

KEY FACTS

Official name: Türkmenistan Jumhuriyati (Republic of Turkmenistan)

Head of State: President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov (TDP) (from 2007; re-elected 12 Feb 2012)

Head of government: President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov

Ruling party: taj

Area: 488,100 square km

Population: 5.61 million (2012)*

Capital: Ashgabat

Official language: Turkmen

Currency: New Manat (M) = 100 tennesi (The new manat was introduced on 1 January 2009, with an exchange rate of 5,000 old manat to one new manat).

Exchange rate: M2.85 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$5,999 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 10.97% (2012)*

GDP: US\$33.68 billion (2012)*

Unemployment: 60.00% (unofficial, no official unemployment data)

Inflation: 4.84% (2012)*

Oil production: 222,000 bpd (2012)

Natural gas production: 64.40 billion cum (2012)

Balance of trade: US\$875.00 million (2009)

Annual FDI: US\$3.19 billion (2011)

* estimated figure

Turkmenistan



In 2013 Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov decided that his personality cult, already well established – needed a bit of a boost. The chosen high profile event was a horse race where the prize money was reportedly US\$11 million. Decked out in a traditional white *telpek* hat, the President cut a dashing figure, all the more so as he went on to win the race riding a horse called *Berkarar* (Mighty).

Perhaps predictably, the President won the race by a fraction of a second. In its six-page coverage of the President's victory the newspaper *Neutrally Turkmenistan* reported that 'The President has yet again demonstrated not only his high class as a horse rider, but also his strong will, firmness and courage.' Moments after his victory, the President's courage was certainly required as he ignominiously fell off his horse and lay motionless for a few seconds. In any Western democracy the incident would have been a field day for journalists. Not so in Turkmenistan where there was no press coverage of the President's fall. So sub-editors were unable to give play to the 'How the Mighty are fallen' clichés that

would have abounded in a free society. Despite the press silence, the fall was recorded and posted on a number of social networks, giving Turkmenistan's younger generation an insight into grass roots democracy.

Unlimited power

In February 2012 President Berdimukhamedov had been elected for a second presidential term. Not only did the President have the longest name of any of the world's heads of state, he was, by a long chalk the world's most popular, winning an unlikely 97 per cent of the votes on an official turnout claimed to be well above 90 per cent. With success like this, the President clearly felt little need for any further progress towards democratisation. Turkmenistan's foreign policy continued a gradual drift away of its focus on Russia, developing where possible alternative links with China and Iran.

The Arkadag

Seven years after the death of dictator Saparmurad Niyazov, Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted that President Berdimukhamedov, his relatives and

associates enjoyed unlimited power and total control over all aspects of public life in Turkmenistan. In 2010 and 2011 Turkmenistan's newspapers and other publications began to bestow on Berdymukhamedov the honorific title *Arkadag* (the protector, guide or even patron), symbolising the strengthening of his cult of personality. Much of Berdymukhamedov's power derives from the fact that the only political party in Turkmenistan is the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, led by... Berdymukhamedov. Proposals for the adoption of a new law on political parties appear to have been mothballed. Hopes were temporarily raised when, in June 2011 President Berdymukhamedov invited exiled political opposition leaders to return to Turkmenistan to run in the presidential election and promised to guarantee their safety. The promise was grander than it sounded, as most of the exiled leaders had been, *in absentia*, in closed trials and convicted on embezzlement and treason charges.

The economy

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 2012 the Turkmen economy grew by a strong 11.1 per cent, a bit less than the 14.7 per cent recorded in 2011. With growth averaging 11 per cent since 2007, Turkmenistan was reclassified by the World Bank in July 2012 as an upper-middle income country. On the demand side, strong gas exports and public investment in infrastructure were the main growth drivers. Gas exports, comprising 70 per cent of total exports, have continued to rise because of long-term contracts with the People's Republic of China (PRC), which has steadily increased its purchases since 2009. Other importers, notably the Russian Federation and Iran, have continued to purchase gas in more moderate volumes. Investment, mainly in hydrocarbons and various public sector projects, surged by 38 per cent over 2011 levels, reflecting programmes guided by the National Programme of Socio-economic Development (NPSED), covering the period 2011–30, which aims to diversify and modernise the country's industrial base, develop rural areas and raise living standards. On the supply side, the government reported all sectors growing in 2012. Industry contributed more than half of all growth, with the hydrocarbon sub-sector, which provides 75 per cent of industrial output and 40 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP), growing by an estimated 19 per cent.

Government investment projects and social programmes boosted construction, while growth in services came mainly from wholesale and retail trade, transport and communications. Agricultural growth came from higher crop and livestock production, reflecting government subsidies and lending programmes and improvements to grain and cotton cultivation. Larger harvests of cotton (up by 12.6 per cent over 2011) and wheat (up by 2.7 per cent) helped reduce agricultural imports. Liberalised prices for certain items created upward pressure on consumer prices. However, officially measured inflation was limited to 5.3 per cent with the help of government subsidies for utilities; low prices for gasoline and public transportation; and price controls on major foodstuffs.

Fiscal policy aimed to support growth through public investment. The state budget, which excludes what are believed to be substantial extra-budgetary expenditures, recorded a large budget surplus equal to 6.0 per cent of GDP, well above the surplus of 3.6 per cent in 2011, as revenue grew much more quickly than expenditure. Rising hydrocarbon exports contributed to a 40 per cent increase in revenue. Budget expenditure rose by 20.6 per cent from 2011, reflecting greater spending for public investment projects, with socially oriented projects constituting over 70 per cent of state budget allocations. As in previous years, the state budget surplus was transferred to a stabilisation fund set up in 2008 to finance the country's development needs.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated total public debt, all of it external, at 14.4 per cent of GDP at the end of

2012. Monetary policy remained broadly neutral in 2012, with the Central Bank of Turkmenistan's (central bank) main instruments largely unchanged. Directed lending by the central bank slowed somewhat, as more liquidity from the stabilisation fund became available through commercial banks and the recently established state development bank. Bank lending to state-owned enterprises – comprising 80 per cent of total lending – rose by 32.6 per cent, while lending to entities and individuals outside the public sector increased by 41.8 per cent. The IMF estimated that broad money grew by 16.6 per cent during 2012.

Since the 2009 currency reform, the Turkmen manat exchange rate remained stable at M2.85 to US\$1. Rapid growth in reserves since 2011 has enabled the authorities to maintain this rate. The current account surplus is believed to have slid from 2.0 per cent of GDP in 2011 to 1.5 per cent in 2012. Exports grew by 19.3 per cent, according to government reports, reflecting higher exports of gas, crude oil and oil products. However, export growth was offset by rising imports, reflecting growing demand for machinery and other equipment and for foreign services in the hydrocarbon sector and construction. Turkmenistan received US\$12.6 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) during 2008–11, including US\$3.2 billion in 2011, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, which listed Turkmenistan among the world's top 10 recipients of FDI. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) estimated that international reserves rose by 7 per cent to US\$20.2 billion at the end of 2012.

KEY INDICATORS

Turkmenistan

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	*5.27	*5.35	*5.20	*5.53	*5.61
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	19.27	18.65	20.00	24.11	*33.68
GDP per capita	US\$	3,918	3,243	3,967	4,722	*5,999
GDP real growth	%	14.7	6.1	9.2	9.9	*11.0
Inflation	%	59.7	-2.7	-1.8	9.7	*4.9
Oil output	'000 bpd	205.0	209.0	216.0	216.0	222.0
Natural gas output	bn cum	66.1	36.4	42.4	59.5	64.4
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	11,786.0	8,946.0	9,660.0	14,189.0	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	5,363.0	8,071.0	8,617.0	9,567.0	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	6,423.0	875.0	1,043.0	4,622.0	–
Current account	US\$m	3,560.0	-2,981.0	-2,349.0	569.0	*579.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	5,200.00	14,215.00	2.84	2.85	2.85
* estimated figure						

Hydrocarbons

Turkmenistan is the sixth largest natural gas reserve holder in the world and was the second largest dry natural gas producer in Eurasia, behind Russia, in 2011. The hydrocarbon-rich country lacks sufficient pipeline infrastructure to export greater volumes of hydrocarbons. In late 2006, according to the US government Energy Information Administration (EIA) the Turkmen government began emphasising the need to seek higher export prices and new markets for hydrocarbon exports, thereby reducing its reliance on Russian markets. Government initiatives have since attempted to create a more business-friendly environment with greater legal transparency for foreign investors in the energy sector.

Turkmenistan had 600 million barrels of proven crude oil reserves in January 2013. In 2012, total oil production was around 244,000 barrels per day (bpd), of which 11 per cent was from national gas plant liquids. Recent production growth has come from Dragon Oil's offshore Cheleken block and Eni's onshore Nebit Dag field. Turkmenistan has two oil refineries, the Seidi and Turkmenbashi, with a total crude oil distillation capacity of almost 237,000bpd. According to IHS Cera, the refineries typically operate at around 50 per cent of capacity, with foreign oil companies exporting their share of crude oil. Turkmenistan has a small domestic crude oil pipeline network linking onshore oil fields with the Turkmenbashi refinery and the Caspian port. Turkmenistan has virtually no international oil pipeline infrastructure except a pipeline between the Seidi refinery in north-eastern Turkmenistan and the Shymkent refinery in Kazakhstan via Uzbekistan. Foreign companies are allowed to participate in production sharing agreements or joint ventures with the state-owned Turkmenneft, the largest oil producer in the country and Turkmengaz, the state-run natural gas company. The main foreign companies participating in Turkmenistan's hydrocarbon sector are the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Dragon Oil (Dubai), Eni (Italy) and Petronas (Malaysia). The Turkmen government typically restricts foreign investors from developing onshore projects, with the exception of a few CNPC projects, according to IHS Cera.

Turkmenistan has proven natural gas reserves of approximately 265 trillion cubic feet (tcf), a significant increase from 94tcf estimated in 2009. Turkmenistan

produced more than 2.3tcf of dry natural gas in 2011. The country has several of the world's largest natural gas fields, including 10 with over 3.5tcf of reserves located primarily in the Amu Darya basin in the south-east, the Murgab Basin and the South Caspian basin in the west. Recent major discoveries at South Yolotan in the prolific eastern part of the country are expected to offset most declines in other large, mature gas fields and will likely add to the current proven reserve amounts. Among the Caspian and Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan has become a leading natural gas exporter. According to BP's 2013 Statistical Review, Turkmenistan exported a total of roughly 1.5tcf via pipeline in 2012, most of which went to China (52 per cent), Russia (24 per cent), Iran (22 per cent) and other former Soviet Union countries (2 per cent). Controlled by the Turkmenistan ministry of energy and industry, the electricity sector is fuelled almost entirely by natural gas. Five key gas-fired power plants have a total installed generation capacity of 3.5 giga-watts, according to IHS Cera. In addition, Turkmenistan is linked to the Central Asian grid and exports electricity to Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey among other Central Asian countries.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Good
Regional stability	Good

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

Present-day Turkmenistan was divided three ways between Tsarist Russia and the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva until 1881, when Russian troops captured Ashgabat and incorporated the country into Russian Turkestan. The fierce Turkmen tribes south of the Amu Darya River were subdued in 1885. 1917 Central Asian peoples were given the right of self-determination by Lenin after the October Revolution in Russia. 1916–21 Turkmens joined other Central Asians states in violently opposing a Russian decree conscripting them for non-combatant duties. They fought against the Bolsheviks during the Russian civil war. In 1921, Turkmenistan formed part of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist republic (ASSR). 1924 Turkmenistan was given Union Republic status. 1920s–1930s The Soviet programmes of agricultural collectivisation and secularisation saw an upsurge in armed resistance and popular uprisings in Turkmenistan.

1960s The completion of the Kara-Kum canal led to a rapid expansion in cotton production. The canal is around 800km long and carries water from the Amu Darya River westwards to Mary and Ashgabat. 1971 Muhammad Gapusov was appointed head of the Turkmenistan Communist Party. 1985 Saparmurad Niyazov replaced Gapusov. 1989 Agzybirlik (Unity), a democratic front led by Turkmen intellectuals, was formed, but was banned the following year. 1990 Turkmenistan's Supreme Soviet declared economic and political independence from Moscow and elected Niyazov as its chairman (in effect, state president). 1991 Niyazov supported an attempted military coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev. Turkmenistan declared independence just before the collapse of the Soviet Union and joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). 1992 Turkmenistan adopted a new constitution, making the president head of government as well as head of state and giving him the option to appoint a prime minister. Niyazov was re-elected in a direct election in which he was the only candidate allowed to stand. 1993 The manat was introduced as the new national currency. The government began opening up the country to limited foreign investment in the country's oil and gas reserves. 1994 In parliamentary elections, all candidates were returned unopposed. In a referendum, President Niyazov's term of office was extended to 2002 without a new election. 1997 The private ownership of land was legalised. 1998 A natural gas pipeline to Iran was opened. 1999 Parliament made President Niyazov president for life. In parliamentary elections, all the elected officials were privately approved by the President. 2002 Turkmenistan became a full member of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB). The President renamed the months of the year after himself, his mother and his spiritual guide, the Ruhnama. 2003 Russian oil producer, Gazprom, agreed to buy 60 billion cubic metres of gas from Turkmenistan annually. The President cancelled a 1993 dual citizenship agreement with Russia, which sparked a diplomatic row with Moscow. 2004 An agreement on water resources was signed by the presidents of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In parliamentary elections all 50 seats were filled by candidates supporting the president.

2006 President Niyazov died. The State Security Council named Deputy Prime Minister Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov as acting president.

2007 Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov was elected president with 89.2 per cent of the vote, beating five other candidates; turnout was 98.7 per cent. Turkmenistan Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to build a new gas pipeline north of the Caspian Sea to ensure gas supplies to Russia.

2008 Natural gas supplies to Iran were cut, during one of the coldest winters in many years. Turkmenistan blamed a technical fault but required Iran to pay more for a resumed supply. A new constitution was adopted that abolished the Khalk Maslakhaty (People's Council) and changed the structure of power including the roles of parliament and the president. The Persian Islamic calendar imposed by the previous president was dropped and the old version re-adopted. The government removed references to the late president Niyazov from the national anthem. Names of months and days, cities, an airport and a meteorite, which were also named after Niyazov and his family, reverted to their original names. In parliamentary elections, 125 seats (out of 125) were won by the Türkmenistanyň Demokratik partiýasy (TDP) (Turkmenistan Democratic Party). They were the first multi-party elections ever held in the country; however due to the lack of time given to register political parties before the elections were called for the newly expanded parliament, opposition parties were unable to field any candidates and the TDP was the only party registered. Opposition groups and Western observers said the elections were a 'sham'; of the 288 candidates running for parliament 90 per cent belonged to the TDP and the rest were state-approved individuals.

2009 The new manat was introduced with an exchange rate of 5,000 old manat to one new manat. President Berdymukhamedov ceremonially began the construction of the latest channel to bring run-off water from the country's cotton fields across thousands of kilometres of desert to create an inland sea. The project, which began in 2000 with two other channels bi-secting the country and hundreds more planned to create feeder funnels, is estimated to cost US\$20 billion. The first pipeline to transport Central Asian natural gas to China was opened. The pipeline starts at the Samandepa gas field and crosses Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on its way to China.

2010 Turkmenistan requested a US\$4.1 billion loan from China to develop its untapped South Yolotan natural gas field, which contains proven reserves of 2.8 trillion cubic metres of natural gas, with a

further estimated 4–14 trillion cubic metres. The field is one of the world's largest gas fields.

2011 A military arms depot outside Abadan exploded in July, causing many deaths and widespread damage that sparked panic and mass looting. Prolonged power failures in the capital followed. In August it was announced that negotiations between Turkmenistan and the five European partnership countries (Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Turkey) of the Nabucco pipeline were to be held in Poland in September.

2012 Eight candidates took part in presidential elections on 12 February. Incumbent Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov won 97.1 per cent of the vote; turnout was 96.3 per cent. European election monitoring bodies declined to send observers, saying that Turkmenistan lacked any degree of democracy. The Observers Mission of the CIS declared there were 'equal opportunities' during the campaign and the Russian state news agency RIA-Novosti, declared the elections had been democratic. On 23 May India, Pakistan and Turkmenistan signed an agreement to build a new gas pipeline (as part of the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan India (TAPI) pipeline) and the subsequent supply of natural gas. On 13 August, as part of the celebration of the holy month of Ramadan President Berdymukhamedov pardoned 1,327 convicts (including 14 foreigners). On 14 September the first stage of a national census was undertaken by recording people in remote settlements. The major stage to complete the census will be held on 15 December.

2013

Political structure

Constitution

Turkmenistan was the first Central Asian state to adopt a constitution (on 18 May 1992), which upholds political pluralism, separates legislative, executive and judicial powers and guarantees private ownership of property. However, adherence to the principles of the constitution is rare. A new constitution was adopted on 25 September 2008 that abolished the Khalk Maslakhaty (People's Council) and changed the structure of power including the roles of parliament and the president. Turkmenistan is divided into five administrative regions: Ashkhabat, Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk), Mary, Tashauz and Chardzhou.

Independence date

27 October 2001

Form of state

Republic

The executive

The president is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term. All candidates must have lived in the country for 15 years before the elections. The president, as head of the executive branch of government, can dissolve the legislature only if the parliament is deadlocked on the election of the Speaker. Parliament would appoint a deputy prime minister as acting president if the president is unable to perform his duties; an acting president cannot run for office as president.

National legislature

The Majlis (Assembly) (established in 2008) has 125 members, elected in single seat constituencies by universal adult suffrage (over 18 years of age) for five-year terms. Candidates may be nominated by political parties, public organisations, and interest groups.

Parliament may pass laws, amend the constitution, approve the state budget, set dates for elections of the president, members of the legislature, and local governing bodies and can ratify or reject international treaties. The parliament delivers binding interpretation of laws and determines the legality of executive branch decisions. It may also terminate a president's term of office for reasons of health.

Legal system

The legal system is based on civil law. Members of the Supreme Court, the highest judicial body, are appointed by the president. There is no judicial review of legislative acts or presidential decrees.

Last elections

14 December 2008 (parliamentary); 12 February 2012 (presidential)

Results: Parliamentary: 125 seats (out of 125) were won by the Türkmenistanyň Demokratik partiýasy (TDP) (Turkmenistan Democratic Party).

Presidential: Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov won 97.1 per cent of the vote, Yarmukhammet Orazgulyev 1.2 per cent; the remaining six candidates shared 1.7 per cent of the vote. Turnout was 96.3 per cent.

Next elections

2013 (parliamentary); 2017 (presidential)

Political parties

Ruling party

taj

Main opposition party

Due to the lack of time given to register political parties before general elections were called for the newly expanded Mejlis in 2008, opposition parties were unable to field any candidates.

Population

5.61 million (2012)*

Last census: January 1995: 4,483,251

Population density: 11 inhabitants per square km (2010). Urban population 50 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.6 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Ethnic make-up

Turkmen (77 per cent), Russian (6.7 per cent), Uzbek (9.2 per cent) and Kazakh (2 per cent).

Religions

The majority of the population are Sunni Muslim (89 per cent). The remainder are predominately Eastern Orthodox Christians (9 per cent).

The government directly controls the hiring, promotion and sacking of Sunni Muslim and Eastern Orthodox clergy. Turkmenistan has a tradition of Sufism or Islamic mysticism and hosts several important Sufi religious sites.

Education

Secondary specialised education lasts for three to four years. General higher education lasts for four years. The Academy of Sciences in Ashgabat was the Republic's principal college of higher education. However, funding problems meant that by 2000 the Academy was closed. According to the government, 20 per cent of the relevant age group participate in some form of tertiary education. Those doing so are forced to undergo family checks going back three generations, while overseas education is not sanctioned by the government.

Females constitute 53 per cent of students in secondary education, 38 per cent of students in higher education and 29 per cent of students in professional schools. Although there is equal opportunity for females in education, they are often disadvantaged in employment situations.

A series of reforms have taken place since independence, with the aim of reducing the costs of education in general and vocational education in particular. Vocational training schools provide training to general education graduates, or adults who are required to pay fees. Some schools, especially in the bigger cities, are able to make enough income to maintain or even expand their activities. However, as government spending on vocational training in rural areas was reduced in the late 1990s, a number of vocational schools closed.

The quality of education is widely regarded as poor at all levels, and the sector is likely to come under increasing pressures from budgetary cuts and high population growth in the region. In September 2000, President Niyazov announced the axing of 5,000 jobs in the education sector as part of his drive to control the government's budget. Combined with low wages in the sector, this

move is likely to undermine morale and reduce Turkmenistan's relatively high education statistics.

Literacy rate: 98 per cent adult rate; 100 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Enrolment rate: 90 per cent gross primary enrolment of relevant age group (including repeaters) (World Bank).

Health

The healthcare system in Turkmenistan has suffered serious under-funding in recent years so that the benefits enjoyed by Turkmenis under the Soviet regime has been lost. Life expectancy has fallen to the lowest of any central Asian state. Free healthcare no longer exists, hospitals outside the capital have been closed, leaving 55 per cent of the population, living in rural areas, forced to travel long distances for treatment.

The availability of prescription drugs is severely limited, although the privatisation of pharmacies has led to an increase in the supply of non-prescription drugs.

There are no private hospitals or clinics in the region although some practitioners offer basic medical services.

Environmental hazards have contributed to widespread respiratory diseases, which prompted the government to ban smoking in public places. Nevertheless government policy on healthcare has ignored the need for Aids awareness, which is thought, by campaigners, to be an heavily underreported.

HIV/Aids

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

Life expectancy: 60 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.4 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 65 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 53 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012)

Head of population per physician: 4.18 physicians per 1,000 people, 2002 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

The government has attempted to deliver social services during the transitional period, but significant fiscal constraints continue to impede the progress of universal social transfers in the long-run. Taxes collected by the state tax service go to the state budget and the social security fund. The social security system is partly financed by payroll taxes set at 30 per cent of wages and voluntary contributions, while the government bears the full cost of social pensions and other subsidies as needed.

The state provides for different types of welfare payments, including pensions and several benefits related to disability, child-care, minimum social allowance, workers compensation, unemployment and family allowances. In 2001, the government decided to double public sector salaries.

Pensions are calculated on the number of years employed and the level of income. Pension benefits were doubled in 2003 following a presidential decree.

Maternity leave benefits are paid according to work experience and income. It is usually paid for 112 days. Workers' compensation benefits are paid at the rate of 6 per cent of salary in cases of unhealthy work conditions and 12 per cent of salary for severely harmful work conditions.

Those working in desert areas receive compensation at the rate of 10 per cent of their salary.

The government's human rights record remains extremely poor and it continues to commit serious human rights abuses. Interference with citizens' privacy remains a problem. Domestic violence and discrimination against women are prevalent.

Main cities

Ashgabat (capital, estimated population 1.0 million in 2012), Turkmenabat (Chärjew) (408,906), Dashhowuz (275,278), Mari (208,682), Balkanabat (133,489), Bayramali (131,173).

Languages spoken

There is a 28 per cent population of Russian or Uzbek speakers. English is also spoken.

Official language/s

Turkmen

Media

The Turkmen government has an absolute monopoly of the media.

In 2008 the Paris-based Reporters Without Borders condemned Turkmenistan for isolating its population from the world and subjecting it to 'propaganda worthy of a bygone age'.

Press

It has been reported that Turkmenistan is a very repressive climate for journalists, according to international observers, it controls not only printing presses but it monitors media outlets and imposes editorial policies.

In Turkmen, *Turkmenistan* is published six times a week, *Watan* is published three times a week, *Galkynys* is a weekly and represents the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan, *Turkmen Dunyasy* is a monthly and represents the Ashgabat-based World Turkmens Association. *Edebiyat we Sungat* is a literature and the arts magazine. In Russian the

Neytralnyy Turkmenistan is published six times a week.

Broadcasting

Radio: Turkmen Radio operated two stations, Watan and Char Tarapdan (also in English) (access may be by www.intervalsignals.net).

Television: There are four channels operated by Turkmenistan state television including TMT 1-2-3 and 4. TMT4 is multinational, transmitting in Turkmen, Russian, English and French. Imported programmes are routinely edited before public broadcasting.

National news agency: Turkmen State News Service (TSNS):

www.turkmenistan.ru

Other news agencies: News Central Asia: www.newscentralasia.net

Economy

Industry constitutes over 50 per cent of GDP and dominates the economy, the service sector provides over 30 per cent and agriculture constitutes over 10 per cent of GDP.

Turkmenistan's wealth is almost entirely derived from hydrocarbons and cotton. In 2008, oil exports accounted for 94 per cent of total exports, although in 2009 they fell by 60 per cent with a loss of over US\$912 million in revenue.

Turkmenistan's proved oil reserves were 600 million barrels at the end of 2011, with annual production of 216,000 barrels per day. Proven natural gas reserves were 24.3 trillion cubic metres (cum) (the world's fourth largest deposits) at the end of 2011, with annual production of 607 billion cum.

GDP growth was a high of 11.1 per cent in 2007 as world prices for oil were at a peak. GDP grew to 14.7 per cent in 2008, before falling to 6.1 per cent in 2009 as global trade weakened due to worldwide economic crisis. However growth picked up in 2010 with an estimated growth of 9.2 per cent, as global trade began to recover coupled with an increase in gas sales to China and a surge in public investment. GDP growth strengthened in 2011 at a projected 9.9 per cent, as a result of

In 2010, Turkmenistan announced that it intended to increase exports of natural gas by 700 per cent by 2030. This followed a summit meeting with Russia's then President Medvedev in which negotiations for the sale of natural gas to Europe should be via Russia's state-controlled Gazprom energy company's network of gas pipelines, thereby avoiding the European-backed Nabucco gas pipeline. The Nabucco pipeline in 2011 was not ready to accept Turkmen natural gas; Turkmenistan has to balance this with its experience of Russia's

unilateral closure of its Caspian pipeline and the loss of revenue in 2009, against possible greater revenue returns if it sold its gas directly to Europe. Turkmenistan and China have a 30-year agreement for the supply of 30 billion cum per year of natural gas. A second natural gas pipeline was opened between Turkmenistan's Dovletabad gas field to Iran in 2010 and will, when fully operational, double gas exports to Iran to 20 billion cum. Over 80 per cent of Turkmenistan's land mass is covered by the Kara Kum desert. Even so the majority of the population work in agriculture, principally nomadic cattle raising and intensive agriculture, particularly in cotton cultivation – Turkmenistan is Central Asia's second largest cotton producer. Production was 304,814 tonnes in 2008/09, falling to 283,041 tonnes in 2009/10, before rising to an estimated 326,586 tonnes in 2010/11. The government has used hydrocarbon revenue to invest in agricultural technology to improve cotton production.

Economic data can be unreliable and policy-making opaque. The economy is dominated by the state, which accounts for around 80 per cent of annual output. A central control system is prevalent, with the state fixing prices, output targets and controlling the distribution, marketing and trade of most products. Investors remain largely wary of Turkmenistan, whose economy is characterised by an inadequate legal framework, often contradictory laws, corruption and excessive bureaucracy. Growth is driven by domestic investment – mostly state-led investments in oil and gas extraction, petrochemicals, electricity generation and transmission, textiles, and luxury housing. About 1.5 per cent of GDP is invested by foreign companies developing oil and gas fields under production-sharing agreements.

Life remains austere for many in Turkmenistan with over half the population living below the poverty line. The UN has been unable to access statistics on poverty to include Turkmenistan in this section of the Human Development Index (2011).

External trade

Turkmenistan is a member of the Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO), comprising 10 regional Central Asian countries.

National statistics are not published; exports are chiefly primary products, cotton and hydrocarbons. Manufacturing and the service sector are underdeveloped and therefore most industrial and community requirements are imported.

Imports

Principal imports are machinery and equipment, vehicles, chemicals, and foodstuffs.

Main sources: China (typically 18 per cent of total), Turkey (16 per cent), Russia (16 per cent).

Exports

The main exports are natural gas (50 per cent of total exports), crude oil, petrochemicals and textiles and cotton fibre.

Main destinations: Ukraine (typically 22 per cent of total), Turkey (10 per cent), Hungary (7 per cent).

Agriculture

Agriculture typically contributes around 20 per cent to GDP. The cultivated land area is around 32 million hectares (ha), with arable land accounting for 19 million ha. Cotton, a major export earner, is cultivated on over 750,000ha of arable land. Turkmenistan was the second largest producer of cotton in the former Soviet Union and is still a major global producer.

In a report published in 2005 – *The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's destructive monoculture* – the International Crisis Group (ICG) said that while the former Soviet cotton producing countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan continued to exploit their cotton growers there was little hope of improving economic development and tackling poverty. The cotton industry is vital to the economy of Turkmenistan, yet while the industry continues to rely on cheap labour (including children), land ownership is uncertain, state intervention discourages competition and the rule of law is limited, there is little incentive for the powerful vested interests to reform the system.

The government has started to diversify production in the agricultural sector away from the cotton monoculture. This has generated a small export surplus in cereal production and a growth of 18 per cent in wheat production. The 23 per cent rise in agricultural output could possibly signal self-sufficiency in grain production.

Turkmenistan is reliant on an inefficient Soviet irrigation system, which diverts water from the Amu Darya River and has contributed to the drying up of the Aral Sea. The irrigation system suffers from poor management and maintenance, with water losses of about 50 per cent, rising salinity and poor drainage.

An absence of storage and packaging facilities means that up to 30 per cent of the grain and cotton harvests are lost annually. Livestock accounts for around one-quarter of agricultural production, including the famous Karakul sheep.

Turkmenistan has considerable fishing resources, with estimated total reserves at 50,000 tonnes of Caspian Sea fish and

8,000 tonnes of inland water fish. Turkmenbashi, on the Caspian Sea, provides an excellent base for accessing marine resources, being located near the main fishing grounds and remaining ice-free throughout the year. The typical annual fish catch is over 12,000 tonnes; the main fish type is kilka, although herring, shad, mullet and crayfish are also harvested.

Less than 10 per cent of Turkmenistan has forest cover. All forested land is owned by the state. There is no large-scale forest industry and most wood products are imported from Russia.

Industry and manufacturing

Industry typically contributes around 45 per cent of GDP and employs 25 per cent of the workforce.

The sector is dominated by the processing of hydrocarbons and other raw materials. The sector is labour intensive and the use of energy and raw materials is wasteful. There is some light engineering industry, which mainly concentrates on the production of cables. US-based Coca Cola has a plant in Turkmenistan. Gap, the multi-national clothing retailer, in a joint venture with Turkmen, has a fully, vertically integrated jeans production facility, using locally produced cotton,

Tourism

The potential for tourism in Turkmenistan, a large part of which is desert, is limited. Attractions include a number of historical and cultural sites. Mountain and coastal resorts are being developed and hotel accommodation is expanding. Visitor numbers are modest at some 8,000 a year, but increasing slowly. Air connections are improving and Ashgabat Airport has been modernised.

The 'National Tourist Zone' of Awaza (Awaza) on the Caspian Sea, 12km west of the capital, was decreed by President Berdymukhamedov in 2008. In 2011, it had eight multi-storey hotels, with plans for more, and a network of ornamental canals plus a range of tourist facilities. However, with little supporting infrastructure, no international flights to the nearest airport, poor water supply and a petroleum plant close enough to be an annoyance for paying guests, this growing development has been considered as possibly 'the most ill-conceived resort ever built.'

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 was left.

The government has endorsed a 2004 joint strategy to resolve the demands of its water requirements with its neighbours. An artificial lake (132 cubic metres deep, 3,460 square km in area) in the Kara Kum Desert is planned to be constructed by 2010 at a cost of US\$6 billion. It will be situated at the Karashor valley and according to the government will prevent the 4,060 square km large lowlands from being flooded, stop desalinisation of the land and return the area to crop growing. Environmentalists claim it will undermine the agricultural sector and contribute to water loss.

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

There are large deposits of iodine-bromine, sodium sulphate, magnesium, sulphur, potassium and other salts in Turkmenistan. Prime deposits of ore and rock are located in Tourakyr, Bolshoy Balkhan, Kopet Dag, Badkhyz, Govurdak, Kugitang, Cheleken, Turkmenbashi peninsula, central and south-east Garagum and northern Turkmenistan. Of these, the Zulfagar alunite deposit in Badkhyz in the south contains several million tonnes of ore with a 50 per cent alunite content. Turkmenistan has the third largest deposits of sulphur in the world, located in the Kara Kum desert. Deposits of industrial minerals, notably kaolin and building granite, are also exploited. Non-ferrous and rare metals are mined and used for the production of chemicals. Gold and platinum are also present.

Despite Turkmenistan's vast resources, mineral deposits are under-exploited and not used significantly in domestic industry. Turkmenistan has not traditionally extracted or processed any significant amounts of metal ores, although the government has shown interest in attracting foreign investment to build its own metal-producing facilities.

Hydrocarbons

Proven oil reserves were 600 million barrels in 2011, with production at 216,000 barrels per day (bpd), around 50 per cent of production is consumed domestically. State-owned Turkmenneft accounts for

90.5 per cent of oil extraction and the rest by foreign companies in production-sharing arrangements.

Turkmenistan's oil reserves remain difficult to estimate as potential oil reserves depend on negotiations to define ownership and prospecting rights in the Caspian Sea.

Turkmenistan has two oil refineries – Turkmenbashi and Chardzhou – with a combined capacity of 237,000bpd.

Proven natural gas reserves were 24.3 trillion cubic metres in 2011 making it one of the world's top four largest deposits; the government claims the actual figure is far higher. Natural gas production was 59.5 billion cubic metres (cum) in 2011, an increase of 40.6 per cent on the 2010 figure of 42.4 billion cum. The

state-owned Turkmengaz accounts for 85 per cent of production with the remainder produced by foreign companies in production-sharing arrangements.

The 1,818km Turkmenistan-China natural gas pipeline, passing through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan (both of which have undertaken to build their section of the pipeline) to take advantage of natural gas supplies, began construction in 2008. The 188km Turkmenistan section of a 7,000km natural gas pipeline was completed in 2009, at a cost of US\$400 million. Natural gas supplies began flowing from the Caspian Sea, across Central Asia to China in 2009. China has a 30-year agreement for the supply of 30 billion cum per year of natural gas using this pipeline.

Turkmenistan exported 6.5 billion cum of natural gas via its pipeline to Iran in 2010; a second, 25km, gas pipeline was opened in January 2010 which, when fully operational, will double gas exports to Iran to 20 billion cum. Turkmenistan has considered joining the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline project but in 2009 Russia offered Turkmenistan greater benefits for the supply of its natural gas to Russia than those offered by Europe for the same gas. The pipeline, opened in 2010, will weaken Moscow's hold over the region, as well as dampen Western hopes. An agreement was signed in December 2010 to build a 1,700km natural gas pipeline supplying gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (Tapi). The estimated cost of the Tapi project was between US\$3.3 billion (but may go as high as US\$10 billion) and was backed by the Asian Development Bank when it was first proposed in the mid-1990s.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 12.55 gigawatts (GW) in 2006, which produced 46.66 billion kilowatt hours (kWh), producing a surplus of 4.43kWh to

be exported to Iran and Kazakhstan. All power stations are fuelled by domestically produced natural gas. The government aims to increase electricity production to 25.5 billion by 2012, but reaching this target will require significant investment in energy infrastructure.

Turkmenistan is connected to Iranian power lines and exchanges electricity during periods of peak energy consumption, usually summer in Turkmenistan and winter in Iran. The government also plans to sell electricity through Iran to other countries of the Economic Co-operation Organisation (ECO), which includes six former Soviet republics.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Türkmenistanyň Döwlet Haryt – Çig Mal Biržasy (The State Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange of Turkmenistan)

Commodity exchange

The State Commodity and Raw Materials (SC&RM) exchange trades commodities only.

Banking and insurance

The economic crisis of 1997–98 led to all banks in Turkmenistan becoming ‘government commercial banks’. Prior to this move, Turkmenistan had 67 banks, two of which were state-owned banks (Vneshekonombank and Sberbank). Vneshekonombank has become one of the largest banks in Central Asia since its creation in 1991. The bank dominates import/export operations and is a key institution for the operation of foreign investment in Turkmenistan. Sberbank holds 95 per cent of all household deposits. The banking sector is widely viewed as corrupt and inefficient, failing to channel funds effectively, and is constrained by the government’s tight control of the credit and foreign exchange markets.

Central bank

Central Bank of Turkmenistan

Main financial centre

Ashgabat

Time

GMT plus five hours

Geography

Turkmenistan is the second largest Central Asian republic and shares lengthy borders with Iran to its south and Uzbekistan to its north and east. The country also borders Kazakhstan to the north-west and Afghanistan to the south-east. The Caspian Sea, where the major port of Turkmenbashi is located, is to the west. The Kara Kum desert comprises over 80 per cent of Turkmenistan’s total area. The Kopet Dag mountains extend along Turkmenistan’s southern border with Iran and Afghanistan.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Temperatures in Ashgabat range between 0 and 40 degrees Celsius (C). Turkmenistan can be very hot in the summer, with temperatures of 35 degrees C common and a maximum of up to 50 degrees C in some provinces. Winters in the Ashgabat area tend to be mild and temperatures do not usually fall below freezing. However, in mountainous southern areas it is not uncommon for temperatures as low as minus 33 degrees C to be recorded. Ashgabat is the southernmost capital city of the former Soviet republics, on the same latitude as San Francisco and Cordoba.

Dress codes

Smart clothes are required for business visitors.

Entry requirements

Passports

Required by all. Passports must be valid for six months after date of departure.

Visa

Required by all. Business visitors require a full itinerary and an invitation, certified by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Ashgabat, from a local, private individual or company to support their application. The Turkmen Chamber of Commerce can provide new business visitors with such a letter. For tourists, these can be obtained from authorised travel agents in Ashgabat. All visitors must provide evidence of sufficient funds for the visit and return/onwards passage.

For further information visit www.turkmenistanembassy.org.

All visa applications made overseas are referred to Ashgabat for a decision. This can take several weeks. There is an accelerated 24 hours service, but a supplementary fee is levied.

On arrival visitors must complete an immigration card and pay a US\$10 immigration fee. The authorities retain one copy and the other must be handed back, by the visitor, on departure.

Visitors must register within three days of their arrival, excluding weekends and holidays, with the Turkmenistan State Registration Service. This is carried out by the inviting organisation or individual, and a registration fee is paid. Tourists should register with the State Committee of Turkmenistan for Tourism and Sports. Registration is for the period of the visa; three days before departure, visitors must de-register with the same authorities. Visitors not staying in Ashgabat should register at the local *velayat* office of their place of residence (there is no need to register both in Ashgabat and regionally).

Visitors transiting the country can be registered at entry and exit points if their stay is not longer than five days and they hold a valid transit visa. Transit visitors cannot change their visas in-country, and need to notify the authorities if they intend to vary their route through the country.

Currency advice/regulations

On 1 January 2008 local currency began to be exchanged for foreign currency at regulated commercial rates. The import of foreign currency is unlimited but must be declared; export is limited to the amount declared. Visitors should check with the central bank for up-to-date regulations.

Ensure you bring enough US dollars to cover all potential needs, Turkmenistan is a cash-only economy. Traveller’s cheques and credit cards are not commonly accepted.

Customs

On arrival declare all foreign currency and valuable items such as jewellery, cameras, computers etc.

Prohibited imports

Firearms, illegal drugs and wool carpets.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

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

Advisable precautions

Water precautions recommended: water purification tablets may be useful or drink bottled water.

It is advisable to be in date for the following immunisations: polio, diphtheria, tetanus, typhoid, hepatitis A, tuberculosis. Also hepatitis B if you are spending more than 6–8 working weeks in a year in the region.

Anti-malarial precautions are advisable. Inoculation against rabies is advisable if travelling to rural areas. It could 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 shortage of routine medications and visitors should take all necessary medicines with them. Medical insurance, including emergency evacuation, is necessary.

Hotels

Rooms are often in short supply and expensive. It is advisable to book in advance through Intourist or other specialist travel agents. A number of major hotel renovations and new building projects have been undertaken in the centre of Ashgabat.

Credit cards

Credit cards are accepted.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 12 Jan (Remembrance Day), 19 Feb (National Flag Day), 20 Mar (Novruz Bairam/Persian New Year), 9 May (Victory Day), 18 May (Constitution Day), 6 Oct (Remembrance Day), 27–28 Oct (Independence celebrations), 17 Nov (Students' Day), 12 Dec (Day of Neutrality).

Variable dates

Eid al Adha (Kurban Bairam), Eid al Fitr (Seker Bairam – three days).

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 feasts 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–Sat: 0900–1800.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

The usage of mobile phones is extremely limited; a GSM 900 services exist in Ashgabat, Mary and Turkmenabat.

Electricity supply

220V AC 50Hz. Round two-pin continental plugs are standard.

Social customs/useful tips

Gratuities are becoming more customary, particularly in international hotels. Visitors are advised to carry some form of identity at all times.

Security

It is unwise to venture out on the streets alone at night. Visitors should be vigilant and are advised to dress down. Keep expensive jewellery, watches and cameras out of sight.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Turkmenistan Airlines

International airport/s: Ashgabat Airport (ASB), 4km from city centre. The are limited services from UK, Germany, Russia and the Middle East.

Airport tax: Departure tax: US\$25; nationals of CIS countries US\$15.

Surface

Road: Primary roads are few; secondary roads, particularly in desert areas, are of poor quality.

There are border crossings with Iran, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. A

road links Chardzhou and Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan.

Rail: A railway service operates from Iran. It runs nearly 300km from the Iranian Silk Road city of Mashhad, crosses the Turkmen border at Sarakhs and joins the Soviet-era Turksib railway at Tedzhen. It gives Turkmenistan access to the Iranian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas.

Water: The only coastline is along the Caspian Sea.

Main port/s: Turkmenbashi, has ferry links to Baku (Azerbaijan).

Getting about

National transport

Air: Akhal Air Company (division of Turkmenistan Airlines) operates domestic services. Daily flights between Ashgabat and Mary.

Road: Roads are poorly maintained and sometimes dangerous. However, new highways are under construction.

Buses: Buses serve Turkmenbashi (formerly Krasnovodsk) and Mary.

Rail: There are lines between Ashgabat, Turkmenbashi, Dashgouz and Mary. Trains to Gushgi are currently prohibited to foreign visitors due to the proximity of the Afghan border.

City transport

Taxis: Volga taxis have a sign on top. Agree a price beforehand. It is safer to use officially marked taxis which should not be shared with strangers.

Car hire

A national licence with authorised translation, or an international driving permit, is required.

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 Turkmenistan is +993, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Ashgabat	12	
Mary	522	
Turkmenabad (Chardzhou)		378
Turkmenbashi (Krasnovodsk)		243

Useful telephone numbers

Fire: 01
Police: 02
Ambulance: 03
Gas leak: 04

Chambers of Commerce

Turkmenistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 17 Karreyeva Street, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 355-594; fax: 355-381; e-mail: asccitm@online.tm).

Banking

Daykhanbank, 60 Atabayeva St, Ashgabat (tel: 419-873, 419-875; fax: 419-868).

Garashyszylyk, 30 A Shevchenko St, Ashgabat (tel: 354-875, 397-393; fax: 397-892).

International Joint-Stock Bank Garaguma, 3 K Kuliyeva St, Ashgabat (tel: 354-062, 475-269; fax: 353-854).

National Bank of Pakistan, Sheraton Turkmen Hotel, 7 Gorogly St, 744000 Ashgabat (tel: 350-465, 512-050; fax: 350-465).

Obabank, 51 Ostrovskogo, Ashgabat (tel: 346-968, 346-558; fax: 246-968).

Prezidentbank, (temporarily at:) 22 Bitarap Turkmenistan Str, Ashgabat (tel: 357-943; fax: 510-812).

The Savings Bank of Turkmenistan, 86 Prospect Mahtumkuly, 744000 Ashgabat (tel: 394-298, 395-4671; fax: 396-553).

Senagat, 42 Turkmenbashi Shayoly Prospect, Ashgabat (tel: 510-305, 350-694; fax: 510-571).

The State Bank for Foreign Economic Affairs of Turkmenistan (Turkmenvneshconombank), 22 Asudalyk St, 744000 Ashgabat (tel: 235-0252; fax: 239-7982).

Central bank

Central Bank of Turkmenistan, 22 Bitarap Turkmenistan St, 744000, Ashgabat, (tel: 353-442; fax: 356-711; email: cbtmode@cat.glasnet.ru).

Stock exchange

Türkmenistanyň Döwlet Haryt – Çig Mal Biržasy (The State Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange of Turkmenistan), www.exchange.gov.tm

Commodity exchange

The State Commodity and Raw Materials (SC&RM) exchange trades commodities only.

Travel information

Akhal Air Company, Ashgabat Airport, 744088 Ashgabat (tel: 225-6084/1052; fax: 229-0724, 225-4402).

DN Tours, Magtymguly Avenue 48/1, 744000 Ashgabat (tel: 270-438, 270-449; fax: 270-420; email: dntour@online.tm; internet: www.dntours.com).

Intourist, Hotel Ashgabat, Prospekt Makhtumkuli 74, 744023 Ashgabat (tel: 290-026).

Lufthansa Airport Office, Ashgabat Airport (tel: 510-697; fax: 510-728).

Turkmenintour, Ul Makhtumkhuli 74, Ashgabat (tel: 256-932, 255-191; fax: 293-169).

Turkmenistan Airlines, Ashgabat Airport (foreign economic relations) (tel: 290-766; fax: 254-402).

National tourist organisation offices

State Committee of Turkmenistan for Tourism and Sport, 17-1984 Pushkin Street, 744000 Ashgabat, (tel: 354-777, 397-606, 396-740; internet: www.tourism-sport.gov.tm; www.turkmenistan.gov.tm; www.turkmens.com).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, Ulitsa Azadi 63, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 256-691; fax: 253-557).

Ministry of Automobile Transport, Ulitsa Baba Annanova 2, Ashgabat 744025 (tel: 474-992; fax: 470-391).

Ministry of Communications, Ulitsa Zhitnikova 36, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 256-665).

Ministry of Construction, Ulitsa Alishera Navoi 56, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 256-060).

Ministry of Construction Materials Industry, Ulitsa Steklozavodskaya 1, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 251-560; fax: 251-913).

Ministry of Consumer Goods, Ulitsa Annadurdieva 52, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 255-442; fax: 254-833).

Ministry of Economy and Finance, Borodinskaya Street no 2, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 251-653; fax: 256-511).

Ministry of Energy and Industry, Ulitsa N Pomma 6, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 254-921; fax: 291-670).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prospect Lenina no 11, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 251-463).

Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Ulitsa Kemine 92, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 297-511; fax: 297-524).

Ministry of Health, Prospect Magtymguly 95, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 251-063; fax: 255-032).

Ministry of Information, Ulitsa Chekhova 8, Ashgabat (tel: 297-572).

Ministry of Interior Affairs (tel: 251-328).

Ministry of Melioration and Water Resources, Ulitsa Seidi 1, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 253-032; fax: 298-589).

Ministry of Oil and Gas Industry and Mineral Resources, 28 Gogolia Street, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 293-827; fax: 510-443).

Ministry of Trade, Pervomayskovo Street no 1, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 251-047; fax: 295-108).

Office of the President (tel: 254-534).

Other useful addresses

American Business Liaison, Gogol Street no 17, Ashgabat 74000 (tel: 253-386).

British Embassy, 301-308 Office Building, Ak Altin Plaza Hotel, Ashgabat (tel: 251-0861; fax: 632-510).

Central Asia Research Forum, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh Street, London WC1H 0XG, UK (tel: (+44-(0)20) 7323-6300; fax: (+44-(0)20) 7436-3844).

Department of Investments, Cabinet of Ministers, Ashgabat (tel: 254-954; fax: 255-112).

EU-TACIS, 92 Kemine Street, Ashgabat (tel: 512-117, 251-020; fax: 511-721).

Kuvyat (state energy corporation), 6 Nurberdi Pomma Street, Ashgabat; Foreign Economic Relations (tel/fax: 254-921).

State Agency for Foreign Investment of Turkmenistan, 53 Azadi Street, Ashgabat 74400 (tel: 350-231; fax: 350-415).

State Committee on Statistics, 72 Magtymguly Avenue, Ashgabat 744000 (tel: 294-265, 253-596; fax: 254-379).

State Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange, Magtymguly Street 3111, Ashgabat (tel: 254-321; fax: 510-304).

State Customs Office, 7 Stepan Razin, 7440225 Ashgabat (tel: 470-455; fax: 470-221).

State Railway of Turkmenistan, 7 Saparmirat Turkmenbashi Street, 744007 Ashgabat; Engineering Department (tel: 473-936; fax: 473-958); International Services (tel: 473-958; fax: 510-632).

State TV and radio, Prospekt Svobody 89, Ashgabat (tel: 251-515).

Turkmenistan Embassy (USA), 2207 Massachusetts Svenue, NW, Washington DC 20008 (tel: (1-202) 588-1500; fax: (1-202) 588-0697; e-mail: turkmen@earthlink.net).

Turkmenintorg Foreign Trade Organisation, Hivinskaya Str 1, 744000 Ashgabat (tel: 298-774/684/975, 297-521; fax: 298-774/955, 295-987).

National news agency: Turkmen State News Service (TSNS): www.turkmenistan.ru

Other news agencies: News Central Asia: www.newscentralasia.net

Internet sites

Turkmenistan Embassy, Washington, US: www.turkmenistanembassy.org

Turkmenistan Information Centre: www.turkmenistan.com