

Uzbekistan 'halts mobile Internet, SMS' for exam day

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A man reads a text message on his cell phone. Mobile operators in Uzbekistan suspended Internet and messaging services for the duration of nationwide university entrance exams Tuesday in an apparent bid to prevent cheating, a report said.

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Five national [mobile operators](#) shut down mobile Internet and text and picture messaging for four hours from 9:00 am (0400 GMT), citing "urgent maintenance work on [telecommunications networks](#)," [gazeta.uz](#) reported.

Voice services were not affected, the website said. The restrictions affected not just those taking tests, but all of the country's estimated 19 million [mobile phone users](#).

"Restrictions on additional services are introduced by mobile operators in Uzbekistan every year on the day of admission test exams," the Russian-language website said.

Reports suggested that authorities feared students may use mobile Internet and text-messaging to cheat on their exams. Police conduct a thorough search for phones and cheat sheets before students enter a university building.

Uzbekistan is a former Soviet republic, the most populous in Central Asia with a population of 28 million people.

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