: 0800–1200, 1530–2130; some are open for a few hours on Fri in the Souk.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

GSM 900/1800 services are available throughout the country.

Electricity supply

230V 50 cycles AC everywhere except Awali, which has 120V 60 cycles; various types of plug fitting, normally three-pin flat.

Weights and measures

Metric system (local measures are also used).

Social customs/useful tips

Traditionally much time is spent in exchanging small talk at business meetings; embarking on business matters before the atmosphere is favourable may cause

offence. Decisions are often taken by consensus, according to the Arabian tradition, rather than exclusively on the advantages and disadvantages of the case submitted. In business, it is essential to create a mood of trust and to be persistent even when the case is apparently lost. Always shake hands on meeting and leaving. You may find the handshake lasts longer than in the West, but this is a sign of friendship. If you have made a good impression, the handshake on departure will be longer than that on arrival. Muslims pray five times a day although shops and offices do not close during prayer. Although alcohol is not forbidden by law, like pork, it is forbidden by Islam and should be consumed with discretion. It is polite to avoid eating, drinking or smoking in the presence of Muslims during daylight hours in the month of Ramadan (it is illegal to do so in public). Unless addressing members of the royal family normal Western forms of address and greeting are usual. Everyone, including the visitor, is subject to *sharia* (Islamic law) although it is less rigorously applied than in some other Islamic countries.

Security

Visitors to Bahrain should keep in touch with developments in the Middle East as any increase in regional tension might affect travel advice.

It is advisable to avoid village areas, especially after dark. Local security precautions, religious and social sensitivities should be observed and respected.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Gulf Air (100 per cent owned by Bahrain since May 2007).

International airport/s: Bahrain International, Muharraq (BAH), 6.5km north-east of city, with bar, restaurant, buffet, bank, shops, hotel reservations.

Airport tax: International departures BD3; not applicable for transit passengers.

Surface

Road: The Saudi-Bahrain Causeway links Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

Water: There are passenger ferries running between Iran and Bahrain; the trip takes about 16 hours each way. There is a port tax of BD3.

Main port/s: Mina Sulman, Mina Manama and Mina Muharraq.

Getting about

National transport

Road: Bahrain's road network is fairly good. There are good tarmac roads between centres, and six-lane highways form a ring road by-pass system for Manama and Muharraq.

Buses: A national bus company provides public transport throughout the populated areas of the country.

Rail: There are no railways in Bahrain.

Water: Dhow trips are arranged most weekends to sand bars and nearby islands from the old wharf (Mina Manama) on King Faisal Road. Boat trips to neighbouring islands are frequently arranged on Friday and publicised in the local press.

City transport

It is easy to cover both Manama and Muharraq on foot, though renting a car will make it easier to get to farther-flung locations.

Taxis: Taxis (with orange side wings and black-on-yellow number plates) are plentiful and fares are regulated. Fares are by meter and only vary when coming from the airport or when travelling by night. Taxis are readily available for the 6.5km journey from Bahrain International airport to Manama, for which there is a charge in addition to the meter reading. Recommended fares from the airport are displayed outside the arrivals terminal. Shared taxis or 'pick-ups' can be hailed from any bus stop. They do not use meters. Fares vary depending on the destination, but are lower than standard taxi fares. However, they can be very cramped and uncomfortable. The 'pick-ups' have white and orange number plates, and a yellow circle with the licence number in black painted on the driver's door.

Car hire

Insurance is compulsory and international driving licences must be validated at the Ministry of Interior Traffic Headquarters before use in Bahrain. Car hire firms are listed in the local telephone directory, and it is generally recommended to compare prices. Driving is on the right. Seatbelts are compulsory for both the driver and front seat passenger, and young children must be seated in the back. Road signs are in English and Arabic. The maximum speed limit on highways is 100kph, and on inner city roads it is generally between 50–80kph. If an accident occurs, the vehicle must not be moved until traffic police get to the scene.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY

The addresses listed below are a selection only. While World of Information makes every endeavour to check these addresses, we cannot guarantee that changes have not been made, especially to telephone numbers and area codes. We would welcome any corrections.

Telephone area codes

The international direct dialling code (IDD) for Bahrain is +973 followed by subscriber's number.

Useful telephone numbers

Emergency service: 999
Directory enquiries: 181
International enquiries: 191
International bookings: 151
Operator: 100
Time in Arabic: 141
Time in English: 140
Telephone faults: 121

Chambers of Commerce

Bahrain Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Bld 122, Road 1605, Block 216, PO Box 248, Manama (tel: 17-229-555; fax 17-224-985; email: bastaki@bahrainchamber.org.bh; internet: www.bahrainchamber.org.bh/english/index.htm)

Banking

Ahli United Bank Bahrain, 126 Government Avenue, PO Box 5941, Manama (tel: 17-221-700; fax: 17-224-322; e-mail: info@ahliunited.com).

Al Baraka Islamic Bank, PO Box 1882, Manama (tel: 17-535-300; fax: 17-533-993; e-mail: baraka@batelco.com.bh).

Arab Banking Corporation, ABC Tower, Diplomatic Area, PO Box 5698, Manama (tel: 17-543-000; fax: 17-533-163; e-mail: webmaster@arabbanking.com; internet: www.arabbanking.com).

Bahrain Development Bank, PO Box 20501, Manama (tel: 17-537-007; fax: 17-534-005).

Bahrain Islamic Bank, Al Salam Tower, Diplomatic Area, PO Box 5240, Manama (tel: 17-535-888; fax: 17-535-707; e-mail: bahisi@batelco.com.bh).

Bahraini Saudi Bank, PO Box 1159, Manama (tel: 17-211-010; fax: 17-210-989; e-mail: helpdesk@bahrainisaudibank.com).

Bank of Bahrain & Kuwait, 43 Government Avenue, PO Box 597, Manama (tel: 17-223-388; fax: 17-229-822; e-mail: bbkonline@batelco.com.bh).

First Islamic Investment Bank EC, PO Box 1406, Manama (tel: 17-218-333; fax: 17-217-555).

Gulf International Bank, PO Box 1017, Al-Dowali Building, 3 Palace Avenue, Manama (tel: 17-534-000; fax: 17-522-633; e-mail: info@gibbah.com; internet site: <http://www.gibonline.com>).

National Bank of Bahrain, PO Box 106, Manama (tel: 17-228-800; fax: 17-228-998; e-mail: nbb@nbbonline.com).

TAIB Bank, Sehl Centre, Diplomatic Area, PO Box 20485, Manama (tel: 17-533-334; fax: 17-533-174; e-mail: taib@taib.com).

Central bank

Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB), King Faisal Highway, Diplomatic Area, Block 317, Road 1702, Building 96, PO Box 27, Manama (tel: 17-535-535; fax: 17-533-342; web: www.cbb.gov.bh).

Stock exchange

Bahrain Stock Exchange (BSE), www.bahrainstock.com

Travel information

Bahrain International Airport, PO Box 586, Manama (tel: 17-321-151; fax: 17-324-096).

Bahrain Tourism Company, PO Box 5831, Manama (tel: 17-534-321; fax: 17-531-353; e-mail: btc@alseyaha.com).

Gulf Air, PO Box 138, Manama (tel: 17-228-820; fax: 17-224-452).

Ministry of tourism

Tourism Affairs, Ministry of Information, PO Box 26613, Manama (tel: 17-201-203; fax: 17-211-717; e-mail: btour@bahraintourism.com).

Ministries

Ministry of Cabinet Affairs, PO Box 26141, Manama (tel: 17-731-544; fax: 17-731-863).

Ministry of Commerce and Industry, PO Box 5479, Manama (tel: 17-531-531; fax: 17-530-455; email: drmansoor@commerce.gov.bh; internet: www.commerce.gov.bh).

Ministry of Defence, PO Box 245, Manama (tel: 17-653-333; fax: 17-663-923).

Ministry of Education, PO Box 43, Manama (tel: 17-680-105; fax: 17-687-866).

Ministry of Electricity and Water, PO Box 2, Manama (tel: 17-546-666; fax: 17-533-035).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PO Box 547, Manama (tel: 17-227-555; fax: 17-212-603).

Ministry of Health, PO Box 12, Manama (tel: 17-255-555; fax: 17-252-569).

Ministry of Housing and Public Works, PO Box 5802, Manama (tel: 17-533-000; fax: 17-536-431).

Ministry of Information, PO Box 253, Manama (tel: 17-781-888; fax: 17-682-777).

Ministry of the Interior, PO Box 13, Manama (tel: 17-272-111; fax: 17-262-169).

Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs, PO Box 450, Manama (tel: 17-531-333; fax: 17-531-284).

Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, PO Box 32333, Manama (tel: 17-687-800; fax: 17-686-954).

Ministry of Municipalities and Agriculture, PO Box 53, Manama (tel: 17-226-060; fax: 17-229-666).

Ministry of Oil, PO Box 1435, Manama (tel: 17-291-511; fax: 17-293-007).

Ministry of Transport, PO Box 10325, Manama (tel: 17-534-534; fax: 17-534-041).

Prime Minister's Office, PO Box 1000, Manama (tel: 17-200-000; fax: 17-532-839).

Other useful addresses

Aluminium Bahrain (Alba), PO Box 570, Manama (tel: 17-830-000; fax: 17-830-083; e-mail: alba@alba.com.bh).

Arabian Exhibition Management, PO Box 20200, Manama (tel: 17-550-033; fax: 17-553-288; aeminfo@batelco.com.bh).

Bahrain International Exhibition Centre, PO Box 11644, Manama (tel: 17-550-111; fax: 17-553-447; e-mail: biec@batelco.com.bh).

Bahrain National Gas Company (Banagas), PO Box 29099, Manama (tel: 17-756-222; fax: 17-756-991; e-mail: bng@banagas.com.bh).

Bahrain Petroleum Company (Bapco), PO Box 25555, Awali (tel: 17-704-040; fax: 17-704-070; e-mail: info@bapco.net).

Bahrain Stock Exchange, PO Box 3203, Manama (tel: 17-261-260; fax: 17-256-362; e-mail: info@bahrainstock.com).

Central Municipal Council, PO Box 53, Manama (tel: 17-276-060; fax: 17-263-666).

Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura), PO Box 2991 Manama (tel: 17-714-422; fax: 17-715-715).

Customs Directorate, PO Box 15, Manama (tel: 17-725-333; fax: 17-725-534).

Ports Directorate, PO Box 453, Manama (tel: 17-725-555; fax: 17-725-534).

National news agency: Bahrain News Agency, (tel: 689-044; fax: 683-825; email: news@bahrain.gov.bh; internet: www.bna.bh).

Internet sites

Arab Net: www.arab.net

Arabia OnLine: www.arabia.com

Bahrain Economic Development Board: www.bahrainedb.com

Bahrain Financial Harbour: www.bfharbour.com/html.index.html

Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance: www.bibf.com

Bahrain Islamic International Rating Agency (IIRA): www.iirating.com.

Bahrain Ministry of Finance and National Economy: www.mofne.gov.bh

Bahrain Promotions and Marketing Board: www.bpmb.com

Gulf business explorer: www.igulf.com/main.htm