

Tehran, Iran

The capital city of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Tehran began as a small city of 15,000 inhabitants in 1788. Since then, the population of Tehran has steadily increased due to the growth of government administration and industrial firms, as well as in-migration of people from other cities and rural areas seeking employment.

The population of the urban centre grew from 1.04 million in 1950 to an estimated 6.8 million in 1995.

Tehran is an important industrial and commercial centre. As of 1988, more than half of the manufactured goods of the Islamic Republic of Iran were produced in Tehran. Industrial plants manufacture such items as textiles, cements, sugar, china and pottery, electrical equipment and pharmaceuticals. There is also an automobile assembly industry. Government administration is an important source of employment. According to the 1986 census, 45.6% of wage and salary earners were in the public sector.

After the 1979 revolution and during the war between the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, industrial development and construction works in the city slowed considerably and resulted in lower in-migration.

The rapid growth of the city has resulted in housing shortages, pollution and traffic congestion. In recent years, air pollution in Tehran has emerged as an area of serious concern. The greatest percentage of air pollution comes from private automobile emissions.

In order to alleviate the increasing problems of urban transport and associated air pollution, the Municipality of Tehran has initiated a number of efforts, namely a trolley bus system, the implementation of separate bus lanes to increase efficiency, trucking restrictions, multi-story parking structures, the opening of the metro system, and an electronic traffic control system.

Tehran currently suffers from an inadequate supply of water to meet the needs of the expanding city. Likewise, the provision of sewage facilities remains unsatisfactory to the demand, and most human waste is discharged untreated into the ground or watercourse, increasing the hazards of contamination.

The Government of Tehran has been pursuing a program of decentralization. To facilitate decentralization from Tehran, the plan envisages equipping a selected number of large cities to serve as regional centres that would increasingly perform the functions of the capital city. It is hoped that this plan will absorb the surplus population of Tehran. The main idea is to narrow the gap between rural and urban areas in terms of their access to social and commercial services.