
DOING BUSINESS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

INTRODUCTION:

This section is an adjunct to the individual Middle East country profiles and addresses a variety of aspects of doing business in the Middle East.

Conducting profitable business operations in a foreign and different culture can at times be frustrating, confusing and discouraging. On the other hand, knowing something of how your partners or associates and clients approach issues both commercial and societal can help relieve some of the uncertainty and anxiety and can improve your business opportunities.

This section will deal with some of the more important areas that can assist in understanding the region.

ISLAM AND THE ROLE IT PLAYS IN BUSINESS:

It is impossible to effect meaningful business relationships in the Middle East without some understanding and knowledge of Islam.

Islam, one of the world's great monotheistic religions, began to attract large numbers of followers in the early years of the seventh century. The spread of Islam was very rapid and within a century had spread to Spain and as far east as China. The religion continued to grow in popularity and adherents and by the golden age of the Arab world (10th - 12th centuries) had become firmly established as one of the world's great religions.

Today, for a fifth of the world's population (approx. 1 billion followers) who are Muslim, Islam is both a religion and a complete way of life. For Muslims, Islam provides a framework of life and society. It is a simple, personal, religion of peace, mercy and forgiveness.

Muslims believe God's final message to man was revealed to the prophet Mohammed and recorded in the Quran. From the Quran as well as from the traditions of the Prophet (Hadith), Muslims derive their law, morality and forms of worship.

In Islam the spiritual and temporal world are not separated. Rules for man's spiritual and temporal behaviour are clearly laid down in the Quran and the Hadith. Certain fundamental obligations are imposed on the believer.