

Uzbekistan



Succession generally becomes an issue in countries that do not have strong enough structures to ensure a smooth process. In 2013 Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov was rumoured to be of ill-health and even no longer able to cope with the affairs of state.

How do you solve a problem like Gulnara?

The lack of any obvious pattern of succession opened up the possibility of a *coup d'état* in Uzbekistan as the President's faithful coterie of advisors and supporters appeared to be doing their best to undermine the chances of the President's glamorous, but unpopular, daughter Gulnara over who was going to take over the reins of state. In a report filed from Moscow, the London *Economist* alleged that Gulnara's charity network – known to be the mainspring of her extremely effective personality network and suspected to be a source of her income – was under investigation. A parallel investigation into the affairs of one of her media companies also resulted in the bank accounts of one of her media companies being frozen. Gulnara was reported to have amassed a fortune worth an estimated US\$600 million under her father's nose. In October 2013 Ms Karimova's cousin, one Akbarali Abdulyev, (aka 'the purse') was arrested

following allegations of an involvement with organised crime.

Gulnara's activities did little to enhance Uzbekistan's wobbly record on human rights. In its summary assessment of the state of affairs in Uzbekistan the US based Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported that: 'Uzbekistan's human rights record is atrocious. Torture is endemic in the criminal justice system. Authorities have intensified their crackdown on civil society activists, opposition members and journalists. Muslims and Christians who practice their religion outside strict state controls are persecuted and freedom of expression is severely limited. The government forces more than one million adults and children to harvest cotton under abusive conditions. Authorities still deny justice for the 2005 Andijan massacre, in which government forces shot and killed hundreds of protesters, most of them unarmed.' Heady stuff.

On its 2012 *Corruption Perceptions Index* Transparency International ranked Uzbekistan 170 out of the 174 countries surveyed. Only failed states such as Somalia and North Korea came lower.

Regional shifts

In 2012 Uzbekistan decided to withdraw from a Russian-lead military alliance, prompting speculation that it was seeking

KEY FACTS

Official name: Ozbekiston Respublikasy (Republic of Uzbekistan)

Head of State: President Islam Abduganievich Karimov (since 1991; re-elected 23 Dec 2007)

Head of government: Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev (appointed 11 Dec 2003)

Ruling party: Coalition of O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi (O'zLiDEp) (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party), O'zbekiston Xalq Demokratik Partiyasi (OXDP) (People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan), O'zbekiston Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi (OMTDP) Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party) and Adolat Sotsial Demokratik Partiyasi (Adolat) (Justice Social Democratic Party) (from 25 Jan 2010)

Area: 447,400 square km

Population: 29.45 million (2012)*

Capital: Tashkent

Official language: Uzbek

Currency: Sum (Sum) = tiyin

Exchange rate: Sum2,104.62 per US\$ (Jul 2013)

GDP per capita: US\$1,737 (2012)*

GDP real growth: 8.00% (2012)*

GDP: US\$51.17 billion (2012)*

Unemployment: 0.20% (2012)*

Inflation: 12.06% (2012)*

Oil production: 68,000 bpd (2012)

Natural gas production: 56.90 billion cum (2012)

Balance of trade: -US\$162.00 million (2010)

* estimated figure

closer ties with the US. Strategically located on the southern fringe of Central Asia, Uzbekistan is an important, if uncomfortable, partner for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) alliance looking for practical ways of repatriating vast amounts of military equipment from neighbouring Afghanistan from 2014.

Unsurprisingly, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) avoided giving any reasons for Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the alliance, but most observers described it as a move towards the US. A Moscow based think tank, PIR-Centre was quoted: 'The United States will make Uzbekistan its strategic ally, will provide financial and military assistance, assume some security guarantees, close its eyes to human rights violations.' The Uzbekistan solution was seen as a replacement for the southern exit route from Afghanistan through Pakistan. Washington's deteriorating relations with Islamabad had forced it into the arms of Uzbekistan, which boasts the best railway network links in the region. A US withdrawal along the so-called Northern Distribution Network would be dependent on Uzbekistan and its Soviet-era railway links with Russia.

Happy families

A 2012 opinion poll conducted by Tashkent's Ijtimoiy Fikr (Public Opinion) research organisation appeared to suggest that most of Uzbekistan's population was 'happy' with their country's achievements. The poll reported that Uzbek citizens were extremely satisfied with everything that had taken place in the

country, while 'the material situation of their families improved and is continuing to improve'. However the results of the poll were worryingly interspersed with qualifying phrases such as 'fully support' and are 'satisfied with the results.' It went on: 'a vast majority of respondents (90 per cent) believe that in the New Year (2013) the socio-economic situation in the country will improve further' and 'the Uzbek population's confidence in future is growing from year to year'. Unsurprisingly, the Ijtimoiy Fikr polling was rather contradicted by HRW. The Uzbek government holds at least 13 human rights defenders in prison and has brought charges against others, because of their human rights work. Several detainees were in very poor health and at least seven had, according to HRW, been ill-treated or tortured in custody.

Reacting to the pro-democracy Arab Spring movements, the Uzbek government increased the presence of security forces across the country and widened its already-tight control over the Internet. Despite the government's persistent refusal to address concerns about its abysmal record, the United States and European Union continued to advance closer relations with the Uzbek government in 2012 and 2013, seeking co-operation in the war (or at least the post-war) in Afghanistan.

The economy

According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) despite weaker external demand, the Uzbek economy again performed strongly in 2012. Gross domestic

product (GDP) grew by 8.2 per cent, according to official data, driven by public investment and private consumption. The main supply-side contributors to growth were services, which grew by 10.4 per cent and industry including construction, which grew by 8.0 per cent.

Industry growth was driven mainly by machinery, fuel and light industry. Services played a larger economic role, due to strong performances by information and communication technology, finance and trade and catering. Agriculture grew by 7 per cent, primarily reflecting a larger cotton harvest and expanded livestock breeding. On the demand side, private consumption rose by 6.0 per cent, as a result of higher public sector wages and pensions, expanded remittances and increased domestic lending. Gross fixed capital formation increased by 11.6 per cent.

Public investment rose by 16.7 per cent, improving on the 11.3 per cent increase in 2011, as the government further expanded investment to support continuing industrial modernisation and infrastructure development. Most public investment was to overhaul key industrial sectors and construct new housing. The government reported that inflation in 2012 remained within the official target of 7 per cent. However, an alternative estimate by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was 12.9 per cent. Inflationary pressures mainly reflected currency depreciation, wage and pension increases and higher administrative prices for fuel, utilities and bread, which were instituted toward achieving cost recovery. The National Bank of Uzbekistan (NBU) (central bank) responded by tightening monetary policy, especially in the second half of the year, through sales of certificates of deposit on the open market, though the policy rate remained unchanged.

An increase in net foreign assets was offset by accumulating government deposits, including in the Fund for Reconstruction and Development (FRD), a sovereign wealth fund. As a result, broad money growth slowed to 25.0 per cent from 32.3 per cent in 2011.

The central bank continued to intervene in the foreign exchange market with the aim of depreciating the local currency – the sum – to promote competitiveness. By year-end the sum had depreciated by almost 10 per cent against the dollar. Fiscal policy remained broadly unchanged in 2012. The consolidated budget, including large surpluses from the FRD, is again estimated to have recorded an overall surplus, equal to 3.1 per cent of GDP.

KEY INDICATORS

Uzbekistan

	Unit	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Population	m	27.55	27.91	*28.10	*28.84	*29.45
Gross domestic product (GDP)	US\$bn	27.90	33.50	39.00	45.40	*51.17
GDP per capita	US\$	1,027	1,195	1,367	1,572	*1,737
GDP real growth	%	9.0	8.1	8.5	8.3	*8.0
Inflation	%	12.7	14.1	9.4	12.8	*12.1
Unemployment	%	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	*0.2
Industrial output	% change	6.8	4.1	8.3	–	–
Agricultural output	% change	4.5	5.7	6.1	–	–
Oil output	'000 bpd	111.0	107.0	87.0	86.0	68.0
Natural gas output	bn cum	62.2	64.4	59.1	57.0	56.9
Exports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	9,817.0	10,890.0	11,536.0	–	–
Imports (fob) (goods)	US\$m	7,612.0	9,277.0	11,698.0	–	–
Balance of trade	US\$m	2,205.0	1,613.0	-162.0	–	–
Current account	US\$m	3,562.0	2,485.0	2,397.0	2,612.0	*1,371.0
Exchange rate	per US\$	1,310.44	1,610.00	1,589.66	1,706.83	1,989.32

Revenue gains from historically high prices for key export commodities (mainly precious metals) and improved tax administration offset expenditures to cover wage and pension increases and higher social outlays. Revenues equalled 36.7 per cent of GDP and expenditures 33.6 per cent.

The current account surplus narrowed to an estimated 4.7 per cent of GDP from 8.1 per cent in 2011 as the trade surplus decreased. Exports of goods and services declined by 5.1 per cent, reflecting weaker external demand and declines in international prices for Uzbekistan's major export commodities: cotton, copper and natural gas. Exports of cotton, foodstuffs, chemicals, metals and machinery all fell in 2012. However, an 81 per cent rise in exports of energy products, primarily natural gas, limited the overall decline in exports. Imports of goods and services rose by 9 per cent, as continued state-led infrastructure development and industrial modernisation required more imports of capital goods and services. Remittances and compensation from abroad, included in the income account, grew sharply, particularly from the Russian Federation, which totalled US\$5.6 billion. This was the highest amount since independence (in 1991), reflecting strong demand for construction labour.

The government reported foreign investment inflows of US\$2.5 billion, mainly into oil and gas, petrochemicals and automobile manufacturing. External debt was estimated to have increased modestly to 17.8 per cent of GDP at the end of 2012 from 17.4 per cent at the end of 2011, as the public investment programme is increasingly being financed by foreign loans. GDP growth was forecast at 7.5 per cent in 2013 and 8.0 per cent in 2014, driven by state-led investment and domestic consumption. Industry and services will continue to be the main supply-side drivers of economic growth. Industrial output will be supported by higher domestic lending and foreign investment, while services will be driven by higher domestic demand, especially from the public sector. Agriculture was projected to post healthy growth, albeit less than the 8-year high observed in 2012.

Hydrocarbons

According to the US government Energy Information Administration (EIA) Uzbekistan was the third largest natural gas producer in Eurasia, behind Russia and Turkmenistan in 2012. With a highly energy-intensive economy, Uzbekistan

holds sizeable hydrocarbon reserves of mostly natural gas. However, a number of challenges, which include insufficient pipelines to export higher volumes of hydrocarbons and aging energy infrastructure have slowed the production, distribution and exports of hydrocarbons in recent years. The need to increase production to meet domestic and export demand has spurred government initiatives to attract more foreign investments.

According to BP's 2013 Statistical Review, total primary energy consumption in Uzbekistan was about 2.0 quadrillion Btu in 2012. Natural gas consumption represented approximately 85 per cent, while consumption of petroleum products and coal were about 8 and 2 per cent, respectively. Hydroelectricity represented the remaining 5 per cent of the share.

Uzbekistan had 594 million barrels of proven crude oil reserves in January 2013. In 2012, total oil production was about 103,000 barrels per day (bpd), of which one third was from natural gas plant liquids. Roughly 60 per cent of all known oil and natural gas fields are located in the Bukhara-Khiva region. The region is the source of approximately 70 per cent of the country's oil production.

Uzbekistan has three oil refineries located in Ferghana, Alty-Aryk and Bukhara, with a total crude oil distillation capacity of 224,000bpd. The refineries typically operate below capacity because of decreases in oil production. Modernisation of these refineries is expected to begin in 2013. Uzbekistan's sole domestic crude oil pipeline links the Ferghana and Alty-Aryk refineries. Uzbekistan has virtually no international oil pipeline infrastructure. A small petroleum products pipeline linking Shymkent, Kazakhstan to Tashkent, the Uzbek capital, resumed imports in 2003 after Uzbekistan allowed oil imports to re-enter the country. Decreases in oil production have prompted the Uzbek government to inch away from an inward focused energy policy that promotes self-sufficiency and subsidised domestic prices. New laws aim to attract foreign investment through production sharing agreements and joint ventures with Uzbekneftegaz, Uzbekistan's state oil and natural gas company. Inadequate export options and limited access to hard-currency markets have been listed as a deterrent to foreign investment in upstream activities, according to IHS Cera.

Russia's Lukoil and Gazprom and China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) are among the most heavily invested

companies in Uzbekistan's oil and natural gas industries.

Uzbekistan has 65 trillion cubic feet (tcf) of proven natural gas reserves as of January 2013 and produced 2.2tcf of natural gas in 2012. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Uzbekistan flared 60 billion cubic feet (bcf) of natural gas in 2011 and ranks among the world's top 20 gas flaring countries. But flaring has declined overall since 2006. Uzbekistan's natural gas transmission and distribution system allows for trade with Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan also serves as a transit country for natural gas flowing from Turkmenistan to Russia and China. In addition, two new natural gas pipelines, Gazli-Kagan and Gazli-Nukus, were built to connect the Ustyurt and Bukhara-Khiva region with the existing system. Agreements with Gazprom and CNPC, as well as loans from China's Export-Import Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), are also facilitating the modernisation of Uzbekistan's gas distribution network.

Risk assessment

Politics	Poor
Economy	Good
Regional stability	Fair

COUNTRY PROFILE

Historical profile

1865–1876 The Russians took Tashkent and made it the capital of Turkestan, incorporating vast areas of Central Asia. They annexed the emirate of Bukhara and the khanates of Samarkand, Khiva and Kokand

1917 Following the October Revolution in Russia, the Tashkent Soviet was established.

1920 The Tashkent Soviet ousted the emir of Bukhara and the other khans.

1921 Uzbekistan became part of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR).

1924 The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) was formed from the Turkestan ASSR, the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic and the Khorezmian People's Soviet Republic; it was given Union Republic status in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

1930s The Uzbek capital was transferred from Samarkand to Tashkent.

1944 The Soviet leader, Stalin, deported 160,000 Meskhetian Turks from Georgia to Uzbekistan.

1950s–80s Cotton production was boosted as the government undertook major irrigation projects on Uzbekistan's

rivers and lakes. The country's water levels fell drastically.

1984 Thousands of Uzbek officials were arrested on corruption charges over the 'cotton affair' when millions of roubles went missing as a result of invented crop yields.

1989 Islam Karimov became the leader of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Ethnic violence broke out against the Meskhetian Turks and other minorities in the Ferghana Valley. Birlik (Unity), a nationalist movement, was founded.

1990 The Communist Party of Uzbekistan declared economic and political sovereignty and Islam Karimov became president.

1991 Independence from the USSR was declared. Uzbekistan joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The first presidential elections were won by Islam Karimov; only a few opposition groups were allowed to field candidates.

1992 President Karimov banned the political parties Birlik and Erk (Freedom) Democratic Party and members of the opposition were arrested.

1994 Uzbekistan signed an economic integration treaty with Russia and an economic, military and social co-operation treaty with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

1995 The ruling Chalk Demokratik Partiyasi (CDP) (People's Democratic Party), formerly the Communist Party of Uzbekistan, won the elections. A referendum extended President Karimov's term of office until the year 2000.

1996 Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan agreed to create a single economic market.

1998 The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), based in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, was formed. It is said to pose a genuine armed threat to Uzbekistan. The activity of the IMU, which aims to overthrow Uzbekistan and establish a separate Islamic polity in the Ferghana valley, has made the Tajikistan-Uzbekistan border a zone of continual near-war. The government severely represses those it suspects of Islamic extremism.

1999 The president blamed bomb blasts in Tashkent on the IMU. A declaration of *jihad* was broadcast by the IMU from a radio station in Iran, demanding the resignation of the Uzbek leadership. The IMU, operating from mountain hideouts, attacked government forces (the first of many future cross-border incursions).

2000 President Karimov was re-elected. Uzbekistan was accused of widespread torture by US-based Human Rights Watch.

2001 The Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) was formed between Tajikistan, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The US

military were allowed to use bases in Uzbekistan airspace for the US-led military operations in Afghanistan.

2002 Uzbeks voted by referendum to increase the unicameral parliament to two chambers and the presidential term in office from five to seven years. A long-standing border dispute with Kazakhstan was resolved.

2003 The Birluk movement and the opposition Erk party were allowed to hold official meetings; other political parties were denied registration. President Karimov dismissed Prime Minister Otkir Sultanov after the worst cotton harvest ever and appointed Shavkat Mirziyayev to replace him.

2004 The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) cut aid due to the country's poor record on economic reform and human rights. Trading practices were restricted and sparked violent street protests in the eastern city of Kokland. An agreement with Turkmenistan on water resources was signed. Opposition parties were barred from taking part in parliamentary elections.

2005 CDP and independents formed a government. Violence erupted in Andijan after gunmen released inmates from prison and troops opened fire on demonstrators. The death toll was disputed – eyewitnesses said hundreds had been killed and the government only 180. Fifteen men were convicted of organising the violence and sentenced to 14–20 years in jail.

2006 Two opposition leaders were jailed for eight years for 'economic crimes' by criticising the crackdown in Andijan. Russia agreed to help in the development of Uzbekistan's gas and oil resources.

2007 President Islam Karimov was elected for a third term in office. The result was heavily criticised by international human rights observers as an election that was not considered free or fair.

2008 Igor Vorontsov, the representative of US-based Human Rights Watch, was expelled. Construction of a 525km gas pipeline between Uzbekistan and China began; when completed it is expected to carry 30 billion cubic metres per year.

2009 The president confirmed that non-military supplies bound for Afghanistan could be transported through Uzbekistan, with the use of rail and road links. The EU agreed to lift an embargo on arms sales that had been in place for four years. The EU said there had been 'positive steps' towards improving human rights issues.

2010 Following the second round of parliamentary elections, O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi (O'zLiDeP) (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party) won

a total of 53 seats (out of 135) and became the single largest party in the national assembly. However, all political parties were supporters of the president and unable to provide an opposition to the administration. Around 400,000 Uzbek refugees fled ethnic violence in Osh, Kyrgyzstan; while many remained in Uzbekistan for two weeks before returning home a significant number preferred to stay.

2011 In March constitutional amendments were implemented by parliament. The new measures strengthened parliamentary democracy. They are also intended to diminish the role of cliques and the ruling elite. In May, a Kyrgyzstan Inquiry Commission (KIC) published its report into the ethnic violence in Osh in 2010. It concluded that political fanaticism mixed with ethno-nationalism had resulted in violence and that the minority Uzbek community was the overwhelming victim of attack. The report also said that there was evidence of official Kyrgyz complicity. In May, the 153 Kyrgyz families (over 1,000 people) living in Barak, Uzbekistan, used a petition to call on the Kyrgyzstan authorities to relocate them to Kyrgyzstan.

2012 On 15 August, Prime Minister Mirziyayev banned the use of children in the cotton harvest. As a result, office workers and medical staff were drafted into the fields without exception.

2013 In September the Asian Development Bank pledged US\$220 million to help Uzbekistan modernise its irrigation system. The practice of forcing some one million people, including students, teachers and doctors, to work at picking cotton, Uzbekistan's 'white gold' for two months at the end of each year continues, despite objections by international organisations such as Unicef.

Political structure

Constitution

The constitution was adopted in December 1992. It guarantees respect for all citizens, regardless of language, custom or tradition, and forbids any group or individual to exercise power on behalf of the people of Uzbekistan except for the elected president and legislature. The creation of a state ideology and censorship of the media are also contrary to the constitution; however, media censorship is still practised.

The autonomous region of Karakalpakstan has its own constitution, but is subject to the laws of Uzbekistan. Karakalpakstan has the right to withdraw from Uzbekistan depending on support via a referendum.

On 8 December 1992, Uzbekistan became the second Central Asian state to

adopt a post-independence constitution. The already considerable powers of the president were increased, giving him the right to appoint regional governors who report directly to him. The constitution also included guarantees of freedom, of conscience and of travel, and a statement that the country should be a secular democracy. President Karimov has pointed to the Turkish state as his country's model. On 27 January 2002, a nationwide referendum agreed with the extension of the president's constitutional term in office from five to seven years and authorised the election of a bicameral parliament.

Independence date

1 September 1991

Form of state

Secular, (theoretically) democratic and presidential republic.

The executive

The president is head of state, holds supreme executive power and is directly elected for no more than two consecutive terms. A January 2002 referendum approved a two-year extension of the president's constitutional term of office from five to seven years (it was originally due to expire in 2005 and has been extended to 2007).

The president appoints the prime minister and ministers, subject to confirmation by the legislature, appoints the judges of the lower courts and the governors of the regions.

The Cabinet of Ministers is the government of the country; it is subordinate to the president.

National legislature

The bicameral Oliy Majlis (National Assembly) comprises the Legislative Chamber with 120 members, directly elected in a two-round voting system, for five-year terms, and the Senate with 100 members of which 84 are elected by subordinate assemblies and 16 are appointed by the president.

The minimum voting age is 25 years (the highest in the world).

Legal system

Judicial power is nominally independent of government, but as the judges of the higher courts are selected from among lower court judges, who are themselves appointed by the president, there is in practice significant political control over the system.

The three highest courts are the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court and the High Commercial Court. The first rules on the validity of legislation and on disputes between the government of Uzbekistan and the Karakalpakstan autonomous region. The second is the highest court of appeal for criminal and civil cases initiated in the lower courts. The third is the

highest court of arbitration for civil cases initiated in the lower courts.

Last elections

27 December 2009 / 10 January 2010 (parliamentary); 23 December 2007 (presidential).

Results: Parliamentary: (two rounds combined totals) O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi (O'zLiDEp) (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party) won 53 seats (out of 135), O'zbekistan Xalq Demokratik Partiyasi (OXDP) (People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan) 32, O'zbekistan Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi (OMTDP) Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party) 31, Adolat Sotsial Demokratik Partiyasi (Adolat) (Justice Social Democratic Party) 19. Turnout is 79.7 per cent.

Presidential: Islam Karimov won 90.77 per cent of the vote, no other candidate won more than 3.3 per cent. Turnout was 90.6 per cent.

Next elections

December 2014 (presidential); December 2015 (parliamentary)

Political parties

In 1997, legislation came into force prohibiting parties based on ethnic or religious lines, or those advocating war or subversion of the constitutional order. As a result of amendments to the Law on Elections in August 2003, only registered political parties and voters' initiative groups have the right to field candidates for election.

Ruling party

Coalition of O'zbekiston Liberal Demokratik Partiyasi (O'zLiDEp) (Uzbekistan Liberal Democratic Party), O'zbekistan Xalq Demokratik Partiyasi (OXDP) (People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan), O'zbekistan Milliy Tiklanish Demokratik Partiyasi (OMTDP) Uzbekistan National Revival Democratic Party) and Adolat Sotsial Demokratik Partiyasi (Adolat) (Justice Social Democratic Party) (from 25 Jan 2010)

Main opposition party

All parties in the Supreme Assembly are loyal to the president. The banned O'zbekiston Erk Demokratik Partiyasi (OEDP) (Erk Democratic Party) is considered to be the main opposition party to the Karimov regime.

Population

29.45 million (2012)*

Last census: January 1989: 19,810,077

Population density: 64 inhabitants per square km (2010). Urban population 36 per cent (2010 Unicef).

Annual growth rate: 1.5 per cent, 1990–2010 (Unicef).

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) 3,000 (UNHCR 2004)

Ethnic make-up

Uzbek (72 per cent), Russian (8 per cent), Tajik (7 per cent), Kazakh (4 per cent), others (9 per cent). There is a Korean minority estimated at 7 per cent. The Uzbeks are the second most numerous Turkic people in the world after the Turks themselves.

Religions

Muslim (88 per cent, mostly Sunni); Christian Eastern Orthodox (9 per cent).

Education

Although Uzbekistan's overall literacy rate is high, the government is implementing a long-term programme of transition from Cyrillic to Latin script, and in the short-term there are likely to be some changes in the literacy rate.

Primary education begins at aged six and last until aged 10. General secondary education lasts until aged 15, when students may choose between a technical, vocational or academic course for two years. From aged 17, specialised secondary schools offer advanced vocational or academic two-year courses.

There are 16 universities and 42 research institutes in the country, including the state-run Tashkent Islamic University. The government initiated a National Programme for Personnel Training, giving high priority to introducing new educational technologies and attracting international donors. The reform programme replaced existing schools and it is estimated that seven million pupils will enrol in these new schools, and in sharp contrast with the past, 90 per cent (an unprecedented amount in the New Independent States) of these pupils are expected to enrol in vocational education and training.

In February 2005 a report by the International Crisis Group alleged that thousands of children are forced out of school to work in cotton fields. Uzbekistan is the world's fifth largest cotton producer and during the harvest season children of all ages are used to pick the cotton. Pay for this work may be denied and refusal to work may lead to expulsion from school.

Literacy rate: 99 per cent adult rate; 100 per cent youth rate (15–24) (Unesco 2005).

Compulsory years: Six to 15

Enrolment rate: 100 per cent gross primary school enrolment rate in 2000, 94 per cent at secondary level and 36 per cent at tertiary level.

Pupils per teacher: 21 in primary schools.

Health

Healthcare standards were fairly uniform across the former Soviet Union, but the breakdown in trade and economic crises

have brought about a severe shortage of medicines and equipment.

According to a presidential decree in 1999, private healthcare institutions, were exempted from tax in order to facilitate investment in medical equipment; it also included a programme for the development of medical treatment centres in villages over 2001–05. The government also plans to make premises and funds available for private healthcare institutions.

HIV/Aids

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

Life expectancy: 66 years, 2004 (WHO 2006)

Fertility rate/Maternal mortality rate: 2.4 births per woman, 2010 (Unicef); maternal mortality 21 per 100,000 live births (World Bank).

Birth rate/Death rate: 23 births and 6 death per 1,000 people (World Bank)

Child (under 5 years) mortality rate (per 1,000): 40 per 1,000 live births (WHO 2012); 7.9 per cent of children aged under five are malnourished (World Bank).

Head of population per physician: 2.74 physicians per 1,000 people, 2003 (WHO 2006)

Welfare

Social spending is relatively high compared to most other transitional countries. Social assistance is channelled through traditional local structures using the national Malhalla foundation, which is responsible for meeting the needs of the poor. The Malhalla collects information on the claimants' needs independently of the state. Wages in the agricultural sector have tended to fall behind the national average as a result of high taxes, contributing to increased risks of civil unrest. Expenditure on the social safety net continues to account for 3.5 per cent of GDP and benefits are usually increased in line with wages rather than with official inflation.

There is a comprehensive system of benefits for sickness, disability, maternity and unemployment, as well as a combined state and private pension scheme. However, many of these payments are linked to the declining minimum wage, with the result that those depending on benefits are likely to drop below the poverty line. There are special payments to veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan. The government also provides benefits through budget subsidies for housing maintenance and public utilities.

Main cities

Tashkent (capital, estimated population 2.2 million in 2012), Namangan (437,119), Andijon (376,159), Samarkand (348,070), Nukus (246,348),

Karshi (230,772), Bukhara (230,336), Kukon (210,794), Margilon (172,227), Fergana (167,367).

Languages spoken

Uzbek is of Turkic origin and is the most commonly used language, although Russian remains the language of inter-ethnic communication and business. Turkish and Arabic are also spoken. English and other Western languages are increasingly common, particularly in Tashkent and other urban areas.

Official language/s

Uzbek

Media

Although the Uzbek Constitution guarantees press freedom, the state maintains tight control of the media with routine harassment of journalists. The government has control of much of the printing and distribution infrastructure. A law, passed in 2007, holds all media outlets responsible for the objectivity of their output and, as such, self-censorship is widespread.

Press

Dailies: In Uzbek, *Hurriyat* (www.hurriyat.uz), a government-owned publication, *Khalq Sozi* has a Russian edition *Narodnoe Slovo* (www.narodnoeslovo.uz), *Uzbekistan Ovozi* and *Tashkent Hakikati*. In Russian, *Pravda Vostoka*, *Zerkalo XXI* (www.zerkalo21.uz). In English, *Good Morning* and *Ovozi Times*.

Weeklies: In Uzbek, *Mohiyat*.

Business: Russian language publications include *Review* (www.review.uz), *Business Partner Uzbekistana* and *Business-vestnik Vostoka* (Bv) (Business News of the East) and *Kommercheskij Vestnik* (Commercial News). In English, publications include *Business Partner* and *Business Review*.

Broadcasting

The National Television and Radio Company (MTRK) (www.mtrk.uz) has a network of four TV channels and five radio stations.

Radio: MTRK national stations include radios' Uzbekistan, *Yoshlar* (the youth station), *Mashal*, Tashkent and *Oltin Zamin*. Private, commercial radio stations include *Oriat FM* (www.oriat.uz), *Uzbegim Taronasi* (www.fm101.uz), *Radio Grand* (www.grand.uz) and *Radio Sezam FM*.

Television: MTRK operates four channels, Uzbekistan, *Yoshlar*, *Sport* and *Tashkent*. There are two national and four, privately run TV stations, located in cities around the country including *Bagdad TV* and *Muloqot* from the Fergana region, *Bekabad* from the Tashkent region, *Aloqa AK* from the Syrdarya region and *Samarkand TV* and *Orbita TV*.

National news agency: *Jahon Information Agency*

Other news agencies: UzA (Uzbekistan National News Agency): www.uza.uz/en

Economy

Reliable statistics for Uzbekistan are not always available; however creditable sources of information were consulted for this report.

Uzbekistan had 600 million barrels of proved oil reserves at the end of 2011, with production of 86,000 barrels per day. It also had 1.6 trillion cubic metres (cum) of proved natural gas reserves, with production of 64.4 billion cum in 2011. Hydrocarbon extraction is the single most dominant component of the economy.

Other industrial production includes mining of uranium, gold and other non-ferrous and rare metals such as molybdenum, zinc, wolfram, lithium and lead. Other mineral reserves include kaolin, quartz spar, phosphorus and bentonite clay. The service sector constitutes just under 50 per cent of GDP and agriculture around 20 per cent. Manufacturing, particularly the automotive industry has grown to constitute around 10 per cent of GDP, with products assembled for export and aimed at Russia.

Agriculture has fallen in importance in the economy, although cotton production and trade is the third largest source of Uzbekistan's wealth; it is the world's fourth largest producer of cotton. Cotton cultivation alone constitutes over 10 per cent.

An Oxfam-Australia report in 2010 stated that cotton production in Uzbekistan was 'one of the most exploitative enterprises in the world' as it relies on forced labour, including mandatory employment by school children, students and civil workers, working in poor conditions for very little pay. Other crops include silk, wheat, fruit and vegetables. Farming is typically either large agri-business enterprises or small family-run concerns that provide poor incomes.

GDP growth has remained strong for several years, reaching a high of 9.5 per cent in 2007 as global prices for oil reached a record level. Growth did not fall significantly during the global economic crisis of 2008–09 when growth was 9.0 per cent and 8.1 per cent respectively, principally because Uzbekistan is self-sufficient in food and energy, the two commodities that help increase costs for other countries. In 2010, GDP growth was 8.5 per cent and remained constant at an estimated 8.3 per cent in 2011. While the government has gradually redirected the economy towards an open free-market system, the number of state-owned enterprises, and government influence in their business, remains high. Unemployment and underemployment are long-term problems, for a workforce that

is generally well educated. However corruption in the education system has begun to erode the status of Uzbekistan qualifications in the region at a time of high migrant numbers. Estimates of Uzbeks working abroad range from 3–5 million, mostly in Russia, the Middle East and south-east Asia.

Although GDP per capita doubled from US\$636 in 2006 to US\$1,336 in 2010, in 2011, the UN Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Uzbekistan 115 (out of 187) for national development in health, education and income. Over 2000–10, 36.2 per cent of the population experienced at least one indicator of poverty, while the headcount poverty rate was 2.3 per cent of the population.

Uzbekistan is both an importer and exporter of electricity between its neighbouring countries. It is in disagreement with Tajikistan over that country's building of the Rohgan hydroelectric dam, which it says was planned in the 1970s and based on defunct technology, while the loss of water to be trapped in the dam could cause long-term damage to Uzbekistan's agricultural production.

As of December 2009, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had provided US\$1.29 billion in financial aid as part of development programmes. The loans were primarily for agriculture and natural resources projects, education, transport and information and communications technology, water supply and other municipal programmes. In April 2010 the ADB agreed to a second line of credit of US\$50 million to enhance the established micro-financing service, plus a grant of US\$600,000 to increase funding for small and micro-entrepreneurial enterprises in Uzbekistan. The terms of the loans for funds, to be administered by three domestic banks, must include at least a total of 25 per cent set aside for loans to women entrepreneurs.

External trade

Uzbekistan is a member of the Economic Co-operation Organization (ECO), comprising 10 regional Central Asian countries. It belongs to the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC), which was established 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 services. The EAEC evolved out of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Customs Union and has begun the process of merging with the Central Asian Co-operation Organisation (CACO). By March 2011 negotiations for Uzbekistan's

membership of the World Trade Organisation were still ongoing.

Natural gas has become the principal export and foreign currency earner, supplanting cotton as the primary export. Other important export products include gold, rare minerals, food, electricity and manufactured goods.

Imports

Principal imports are machinery and equipment (around 50 per cent of total), foodstuffs, chemicals and metals.

Main sources: Russia (21.4 per cent of total in 2011), South Korea (19.1 per cent), China (15.1 per cent).

Exports

Principal exports are natural gas, oil, cotton, gold and precious stones, mineral fertilisers, ferrous metals, textiles, food products and vehicles.

Main destinations: Russia (20.9 per cent of total in 2011), Turkey (17.1 per cent), China (14.7 per cent).

Agriculture

Only 9 per cent of the land is suitable for cultivation. Over 1,500 farms operate on a co-operative basis. Family farms dominate 99 per cent of the cotton sector and 93 per cent of the corn sector.

Cotton is the main crop, around a million tonnes a year being produced, three-quarters of it for export. 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 Uzbekistan, 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. In 2013 the practice of forcing some one million people, including students, teachers and doctors, to work at picking cotton, Uzbekistan's 'white gold' for two months at the end of each year continues, despite objections by international organisations such as Unicef. In addition to the economic and social costs to the rural populations, the environmental costs of the monoculture have been devastating. The degradation of the Aral Sea in particular has led to international concern.

Only 8 per cent of Uzbekistan is forested and commercial exploitation is for domestic purposes only as fuel. There is low production of industrial roundwood, because the government has placed restrictions on

harvesting due to the poor condition of forests.

Industry and manufacturing

Industry contributed around 25 per cent to GDP in 2004 and employs 18 per cent of the working population.

Main industries include chemical and gas production, heavy engineering, specialising in machinery for the cotton-growing and textile industries, aircraft construction, metal works, textiles and cotton derivatives, canned foods and nitrogenised fertilisers.

Tourism

Uzbekistan is a landlocked country in Central Asia that relies on air and overland access for visitors, which somewhat limits numbers. However, in 2009 there were 1.2 million visitors, falling in 2010 to 975,000 as the global economic crisis depressed the market. However, the government strategy has been to concentrate its focus on tourism from the region and the greater Asian market. Through public-private initiatives the infrastructure is improving as wealthier visitors provide the stimulus for investment.

The ancient Silk Road runs through Uzbekistan (and continues into Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan) and this resource alone provides 30 per cent of all visitor receipts and 20 per cent of total tourism income. Organised groups offer visitors the chance to travel along its route, from Tashkent in the east to Khiva in the west, taking in some major sites, such as Samarkand. The historic centre of Bukhara (home to a style of handmade oriental carpets) and Shakhrisabz, plus Itchan Kala are all included on Unesco's World Heritage List.

Environment

The Aral Sea had been drying up due to the overuse of water from the two main rivers which feed into it, with the loss of up to 50 per cent of its water. This resulted in desertification of the surrounding land. However, by 2006, a World Bank funded project had begun a reversal, as building works on the river Syr Darya, in Kazakhstan, increased the level of water in the northern section of the Aral Sea. Work continues to allow more water into the southern section and directly benefit Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan has numerous environmental problems, more than half of its irrigated land is heavily salinated and eroded. Surface and underground water sources used for human consumption in parts of the country have also been polluted by industrial and communal discharges.

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

Uzbekistan is rich in unexplored mineral deposits – its potential mineral wealth amounts to a value of US\$3,000 billion. There are around 100 deposits of various metals, including gold, silver, uranium, zinc, copper and tungsten, which need developing. Uzbekistan is the fourth-largest uranium producer in the world. Uzbekistan is the ninth-largest gold producer in the world. Its commercial reserves are associated with open-cast mines of the Muruntau field in the Kyzylkum desert in central Uzbekistan, which have been developed by the main state gold producer Kyzylkumredmetzoloto (Navoi Integrated Mining and Metallurgical Plant) since 1967. Its annual output amounts to 55–60 tonnes, producing 70 per cent of Uzbekistan's total gold production.

The Zarafshan-Newmont joint-venture between Uzbekistan and the US mining company Newmont, set up in 1995, processes about 200 million tonnes of low-grade ore, previously regarded as waste, from the Muruntau open gold pit. The project is due to end in 2012. Dzhetymtau, located in the Kyzylkum desert is estimated to hold reserves of 400 tonnes of gold and 350,000 tonnes of tungsten ores.

There are silver deposits in the central Kyzylkum region, which also contain gold, platinum group metals, cobalt and nickel, which can be recovered as by-products. Uzbekistan is the only producer of enriched uranium in the former Soviet Union. All output is exported, since Uzbekistan has no nuclear reactors. Uzbekistan's proven uranium reserves are around 80,000 tonnes, while estimated reserves are around 178,000 tonnes. Sugraly is one of Central Asia's biggest uranium fields and holds an estimated 38,000 tonnes of uranium. Kyzylkumredmetzoloto (Kyzylkum Precious Metals and Gold) is Uzbekistan's only uranium producer and exporter. Uzbekistan possesses considerable reserves of lead and zinc.

Copper production in Uzbekistan averages 80,000 tonnes per year, principally from the Kalmakir open mine, with the remainder mined at the Sari Checku open pit. The ore is processed at the Almalyk concentrator.

Uzbekistan produces over 100,000 tonnes per year of feldspar, about one-third of the output of the former Soviet Union. The non-ferrous metal industry includes the mining of bismuth, tungsten and molybdenum. Other natural resources include rock salt, potassium salts, anthracite, graphite, ozokerite, sulphur, quartz, limestone, gypsum, bentonites and semi-precious stones.

Hydrocarbons

Proven oil reserves were 600 million barrels in 2011, with production at 86,000 barrels per day (bpd), a reduction of –1.8 per cent on the 2010 figure of 87,000bpd, due to a lack of new investment and technical difficulties. Consumption was 91,000bpd in 2011, with the balance met by imports.

There are three refineries – at Fergana, Alty-Arik and Bukhara with total capacity of 222,000bpd.

Proven natural gas reserves were 1.6 trillion cubic metres (cum) in 2011 and Uzbekistan is a major world reserve of natural gas, but the country lacks the infrastructure to exploit it. Gas production was 57 billion cum in 2011, of which 49.1 billion cum was consumed domestically.

The industry is almost entirely state-controlled, with 14 companies grouped around Uzbekneftegaz (Uzbek Oil and Gas), which is responsible for all aspects of exploration, production, distribution and processing in the hydrocarbons sector. Principal oil and gas fields include Kuanish, Shakhpakhly and Chembar. Other fields have been discovered in the Mamangan and Ferghana regions. Proven reserves of recoverable coal are 3 billion tonnes, about one-third of which is highly valued anthracite, for which production has increased, while production of less valued bitumen has remained negligible. The industry is in need of modernisation, but production meets all domestic needs of around one million tonnes per annum of which over 80 per cent is used in power stations.

Energy

Total installed generating capacity was 12.55 gigawatts (GW) in 2007, producing over 47 billion kilowatt hours (kWh). Natural gas provides most of the necessary energy for local electricity generation. Uzbekistan is the largest energy producer among the Central Asian republics and a net exporter. The energy sector is almost entirely state-controlled by the joint stock company UzbekEnergo. Uzbekistan is part of the Central Asian power distribution system, it has 37 electric power plants including the hydroelectric power plants on the Syr Darya, Narin and Chirchik rivers, and thermal power

stations at Syr Darya, Tashkent, Novo-Angren, Tachiatasch and Ferghana. Hydroelectric plants produce 15 per cent of electricity and thermal-powered plants 85 per cent.

Financial markets

Stock exchange

Republican Stock Exchange

Banking and insurance

Three state-owned banks dominate the banking sector: Bank Asaka, National Bank of Uzbekistan (NBU) and Narodny Bank.

Central bank

National Bank of Uzbekistan (NBU)

Main financial centre

Tashkent

Time

GMT plus five hours

Geography

Uzbekistan is located in the heart of Central Asia. The fourth-largest republic in the former Soviet Union, Uzbekistan measures approximately 925km from north to south and 1,400km from west to east at its widest points. The republic has a short border with Afghanistan to the south, Kazakhstan lies to the north, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the east and south-east and Turkmenistan to the south-west. The western region, including the Karakalpakstan oblast, marks the eastern fringe of the Turkmen desert. The Kyzylkum desert covers most of the area between Tashkent and the Aral Sea. The western reaches of the Tien Shan mountain range protrude from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan into south-eastern Uzbekistan. The fertile Ferghana Valley runs from the north-eastern finger of Uzbekistan, east of Tashkent, across the border into Kyrgyzstan. Half of the Aral Sea lies within Uzbekistan, the other half in Kazakhstan. There are two main rivers. The Amu Darya, which enters from Afghanistan at Termez and runs along the border with Turkmenistan before turning north at Khiva and flowing into the southern end of the Aral Sea. The Syr Darya flows from the Tien Shan mountains northwards, east of Tashkent and into Kazakhstan, eventually reaching the northern end of the Aral Sea.

Hemisphere

Northern

Climate

Uzbekistan comprises mostly desert and semi-desert, with extreme continental temperatures: the average stands at minus 8 degrees Celsius (C) in January and 26 degrees C in June. Temperatures in Tashkent vary from minus 1 degree C in January to 29–40 degrees C or more in summer. Rainfall averages between 80

and 90mm per annum on the plains and 890 to 1,000mm per annum in the mountains.

Dress codes

Smart clothes are required for business visitors. Otherwise dress is not overly formal but modest, particularly outside Tashkent.

Entry requirements

Passports

Passports are required by all and must be valid for at least six months after the intended date of departure.

Visa

Required by all. Business travellers must obtain an invitation from a local company or organisation. Exceptions include nationals of the US, UK, Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain and Switzerland who may apply directly. The Uzbek contact should submit a visa support letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tashkent before the visitor applies for a visa. When an approval to visit has been agreed a confirmation is sent by the ministry to the embassy and the visitor should contact a consular section to ensure that a visa issuance confirmation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is in place before submitting their application.

To download a visa application see www.uzbekembassy.org and *consular section*, see *visa information* for further details.

Travellers on visitor's visas whose stay in Uzbekistan exceeds three days are required to register with the Local Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within three working days of arrival. Hotel administration should take care of such registration automatically.

Transit visas issued in other CIS countries are no longer recognised.

Currency advice/regulations

The import and export of local currency is unlimited. The import of foreign currency is unlimited but must be declared on arrival; export is limited to the amount declared. However, proof of legal exchange to local currency must be provided for re-export for imported sums of over US\$2,000; retain all currency exchange receipts.

Travellers cheques have limited acceptance.

Customs

Personal items are duty-free, goods to the value of US\$10,000 can be imported for personal use; valuable items such as jewellery, cameras, computers must be declared.

The export of antiques and art objects is subject to duty and a special permit from the Ministry of Culture, a certificate stating the age of the item(s) should be obtained when purchased.

Prohibited imports

Firearms, ammunition, illegal drugs, anti-Uzbek propaganda, fruit or vegetables, precious metals, gem stones and furs.

Health (for visitors)

Mandatory precautions

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

Advisable precautions

Vaccinations for diphtheria, tetanus, hepatitis A and typhoid are recommended. Other vaccinations that may be advised include tuberculosis and hepatitis B. A non-malignant malaria occasionally occurs in the border area of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, visitors should avoid being bitten by using anti-mosquito sprays and long clothing. There is a risk of rabies. Water precautions are recommended using water purification tablets or drinking bottled water.

Any medicines required by the traveller should be brought into the country 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. Medical insurance is essential, including emergency evacuation.

Hotels

Advisable to book in advance through Uzbektourism or other specialist travel agents.

Credit cards

Credit cards are not widely accepted outside Tashkent's top hotels and restaurants.

Public holidays (national)

Fixed dates

1 Jan (New Year's Day), 8 Mar (Women's Day), 20–22 Mar (Nowruz/Persian New Year), 1 May (Labour Day), 9 May (Victory Day), 1 Sep (Independence Day), 18 Nov (Flag Day), 8 Dec (Constitution Day).

Variable dates

Eid al Adha, Persian New Year, Birth of the Prophet, 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 feasts vary according to the sighting of the new moon, so cannot be forecast exactly.

Working hours

Banking

Mon–Fri: 0900–1800; Sat: 0900–1500. Banks at Tashkent airport are open only at arrival of international flights.

Business

Mon–Fri: 0800–1300, 1400–1700. Business hours generally include Saturday mornings.

Government

Mon–Fri: 0800–1300, 1400–1700. Some government offices are open Saturday mornings.

Shops

Mon–Fri: 0800–2000/2100. Shops are closed for lunch for one hour at any time between 1100 and 1500.

Telecommunications

Mobile/cell phones

There are 900 and 900/1800 GSM services located in highly populated areas only.

Electricity supply

220V AC, with round two-pin plugs.

Social customs/useful tips

Business is conducted formally. Appointments are essential when business cards are exchanged.

Personal relationships are the key to doing business in Uzbekistan, with the hierarchy confined to a small group of influential families. Establishing contact within that group can be vital. Gratuities are illegal.

The giving of small gifts is widely practised, not as bribes but as social niceties. Uzbek hospitality is renowned. It may be regarded as insulting to decline an invitation to a private function. Offering basic food is considered insulting. It is polite to see a visitor off at a train station. If travelling on public transport, make sure to give up your seat to the old, parents with children and the disabled. Superstitions are taken somewhat seriously: for example, do not give an even number of flowers, as this is funereal; do not greet people in a doorway – this is considered unlucky. Local customs of note are ram butting and wrestling, and wedding ceremonies in September which take place in the street. Alcohol is available and smoking is widespread.

Security

Terrorist bombings in Tashkent have prompted many Western governments to advise their citizens not to visit Uzbekistan unless absolutely necessary. Visitors should alert their presence to their own embassies on arrival and take all precautions and advice given regarding safety measures.

It is unwise to venture out on the streets alone at night. Dress inconspicuously, as wealthy-looking foreigners can be a target for muggers. Identification should be carried at all times, and visitors should avoid photographing official buildings. If taking photographs in the vicinity of police or soldiers, it is best to ask their permission first.

Since 1999, there has been an increasing terrorist and kidnapping threat in the north-east of the country, especially in the

Ferghana Valley and mountainous regions on the Kyrgyz and Tajik borders. Visitors should register with the Uzbek authorities before entering these areas. Outbreaks of violence can lead to strong reactions from the Uzbekistani army, including wide-spread road blocks and the closure of some destinations. If stopped by police, visitors should remain calm and polite.

Getting there

Air

National airline: Uzbekistan Airlines

International airport/s: Tashkent International airport (TAS), 11 km from city centre. Facilities include duty-free shops, bureau de change, left luggage, restaurants and bar. There are taxis, trains and trolley buses to the city (journey time 10–20 minutes).

Airport tax: Departure tax: US\$10

Surface

There are border crossings with Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, however not all are open and available to international travellers. Check with local authorities before making an abortive trip.

Road: Primary roads along trade routes are being upgraded to increase access for freight. Secondary roads are in poor condition especially in desert areas such as the borders with Turkmenistan and the western borders with Kazakhstan.

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: Tashkent is the hub of rail services in Central Asia. Lines run west to Ashgabat (Turkmenistan), south to Samarkand and on to Dushanbe (Tajikistan), east to Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan) and Almaty (Kazakhstan) and north to Moscow (Russia). The distances involved do not make this the most convenient means of travel, services are few and slow, and tickets must be purchased with hard currency, preferably US dollars.

Getting about

National transport

Air: Uzbekistan Airways has scheduled flights to many cities and towns around the country providing a realistically quick method of getting around the country.

Tashkent, Bukhara, Samarkand and Urgench are all served by internal flights.

Road: The road network is deteriorating and many published statistics on paved and unpaved roads are often a decade out-of-date. Driving can be hazardous for the visitor and it is recommended that arrangements should be made to use a local driver and a four-wheel drive vehicle, particularly if travelling to the Tien Shan mountain ranges. Tashkent roads are relatively well maintained with street lighting. Outside the city however the risks of driving, especially at night, include livestock and farm vehicles (often animal-drawn). There are security checkpoints at the city limits of Tashkent and other towns throughout the country. A permit is necessary if travelling to Termez and other areas of the Surkhandarya region. The permit can be applied for in Tashkent and usually takes five days to process.

Uzbekistan has a large highway police force, and drivers are frequently stopped for minor infractions or document checks.

Buses: Routes between the main cities are served by modern air-conditioned coach services which are reliable but infrequent. Other regional services are irregular and often used for transporting goods and livestock.

Rail: Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara are all connected by an electrified network. Some other routes are in varying states of disrepair, and long-distance travel by train should be avoided.

City transport

Taxis: In each city there are official taxis (with sign on top) and unofficial taxis. Agree rates in advance when using the official taxis. A few dollars are sufficient for a local journey in an unofficial taxi. In Tashkent it is safer to use official taxis or hire cars. Taxis can be hired for an hour, a day or a week.

Buses, trams & metro: An underground railway, trolleybus service and buses provide a comprehensive network in Tashkent.

Car hire

There are very few car hire facilities; a national licence with authorised translation or 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

International direct dialling code (IDD) for Uzbekistan is +998, followed by area code and subscriber's number:

Andijan	74	Bukara	65
Ferghana	73	Samarkand	66
Tashkent	71		

Useful telephone numbers

Police: 02

Fire: 01

Ambulance: 03

Chambers of Commerce

American Chamber of Commerce in Uzbekistan, 41 Buyok Turon Street, Tashkent 700000 (tel: 120-6077; fax: 120-7077; e-mail: office@amcham-uzbekistan.org).

Uzbekistan Chamber of Commodity Producers and Entrepreneurs, 6 Bukhoro Street, Tashkent 700047 (tel: 133-0699; fax: 133-3799; e-mail: root@ptp.co.uz).

Banking

Agrobank, 43 Muqimiy Street, Tashkent 100096. (tel.: 150-5369, 120-8833).

Bank Asaka (specialised state joint stock commercial), 67 Nukus Str, 700015 Tashkent (tel: 120-8111; fax: 120-8173).

Hamkorkbank, Avenue Bobur 85, Andijan (tel: 244-73-33; 244-77-18).

Narodny Bank (People's Bank), Tashkent.

National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 101 Amir Temur St, 700084 Tashkent (tel: 137-6077; fax: 133-3200).

Pakhta Bank, 79A Nukus St, Apar 1–2, Tashkent 700015 (tel: 120-5855; fax: 120-7712).

Ravnak Bank, 2 Furkat St, Tashkent 700021 (tel: 144-0753; fax: 144-1091).

Tadbirkorkbank, 52 S Azimov St, Tashkent (133-1875; fax: 133-8100).

Uzbekistan-Turkish Bank, No.15/B Drujba Narodov Street, Tashkent (tel: 173-8323, 173-8324; fax: 120-6362).

Uzpromstroybank, 3 Shahrizabzskaya St, Tashkent 700000 (tel: 120-4528; 120-4520).

Central bank

Central Bank of Uzbekistan (CBU), Prospekt Uzbekistana 6, Tashkent 700001 (tel: 133-6829; fax: 136-7704).

Stock exchange

Republican Stock Exchange, www.uzse.uz

Travel information

Sairam Tourism, 13A Movarounnahr St, Tashkent 700060 (tel: 133-7411; fax: 120-6937; internet: www.sairamtour.com).

Tashkent Intourist, 69A Navoi St, Tashkent (tel: 144-1294, 144-0278, fax: 144-0776).

Uzbekistan Airways, 41 Movarounnakh Street, Tashkent 700060 (tel: 255-1850;

fax: 255-6822; internet: www.uzairways.com).

National tourist organisation offices
Uzbektourism, 47 Khorezm St, 700047 Tashkent (tel: 133-3854; fax: 136-7948; internet: www.uzbektourism.uz).

Ministries

Ministry of Agriculture, 4 Navoi St, 700004 Tashkent (tel: 114-1353, 141-0020; fax: 141-0053).

Ministry of Communication, 1 Alexei Tolstoy St, 700000 Tashkent (tel: 133-8503; fax: 133-1695).

Ministry for Cultural Affairs, 30 Navoi St, 700129 Tashkent (tel: 139-4957).

Ministry of Defence, 100 Academician Abdullaev St, 700000 Tashkent (tel: 133-6667).

Ministry of Energy and Electrification, 6 Horezm St, 700000 Tashkent (tel: 133-6128; fax: 136-2700).

Ministry of Finance, 5 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 1391943; fax: 144-5643).

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 9 Uzbekistan Ave, 700029 Tashkent (tel: 133-6475; fax: 139-4348; internet: <http://jahon.mfa.uz>).

Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Elyor Madjidovich Ganiev, 75 Buyuk Ipak Yuli St, 700077 Tashkent (tel: 1670734, 168-9256, 134-4480; fax: 168-7231, 168-7477).

Ministry of Health, 12 Navoi St, 700012 Tashkent (tel: 141-1680; fax: 141-1641).

Ministry of Higher and Special Secondary Education, 6 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 139-4808; fax: 139-4329).

Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1 Herman Lopatin St, 700029 Tashkent (tel: 158-3614; fax: 133-8934).

Ministry of Justice, 5 Hamza St, 700047 Tashkent (tel: 133-5039; fax: 133-5176).

Ministry of Labour, 4 Abai St, 700195 Tashkent (tel: 141-7628; fax: 139-7821).

Ministry of Land Improvement and Water Economy, 5a Abdulla Qodiri St, 700128 Tashkent (tel: 141-1353; fax: 141-4924).

Ministry of Public Education, 5 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 139-4214; fax: 139-1173).

Ministry of Social Security, 20a Abdulla Avioni St, 700100 Tashkent (tel: 153-5371).

Other useful addresses

British Embassy, 67 Gulyamov St, Tashkent 700000 (tel: 120-6574; fax: 120-6430; email: brit@emb.uz).

Business-Vestnik Vostoka (BVV) (English newspaper) (32 Matbuotchilar St,

Tashkent (tel: 133-9593; email: bvv@bvv.bcc.com.uz).

Cabinet of Ministers, 5 Mustakillik Maidoni, Tashkent (tel: 139-8188; fax: 139-8121).

Central Asia Research Forum, School of Oriental and African Studies, Thornhaugh St, London WC1H 0XG, UK (tel: (+44) 171-323-6300; fax: (+44) 171-436-3844).

EU Co-ordinating Unit, Tarasa Chevchenka St Dom 4, 700029 Tashkent (tel: 138-4018, 156-3479, 156-0417; fax: 132-0652).

Foreign Investment Agency, 4th Floor, 16A Navoi Street, Tashkent (tel: 141-5541, 141-5752; fax: 189-1201).

Government House, 700008 Tashkent (tel: 139-8295; fax: 139-8601).

National Agency for Telecommunications and Postal Services, 1 Tolstoy Street, Tashkent (tel: 133-6503, 133-6645; fax: 139-8732).

National Association of Gold Mining and Diamond Processing Companies, 26 Turaqorghan Thoroughfare, 700019 Tashkent (tel: 148-0720; fax: 144-2603).

National Joint Stock Corporation for Construction in the City of Tashkent, 16a Uzbekistan Ave, 700027 Tashkent (tel: 133-9033; fax: 136-4788).

SME Development Agency, 89 Gargarin St. Samarkand, PO Box 703029 (tel: 124-2966; fax: 131-0107; email: ravshan@samarkand.silk.glas.apc.org).

State Company for Television and Radio Broadcasting, 69 Navoi St, 700011 Tashkent (tel: 133-8106; fax: 144-0021).

State Committee on Agriculture and Construction of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 6 Abai St, 700011 Tashkent (tel: 144-0084/5).

State Committee on Forecasting and Statistics of the Cabinet of Ministers, 45a Uzbekistanskii Ave, 700008 Tashkent (tel: 139-8216, 139-8669; fax: 167-2509, 167-7816).

State Committee on Forests, 49a Uzbekistan Ave, 700017 Tashkent (tel: 145-9180).

State Committee on Geology and Mineral Resources, 11 Taras Shevchenko St, 700060 Tashkent (tel: 133-7206; fax: 156-0283).

State Committee on Precious Metals, 26 Turk-Kurganskiy Proezd, 700019 Tashkent (tel: 148-0720, 148-0663; fax: 144-2603, 148-0481).

State Committee for Privatisation (GKI), Mustaqillik Maydoni 6, Tashkent (tel: 139-8768; fax: 139-8548).

State Committee on the Protection of Nature, 5a Abdulla Qodiri St, 700000 Tashkent (tel: 141-0442; fax: 141-3990).

State Committee on Science and Technology, 29 Hadicha Syleimonova St, 700017 Tashkent (tel: 139-1843; fax: 139-1243).

State Committee for Television and Radio, Ulitsa Khoremzskaya 49, Tashkent (tel: 144-3287).

State Corporation on Industrial and Civil Engineering Construction, 17 Proletar St, 700060 Tashkent (tel: 133-7725; fax: 133-1041).

State Corporation of Local Industries, 5 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 139-1058; fax: 139-4853).

State Joint-Stock Association on Trade, 6 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 139-4971; fax: 139-1282).

State Property Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Prospekt Uzbekistanskij 55, 700003 Tashkent (fax: 113-94617; 139-2236).

Embassy of Uzbekistan (USA) 1746 Massachusetts Avenue, NW Washington 20036-1903 (tel: (+1-202) 887-5300; fax: (+1-202) 293-6804; internet: www.uzbekistan.org).

Uzbek Information Agency (state news agency), Ulitsa Khamza 2, Tashkent (tel: 139-4982, 133-1622).

Uzbekinvest, 5 Mustaqillik Sq, 700078 Tashkent (tel: 139-1989; fax: 189-1538, 144-5186).

Uzbekiston Ovozi Times (English newspaper), 32 Matbuotchilar St, Tashkent (tel: 133-2036, 133-3855; fax: 133-7914).

Uzbekneftgas (national corporation of the oil and gas industry), 21 Akhunbabaev St, 700047 Tashkent (tel: 133-5757; fax: 132-1062).

Uzbek Post Office, 1 Tolstoy Street, Tashkent (tel: 133-5747; fax: 136-0921).

National news agency: Jahon Information Agency

9 Uzbekistan Street, Tashkent, 700029 (tel: 133-6591, 153-8682; fax: 120-6443; email: aqajhon@mfa.uz; internet: <http://jahon.mfa.uz>)

Other news agencies: Uza (Uzbekistan National News Agency): www.uza.uz/en

Internet sites

The Times of Central Asia: www.times.kg
News and commercial information: www.uzreport.com

General and government information: www.uzland.uz

Regional news and links: www.eurasianet.org