

Kyrgyzstan

KEY FACTS

Official name: Kyrgyz Respublikasy (Kyrgyz Republic)

Head of State: President Almazbek Sharshenovich Atambayev (SDPK) (took office 1 Dec 2011)

Head of government: Prime Minister Zhanotoro Satybaldiyev (from 1 Sep 2012)

Ruling party: Coalition led by Sotsial-Demokraticheskaya Partiya Kyrgyzstana (SDPK) (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan), with Respublika (Republican Party) and Ata-Zhurt (Fatherland) (from 17 Dec 2010)

Area: 198,500 square km

Population: 5.59 million (2012)*

Capital: Bishkek (formerly Frunze)

Official language: Kyrgyz, Russian

Currency: Som (S) = 100 tyin

Exchange rate: S48.84 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$1,158 (2012)*

GDP real growth: -0.90% (2012)*

GDP: US\$6.47 billion (2012)*

Labour force: 506,000 (2011)*

Unemployment: 7.74% (2012)*

Inflation: 2.77% (2012)*

Balance of trade: -US\$3.05 billion (2012)*

Annual FDI: US\$391.00 million (2011)*

* estimated figure



After two revolutions in the last eight years, in 2013 Kyrgyzstan was still – with difficulty – coming to terms with the implications of democracy. While the peaceful transfer of power in 2011 and the swift formation of a new government in 2012 laid the foundation for growth, the economy has not been able to keep up with aspirations. Low gold production meant that gross domestic product (GDP) contracted by 0.9 per cent. In 2013 growth is expected to rebound to 5.5 per cent. Meanwhile, the government will begin implementing its new Sustainable Development Strategy, 2013–17, a blueprint for building a stable society, strengthening the rule of law and improving the investment climate.

Clinging to the wreckage

In August 2012 things had looked in danger of falling apart as the coalition headed by Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov came under attack on charges of corruption. And fall apart it did, when two smaller parties defected from the coalition citing not only corruption, but also the government's failure to deal with Kyrgyzstan's economic problems. President Almazbek Atambayev's efforts to put together a new government did little to suggest that he was bent on implementing greater transparency. The fact that he asked his own Sotsial-Demokraticheskaya Partiya Kyrgyzstana

(SDPK) (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan), to lead attempts to form a new government did not suggest that the process was being opened up. A weary electorate did not expect a new coalition to offer much by way of change. The same vested interests were expected to continue to call Kyrgyzstan's political shots.

Kyrgyzstan's geography does little to give it a national peace of mind. Claiming to be the home of the apple and the walnut (both grow wild in Kyrgyzstan's mountains) the former Soviet satellite borders international heavyweights such as China and high risk countries such as Afghanistan as well as its fellow ex-USSR sub-states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. In the twenty years since 1991 and freedom from Soviet rule, Kyrgyzstan's domestic politics have hardly been stable or even benevolent. To make matters worse, Kyrgyzstan finds itself pulled in different directions by its own minority ethnic groups, notably a number of Uzbek enclaves. Added to the mix is Kyrgyzstan's almost unique international position of playing host to both US and Russian air bases. However important Kyrgyzstan may be to the global powers, both the US and Russia were less than forthcoming in providing aid and assistance in June 2010 as thousands of Kyrgyzstan's ethnic Uzbek's were forced to flee the country.

Not only is Kyrgyzstan divided geographically by its high mountain ranges.

There are ethnic divisions as well, although to the outside world these had not appeared to be on the brink of violence. The larger part of Kyrgyzstan's estimated 800,000 Uzbeks live in the southern part of the country, to the west of Osh and centred on Andijan. In the fertile Fergana valley, Uzbeks are generally thought to be in a majority. One of the few advantages of Soviet rule had been the tight grip maintained by the (essentially Russian) troop presence.

Northern Kyrgyzstan was, and still is, the most distinctly Russian part of the country. In 2005 Kyrgyzstan experienced its first post Soviet revolution with the toppling of the country's Soviet placeman president, Askar Akayev. He was replaced by Kurmanbek Bakiyev who turned out not to be much of an improvement. Mr Bakiyev followed in what had now become a Kyrgyz tradition of extending presidential powers and self enrichment.

The economy

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) GDP declined during 2012 as adverse geological factors affected gold production. Despite some recovery in gold output toward the end of the year and 5.0 per cent growth in other sectors, real GDP contracted by 0.9 per cent. All sectors except gold and agriculture showed robust gains in 2012, reflecting growing public confidence. Agricultural growth was hurt by a poor grain harvest. Industrial output fell by 13.8 per cent, reflecting a 27.2 per cent drop in manufacturing, which reflected in turn the decline in gold output and lower production of machinery and equipment. Growth in other key manufacturing subsectors averaged a robust 6.1 per cent, driven by higher domestic consumption. Output of textiles grew by 12.5 per cent and chemical production by 22.7 per cent, to supply growing trade with the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. Mining output grew by 22.5 per cent, reflecting higher extraction of coal, basalt and other minerals. Construction grew by 17.3 per cent, following the sluggish 2.5 per cent growth of 2011, because of large investments in new buildings and repairs to existing structures.

The ADB noted that in 2012 agriculture had grown only by 1.2 per cent, less than the 1.9 per cent rise in 2011. Lower productivity and adverse weather caused a 10.0 per cent decline in the grain harvest, which was offset by 2.4 per cent growth in livestock production. Services, which

provide half of GDP, grew strongly for the second consecutive year, by 6.2 per cent. The strongest gains were in transportation at 8.9 per cent, trade 10.5 per cent and hotels and restaurants 11.7 per cent, reflecting higher consumer demand and improved cross-border trade. On the demand side, private consumption is estimated to have grown by more than 6 per cent, as higher employment, wage increases averaging 16.5 per cent and a rise in remittances exceeding 17.0 per cent fuelled an 11.0 per cent increase in retail sales.

Investment expanded by 21.5 per cent, including a 30.2 per cent rise in gross fixed capital formation, following the 3.1 per cent investment decline in 2011. The increases, all in the private sector, reflected gains in energy, mining, processing and trade but were partly offset by declines in communications, transport infrastructure and housing. Government investment shrank by 4.8 per cent, as austerity measures aimed to reduce lower priority spending. Net exports declined, as export volumes fell by 13.1 per cent while import volumes grew by 26.6 per cent. Measured as a year average, inflation slowed significantly to 2.8 per cent from 16.6 per cent in 2011, with a 3.9 per cent decline in food prices largely offsetting a 10.1 per cent rise in other prices. Inflation rose slightly during the second half of the year led by higher prices for wheat, which caused the 12-month (December over December) inflation rate to reach 7.5 per cent, above the comparable rate of 5.7 per

cent for 2011. Despite improved tax collection, rapid growth in social expenditures caused the budget deficit to widen to 6.6 per cent of GDP from 4.8 per cent in 2011. Government revenue rose to 28.6 per cent of GDP from 27.2 per cent in 2011, reflecting growth aside from gold and improved tax administration. However, higher wages, pensions and spending on energy infrastructure caused expenditures to rise to 35.2 per cent of GDP from 31.9 per cent in 2011. Public debt, equivalent to 47.9 per cent of GDP at the end of 2012, rose slightly from 45.6 per cent of GDP in 2011 but was far below the 55.2 per cent of 2010, partly because of agreements reached with Turkey and the Russian Federation to write off debt. The agreement with the Russian Federation, ratified in November 2012, provided for the immediate write-off of US\$189 million in debt and the phased write-off of the remaining US\$300 million over 10 years starting in 2016.

Extensive dollarisation in the Kyrgyz Republic and a shallow financial sector limit the impact of monetary policy. During 2012 the National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic (central bank) relaxed monetary policy as inflation slowed, steadily lowering the policy rate over the year from 13.6 per cent at the beginning to 2.6 per cent at year-end, in line with declining core inflation and growing confidence in the banking sector. The average deposit rate rose slightly, to 5.4 per cent from 4.9 per cent in 2011, while the lending rate fell to 23.0 per cent from 23.8 per cent in 2011.

KEY INDICATORS

Kyrgyzstan

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	5.31	*5.37	*5.44	*5.51	*5.59
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	5.13	4.68	4.79	5.92	*6.47
GDP per capita	US\$	966	864	875	1,070	*1,158
GDP real growth	%	7.6	-0.5	-0.5	5.7	*-0.9
Inflation	%	24.5	6.8	7.8	16.6	*2.8
Unemployment	%	8.2	8.4	8.6	7.9	*7.7
Industrial output	% change	7.6	-0.3	0.6	-	-
Agricultural output	% change	0.7	6.7	-2.8	-	-
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	1,846.9	1,700.4	1,782.6	2,271.2	*1,920.6
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	3,753.5	2,813.6	2,980.9	3,935.9	*4,966.5
Balance of trade	US\$m	-1,906.6	1,113.2	-1,198.3	-1,664.7	*-3,045.9
Current account	US\$m	-413.0	30.0	-269.8	-371.0	*-822.0
Total reserves minus gold	US\$m	1,152.9	1,494.0	1,603.6	1,827.8	*1,903.2
Foreign exchange	US\$m	1,097.6	1,331.9	1,431.9	1,652.8	*1,717.3
Exchange rate	per US\$	36.57	46.65	45.96	46.55	47.25
* estimated figure						

During 2012, the deposit base grew by 36.1 per cent and credit to the economy grew by 26.2 per cent. The share of non-performing loans at year-end fell again to 7.2 per cent in 2012 from 10.2 per cent in 2011 and 15.8 per cent in 2010. The value of the Kyrgyz som remained relatively stable against the US dollar but depreciated slightly during the second half of the year, sliding from Som46.69 to the dollar in January to Som47.40 by 31 December 2012. The central bank intervened in the foreign exchange market only to smooth short-term fluctuations.

The external current account deficit was estimated to have widened to 20.9 per cent of GDP from 6.1 per cent in 2011, reflecting lower export volumes and a slight fall in gold prices. The trade deficit is estimated to have increased significantly, to US\$3.0 billion, as higher purchases of gasoline and diesel fuel caused imports to rise by 26.2 per cent, while exports fell by 13.1 per cent, mainly reflecting lower gold exports. Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) remained the Kyrgyz Republic's largest trading partners. Remittances rose to US\$1.8 billion from US\$1.5 billion in 2011, reflecting positive developments in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. Investment inflows rose by 26.7 per cent, largely reflecting new investments in the energy sector and elsewhere. Gross international reserves climbed by 12.7 per cent to US\$2.1 billion. Growth was expected to rebound to 5.5 per cent in 2013 and 4.5 per cent in 2014 on the back of higher gold production and investments, mainly from the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China, in energy and transport infrastructure projects. However, gold output could fall below expectations if the political environment deteriorates, weakening investment incentives. The restoration of public confidence and greater political stability should raise domestic demand, spurring growth in the private sector apart from gold. Good economic conditions in the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan are likely to promote growth by generating higher remittances and external demand. Reform in state governance also holds promise.

The service sector looked set to remain the major source of economic expansion for the immediate future, with growth expected at 5.0 per cent each year. Transportation and communications should continue to perform well, as major road networks and energy infrastructure are rehabilitated and communication networks expanded. Industry is expected to grow by

10.0 per cent each year, with metals and metallurgy the main drivers, gold remaining the principal output and gold and energy showing the highest growth rates. Inflation is expected to rise to 7.5 per cent for the whole of 2013 with the rebound in gold output and infrastructure investments in the energy sector and then ease to 5.5 per cent in 2014. Substantial price rises are not expected for food, which – according to the ADB – occupied 45 per cent of the consumer price index, given current forecasts for declining global food prices.

The fiscal deficit should narrow to 5.5 per cent of GDP in 2013 and 4.0 per cent in 2014 as gold-related tax revenues rise. The government is committed to fiscal consolidation in the medium term and will be guided by conservative revenue forecasts, restrained expenditure on low priority items and social considerations. Total revenue is expected to increase to 33.0 per cent of GDP, as improving tax administration remains high on the government's agenda. Total expenditure is expected to rise to 38.3 per cent of GDP, reflecting lower current expenditure but higher capital spending.

Future pension increases will continue to be tied to changes in the income officially deemed necessary for subsistence. Monetary policy is expected to remain cautious as the central bank works to absorb any excess liquidity caused by government spending. The central bank was likely to raise interest rates if inflation rises, as expected. Nominal interest rates are expected to stay in the 13.0–15.0 per cent range, helping the som to appreciate during 2013. The current account balance is forecast to improve, with rapid export growth narrowing the deficit to 7.0 per cent of GDP in 2013 and further to 5.0 per cent in 2014.

Trade should benefit from anticipated accession into the customs union with Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation in 2014, though trade may fall initially with countries outside the union. Foreign direct investment inflows will depend largely on the government implementing its proposed structural reform and improvements to the investment climate.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Fair
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1700s–1800s After being invaded by the Arabs, Mongols and the Chinese,

Kyrgyzstan was ruled by the Khanate of Kokand (part of modern-day Uzbekistan). 1876 Tsarist troops conquered Kokand and incorporated Kyrgyzstan into the Russian Empire.

1916–17 Following the suppression of rebellion in Central Asia against Russian rule and the outbreak of civil war after the October Revolution in Russia, many Kyrgyz crossed the eastern border into China.

1918 Parts of Kyrgyzstan were absorbed into Russian-controlled Turkestan.

1920s–30s Soviet nationalities policy under the direction of Joseph Stalin saw Soviet rule enforced from Moscow by Red Army troops who put down Muslim revolts throughout Central Asia after the Russian civil war. All arable and grazing lands were consolidated into large state-owned farms, upsetting the traditional Kyrgyz way of life, based on nomadic livestock-herding. The Kyrgyz Communist Party was established as the sole legal party.

1924 Kyrgyzstan was designated the Kara-Kyrgyz Autonomous Region (re-named Kyrgyz Autonomous Region in 1925) and absorbed into the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR). 1926 The Kyrgyz Autonomous Region was upgraded to an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).

1936 Kyrgyzstan became a constituent republic within the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

1940s–80s Kyrgyzstan was an important source of raw materials to the Soviet Union.

1990 Leaders of the Kyrgyz Communist Party opposed changes to the Soviet constitution as they would have allowed non-Communist parties to take part in political life. The Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations rioted in ethnically-divided Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan and a state of emergency was declared after several hundred people were killed. Askar Akayev, a liberal academic on the reform wing of the Kyrgyz Communist Party, was elected by the legislature to the newly created post of president of the Kyrgyz Socialist Republic.

1991 Kyrgyzstan was the first Central Asian republic to declare independence from the USSR. Akayev stood alone in the country's presidential elections. Kyrgyzstan joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

1992 An economic reform programme was launched. Kyrgyzstan joined the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, the predecessor of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); 1993 Kyrgyzstan adopted its first post-Soviet constitution allowing for a parliamentary system of government. The som

replaced the rouble as the unit of currency.

1994 Akayev won a resounding referendum victory, giving him the mandate to make the legislature a bicameral body. Uzbekistan signed an economic, military and social co-operation treaty with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

1995 Akayev was re-elected for a second five-year term.

1996 A referendum gave the president the authority to appoint all top officials; parliamentary approval is only required for prime ministerial candidates.

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed to create a single economic market.

1998 Constitutional changes were approved to change former communist farm collectives to private land ownership – the first time this was attempted by a Central Asian state. Kyrgyzstan became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the first of any former Soviet Union republics to join.

2000 President Akayev was elected for a third term, contrary to the constitution and amid allegations of electoral irregularities. The elections were followed by the harassment and imprisonment of opposition leaders and the closure of opposition newspapers. The presidents of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan (formerly the Customs Five) established the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC).

2001 Tajikistan, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan formed the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) and agreed to fight ethnic and religious militancy, while promoting investment and trade.

2002 Prime Minister Kurmanbek Bakiyev resigned and Nikolai Tanayev was named as his replacement. Opposition protesters marched in the capital, demanding the President's resignation.

2003 President Akayev's constitutional reforms, which included extending the president's term of office were endorsed by 80 per cent of voters; the opposition said they restricted civil liberties and consolidated power in the hands of the president.

Widespread voting irregularities were reported by international observers. Parliament granted President Akayev and two other Soviet era Communist leaders life-long immunity from prosecution.

2005 Numerous independent and opposition candidates were barred from standing in parliamentary elections, sparking widespread demonstrations. Protests increased during the second round of voting as demonstrators occupied government buildings and calls were made for President Akayev to resign. When protesters occupied official

buildings in the capital Akayev fled to Moscow. The supreme court cancelled the results of the elections, although later elected members took their seats. The acting president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, won a landslide victory in presidential elections. Feliks Kulov became prime minister.

2006 President Bakiyev signed a new constitution after a week of mass protests for constitutional reforms and action to combat crime and corruption. Kyrgyzstan became a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Bakiyev accepted the resignation of the entire cabinet in his long-running dispute with parliament. Parliament revised the latest constitution, reinstating some presidential powers concerning government appointments.

2007 Almazbek Atambayev became prime minister. A constitutional referendum agreed to a change in voting laws from first-past-the-post to party-list voting; it also endorsed constitutional changes, which had been invalidated by the Constitutional Court. Prime Minister Atambayev and his cabinet resigned; Iskenderbek Aidaraliyev became acting prime minister. In early parliamentary elections, the ruling Ak Zhol Eldik Partiyasy (Ak Zholor) (Bright Path Popular Party) won over 48 per cent of the vote. A presidential ruling required any political party to achieve a threshold 5 per cent of the national vote, of which 0.5 per cent of the vote had to be in every district in the country, to win seats. As no other party managed this, Ak Zholor would have had a clean sweep and taken all 90 seats. However, the Supreme Court revoked the 0.5 per cent aspect of the presidential ruling and Ata Menken Socialist Party (Fatherland Socialist Party) won several seats.

2009 Following an offer of US\$1.4 billion in aid from Russia, the president asked parliament to terminate the US lease on its Manas air base, which the Americans used to transport material and personnel into Afghanistan. In presidential elections Kurmanbek Bakiyev won overwhelmingly with 77.8 per cent of the vote. Opposition candidate Almaz Atambaev withdrew from the election citing electoral fraud. The OSCE considered the elections to be flawed. Prime Minister Igor Chudinov resigned and Daniyar Üsönöv was appointed as his replacement.

2010 After a series of mass protests throughout the country, President Bakiyev was ousted and retreated to his home in the south of the country. He initially refused to step down as president but eventually fled to Kazakhstan and resigned from there. One of the interim government's first moves was to extend the US lease on the Manas air base. Communal violence in the city of Osh between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks resulted in the killing

of 470 persons, mainly Uzbeks, and with hundreds injured. An estimated 400,000 fled into neighbouring Uzbekistan; the UN launched an aid appeal to raise US\$71 million to help the refugees. In a constitutional referendum, 90 per cent voted in favour of proposals to remove a number of presidential powers and turn the country into a parliamentary republic, with a single six-year presidential term and parliamentary elections every five years. International observers declared the referendum as 'largely transparent and peaceful'. The amendments also included a new political system to prevent concentration of power in the executive, and set a limit of 50 on the number of parliamentary members from any one political party. Under the constitution the president is banned from deriving income from any source other than the presidential salary and the president and family lost their immunity from the law and their personal lives are not subsidised by the state. Roza Otunbayeva was sworn in as interim president under the terms of the new constitution. She had the responsibility of heading a cabinet until a new government was formed in elections scheduled for later in the year. The state of emergency, imposed in the southern region was lifted. In parliamentary elections, using the newly adopted system of proportional representation from political party lists, no party won overall power and talks on a coalition government began immediately. A military court sentenced Sanzhar Bakiyev, nephew of ousted president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, to 10 years in jail for plotting rebellion. Parliament approved the new government coalition led by Sotsial-Demokraticeskaya Partiya Kyrgyzstana (SDPK) (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan), with Respublika (Republican Party) and Ata-Zhurt (Fatherland) on 17 December; Almazbek Atambayev (SDPK) became the country's first prime minister as Kyrgyzstan became Central Asia's first parliamentary republic.

2011 The Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) report into the ethnic violence in Osh in 2010 was published in May. It concluded that political fanaticism mixed with ethno-nationalism had led to the violence and that the minority Uzbek community was the overwhelming victim of attack. The report also said that there was evidence of official complicity. It also determined that some acts could be considered as crimes against humanity, but not genocide. The official response was of acceptance of the KIC, but that the report was rushed and subjective. In early July, the Criminal Code was amended, removing libel as a criminal offence, a move expected to strengthen press freedom. In a move to allow him to run for president,

Prime Minister Atambayev temporarily transferred his authority to First Deputy Prime Minister Omurbek Babanov in September. Presidential elections were held in October in which five candidates took part. Former prime minister and supporter of Russia, Almazbek Atambayev (SDPK) won an overwhelming majority with 62.9 per cent of the vote, his closest rivals Adahan Madomarov (Butun Kyrgyzstan (United Kyrgyzstan)) and Kamchybek Tashiev (Ata-Zhurt) won just over 14 per cent each. In November, Almazbek Atambayev resumed his duties as prime minister, prior to taking office as president in December when Roza Otunbayeva stepped down from the office. Omurbek Babanov was appointed as prime minister on the same day and parliament later confirmed the appointment.

2012 On 1 September Omurbek Babanov resigned as prime minister. On 5 September Zhantoro Satybaldiyev (an independent politician) took office as prime minister. In September, Kazakhstan, Russia and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement to build the Kambarata-1 hydroelectric power plant. The power station will be built in Upper Naryn (in Kyrgyzstan) and is due to be completed in 2020. On 13 October, Maksim Bakiyev, the son of former president Kurmanbek Bakiyev, was arrested in London on a provisional warrant issued by the US, alleging his involvement in a conspiracy to defraud and pervert the course of justice.

2013

Political structure Constitution

The constitution was adopted in 1993 (amended in 1998, 2003, 2007 and 2010). It defines Kyrgyzstan as a sovereign, unitary, parliamentary democratic and secular republic. All land, airspace and natural resources are the property of the state unless assigned for private usage. Discrimination on the grounds of language is forbidden. There is universal direct adult suffrage by secret ballot. There are six administrative *oblasts* (regions): Chu, Issyk-Kul, Osh, Talas, Jalal-Abad and Naryn. The capital, Bishkek, has special status and is not included in any oblast.

The 2003 constitutional amendment gave local authorities more power.

The 2007 constitutional amendment changed voting laws from first-past-the-post to party-list voting, as well as the constitutional changes, agreed in 2005, but which had been invalidated by the Constitutional Court.

The first 2010 constitutional amendment prevented authoritarianism and included a new political system that prevents concentration of power in the executive, a

limit of 50 to the number of parliamentary members any one political party may have. The president must not derive income from any source except the presidential salary. The president and his family will lose their immunity from the law and his family's personal lives will not be subsidised by the state. The status of the country was changed to a parliamentary republic, with a single six-year presidential term of office and parliamentary elections to be held every five years.

Independence date

31 August 1991

Form of state

Parliamentary republic

The executive

The president is directly elected with a single six-year presidential term of office. The constitution states that the president must be able to speak the Kyrgyz language. In 2010 executive power was ceded to parliament, under the leadership of the interim president.

National legislature

There are 120 seats in the unicameral, Jorgorku Kenesh (Supreme Council). All seats are elected by proportional representation from party lists. Seats are allocated to political parties obtaining over 5 per cent of the national vote and more than 0.5 per cent within each of the nine provinces and capped at 65 seats per party.

Legal system

The legal system is based on a civil law code. There are three ultimate legal authorities: the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the Higher Arbitration Court. All are composed of judges with a 15-year term of office who must be approved by the national legislature and the executive. The Constitutional Court rules on the constitutionality of central and local government legislation and on the validity of elections. The Supreme Court is the highest court of appeal for civil, criminal and administrative cases previously heard in oblast, district, city and military courts. The Higher Arbitration Court oversees and rules on the operation of the regional and City of Bishkek arbitration courts.

Last elections

30 October 2011 (presidential); 10 October 2010 (parliamentary)

Results: Presidential: Almazbek Atambayev (SDPK) won 62.9 per cent of the vote, Adakhan Madomarov (Butun Kyrgyzstan (United Kyrgyzstan)) 14.9 per cent, Kamchybek Tashiev (Ata-Zhurt) 14.4 per cent; 14 other candidates each won less than 1 per cent. Turnout was 57 per cent.

Parliamentary: Ata-Zhurt (Fatherland) won 16.1 per cent of the vote (28 seats out of 120), Sotsial-Demokraticeskaya Partiya

Kyrgyzstana (SDPK) (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan) 14.55 per cent (26), Ar-Namys (Dignity) 14.02 per cent (25), Respublika (Republican Party) 13.12 per cent (23), Ata-Meken (Fatherland Socialist Party) 5.6 per cent (18); over four other parties failed to win enough votes to win any seats.

Next elections

2015 (parliamentary); 2016 (presidential)

Political parties

Ruling party

Coalition led by Sotsial-Demokraticeskaya Partiya Kyrgyzstana (SDPK) (Social Democratic Party of Kyrgyzstan), with Respublika (Republican Party) and Ata-Zhurt (Fatherland) (from 17 Dec 2010)

Population

5.59 million (2012)*

Approximately 37 per cent of the population is under 14 years of age, 58 per cent 15–64 years and 5 per cent over 65.

Over 400,000 people, mostly Slavs, emigrated from Kyrgyzstan between 1990 and 2000. It is estimated that 48 per cent of the population live in poverty with about three-quarters of the total poor living in the rural areas.

Last census: March 1999: 4,822,938

Population density: 27 inhabitants per square km (2010). Urban population 35 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.0 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Kyrgyz (54.0 per cent, originally a nomadic people of Turko-Mongolian origin who still dominate in rural areas), Russians (12.0 per cent), Ukrainians (2.5 per cent), Germans (2.0 per cent), Kazakh, Uighurs and others (29.5 per cent).

Religions

Predominantly Muslim (Sunni) (70 per cent of the population). There are also Russian Orthodox and Baptist churches.

Education

Primary education lasts for three years between the ages of seven and 10. Secondary education comprises of compulsory basic secondary (five years) and non-compulsory complete secondary (two years) which gives access to higher education. Vocational education is provided by professional schools which lasts for one-and-a-half years for those with complete secondary education. There are 51 higher education institutions, of which 26 are run by the government. There are 13 non-governmental and 12 private higher education institutions.

Compulsory years: Seven to 15

Enrolment rate: 104 per cent gross primary enrolment of relevant age group (

including repeaters); 79 per cent gross secondary enrolment (World Bank).

Pupils per teacher: 20 in primary schools.

Health

The healthcare system in Kyrgyzstan continues to be based on practices developed in the Soviet era, which concentrate on primary care and are cost-inefficient. The primary health sector has been supported by international donors, including the International Development Association (IDA), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the German and Swiss governments, to resist the tide of an overall decline. Primary healthcare has slowly been re-formed, by local people identifying their own needs and devising methods to improve health generally. Despite the best efforts of local committees, a scandal in the hospital system resulted in a known 78 babies and some of their nursing mothers being infected with the HIV virus during to poor hygiene and corrupt practises in 2006. It has been recognised that the millions of dollars spent in international aid in prevention programmes in Kyrgyzstan the health system was of more danger than the disease.

A mandatory medical health insurance fund provides for 70 per cent of the population, covering 65 hospitals and 350 groups of family doctors. In-patient treatment is provided through a system of referrals throughout several levels of the system. Patients are entitled to essential drugs free of charge. Medical equipment supplies only 20 per cent of the needs of medical institutions. Kyrgyzstani clinics and hospitals use outdated equipment, 75 per cent of which needs to be replaced or upgraded. There is a shortage of affordable drugs and vaccines and most of the drugs are imported by small traders who do not conform to strict safety rules.

HIV/Aids

HIV prevalence: 0.1 per cent aged 15–49 in 2003 (World Bank)

Life expectancy: 63 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.7 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 65 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 27 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 7 per cent of children aged under five are malnourished (World Bank).

Head of population per physician: 2.51 physicians per 1,000 people, 2003 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

Like many other former Soviet countries, Kyrgyzstan has a large and complex social benefit system. Social spending, including

expenditures of the social fund, makes up 28 per cent of the government budget and 7 per cent of GDP. Although the government budget subsidises the social fund, the payroll tax and the total costs of pensions are high. Pensions are often below subsistence level and the government believes that the current pension system is financially unsustainable. It is looking at cutting costs, preferably by reducing the number of beneficiaries, and aims to move to a system with a minimal state pension and a service pension based on payments into a pension insurance scheme.

Around 44.5 per cent of the population live below the poverty line. The aim of the Participatory Poverty Alleviation Programme (PPAP), set up by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), in co-operation with President Akayev's administration, is to reduce poverty in the country by 10 per cent by 2010.

Main cities

Bishkek (capital, estimated population 977,204 in 2012), Osh (246,881), Celalabad (81,280), Karakol (68,562), Tokmak (59,352), Karabalta (53,573).

Languages spoken

Kyrgyz is a Turkic language. Russian is widely spoken, even among ethnic Kyrgyz.

Official language/s

Kyrgyz, Russian

Media

A rise in pressure on the media in recent years from informal government censorship and large fines from legal action for slander has resulted in self-censorship in editorial content and a financial burden on media entities.

Press

Several daily and weekly newspapers include in Russian, *Slovo Kirgystana*, *Vecherni Bishkek* (www.vb.kg), *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (KP) (www.kp.kg), *Moya Stoltisa Novosti* (MSN) (www.msn.kg), *Obshchestvennyy Reyting* (www.pr.kg). In English *The Times of Central Asia* (www.timesca-europe.com) with regional news.

Broadcasting

Kyrgyz National TV and Radio Broadcasting Corporation is state-run. The government maintains control of broadcasting through licenses which can be revoked if political comment becomes provoking. Live broadcasts are restricted in what can be reported.

Radio: The state-run Kyrgyz Radio Broadcasting Corporation operates Radio 1 and 21 Vek. Most private stations operate from Bishkek, including AutoRadio, Europa Plus, Radio Max (www.max.kg) Ekho Bishkeka and Russkove Radio.

Television: There Kyrgyz National TV operates two channels. Other private stations include NTS (www.nts.kg), Piramida, Independent Bishkek TV and Broadcasts are in Kyrgyz and Russian. Osh TV is an independent TV company broadcasting in the southern regions of the country mostly in the Uzbek language.

National news agency: Kabar: <http://en.kabar.kg>

Other news agencies: AKIpress: www.akipress.com
24.Kg: <http://eng.24.kg>

Economy

Kyrgyzstan experienced a severe economic shock after the collapse of the former Soviet Union as trading links were severed and exports of its natural resources were markedly reduced. However, as trade began to grow again, with Russia and Kazakhstan and other new markets, the economy picked up and from 2000 onward Kyrgyzstan experienced relatively high GDP growth for a number of years. GDP growth was 7.6 per cent in 2008, falling to 2.9 per cent in 2009 and further still, to -0.5 per cent in 2010, before recovering to an estimated 5.7 per cent in 2011. However the International Monetary Fund in its report of May 2012, predicted that growth would slow to 5 per cent in 2012

In 2009, the governor of the Bank of Kyrgyzstan (BoK) characterised the effect of the global crisis on the economy as having struck in three waves. Beginning in 2007, as global commodity prices rose, Kyrgyzstan was threatened with a severe shortage of foodstuffs, typically imported from other countries, which resulted in a sharp rise in inflation to over 20 per cent in late 2007. In 2008, a steep rise in fuel costs increased inflation to over 30 per cent before falling back to 14.4 per cent in 2009 as oil prices moderated. The current account in 2008 was -US\$413 million, rising to US\$30 million in 2009, due to increasing exports of gold, strong remittance inflows (30 per cent of GDP in 2008) and increased tourist receipts. However, in 2010, the current account fell again to -US\$269 million. The balance of trade narrowed from -US\$1.9 billion in 2008 to US\$1.1 billion in 2009, before expanding again in 2010 with an estimated -US\$1.19 billion. With its mountainous terrain and plentiful water resources, Kyrgyzstan has the potential to produce and export large quantities of electricity. However, it currently suffers from a shortfall in energy and water, which typically impacts on industrial output.

External trade

Kyrgyzstan is a member of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). It also

belongs to the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC or EAEC), which was set up in 2000 to promote a customs union between its six member states (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) and among, other objectives, to introduce standardised currency exchange and rules for trade in goods and service.

Imports

Main imports are food, oil and gas, machinery and equipment, chemicals and foodstuffs.

Main sources: China (typically 40 per cent of total), Russia (20 per cent), Kazakhstan (10 per cent), Turkey (5 per cent)

Exports

Principal exports are primary minerals, including mercury, antimony and rare-earth metals, chemicals, electricity and engineering goods, paper and timber products, agricultural products including woollens, vegetable oil, rice and meat.

Main destinations: UAE (typically 35 per cent of total), Russia (20 per cent), China (15 per cent), Kazakhstan (10 per cent).

Agriculture

Agriculture is one of Kyrgyzstan's main sources of wealth, accounting for around 37 per cent of GDP and employing approximately 48 per cent of the labour force.

The total area of agricultural land is 10 million hectares (ha), but only 7 per cent is cultivated.

The main products are tobacco (55,000 tonnes per annum), wool, cotton, leather, silk, meat, grain (especially barley), fruit and vegetables.

Livestock production accounts for about 60 per cent of gross agricultural income. Kyrgyzstan is the third-largest wool producer in the former Soviet Union. Only 15 per cent is processed locally. Vegetable oil, milk products and baby foods are imported.

There are no price regulations and there is no duty on export products. Since the amendment of the constitution in 1998 to allow for the full private ownership of land, the government has worked on a plan to auction land under the Land Redistribution Fund (which administers about 25 per cent of all arable land) and to implement a scheme to eliminate the state monopoly on seed production.

Fishing remains important for domestic consumption, but fish stocks have been drastically reduced by irrigation, pollution and a lack of investment. The typical annual catch is 200million tonnes.

Forests cover four per cent of Kyrgyzstan's land area, or 7,000 square km. Conifers account for 40 per cent of forest composition. Almost half of the forests are mature

and over-mature stands. All forests are state-owned. Despite commercial potential, there are no significant forest industries, although Kyrgyzstan has a co-operation agreement with Switzerland for forestry development.

The total forested area has remained stable for several decades and could probably absorb higher levels of exploitation. The government aims to increase production, both to meet domestic needs and to export to other Central Asian countries.

Industry and manufacturing

The industrial sector contributes around 21 per cent to GDP, with manufacturing accounting for 13.6 per cent.

Prior to independence, Kyrgyzstan was a significant producer of agricultural machinery, military equipment and medical supplies. Since fundamental manufacturing inputs came from other parts of the former Soviet Union, independence severely impacted upon the size of the industrial base.

Tourism

The geographical remoteness of Kyrgyzstan is an immediate obstacle to growth in the tourist sector. A rise in the number of visitors from other former Soviet states has encouraged a growth in accommodation for visitors. Inbound travellers make up the majority of tourists to Kyrgyzstan. The terrain is impressive and attracts those that love adventure and sightseeing holidays. The Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain is a backdrop to the city of Osh and dominates the Fergana Valley; it is also included on Unesco's World Heritage List. The Silk Road runs through Kyrgyzstan and visitors can follow its trail with the help of tour guides and in groups.

Travel and tourism provided an average 5.9 per cent of GDP over 2000–05. This figure jumped to 8.4 per cent in 2006, before falling back to 5.8–5.9 per cent in 2008–09; since then the global economic crisis has cut visitor numbers and it fell further to 3.7–3.0 per cent in 2010–11. Employment matched this trend from a record 152,200 jobs (7.2 per cent of total employment) in the industry in 2006, to 59,400 (2.6 per cent of total) in 2011.

Environment

The Aral Sea is drying up due to the over-use of water from the two main rivers which feed into it and has lost 40 per cent of its water, dropping by up to 19 metres. This has resulted in desertification of the surrounding land. A UN study published in 2004 reported that there was no possibility of restoring the water and the need must be on preserving what is left. A meeting was held in April 2009 to determine water sharing between Tajikistan,

Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan failed, as negotiators were unable to find a trade in water for energy and hydrocarbons. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan hold around 80 per cent of the water in the Aral Sea but suffer from lack of electricity during freezing winters, while the remaining three states downstream are semi-arid and need water for their cotton industries and agriculture.

Mining

Kyrgyzstan has deposits of gold, mercury, antimony, wolfram, tungsten, lead, zinc, uranium, rock salt and gypsum. Uranium oxide and molybdenum are produced at the Kara-Balta combine (Chu Valley). Metallic antimony (7,800 tonnes per year (tpy)) and antimony oxide (6,000 tpy) produced at the Kadamzhay combine (Osh Region), account for 13 per cent of world supply. Mercury is produced at the Khaidarkan combine (Osh Region), accounting for 21 per cent of world output. Kyrgyzstan has impressive reserves of tin and tungsten, which are concentrated in the Sary-Dzhaz river basin, in the east of the country, and have been prospected and prepared for commercial development.

Kyrgyzstan attracts foreign mining and metallurgical companies due to its lax environmental laws. Large mining and metallurgical plants have failed to take into account the hazards of mercury, cyanide, acids and other toxic substances used in the ore refining and enrichment process. This has caused environmental disasters and poses a threat to the health of workers and the local population.

Antimony manufactured at the Kadamzhay combine suffers from high production costs and is unable to compete with relatively cheap antimony available from Chinese producers. Three other undeveloped reserves include Nichkesu (with estimated reserves of 100,000 tonnes), Savoyardy (90,000 tonnes) and Aktyub (30,000 tonnes).

The Russian, Kyrgyzstani and Kazakhstani governments have co-operated to step up the extraction and processing of raw uranium. The state-owned Khaidarkan combine in the Osh region is the only mercury producer in Kyrgyzstan. It is responsible for the improvement of ore enrichment technology and the development of the Novoye deposit, which has a high concentration of mercury, antimony and fluoride.

Most of the gold reserves are concentrated in lode deposits. With substantial deposits in the Talas mountains in the north and the Batken region in the south, together with relatively low production costs, gold is a key export for Kyrgyzstan.

The Kumtor gold mine is one of the 10 largest in the world, accounting for around 30 per cent of exports and 11 per cent of GDP. Kumtor has reserves of 514 tonnes of gold. The mine typically has an annual production of 18.9 tonnes of gold; this level of production will be sustainable until 2010–13. The Kumtor Gold Company, a joint venture between Canada's Cameco and state-owned Kyrgyzaltyn, provides around 95 per cent of Kyrgyzstani gold.

Hydrocarbons

Proven oil reserves were 40 million barrels in 2007, with production a 1,000 barrel per day (bpd). Consumption, however, was 14,000bpd and imports of 13,000bpd were required. The downstream industry consists of one crude oil refinery at Dzhahalabad, south of Bishkek, which has a capacity of 10,000bpd, although supplies of crude are unreliable and the refinery operates below capacity.

Oil and Natural Gas exploitation has begun in the Naryn Basin in the centre of the country. By 2009 there had been a few discoveries, but any evaluation had yet to be determined.

Proven natural gas reserves were 5.6 billion cubic metres (cum) in 2007, with production at 28 million cum. Consumption was 27 million cum and was made up from imports, mainly from Uzbekistan. Coal reserves are estimated at 1.3 billion tonnes. There are sizeable coal deposits in Shurab, Kyzyl-Kiya, Naryn and Kok-Yangak. Further coal could be extracted from the Kara-Keche deposit in the north, but it would need foreign investment to cover the development costs.

Energy

Kyrgyzstan has an electricity generating capacity of 3.72GW. Hydropower account for over 80 per cent of electricity generated. If the country were to utilise its full hydropower potential it could produce 160 billion kilowatt hours (kWh) per year, whereas currently it uses only 10 per cent of this amount. There are 15 hydropower stations, of which five major plants are located on the Naryn River below the Tokogul dam, providing 97 per cent of hydroelectricity. There are two thermal power stations. Another two thermal power plants, with construction begun in 1980 but left incomplete in 1991, are being considered for addition to the production capacity.

The Electric Stations Open Joint Stock Company (OJSC) controls all major power stations and has a monopoly in electrical generation. The National Electric Network operates all power lines. Both companies are government-owned but in

2008 plans were initiated to privatise the hydro power plants.

A report in February 2009 by Eucam (EU Central Asia Monitoring) highlighted the energy emergency facing Kyrgyzstan. The country is reliant on hydropower but the 'outdated' and 'barely functioning' energy infrastructure is faced with collapse following the recent cycles of drought and harsh winters. The lack of energy threatens food security and could destabilise the country through social upheaval.

Kyrgyzstan has the second largest water resource in Central Asia and conflicts have arisen over the water taken for hydropower which is also vital downstream in neighbouring countries.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Kyrgyz Stock Exchange (KSE)

Banking and insurance

During the final years of the Soviet Union, the banking sector was one of the first economic activities to be liberalised. Upon independence in 1991, Kyrgyzstan had a large number of small banks, many of which offered limited services and had poor ratios of reserves to deposits. Of the Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan has made the best progress towards tighter regulation and supervision of banks, although it continues to fall short of the progress made by the Baltic states and Eastern European countries.

Kyrgyzstan adopted the Basle capital requirements in 1995, since when the minimum capital requirement has been increased in stages. As regulation of the system has tightened, so the number of banks has fallen. Simultaneously, privatisation has progressed in Kyrgyzstan to the extent that less than 10 per cent of the banking market is controlled by state banks. Furthermore, 16–17 per cent of the market is controlled by the three foreign banks with a presence in the country. The largest investment bank is the Kairat Bank.

The Law on Banks and Banking Activity, enacted in 2003, strengthened the regulatory powers of the central bank to ensure good management and corporate governance in banks, improve financial disclosure, and control insider dealing.

Central bank

National Bank of the Kyrgyz Republic

Time

GMT plus five hours

Geography

Kyrgyzstan is a relatively small, landlocked country situated in eastern central Asia. There are border crossings with the People's Republic of China to the east and south-east, Kazakhstan to the north,

Tajikistan to the south and south-west and Uzbekistan to the west.

The Tian Shan mountains, with glaciers, fast flowing rivers and deep lakes, account for most of the country's high alpine terrain, except for the eastern edge of the steppe bordering Kazakhstan and the fertile Osh Valley to the west. Lake Issyk-Kul in the north-east of the country is the second deepest crater lake in the world.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Temperature varies from the temperate steppe to sub-zero temperatures in the mountains (Bishkek: minus 5–35 degrees Celsius). Depending on terrain, annual rainfall varies from 170mm and 265mm.

Dress codes

Dress in the business community is informal, European style.

Entry requirements

Passports

Passports are required by all and must be valid for a minimum of six months at the time of entry.

Visa

Required by all except some nationals of former communist states. For tourist purposes, it is advisable to obtain visas in advance even though some nationals can obtain a visa on arrival, without a letter of invitation.

For most visitors tourist and business visas require an invitation from a local sponsor or company or government organisation. Business visas require confirmation of the contacts to be met and their business addresses and telephone numbers. These should be submitted to the issuing embassy, along with a business letter from the employer giving an account of the visitor's position and role within the foreign company, and full itinerary with purpose of visit and length of stay. For individual business travellers, visa support is required from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More information should be gathered from the nearest consulate.

CIS transit visas are no longer valid to enter neighbouring countries; a visa for each state should be obtained in advance.

Currency advice/regulations

Only Kyrgyz residents may import and export local currency.

The import of foreign currency is unlimited but must be declared; export is limited to the amount declared.

Travellers cheques, in US dollars, have limited acceptance in banks in the capital.

Customs

A customs declaration form is issued on arrival and must be surrendered on departure; declare all foreign currency and

valuable items such as jewellery, cameras, computers, etc.

Prohibited imports

Illegal drugs, precious metals and artefacts, fur, fruit and vegetables and printed material, including photographs, which are detrimental to Kyrgyzstan. Firearms, ammunition, works of art and antiques and live animals are subject to special permits.

Health (for visitors)

A reciprocal health agreement for urgent medical treatment exists with the UK. Proof of UK residence will be required.

Mandatory precautions

Vaccination certificates are required for yellow fever if travelling from an infected area.

Advisable precautions

Water precautions are recommended: water purification tablets may be useful or drink bottled water. It is advisable to be in date for the following immunisations: polio (within 10 years), tetanus (within 10 years), typhoid fever, tuberculosis, hepatitis A (moderate risk only), hepatitis B, tick-borne encephalitis.

Any medicines required by the traveller should be stocked by the visitor, and it would be wise to have precautionary antibiotics if going outside major urban centres. A travel kit including a disposable syringe is a reasonable precaution. There is a risk of rabies.

Hotels

It is advisable to book in advance through specialist travel agents. Tips are becoming customary.

Credit cards

Credit cards are accepted in larger hotels and banks in Bishkek.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 7 Jan (Orthodox Christmas Day), 8 Mar (Women's Day), 21 Mar (Noruz/Persian New Year), 24 Mar (National Day), 1 May (Labour Day), 5 May (Constitution Day), 9 May (Victory Day), 31 Aug (Independence Day), 7 Nov (Socialist Revolution Day).

Variable dates

Eid al Adha, Eid al Fitr.

Islamic year 1435 (5 Nov 2013–24

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

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0930–1730.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0900–1800.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0900–1800.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0900–1700.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

GSM 900 and 1800 services are available in populated areas only.

Electricity supply

220V AC

Social customs/useful tips

There are many customs and traditions to be understood. Alcohol is available and smoking is widespread. Gratuities are becoming more customary, particularly in international hotels.

Security

Western nationals have been advised to be vigilant if staying in Kyrgyzstan. Close proximity to Afghanistan and the presence of Western troops in the country could make foreign travellers a target of Islamic rebels. Travellers have been particularly advised to stay away from the southern provincial capital of Osh and especially the surrounding area.

It is unwise to venture out on the streets alone at night. Keep expensive jewellery, watches, cameras, etc, out of sight. Avoid parks at night and use registered taxis only.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Kyrgyz Aba Zholdoru (Kyrgyzstan Airlines)

International airport/s: Bishkek-Manas airport (FRU), 30km north of city, *bureau de change*, duty-free shops, post office, restaurants.

Almaty International Airport (ALA), 10km north-east of the city. Facilities include VIP lounge, car hire, duty-free shops, restaurant and post office.

Airport tax: US\$10

Surface

Road: There are roads and border crossings with China, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Roads can be hazardous in winter. The border crossings in the south-west of the country are considered insecure due to the activity by Islamic rebels.

The Regional Road Corridor Improvement Project, estimated at US\$18 billion, to improve Central Asian roads, airports, railway lines and seaports and provide a vital transit route between Europe and Asia was agreed, on 3 November 2007. Six new transit corridors, between Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, of mainly roads and rail links, will be constructed, or existing resources upgraded, by 2013. Half the costs will be provided by the Asian Development Bank

and other multilateral organisations and the other half by participating countries.

Rail: Bishkek is linked by rail to Central Asia's transport hub, Tashkent, in Uzbekistan.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Kyrgyz Aba Zholdoru operates domestic services. There are regular flights from Bishkek to Osh.

Road: There are 21,000km of roads, only about 50 per cent of which are in reasonable condition. Travel by road is generally difficult because of the terrain and in spring, landslides are common in mountain areas, especially around Osh. Travel by horseback in the mountains. There are few garage facilities on the main roads to and from Bishkek. Care should be taken when travelling by road, especially if a breakdown is involved. Driving during the winter months in private vehicles can be hazardous and some routes could be closed at times. Taxis and private drivers are often willing to provide inter-city services at reasonable prices.

Buses: There are regular and convenient bus services between major towns and cities.

Rail: The only line in use for passenger services is the 340km line in the north of the country, which connects to the Kazakhstani border at both ends and passes through Bishkek. The service is unreliable and is not widely used.

City transport

Taxis: Few taxis have meters and a price should be agreed beforehand. It is sometimes possible to hire private cars, but visitors are recommended to travel only in official taxis.

Buses, trams & metro: Cheap trolley-buses. Service 153 from Bishkek-Manas airport to city centre, every 15 minutes.

Car hire

A national licence with authorised translation or an international driving permit is required. A rented car is often accompanied by a driver.

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 (IDD) code for Kyrgyzstan is +996, followed by area code and customer's number:

Bishkek	312	Osh	322
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Useful telephone numbers

Fire: 101

Police: 102

Ambulance (free): 103

Ambulance (private): 151

Chambers of Commerce

Bishkek Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Handicraft, 539 Jibek-Jolu, Bishkek (tel: 670-113; fax: 660-048; e-mail: bishkekchamber@netmail.kg).

Kyrgyzstan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 107 Kievskaya Street, Bishkek 720001 (tel: 210-565; fax: 210-575; e-mail: cci-kr@ifmiko.bishkek.su).

Banking

Bakai, 75 Isanov Street, Bishkek 720001 (tel: 660-610; 660-612; e-mail: bank@bakai.kg).

Demir Kyrgyz International, 245 Chui Boulevard, Bishkek 720040 (tel: 610-610; fax: 610-444; e-mail: dkib@demirbank.com.kg).

Eridan, 57 Kalyk-Akieva Street, Bishkek 720001 (tel: 650-610; fax: 650-654; e-mail: eridanbank@infotel.kg).

Kairat, 390 Frunze Street, Bishkek 720033 (tel: 218-932; fax: 218-955; e-mail: kairat@kairatbank.kg).

Kurulush, 28 Manas Street, Bishkek 720391 (tel: 219-736; fax: 219-743; e-mail: kurulush@bank.kg).

Kyrgyzstan, 54 Togolok Moldo Street, Bishkek 720001 (tel: 219-598; fax: 610-220; e-mail: akb@elcat.kg).

Central bank

National Bank of Kyrgyz Republic, 101 Umetalieva St, 720040 Bishkek (tel: 669-011; fax: 669-176; internet: www.nbkr.kg).

Stock exchange

Kyrgyz Stock Exchange (KSE), www.kse.kg

Travel information

Airport 'Manas', Bishkek 720062 (tel: 313-593; fax: 313-040; e-mail: manas@ch2m.bishkek.su).

AKC Kyrgyz Concept, 1000 Razzakova Street, Bishkek 720001 (tel 210-556; fax: 660-220; e-mail: akc@mail.elcat.kg).

Kyrgyzstan Aba Joldoru (national airline), Airport 'Manas', Bishkek 720062 (tel: 257-755; fax: 257-162; e-mail: mana@ch2m.bishkek.su).

Kyrgyzstan Airlines (domestic services), Airport 'Manas', Bishkek 720062 (tel: 696-600).

National tourist organisation offices

Kyrgyz State Agency for Tourism and Sport, 17 Togolok Moldo Street, Bishkek 720033 (tel: 220-657; fax: 212-845).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources, 96a Kievskaya Street, Bishkek 720040 (tel: 221-435; fax: 226-784).

Ministry of Environmental Protection, 131 Isanova Street, Bishkek 720033 (tel: 219-737; fax: 216-763).

Ministry of Finance, 58 Erkindik Boulevard, Bishkek 720002 (tel: 228-922; fax: 227-404, 620-955).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 59 Razzakopva Street, Bishkek 720040 (tel: 220-545; fax: 263-639).

Ministry of Foreign Trade and Industry, 106 Chui Boulevard, Bishkek 720002 (tel: 223-866; fax: 220-793, 252-747).

Ministry of Justice, 37 Orozbekova Street, Bishkek 720040 (tel: 228-489; fax: 261-115).

Ministry of Transport and Telecommunications, Isanova Street, Bishkek 720017 (tel: 216-672; fax: 213-667).

Other useful addresses

British Embassy, 173 Furmanova Street, Alma Ata, Kazakhstan (accredited to Kyrgyzstan) (tel: (7-3272) 506-191; fax: (7-3272) 506-260).

Free Economic Zone General Directorate, 303 Manas Street, Bishkek 720026 (tel: 670-511; fax: 670-512).

Goskominvest (State Committee on Foreign Investments and Economic Co-operation), 58A Erkindik Boulevard, Bishkek 720002 (tel: 223-292; fax: 620-017; e-mail: satc@ifmiko.bishkek.su).

Kyrgyzstan Embassy (USA), 1732 Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20007 (tel: (+1-202) 338-5141; fax: (+1-202) 338-5139; e-mail: embassy@kyrgyzstan.org).

Kyrgyzvneshtorg (Foreign Trade Association), 276 Abdymomunova Street, Bishkek 720033 (tel: 215-701; fax: 620-836).

National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, 374 Frunze Street, Bishkek 720033 (tel: 226-363; fax: 220-759; e-mail: zkudabaev@nsc.bishkek.su).

State Property Fund, 57 Erkindik Boulevard, Bishkek 720002, (tel: 227-706; fax: 660-236; e-mail: spf@ifmiko.bishkek.su).

Stock Exchange, 172 Moskvskaya Street, Bishkek 720010 (tel: 665-059; fax: 661-595; e-mail: kse@kse.kg).

US Embassy, 171 Mira Boulevard, Bishkek 720016 (tel: 551-241; fax: 551-264; e-mail: mukambaevaibx@state.gov).

National news agency: Kabar: <http://en.kabar.kg>

Other news agencies: AKIpress: www.akipress.com

24.Kg: <http://eng.24.kg>

Internet sites

The Times of Central Asia: <http://www.times.kg>

Government of Kyrgyzstan (list of departments in Cyrillic script, email addresses in Latin script): <http://kenesh.bishkek.gov.kg/>