



Uzbekistan Update

I arrived back in Uzbekistan on 20 January to continue with part two of a health promotion training course for national and provincial level staff of the Ministry of Health. This piece of work is part of the "Primary Health Care Project – II" funded by the World Bank and DFID — the Department for International Development — the overseas funding agency of the British government.

Part two of the course follows the nine-day workshop which I delivered (together with three other trainers) from 26 November to 5 December. During the workshop participants were introduced to theories, methodologies and practices of health promotion.

During the seven weeks between parts 1 and 2, participants were to work together in provincial groups to prepare health promotion plans on a health issue of their choice — HIV/AIDS, TB, smoking, nutrition...whatever they might be interested in.

During the second part of the course the participants are to present their health promotion plans. Plans will be critiqued and revised as necessary. Monitoring and evaluation plans will be drafted. The course will run from 26–30 January. Since my arrival I've been spending my days completing presentations, and pushing the local project staff to select and prepare a venue—the fact that as of Friday morning a venue had not yet been agreed is more than a bit disconcerting.



Yours truly, together with Mr Rustam "No Problem" Saidova, the project driver. "No Problem" appears to be Rustam's favourite English phrase, used frequently in his response to any of our queries. "Rustam, could you take us to the Ministry of Health?" — "No problem." "Rustam, could you drive us to Moscow?" — "No problem."



In the centre of the square is a bronze horse monument of Amir Timur (1336-1405) the "father" of Uzbekistan and famous statesman of Central Asia. Amir Timur ruled an area stretching from the Mediterranean Sea in the west to Chinese Turkistan in the east, and from India in the south to Russia in the north. He beat the American to Baghdad by about 600 years. The areas he conquered in his lifetime were only second to the conquests of Alexander.

Touring Tashkent

I've taken a couple of walks from my hotel to the "centre" of Tashkent — the Amir Timur square. Decorated with trees, flower beds and fountains the square must be quite magnificent in the spring and summer; the dead of winter is not the time to visit Uzbekistan.

LEAST YOU FORGET:
"Just where the hell is Uzbekistan?"



Not too far from Amir Timur square is the Alisher Navoi Opera & Ballet Theatre (right). It's claimed to be one of the best opera theatres of the world (at least that's what the guide book says). I had the "pleasure" to attend a ballet here last November. My first ballet in over 40 years...and hopefully it will be at least another 40 years before I attend another. The theatre was built in 1947 by Japanese prisoners of war still being held in the Soviet Union. It survived the earthquake of 1966 with only limited damage. The architect of the Alisher Navoi Opera & Ballet Theatre is Alexey Shusev, the architect of the Mausoleum in the Red Square in Moscow.

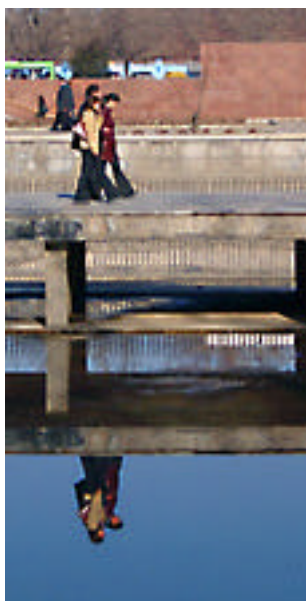


Also located near Amir Timur square is the State Temurid Museum, "a history museum celebrating the people of Uzbekistan" opened in 1995. The museum is devoted to Amir Timur "celebrated statesman and general, founder of a united state in Movaraunnahr" (which, more or less, encompasses present day Uzbekistan).



Amir Timur

The collection mainly consists of ancient manuscripts, paintings and engraving of the Temurid era.



Tashkent is adorned with numerous fountains. I'm told that during the hot summer months (average 36 C in July) they cool things off a bit. In the winter, however, they're all shut down. A bit of stagnate water in this one resulted in a reflecting pool.

During the past couple of days I also managed to take a stroll around the remnants of the old town, *eski shakhar*. This maze of narrow dusty streets lined by low, mudbrick houses, mosques and *medressas* (Islamic academies) is characteristic of Tashkent prior to the 1966 earthquake which destroyed much of the city. Thanks to the earthquake and the subsequent enthusiasm of Soviet planners, little remains of the city's 2000-year architectural history.

