



# INTRODUCTION

## OVERVIEW: GENERAL

INDIA is one of the oldest civilizations in the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. India is the largest democracy in the world, with a population of over 1 billion people and is the seventh largest country with a landmass of 3.29 million sq.km. It has 28 States and 7 Union Territories, with each part of the country offering distinctive cultural and commercial opportunities.

India has achieved multifaceted socio-economic progress during the last 62 years of its Independence. It became self-sufficient in agricultural production in the 1970s, and is now the tenth most industrialized country in the world and the sixth nation to have gone into outer space. It has vast natural resources, skilled workforce, diversified industrial base, and advances in knowledge-based industries that provide tremendous opportunities for foreign companies for forging economic and business ties.



## GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION AND CLIMATE

India extends from the snow-covered Himalayan mountains to the tropical rain forests of the south. The country straddles the head of the Indian Ocean, adjoining both the Arabian Sea on the west and the Bay of Bengal on the east. India stands at the centre of the Asian landmass, uniquely positioned with proximity to the sub-regions of West Asia, Central Asia, and South East Asia.

The countries bordering India include China, Bhutan and Nepal to the north, Afghanistan and Pakistan to the north-west, Myanmar to the east, and Bangladesh to the east of West Bengal. Sri Lanka is separated from India by a narrow channel of sea, formed by Palk Strait and the Gulf of Mannar.

India and Malaysia share common space as littoral states of the Indian Ocean. The Andaman Sea adjoins both land masses.

The climate of India can broadly be classified as a tropical monsoon one. But, in spite of much of the northern part of India lying beyond



the tropical zone, the entire country has a tropical climate marked by relatively high temperatures and dry winters. There are four seasons - winter (December-February), (ii) summer (March-June), (iii) south-west monsoon season (July-September), and (iv) post monsoon season (October- November).

Temperatures can drop to below 0 degree centigrade in north India during the winter, and soar as high as 45 degrees in summer. It is therefore advisable to be apprised of weather conditions while taking clothes for the visit. Warm woollens are needed in winter in north India as most buildings are not centrally heated. Visitors should also be prepared for heavy showers during the monsoon season from July to September in most of the country.

## PEOPLE AND GOVERNMENT

The population of India is 1028 million as per the 2001 Census. All races are present in the country. A large diversity is to be found in cultures, habits, religions, cuisines, languages, etc.

Poverty continues to be a challenge in India as about 22% of the population is under the official poverty line. India ranks 121 on the UN Human Development Index.

India, a Union of States, is a sovereign, secular, democratic Republic with a parliamentary system of Government. The President is the constitutional head or Executive of the Union. In the States, the Governor, as the representative of the President, is the head of Executive. The system of government in states closely resembles that of the Union. There are 28 states and 7 Union territories in the country. Union Territories are administered by the President through an Administrator appointed by him.

The roles of the Central Government and the State governments are clearly demarcated by the Constitution of India, with important areas being under the administration of the latter.

As a peaceful and stable democracy, India holds general elections every five years to elect the members of Parliament. The last General Elections were held in April-May 2009, and the ruling coalition United Progressive Alliance with the Congress Party as the single largest party returned to government.

India is a Commonwealth country and as such, enjoys many characteristics in common with Malaysia, in administrative system, education systems, legal system, English language, etc.

## RELIGION

Freedom of religion is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of India. According to the 2001 census, out of the total population of 1028 million in the country, Hindus constituted the majority with 80.5%, Muslims came second at 13.4%, followed by Christians (2.3 per cent), Sikhs (1.9 per cent), Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and others.

There are about 150 million Muslims in India, making it the second largest Muslim population in the world. They are distributed all over the country with their own unique culture and identity. India is thus sensitive to Islamic needs such as halal food.

## LANGUAGE

India's most distinctive feature is its diverse languages and dialects. The Indian Constitution recognizes 22 languages as national languages. Hindi, the most widely spoken language, is the official language of the Union of India. English is also recognized as an official language and is the language of the executive, legislative and judicial institutions of the Union of India. It is widely used all over the country. At the state level, regional languages are the official languages of the states concerned.

Tamil is the mother-tongue of residents of the southern State of Tamil Nadu and adjoining areas. Many Tamil speakers work in regions around the country.





## INDIA AT A GLANCE



Country Name	Republic of India; Bharat Ganarajya
Capital	New Delhi
National Days	15 August (Independence Day)
	26 January (Republic Day)
	2 October (Birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation)
Government Type	India is Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. It has a bicameral Parliament at Union level. Three branches of Government at the Union and State level are the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary.'
Land Area	3.29 million sq. km.
Population	1028 million (2001 census)
Life Expectancy	64 years (males); 67 years (females) (As of 2005)
Literacy rate	65.38 (2001 census)
International Airports	New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi (Cochin), Hyderabad, Bangalore, Amritsar, Ahmedabad, Goa, Guwahati
Major Ports	Mumbai, JNPT, New Mangalore, Kandla, Paradip, Tuticorin, Vishakhapatnam, Kolkata, Chennai, Ennore, Cochin, Marmugao
Natural Resources	Coal, iron ore, manganese ore, mica, bauxite, petroleum, titanium ore, chromite, natural gas, magnesite, limestone, arable land, dolomite, barytes, kaolin, gypsum, apatite, phosphorite, steatite and fluorite.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**Time:** GMT+5 ½ hours; 2 ½ hours behind Malaysia time

**Currency:** Indian rupees; RM 1 is approximately equal to Rs. 13.9; Rs. 100 is approximately equal to RM 7.2

**Country IDD code:** 91

**Metro Cities with STD Code:** New Delhi (11); Mumbai (22); Kolkata (33); Chennai (44); Hyderabad (40); Bengaluru (80)

**Electricity:** same as Malaysia, but adaptor plugs will be required for round-pin sockets

**Weights and measures:** metric system, same as in Malaysia

**Telephones:** public call booths are infrequent in India. However, cell phone connections are readily available and India has the cheapest cell phone rates in the world.

**Money exchange:** money exchange counters may be found at airports and major hotels. It is best to change money at the airport or at banks. Credit cards can be used in large shops. ATMs are found conveniently at major cities.

### Calendar of Holidays

Offices in India remain closed on national holidays, which are Republic Day (January 26), Independence Day (August 15) and the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi (October 2),

Apart from these national days, offices are also closed on various religious holidays. These include Id, Maha Shivratri, Muharram, Holi, Mahavir Jayanti, Prophet Mohammed's birthday, Buddha Purnima, Janamashtmi, Dusshera, Diwali and Guru Nanak's birthday. The dates for these change each year, as they are based on the Lunar Calendar.

Web links providing a list of Indian holidays are [www.holidayfestival.com](http://www.holidayfestival.com), and [www.indianholidays.com](http://www.indianholidays.com). You may like to plan your visit to India keeping the details of the holidays in mind.

