

Uzbekistan

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Location and area

Uzbekistan is a republic in Central Asia, bordered on the west and north by Kazakhstan, on the east by Kyrgyzstan, on the southeast by Tajikistan, and on the south by Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Uzbekistan includes the Karakalpakstan Autonomous Republic (Qoraqalpoghiston). Uzbekistan's land area totals about 447,400 km². (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Topography

Uzbekistan's terrain is composed primarily of plains, such as the Turan, which occupy about four fifths of the republic's territory. Branches of the Tian and Pamir mountains rise in the east and northeast, with the highest elevation in the republic reaching 4,643 m. The north-central part of the republic is occupied by the Kyzyl Kum, one of the largest deserts in the world. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Water

Most of Uzbekistan's rivers drain internally or dissipate before reaching a terminal body of water. The two largest rivers, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, flow into the Aral Sea. They have been heavily tapped for irrigation and, as a result, the area of the Aral Sea has declined sharply in recent decades with severe environmental damage to the surrounding ecosystem. Extensive canal systems, such as the Amu-Bukhara, Qarshi, Southern Golodnaya Steppe, and Great Fergana canals, have greatly altered hydrologic flow patterns. The republic contains many large artificial lakes and reservoirs, such as Lake Aydar, which is fed by irrigation run-off water. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Climate

The climate is desert continental; temperatures fluctuate greatly over the course of a year. Average daily temperature in January ranges from -6° to 2° C, and in July from 26° to 32° C. Precipitation is scant, and irrigation is necessary for crop cultivation, except along mountain slopes.

Agriculture contributed about 33 per cent of gross domestic product. Cotton is the primary crop. (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia 2002).

Peatlands

According to the interpreted World Soil Map (Van Engelen & Huting 2002) 872 km² of histosols exist in Uzbekistan and 29,705 km² of gley soils.