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Research Dossier: Iran

Geographic Region (ITU/UN)

Asia & Pacific
Southern Asia

Currency

IRR

ISO 3166 Code

IR

MCC

432

Calling Code

+98

ITU Member

Yes

ITU-R Region

Region-3



Overview

Iran (■■■■■), also known as Persia, officially the Islamic Republic of Iran, is a sovereign state in Western Asia. Iran is bordered to the northwest by Armenia, the *de facto* independent Republic of Artsakh, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and the Azerbaijani exclave of Nakhchivan; to the northeast by Turkmenistan; to the east by Afghanistan and Pakistan; and to the west by Turkey and Iraq.

Cellular mobile communications began in 1994 in Tehran through the use of a network of 176 transmitters and receiver (BTS) providing 9200 cell phone numbers. After several years and with rapidly increasing demand for mobile services, TCI (Telecommunications Company of Iran) was forced to expand both coverage and capacity. The Mobile Communication Affairs Division of TCI, later named MCI was responsible for network roll out. Considering such high demand, the state telecommunication company has taken steps forward towards development of mobile network and by the end of 2004 the numbers of subscribers reached 3,450,000.

Noting Iran's monopolistic mobile market, MCI being the incumbent, a second mobile network (MTN Irancell) was launched after an international tender. The move to break the monopoly was according to the implementation of the Third Economic, Social and Cultural National Development Plan. According to the Article 124 of that plan, Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) held a tender for the second mobile operator in November 2003. This was done to promote foreign investment, encourage local private sector participation, and enhance competition. After completing the tender formalities and reviewing the tenders, MCIT announced Irancell consortium as the winner of the tender for the second mobile operator on 16 February 2004. Irancell was granted the Mobile (GSM) Communications Network and Services License by MCIT on 27 November 2005. The license was granted as on a national basis and includes the overall geographical coverage of Iran.

In 2007 a third mobile license was awarded to RighTel which would launch 3G mobile services for the first time in Iran. RighTel is a subsidiary of the Social Security Investment Company (SSIC), the investment branch of the Social Security Organization (SSO), the largest non-government investment company in Iran. It would take until 2014 for MCI and Irancell to deploy 3G services in competition with RighTel, due to a technology exclusivity provided by the Communication Regulation Agency (CRA).

Irancell was first to launch 4G LTE services in November 2014, with both MCI and RighTel following suit in 2015. With the removal of UN sanctions in 2015 LTE technology has advanced quickly in Iran, with Irancell first to launch LTE-A services in 2017 achieving live peak data rates in excess of 1.2 Gbps.

Iran is a member of the ITU and as such follows radio frequency harmonisation principles according to ITU-R [Region-3](#). The regulatory body governing communications policy is the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology (MICT), and the Communications Regulatory Authority (CRA) is charged with regulating the country's radio frequency spectrum activities such as planning, allocations, and licencing.

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