

U Z B E K I S T A N

SECTION A

Capital

Tashkent 2,107,000 (1995 est.)

Area

447,400 sq km (172,700 sq mi)

Form of government

Republic

GDP—per capita

Purchasing power parity—\$2,500 (1999 est.)

Population

24,755,519 (July 2000 est.)

Ethnic composition

Uzbek	80.0%
Russian	5.5%
Tajik	5.0%
Kazakh	3.0%
Karakalpak	2.5%
Tatar	1.5%
Other	2.5%

Official language

Uzbek

Other languages

Russian is used as the language of interethnic communication (14.2%), Tajik (4.4%), and others.

Legislation dealing with the use of languages

The Constitution was adopted on December 8, 1992.

Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan On the State Language (December 21, 1995)

Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the State Language, (October 21, 1989), No.3561-XI *Differences between the Law on the State Language of 1989 and the Law on the State Language of 1995*

- The Law of 1989 begins with an introduction that stresses the importance of a language. The 1995 Law provides only specific, concrete provisions without statements of general nature.
- The Law of 1989 states that the provisions of this law do not regulate the usage of language in the military. The Law of 1995 does not provide for this possibility.
- The 1989 Law guarantees the development and free usage of the Russian language as a language of international communication. The 1995 Law does not single out Russian.
- The 1989 Law grants the right to issue requests to governmental and public organizations and receive replies in the state language. The 1995 Law mentions only the right to issue requests in Uzbek, but does not grant the right to receive replies in the state language.
- The 1989 Law requires a sufficient, for their obligations, knowledge of the state language for a job in the service sphere. The 1995 Law does not provide such a requirement.
- The 1989 Law provides that scientific works can be defended in Russian and other languages. The 1995 Law does not contain such a provision.
- The 1995 Law states that texts of seals and stamps have to be in the state language, whereas the 1989 Law provides that there must also be copies of such texts in Russian.”
- The 1989 Law originally required that Uzbek would be the sole language of official communication by 1998, but that was subsequently modified and now stipulates no specific date. The

Government is also in the process of replacing the Cyrillic with the Latin alphabet. However, realizing the difficulties for Uzbeks and minorities alike, the Government has delayed the full transition to both the Uzbek language and the Latin alphabet until the year 2005.”

Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Amendments and Complements to the Law On State Language of the Republic of Uzbekistan, (December 21, 1995)

Law on Citizenship, (1992)

Background notes

Currently the Uzbek language is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. Between the years 1926 and 1927, preliminary work was done in Uzbekistan to shift the alphabet from the Arabic to the Roman, which was adopted by the late 1920s. In 1940, the writing system underwent another shift from the Roman to the Cyrillic alphabet, used to this today. There are plans to replace the Cyrillic with the Roman script in the future.

SECTION B

Where does one observe language to be a problem in the country?

Russians had been the privileged group under the communist system. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union they found it difficult to adjust to being the ethnic minority within a new state. Uzbeks themselves do not consider the situation of Russian-speakers in Uzbekistan as miserable or their policies adopted as discriminating.

Russian-speakers in Uzbekistan called the Language Law “a law on emigration”. Such an attitude towards the law might be motivated by the fact that the new citizenship law considers those who did not adopt Uzbek nationality by July 1, 1993 as “foreigners”, and such non-citizens are refused the access to health care and education.

Such discriminatory language and the citizenship policy, i.e. limitation of political rights and representation, as well as the restriction of the social rights of the Russian-speaking population, together with grass-roots nationalism, have contributed to the fact that many Russian-speakers have left Uzbekistan. Another reason for this may have been the difficulty of Russian-speakers to adapt to the loss of their formerly privileged status. The discrimination towards Russian-speakers at the state level, however, has been mainly indirect and confined, due to continuing economic dependence of the country on Russia. Because of the concern expressed by Russia, some steps have recently been taken to improve the situation of the ethnic Russians.

To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?

Ethnic groups other than the Uzbeks, particularly Russians, frequently complain about the limited job opportunities for them. Senior positions in the government bureaucracy and business generally are reserved for ethnic Uzbeks, although there are numerous exceptions to this rule.

Since independence, a significant number of non-Uzbeks, including Russians, Jews and Ukrainians have emigrated. For example, from 1985 to 1992 approximately 800,000 people, mostly Russians, left Uzbekistan. In the capital of Tashkent, the Uzbek population rose from 40% in the late 1980s to 60% in 1992. Emigration continued growing, in that the number of emigrants to Russia had risen from 27,400 at the end of 1996 to 33,000 at the beginning of 1997. The language policy in the country has most likely contributed to the increase of emigration from Uzbekistan.

The new Law on Political Parties has hindered the political rights of national minorities. The law came into force on January 7, 1997, and prohibits parties formed on ethnic or religious lines. The Government prevents unregistered opposition parties and movements from operating freely or publishing their views. These means of public control effectively prevent ethnic minorities from publicly expressing and representing their interests.

The use of language in everyday life e.g. education, broadcasting and other

In 1992, 185 newspapers (out of 279) and 33 periodicals (out of 93) were printed in the Uzbek language. Education in Uzbek was available from primary school through university level. In 1988/1989, more than three quarters of students were educated in Uzbek language schools. Since the establishment of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Arabic script has been taught.

The situation changed after the enforcement of the new Language Law. It seems to have hindered the freedom of expression of the Russian-speaking minority in particular. In 1994 it was announced that as of September, broadcasts of the Russian language television channel in Uzbekistan would be stopped. This decision was justified by the fact that Russia had stopped financing the station. The Russian-language media in particular was targeted. In January 1996, the newspaper "Vestnik Kul'tury", published by the Russian Cultural Center in Tashkent, was suspended immediately after its first issue appeared. In August 1996 the Moscow radio station "Mayak" was ordered to stop its relays in Uzbekistan as of January 1997.

SECTION C

To what extent are minority groups in this country disadvantaged by their language?

Updated (July 2003)

ETHNIC MINORITIES IN BOTH TURKMENISTAN AND UZBEKISTAN CONTINUE TO SUFFER

In spite of the fact that several months ago the Uzbek ambassador in Ashgabat was implicated in an assassination attempt against the Turkmenistan President Niyazov,¹ the head of the state recently proclaimed that “his nation enjoys good relations with neighboring Uzbekistan.” However, notwithstanding this thaw on the official level, ethnic minorities in both countries continue to face difficulties, especially in the educational sphere.

For ethnic Turkmen in Uzbekistan, living conditions have continuously deteriorated when the “Uzbekization” of schools dramatically reduced their opportunities for higher education.

There are around 800,000 ethnic Turkmen living in Uzbekistan. Although in several villages they constitute the majority (the village of Chandir, in the Uzbek province of Qashkadarya), they have problems to obtain Turkmen-language instruction.

During the early years following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkmen-language schools in Uzbekistan experienced a shortage of supplies, especially textbooks, which were produced in Turkmenistan. The situation has worsened over time, as Turkmenistan stopped delivering educational materials since the late 1990s. Eventually, a governmental decree ordered to convert all Turkmen-language schools into schools with Uzbek-language instructions.

¹ Turkmen-Uzbek ties, never especially cordial in the post-Soviet era, reached their tensest point in late 2002, in the aftermath of the failed plot to kill Niyazov. [For background see the [Eurasia Insight archive](#)]. Niyazov later accused Uzbekistan’s envoy in Ashgabat, Abdurashid Kadyrov, of assisting a leader of the alleged conspiracy, Boris Shikhmuradov. [For additional information see the [Eurasia Insight archive](#)]. In subsequent months, Turkmen authorities forcibly relocated ethnic Uzbeks living near the country’s long border with Uzbekistan.

Uzbeks in Turkmenistan have been caught up in the general decline of the country’s educational system. [For background see the [Eurasia Insight archive](#)].

Currently Turkmen students study their language for an hour per week. At the same time, the low quality of lessons in many schools leaves them with only limited Uzbek-language abilities.

The supply shortages and government decisions have left Turkmen pupils with a poor command of their native language. "I can witness nowadays that our children are forgetting their language and customs," said one distraught Turkmen parent.

The state Ukituvchi Publishing House, which specializes in the publication of schoolbooks, produced only 23 foreign-language books in 2002 (most of them were in Tajik and Kazakh). The publishing house was reluctant to issue more titles because of both the high production costs and the low rate of return.

To a certain extent, the Soviet collapse and a consequent economic chaos meant that an educational crisis was unavoidable. However, Turkmen-Uzbekistan tension has even exacerbated the problems. For example, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have stopped recognizing each other's diplomas. This virtually eliminated the possibility of ethnic Turkmen in Uzbekistan to study at higher educational institutions in Turkmenistan, and vice versa. As a result, ethnic Turkmen stand a very little chance to receive higher education, because many lack a sufficient command of Uzbek and/or Russian to gain the admission to Uzbek universities. Those who were admitted say surmounting the language barrier was the most difficult aspect of the process.

A few activists are striving to protect the Turkmen language and culture. In Qashkadarya, there have been several attempts to establish a Turkmen cultural center for the province, but local authorities rebuffed each effort.

Source: Minelres Archive, May 21, 2003, by Kamol Kholmuradov, May 15, 2003, <http://lists.delfi.lv/pipermail/minelres/2003-May/002735.html>

APPENDIX A

MAP OF UZBEKISTAN



APPENDIX B

UZBEKISTAN - CONSTITUTION

Constitution as adopted on December 8, 1992

Article 4

The state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan is Uzbek. The Republic of Uzbekistan ensures a respectful attitude towards the languages, customs, and traditions of the nationalities and peoples living on its territory and ensures conditions for their development.

Article 18

All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan have equal rights and freedoms and are equal before the law regardless of differences in gender, race, nationality, language, religious, social heritage, convictions, and person or social position. Privileges may be established only by law and should be accord with the principles of social justice.

Article 115

Judicial proceedings in the Republic of Uzbekistan are conducted in Uzbek, Karakalpak, or the language of the majority of people of the area. Participants in a case who do not know the language of the judicial proceedings are ensured the right to acquaint themselves fully with the materials of the case and participate in the judicial proceedings through an interpreter, and also the right to address the court in their native language.

LAW OF THE REPUBLIC OF UZBEKISTAN ON THE STATE LANGUAGE

Adopted on December 21, 1995

Came into force on December 21, 1995, save Articles 9 and 10.

Article 1

The Uzbek language shall be the state language of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Article 2

Granting a status of the State language to the Uzbek language shall not infringe upon the constitutional rights of nations and peoples residing in the territory of the Republic, to use their native language.

Article 3

The legal grounds for functioning of the Uzbek language as the State language shall be determined by the present Law and after legislative acts.

The questions related to functioning of the language in the Republic of Karakalpakstan shall be also determined by the legislation of the Republic of Karakalpakstan.

The present Law shall not govern the usage of languages in private life, personal communication, and when performing religions and cult rites.

Citizens shall have the right to choose a language of interethnic communication on their own.

Article 4

The Republic of Uzbekistan shall provide all citizens with the opportunity to learn the State language, and shall ensure respect for languages of the nations and peoples residing in its territory, and shall create conditions for development of these languages.

Teaching citizens the State language shall be free of charge.

Article 5

The Republic of Uzbekistan shall ensure establishment of pre-school institutions using the State language, and at the places of compact residence of ethnic groups - using also their languages.

Article 6

Citizens residing in the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have the right to free choice of teaching language.

The Republic of Uzbekistan shall ensure the general, vocational, specialized secondary and higher education in the State language as well as in other languages.

Article 7

In the spheres of official functioning of the State language the existing scientific rules and norms of the Uzbek literary language shall be observed.

The State shall ensure enrichment and perfection of the Uzbek language, inter alia by introducing generally recognized scientific, technical, social and political terminology.

New scientifically grounded terms shall be introduced to the Uzbek language after the public discussion and upon a consent of a respective committee of the Parliament.

Article 8

Legislative acts of the Republic of Uzbekistan, other documents of bodies of State authority and administration shall be adopted and published in the State language. Translation of these documents shall be published in other languages as well.

Documents of bodies of State authority and administration shall be adopted and promulgated in the State language. At the places of compact residence of representatives of particular ethnic groups, documents of local bodies of State authority and administration shall be adopted and promulgated in the State language of the Republic and in the language of such ethnic group.

Article 9

The office work in bodies of State authority and administration shall be effected in the State language and, where necessary, provision shall be made for translation into other languages.

Working languages of international fora held in Uzbekistan shall be the State language as well as the languages chosen by their participants.

Article 10

At enterprises, institutions, organizations and public associations the office work, accounting, statistical and financial documentation shall be kept in the State language, and where the majority of the staff does not know Uzbek, other languages may be also used along with the State language.

Article 11

Legal proceedings shall be effected in the State language or in the language of the majority of population in the locality. The participants in a case who do not know the language in which the proceedings are effected shall be ensured the right to be acquainted with the materials of the case, to participate in the court through an interpreter, as well as the right to make statements in the court in the native language.

The State language shall be used for examination and resolution of economic disputes between enterprises, organizations and institutions. Upon consent of the sides, economic disputes may be also examined in other language.

Article 12

In the Republic of Uzbekistan the notary acts shall be effected in the State language. Upon the request of citizens, a text of the document legalized by a State notary or by a person acting as notary, shall be issued in Russian or if possible in other acceptable language.

Article 13

The acts of civil status, identification documents and documents certifying the rights of a person shall be legalized in the State language and, where necessary, shall be copied in other language.

Article 14

Persons residing in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be guaranteed the right to apply to State organizations, institutions and public associations with applications, suggestions, complaints in the State and other languages.

Article 15

Persons residing in the Republic of Uzbekistan, irrespective of their ethnicity, shall have the right to write the first name, second name and family name in accordance with national and historical traditions.

Article 16

Television and radio broadcasts shall be in the State language as well as in other languages.

Article 17

Publishing activities shall be in the State language and, where necessary, in other languages as well.

Article 18

The mail and telegraph messages shall be in the State language or, upon citizens' wish, in other language.

Article 19

Texts of seals, stamps, letterheads of institutions, organizations and public associations shall be in the State language.

Texts of seals, stamps, letterheads of international organizations and institutions, joint ventures located in the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan and of national cultural societies and centers shall be duplicated in the State language.

Article 20

Texts of signboards, announcements, price-lists and other visual as well as oral information shall be written and promulgated in the State language and may be duplicated in other languages.

Article 21

Goods of enterprises shall be provided with labels, instructions and tags in the State language and in other languages.

Article 22

The names of administrative and territorial areas, squares, streets and geographic entities of the Republic shall be produced in the State language.

Article 23

Texts of international treaties of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall be produced in the State language and in a language of the Contracting Party (Parties), unless the treaty provides for otherwise.

Article 24

In the Republic of Uzbekistan a scornful and hostile attitude towards the State or other languages shall be prohibited. Persons infringing upon the right of citizens to free choice of language in communication, upbringing and education, shall be liable in accordance with the legislation.

International Organization for Migration (IOM)

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