

## Mongolia



Flag	Coat of arms
Capital (and largest city)	Ulaanbaatar 47°55'N 106°53'E
Official languages	Mongolian
Government	Parliamentary democracy
- President	Tsakhiagiin Elbegdorj
- Speaker of Parliament	Damdingiin Demberel
- Prime minister	Sanjaagiin Bayar
Formation	
- National Foundation Day	1206
- Independence from China	July 11, 1921
<b>Area</b>	
- Total	1,564,116 km <sup>2</sup> (19th) 603,909 sq mi
- Water (%)	0.6
<b>Population</b>	
- July 2008 est.	2,996,081
- Population growth rate	1.493% (2008 est.)
- Density	1.7/km <sup>2</sup> (227th) 4.4/sq mi
<b>GDP (PPP)</b>	(2007 est.)
- Total	\$8.42 billion (143 <sup>rd</sup> )
- Per capita	\$2,900 (130 <sup>th</sup> )
<b>HDI (2007/2008)</b>	▲0.700 (medium) (114th)
<b>Human Development Index</b>	
<b>Currency</b>	Tugrug (MNT)
<b>Time zone</b>	(UTC+7)
- Summer (DST)	(UTC+8)
<b>Internet TLD</b>	.mn
<b>Calling code</b>	+976

**Mongolia** (Mongolian: Монгол Улс) is the largest fully landlocked country typically classified as being a part of East Asia, though it is sometimes considered as being a part of Central Asia instead. It is bordered by Russia to the north and China to the south. Mongolia's political system is parliamentary democracy. Its capital and largest city is Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolia was the center of the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century and was later ruled by the Manchu Qing Dynasty from the end of the seventeenth century until 1911, when an independent government was formed with Russian assistance. The Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed in 1924, leading to the adoption of communist policies and a close alignment to the Soviet Union. After the fall of communism in Mongolia in 1990, Mongolia adopted a new, democratic constitution which was ratified in 1992. This officially marked the transition of Mongolia to a democratic country, making it one of the world's youngest democracies.

At 1,564,116 square kilometres, Mongolia is the nineteenth largest country in the world. However, the country contains very little arable land as much of its area is covered by arid and unproductive steppes with mountains to the north and west and the Gobi Desert to the south. Approximately 30 percent of the country's

2.8 million people are nomadic or semi-nomadic. The predominant religion in Mongolia is Tibetan Buddhism, and the majority of the state's citizens are of the Mongol ethnicity, though Kazakhs and Tuvans also live in the country, especially in the west. About one-third of the population lives in Ulaanbaatar.

## History

A large number of ethnicities have inhabited Mongolia since prehistoric times. Most of these people were nomads who, from time to time, formed great confederations that rose to prominence. The first of these, the Xiongnu, were brought together to form a confederation by Modu Shanyu in 209 BCE. They defeated the Donghu, who had previously been the dominant power in eastern Mongolia. The Xiongnu became the greatest threat to China for the following three centuries; the Great Wall of China was built partly as defence against the Xiongnu. Marshal Meng Tian of the Qin Empire dispersed more than 300,000 soldiers along the Great Wall to prevent an expected invasion from the North. It is believed that after their decisive defeat by the Chinese in 428-431, some of the Xiongnu migrated West to become the Huns. After the Xiongnu migrated west, Rouran, a close relative of the Mongols, came to power before being defeated by the Göktürks, who then dominated Mongolia for centuries.

During the seventh and eighth centuries, Mongolia was controlled by Göktürks, who were succeeded by the ancestors of today's Uigur and then by the Khitan and Jurchen. By the tenth century, the country was populated predominantly by Mongols believed to be a branch of the Xianbei. During this period the country was divided into numerous tribes linked through transient alliances.

In the late twelfth century, a chieftain named Temujin united the Mongol tribes to the Naiman and Jurchen after a long struggle and took the name of Genghis Khan. Known to Mongolians as Chinggis Khan, the mistranslation Genghis is said to have been made by the conquered people of the Middle-East. Starting in 1206, Genghis Khan and his successors consolidated and expanded the Mongol Empire into the largest contiguous land empire in world history, going as far northwest as Kievan Rus. After Genghis Khan's death, the empire was divided into four kingdoms, or "Khanates". One of these, the "Great Khanate," comprised the Mongol homeland and China, and its emperors were known as the Yuan Dynasty. Its founder, Kublai Khan, set up his centre of administration in present day Beijing. After more than a century of power, the Yuan Dynasty was replaced by the Ming Dynasty in 1368, and the Mongol court fled north. The Ming armies pursued and defeated them in Mongolia, but did not conquer Mongolia.

During the next several centuries, Mongolia was split between the Oirad in the west and the Khalkha in the east. Altan Khan united the Mongols briefly in 1571. After failing to defeat the Chinese, he made peace with the Ming Dynasty and instead focused on Tibet, eventually becoming a convert to Tibetan Buddhism.

During the seventeenth century, the Manchus rose to prominence in the east, they conquered Inner Mongolia in 1636. Outer Mongolia submitted in 1691. For the next two hundred years Mongolia was ruled by the Qing Dynasty. During this time, the Manchus maintained their control over Mongolia with a series of alliances and intermarriages, as well as military and economic control. Several Emperors of the Qing Dynasty were born to Mongol mothers.

With the fall of the Qing Dynasty, Mongolia declared independence in 1911. The new country's territory was approximately that of the former Outer Mongolia. After the October Revolution in Russia, Chinese troops led by Xu Shuzheng occupied the capital in 1919. The Chinese rule did not last: notorious Russian adventurer "bloody" Baron Ungern who had fought with the "Whites" (Ataman Semyonov) against the Red army in Siberia, led his troops into Mongolia and forced a showdown with the Chinese in the City of the Red Hero. Ungern's cossacks triumphed, and he briefly in effect ruled Mongolia under the blessing of religious leader Bogda Khan. But Ungern's triumph was shortlived; he was chased out by the Red Army, which, while at it, liberated Mongolia from feudalism and insured its political alignment with the Russian Bolsheviks. In 1924, after the death of the religious leader Bogda Khan, the Mongolian People's Republic was proclaimed and was backed by the Soviets.

## Chronology of Mongolian History 1921-Present

**March 13, 1921:** Provisional People's Government declares independence of Mongolia.

**May 31, 1924:** U.S.S.R. signs agreement with Peking government, referring to Outer Mongolia as an "integral part of the Republic of China," whose "sovereignty" therein the Soviet Union promises to respect.

**May-September 16, 1939:** Large scale fighting takes place between Japanese and Soviet-Mongolian forces along Khalkhyn Gol on Mongolia-Manchuria border, ending in defeat of the Japanese expeditionary force. Truce negotiated between U.S.S.R. and Japan.

**October 6, 1949:** Newly established People's Republic of China accepts recognition accorded Mongolia and agrees to establish diplomatic relations.

**October 1961:** Mongolia becomes a member of the United Nations.

**January 27, 1987:** Diplomatic relations established with the United States.

**December 1989:** First popular reform demonstrations. Mongolian Democratic Association organized.

**January 1990:** Large-scale demonstrations demanding democracy held in sub-zero weather.

**March 2, 1990:** Soviets and Mongolians announce that all Soviet troops will be withdrawn from Mongolia by 1992.

**May 1990:** Constitution amended to provide for multi-party system and new elections.

**July 29, 1990:** First democratic elections held.

**September 3, 1990:** First democratically elected People's Great Hural takes office.

**February 12, 1992:** New constitution goes into effect.

**April 8, 1992:** New election law passed.

**June 28, 1992:** Election for the first unicameral legislature (State Great Hural).

**June 6, 1993:** First direct presidential election.

**June 30, 1996:** Election resulted in peaceful transition of power from former communist party to coalition of democratic parties. From 1998-2000, four prime ministers and a series of cabinet changes. In early 2000, Democratic Coalition dissolved.

**July 2, 2000:** Election resulted in victory for the former communist Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party (MPRP); first-past-the-post electoral system enabled MPRP, with 52% of the popular vote, to win 95% of the parliamentary seats; formation of new government by Prime Minister N. Enkhbayar.

**June 27, 2004:** Motherland-Democracy Coalition formed in early 2004 to contest the parliamentary election.

Election resulted in roughly 50/50 split of parliamentary seats between former communist party and democratic opposition and formation of new government by Prime Minister T. Elbegdorj (Democratic Party).

**January 2006:** MPRP ministers resigned from the government, and the government dissolved. A new coalition government was formed, led by the MPRP with the participation of four smaller parties.

**October 2007:** MPRP ousts its leader, Prime Minister Enkhbold, who resigns as Prime Minister. The new leader of the MPRP, Sanjaa Bayar becomes Prime Minister. Prime Minister Bayar forms a new cabinet.

### **Alignment with the Soviet Union**

The Mongolian People's Republic was aligned closely with the Soviet Union. During the 1920s and 1930s, several high-ranking politicians who demanded a more independent course, like Dogsomyn Bodoо or Horloogiyn Dandzan, fell victim to violent power struggles and were killed. In 1928, Horloogiyn Choybalsan rose to power. Under his administration, forced collectivisation of livestock was instituted, and the destruction of Buddhist monasteries in 1937 left more than 10,000 lamas dead.

During the Soviet-Japanese Border War of 1939, the USSR defended Mongolia against Japan. Mongolian forces also took part in the Soviet offensive against Japanese forces in Inner Mongolia in August 1945 (see Operation August Storm). The (Soviet) threat of Mongolian forces seizing parts of Inner Mongolia induced the Republic of China to recognize Outer Mongolia's independence, provided that a referendum was held. The referendum took place on October 20, 1945, with (according to official numbers) 100% of the electorate voting for independence. After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, both countries re-recognized each other on October 6, 1949.

After Choybalsan died in Moscow on January 26, 1952, Yumjaagiyn Tsendenbal took power. In 1956 and again in 1962, Choybalsan's personality cult was condemned. Mongolia continued to align itself closely with the Soviet Union, especially after the Sino-Soviet split of the late 1950s. While Tsendenbal was visiting Moscow in August 1984, his severe illness prompted the parliament to announce his retirement and replace him with Jambyn Batmonh.

### **1990 Democratic Revolution**

The introduction of perestroika and glasnost in the USSR by Mikhail Gorbachev strongly influenced Mongolian politics even though Mongolia was a sovereign nation. The collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, combined with these two policies, were enough to lead to a peaceful democratic revolution in Mongolia in 1990. This, in turn, allowed Mongolia to begin engaging in economic and diplomatic relations with the Western world. The nation finished its transition from a communist state to a multi-party free-market democracy with the ratification of a new constitution in 1992.

## Government and politics

Mongolia is a parliamentary republic. The parliament is elected by the people and in turn elects the government. The president is elected directly. Mongolia's constitution guarantees full freedom of expression, religion, and others. Mongolia has a number of political parties, the biggest ones being the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the Democratic Party (DP).

The MPRP formed the government of the country from 1921 to 1996 (until 1990 in a one-party system) and from 2000 to 2004. From 2004 to 2006, it was part of a coalition with the DP and two other parties, and since 2006 it has been the dominant party in two other coalitions. Both changes of government after 2004 were initiated by the MPRP. The DP was the dominant force in the ruling coalition between 1996 and 2000, and also an approximately equal partner with the MPRP in the 2004-2006 coalition. The latest parliamentary election was held on 29 June 2008. A total of 76 new parliament members were elected from 26 electoral districts throughout the country. They were elected in multi-member constituencies following a change in electoral laws, which led to a delay in vote counting, as voters were able to vote for up to three or four candidates in each constituency. 311 candidates from 11 parties and one coalition, plus 45 independent candidates, were running for election, only 28 of them incumbent MPs. The main issues were inflation and mining rights. Before the elections, the race between the two largest parties, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the Mongolian Democratic Party (DP), was expected to be very close, with minor populist parties also expected to make gains at the large parties' expense, thus securing a good position in post-election coalition negotiations in case none of the large parties gains an outright majority. Turnout was 74.3%.

On 14 July 2008, the General Election Commission officially announced that the MPRP won 39 seats, the Democrats won 25, and that one seat each went to one independent candidate and the Civic Will Party, with ten seats (from Dornod, Khentii, and Bayangol constituencies) being subject to recounts and yet to be announced.

## President

Mongolia's president has a symbolic role. Mongolia's Constitution provides three requirements for taking office as President: the individual must be a native-born Mongolian, who is at least 45 years of age, and who has resided in Mongolia for five years prior to taking office. The current President is Nambaryn ENKHBAYAR (since 24 June 2005)-elected by popular vote to serve for four years. The president has many symbolic duties to fulfill, including amongst others, leading the annual military procession through the streets of Ulaanbaatar.

## The State Great Hural

The word Great Khural (Khurildai) was already in the Mongolian lexicon long ago. Any essential issues of law, state, war and peace ordered by Chinggis Khaan, who founded the Mongol Empire in 1206, were discussed by the nobility at the Great Khurildai. The present State Great Khural of Mongolia is legally similar to a parliament, the legislative organ of eastern and western countries where democracy has developed. In the 1992 Constitution, it is declared that "The State Great Khural is the highest organ of State power, and legislative power shall be vested solely therein". Since 1992, the State Great Khural has been elected, by citizens qualified to vote, on the basis of universal, free, direct suffrage by secret ballot for a term of four years. Mongolia uses a unicameral parliamentary system in which the president has a symbolic role and the government chosen by the legislature exercises executive power. The legislative arm, the State Great Khural, has one chamber with 76 seats and is chaired by the speaker of the house. It elects its members every four years by general elections. The State Great Khural is powerful in the Mongolian government with the president being largely symbolic and the prime minister being confirmed from the parliament. The members of parliament elect a chairperson from among their own numbers. The chairperson executes the roles of the speaker of the legislative as well as deputy of the president, and is ranked second in the hierarchy of the state after the president. The chairperson supervises the sessions of the parliament, and is responsible for its voting procedures. Current chairman of the State Great Hural of Mongolia is Mr. Danzan Lundeeljantsan. He automatically (*ex officio*) becomes a member of the National Security Council.

## Prime minister and cabinet

The Prime Minister of Mongolia is elected by the State Great Khural. The current prime minister is Sanjiin Bayar, who was elected by sixty-seven votes to two on November 22, 2007. There are ministers of each department (finance, defense, labor, agriculture, etc.) and those offices constitute the prime minister's cabinet.

The cabinet is nominated by the prime minister in consultation with the president and confirmed by the State Great Khural.

## Geography and climate



Map of Mongolia

At 604,209 mi<sup>2</sup> (1,565,000 km<sup>2</sup>[1]), Mongolia is the world's nineteenth-largest country (after Iran). It is significantly larger than the next-largest country, Peru, and is nearly as large as the US state of Alaska. The Mongolian heartland consists of relatively flat steppes. The southern portion of the country is taken up by the Gobi Desert, while the northern and western portions are mountainous. The highest point in Mongolia is Nayramadlin Orgil (Huyten Orgil) at 4,374 m (14,350 feet). Ubsunur Hollow and Uvs Nuur Lake, shared with Tuva Republic in Russia, is a natural World Heritage Site.

Most of the country is hot in the summer and extremely cold in the winter, with January averages dropping as low as -30°C (-22°F). The country is also subject to occasional harsh climatic conditions known as *zud* or *dzud*. Ulaanbaatar has the coldest average temperature of any national capital in the world.

Mongolia is high, cold, and windy. It has an extreme continental climate with long, cold winters and short summers, during which most of its annual precipitation falls. The country averages 257 cloudless days a year, and it is usually at the center of a region of high atmospheric pressure. Precipitation is highest in the north (average of 20 to 35 centimeters per year) and lowest in the south, which receives 10 to 20 centimeters annually. The extreme south is the Gobi, some regions of which receive no precipitation at all in most years. The name "Gobi" is a Mongol term for a desert, depression, salt marsh, or steppe, but which usually refers to a category of arid rangeland with insufficient vegetation to support marmots but with enough to support camels. Mongols distinguish Gobi from desert proper, although the distinction is not always apparent to outsiders unfamiliar with the Mongolian landscape. Gobi rangelands are fragile and are easily destroyed by overgrazing, which results in expansion of the true desert, a stony waste where not even Bactrian camels can survive.

## Administrative divisions



The southern portion of Mongolia is taken up by the Gobi Desert, while the northern and western portions are mountainous.

Mongolia is divided into twenty-one *aymguud* (provinces; sing. *aimag* or *aymag*) and one municipality (*khov*) with provincial status:

Arhangay	Hovd
Bayan-Ölgij	Hövsögöl
Bayanhongor	Ömnögovj
Bulgan	Orhon
Darhan-Uul	Övörhangay
Dornod	Selenge
Dornogovj	Sühbaatar
Dundgovj	Töv
Govj-Altay	Ulaanbaatar*
Govjsumber	Uvs
Hentiy	Zavhan

The *aymguud* are further divided into 315 *sumuud* ("districts"; sing. *sum*).

## Economy

Economic activity in Mongolia has traditionally been based on herding and agriculture. Mongolia has extensive mineral deposits. Copper, coal, gold, molybdenum, fluorspar, uranium, tin, and tungsten account for a large part of industrial production and foreign direct investment. Soviet assistance, at its height one-third of GDP, disappeared almost overnight in 1990 and 1991 at the time of the dismantlement of the USSR. The following decade saw Mongolia endure both deep recession because of political inaction and natural disasters, as well as economic growth because of reform-embracing, free-market economics and extensive privatization of the formerly state-run economy. Severe winters and summer droughts in 2000-02 resulted in massive livestock die-off and zero or negative GDP growth. This was compounded by falling prices for Mongolia's primary sector exports and widespread opposition to privatization. Growth was 10.6% in 2004, 5.5% in 2005, 7.5% in 2006, and 9.9% in 2007 largely because of high copper prices and new gold production. Mongolia is experiencing its highest inflation rate in over a decade as consumer prices in 2007 rose 15%, largely because of increased fuel and food costs. Mongolia's economy continues to be heavily influenced by its neighbors. For example, Mongolia purchases 95% of its petroleum products and a substantial amount of electric power from Russia, leaving it vulnerable to price increases. Trade with China represents more than half of Mongolia's total external trade - China receives about 70% of Mongolia's exports. Remittances from Mongolians working abroad both legally and illegally are sizable, and money laundering is a growing concern. Mongolia settled its \$11 billion debt with Russia at the end of 2003 on favorable terms. Mongolia, which joined the World Trade Organization in 1997, seeks to expand its participation and integration into Asian regional economic and trade regimes.

<b>Currency</b>	Tugrik, 1 USD = 1,159.6 MNT (June 2008)	Yahoo currency update
<b>Total GDP</b>	\$8.42 billion (2007 est.)	143rd in the world* CIA factbook
<b>GDP growth rate</b>	9.9% (2007)	CIA factbook
<b>GDP per capita</b>	\$2,900 (2007 est.)	130 <sup>th</sup> in the world* CIA factbook
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	3% (2007)	CIA factbook
<b>Exports of goods and services</b>	\$1.889 billion (2007)	CIA factbook
<b>Exports – partners</b>	China 48.1%, US 30.1%, Russia 6.9%, South Korea 4.2%	CIA factbook
<b>Imports of goods and services</b>	\$2.117 billion (2007)	CIA factbook
<b>Imports – partners</b>	Russia 29.7%, China 29.4%, Japan 11.9% (2006)	CIA factbook
<b>FDI (?)</b>	Inward FDI – 167 million (2006 est.)	UNCTAD – world investment report 2007
<b>Index of economic freedom</b>	62nd in the world – moderately free (Index of Economic Freedom 2008)	The heritage foundation
<b>Number of tourists annually visiting Mongolia</b>	-	451 598 tourists in 2007* Ministry of road, transport and tourism of Mongolia

### **Industrial sector**

Industry currently accounts for 21.4% of GDP, approximately equal to the weight of the agriculture sector (20.4%). These industries include construction materials, mining (coal, copper, molybdenum, fluorspar, tin, tungsten, and gold), oil, food and beverages, processing of animal products, and cashmere and natural fiber manufacturing. The industrial production growth rate is estimated to be 4.1% in 2002. Mining is continuing to rise as a major industry of Mongolia.

### **Science and technology**

Mongolia has increasingly started to develop its technology industry since the democratic revolution of the early 1990s, and many new technology companies have been founded. Also, some technology companies in nearby countries, such as South Korea and the People's Republic of China, have started to open offices in Mongolia.

### **Service sector**

After the democratic revolution of the early 1990s, Mongolian domestic production has picked up providing basic food production to its residents through increasing competition among companies. According to the CIA World Factbook, in 2003, the service sector accounted for 58% of the GDP, with 29% of the labor force of 1.488 million involved.

However, investment from Korea and other countries have helped add more paved roads and [?] to China, Korea, Japan, Germany, Russia, and other countries. The air transport company of Mongolia is MIAT. Petroleum products are to a large part (80%) imported from Russia, which makes Mongolia vulnerable to supply side shocks. This is one strong example of the influence of Mongolia's neighbors on its economy.

Though the majority of Mongolian citizens are of Mongol descent there are small populations of Kazakh, Tuvan and Tungus peoples. Mongolia's population growth rate is estimated at 1.54% (2000 census). About two-thirds of the total population is under age 30, 36% of whom are under 14. This relatively young and rapidly growing population has, as in many developing countries, placed strains on Mongolia's economy. According to the World Factbook, 50% of Mongolia's population are Buddhist-Lamaist, which is related to Tibetan Buddhism. 40% are atheist, 6% are Shamanist or Christian, and 4% are Muslim.

Life in sparsely populated Mongolia has become more urbanized. Nearly half of the people live in the capital and in other provincial centers. Seminomadic life still predominates in the countryside where many families stay in villages during the cold winters and live in gers during the summer, though agricultural communities that are settled year-round are becoming more common.

Ethnic Mongols account for about 85% of the population and consist of Khalkha and other groups, all distinguished primarily by dialects of the Mongol language. The Khalkha make up 90% of the ethnic Mongol population. The remaining 10% include Durbet Mongols and others in the north and Dariganga Mongols in the east. Turkic speakers (Kazakhs, Tuvans, and Uyghurs) constitute 7% of Mongolia's population, and the rest are Tungusic speakers, Chinese, and Russians. Most, but not all, Russians left the country following the withdrawal of economic aid and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

## **Mongolia Culture**

### **Language**

The official language of Mongolia is Khalkha Mongol, which uses the Cyrillic alphabet, but there are variety of different dialects across the country. In the more western parts of the country, where there is more ethnic diversity, primarily due to populations of ethnic Tuvans and Kazakhs, the Tuvan language and Kazakh language, among others, are also spoken. In the northern parts of the country, Russian language is frequently spoken among the Russian populations. Furthermore, the Mongolian government has worked to encourage the learning of English as a second language by having it replace the teaching of Russian in schools. Many older educated Mongols speak some German, as they studied in the former East Germany, while a few speak other European languages from the former Eastern Bloc.

Mongol is an Altaic language, meaning that it belongs to the language family, named after the Altay Mountains of Central Asia, that comprises the Turkic, Tungusic, and Mongolic subfamilies--and is related to Turkic (Uzbek, Turkish, Tatar, and Kazakh), and possibly also Korean.

### **Religion**

Aside from brief periods of Islam and Christianity, various forms of shamanism have been widely practiced throughout the history of what is now modern day Mongolia, as such beliefs were common among nomadic people in Asian history. Such beliefs gradually gave way to Tibetan Buddhism, but shamanism has left a mark on Mongolian religious culture. Indeed, some shamanistic practices and traditions are still practiced in rural areas.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the communist government ensured that the religious practices of the Mongolian people were largely repressed. Horloogiyin Choybalsan complied with the orders of Joseph Stalin, destroying almost all of Mongolia's over 700 Buddhist monasteries and killing thousands of monks. The fall of communism in 1991 restored the legality of public religious practice, and Tibetan Buddhism, which had been the predominant religion in the region before the rise of Communism, again rose to become the most widely practiced religion in Mongolia. The end of religious repression in the 1990s also allowed for other religions, such as Islam and Christianity, to spread in the country.

### **Education**

During the state-socialist period, education was one of the areas of significant achievement. Illiteracy was virtually eliminated, in part through the use of seasonal boarding schools for children of nomadic families. Funding to these boarding schools has been cut in the 1990s contributing to a reversal in the decline of illiteracy.

Primary and secondary education used to last for ten years, but has been expanded to eleven years recently and is set to be expanded further to twelve years.

Mongolian national universities are all spin-offs from the National University of Mongolia and Mongolian University of Science and Technology

The broad liberalization of the 1990s led to a boom in private institutions of higher education, although many of these establishments have a hard time living up to their nomenclature of "college" or "university".

### **Health**

Health care in Mongolia is rapidly improving, leading to a higher life expectancy.

Childbirth is 2.26 per woman. Average life expectancy is 63 years, and the infant mortality rate is at 6%. The health sector is comprised of 17 specialized hospitals and centers, 4 regional diagnostic and treatment centers, 9 district and 21 aimag general hospitals, 323 soum hospitals, 18 feldsher posts, 233 family group practices, and 536 private hospitals and 57 drug supply companies/pharmacies. In 2002 the total number of health workers was 33273, of which 6823 were doctors, 788 pharmacists, 7802-nurses and 14091 mid-level personnel. At present, there are 27.7 physicians and 75.7 hospital beds per 10,000 population overall.

### **Foreign relations of Mongolia**

Mongolia maintains friendly relations with the United States, Russia, Japan, the People's Republic of China, and virtually all countries in the world. The government has focused a great deal on encouraging foreign investments and trade. Mongolia supported the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and has sent several successive contingents of 103 to 180 troops each to Iraq. Smaller contingents were also sent to Afghanistan. 200 Mongolian troops are serving in Sierra Leone on a UN mandate to protect the UN's special court set up there. On November 21, 2005, George W. Bush became the first-ever sitting U.S. President to visit Mongolia. In 2004, under the Bulgarian chairmanship, The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), invited Mongolia as its newest Asian Partner.

In the wake of the former Soviet Union's economic collapse, Mongolia began to pursue an independent and nonaligned foreign policy. The Prime Minister called for coexistence with all nations, and Mongolia follows a general policy of expanding relations with as many countries as possible.

Due to Mongolia's landlocked position between the Newly Independent States (NIS) of the former Soviet Union and People's Republic of China, it was essential to continue and improve relations with these countries. At the same time, Mongolia is reaching out to advance its regional and global relations. As part of its aim to establish a more balanced nonaligned foreign policy, Mongolia is seeking active supporters and friends beyond its neighbours and looking to take a more active role in the United Nations and other international organisations. It has begun a drive for international recognition of a one state Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone. While it is downgrading relations with most of its former east European allies, it is pursuing a more active role in Asian and northeast Asian affairs. Mongolia is seeking to join APEC and became a full participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in July 1998. Mongolia became a full member of the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council in April 2000.

Mongolian relations with the PRC began to improve in the mid-1980s when consular agreements were reached and crossborder trade contacts expanded. In 1989, the People's Republic of China and Mongolia exchanged visits of foreign ministers. In May 1990, a Mongolian head of state visited China for the first time in 28 years. The cornerstone of the Mongolian-Chinese relationship is a 1994 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, which codifies mutual respect for the independence and territorial integrity of both sides. The two foreign ministers exchanged visits in 1997, as did the leaders of the two countries' parliaments. President Jiang Zemin visited Mongolia in July 1999.

Mongolia is expanding relations with Japan and South Korea. Its Prime Minister visited Japan in March 1990 and Prime Minister Obuchi reciprocated with a visit to Mongolia in July 1999. Japan has provided more than \$100 million in grants and loans since 1991 and coordinated international assistance to Mongolia. Diplomatic relations were established with South Korea in 1991, and during the Mongolian President's visit, seven agreements and treaties were signed, providing the legal basis for further expanding bilateral relations. Japan is Mongolia's largest bilateral aid donor. In 2001 President Bagabandi made state visits to India and Nepal.

After the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, Mongolia developed relations with the new independent states. Links with Russia and other republics were essential to contribute to stabilization of the Mongolian economy. The primary difficulties in developing fruitful coordination occurred because the NIS were experiencing the same political and economic restructuring as Mongolia. Despite these difficulties, Mongolia and Russia successfully negotiated both a 1991 Joint Declaration of Cooperation and a bilateral trade agreement. This was followed by a 1993 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation establishing a new basis of equality in the relationship. Mongolian President Bagabandi visited Moscow in 1999, and Russian President

Vladimir Putin visited Mongolia in 2000 in order to sign the 25-point Ulaanbaatar Declaration, reaffirming Mongol-Russian friendship and cooperation on numerous economic and political issues.

Mongolia seeks closer relations with countries in Europe and hopes to receive most-favoured-nation status from the European Union (EU). During 1991, Mongolia signed investment promotion and protection agreements with Germany and France and an economic cooperation agreement with the United Kingdom. Germany continued former East German cooperative programs and also provided loans and aid. The Prime Minister has travelled to Germany, France, Belgium, and EU headquarters in Brussels seeking economic cooperation. President Bagabandi visited several European capitals in 1999-2000. In 2004 he became the first Mongolian President to pay a state visit to Canada, some 30 years after the two countries established formal diplomatic relations.

Mongolia has embassies in Almaty, Ankara, Bangkok, Berlin, Beijing, Brussels, Budapest, Cairo, Warsaw, Washington, D.C., Vienna, Vientiane, Havana, Delhi, London, Moscow, Ottawa, Paris, Prague, Pyongyang, Seoul, Sofia, Tokyo, Hanoi, and Singapore, a consulate in Irkutsk and Ulan-Ude, and a diplomatic mission to the United Nations in New York City and to the European Union in Geneva

**International organization participation:** AsDB, ASEAN (observer), ASEM, ESCAP, FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICCT, ICFTU, ICRM, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, ILO, IMF, IMO, Intelsat, Interpol, IOC, ISO, ITU, NAM, OPCW, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO, WTrO, SCO (observer)

Mongolia did not join the UN until 1961 because repeated threats to veto by the Republic of China, who considered Mongolia to be part of its territory (see China and the United Nations). The Republic of China (currently on Taiwan) has not renounced claim to Mongolia as one of its provinces, primarily out of concern that such a move would be viewed as a precursor to renouncing sovereignty over all of Mainland China and Taiwan independence. In 2002 several ROC officials and government agencies passed laws and made strong statements recognising the Republic of Mongolia's sovereignty over the area (unofficially). Outer Mongolia was removed from the ROC's official maps and a representative office was established in Ulan Bator.

### Traditional Festivals of Mongolia

#### **Tsagaan Sar** *Alternative meaning: The Mongolian Lunar New Year or the White Moon Festival*

The Mongolian **Tsagaan Sar** (English: **White Moon**) festival of the lunar New Year, is often celebrated around the same time as the Chinese New Year. However, Mongolians generally deny any Chinese origin or influence, so the celebration is sometimes referred to as the Mongolian New Year or Asian New Year when translated into English.

The White Moon holiday is celebrated two months after the first new moon following the winter solstice. In 2007, White Moon falls on Feb. 20. After Naadam, Tsagaan Sar is the second-most important Mongolian holiday.

Around the New Year people greet each other by saying "Amar mend uu", a very formal greeting which one says to one's elders. Mongolians also visit friends and family on this day and exchange gifts. A typical Mongolian family will meet in the home dwelling of the eldest male in the family. When greeting their elders during the White Moon festival, Mongolians grasp them by their elbows to show support for them. The eldest male receives greetings from each member of the family except for his wife. During the greeting ceremony, family members hold long pieces of colored cloth called *khadag*. After the ceremony, the family eats buuz and drinks *airag* (fermented mare's milk) and exchanges gifts.

The day before Tsagaan Sar is called "Bituun". On this day, families gather together--immediate family usually, in contrast to the large feast gatherings of White Moon day--and see out the old year. Traditionally, Mongolians settle all issues and repay all debts from the old year by this day. Mongolians eat their fill at the Bituun meal, as tradition says that if you are hungry after Bituun you will be hungry for the whole coming year. Traditional food for the festival includes a grilled side of sheep and minced beef or minced lamb steamed inside pastry, a dish known as buuz. Tsagaan Sar is a lavish feast, requiring preparation days in advance, as the women make large quantities of buuz and freeze them to save for the holiday.

**Naadam** (Наадам) is the national festival of Mongolia held from July 11th to 13th. The festival is also called "Eriin Gurvan Naadam," meaning "men's three variety of games." The games are Mongolian wrestling, horse racing and archery, and are the only ones that are held throughout the country. However, now women also participate in two of the 'three manly games' via. archery and horse-racing.

The main festival is held in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar, although other cities and towns across Mongolia have their own, smaller scale Naadam celebrations. It begins with an elaborately produced ceremony

featuring dancers, athletes, horseriders, and musicians. After the ceremony, the competitions begin. 512 wrestlers meet in a single-elimination tournament that lasts nine rounds. Mongolian traditional wrestling is an untimed competition in which wrestlers lose if they touch the ground. In dress and style, it resembles the Japanese sumo.

Unlike Western horse racing, which consists of short sprints generally not much longer than 2 km, Mongolian horse racing as featured in Naadam is a cross-country event, with races 15-30 km long. The riders are children, some as young as five years old.

Naadam is the most widely watched festival in the country, and is believed to have existed for centuries in one fashion or another. Originally it was a religious festival but now it formally commemorates the 1921 revolution when Mongolia declared itself a free country.

Another popular Naadam activity is the playing of games using shagai, sheep anklebones that serve as game pieces and tokens of both divination and friendship.

The festival is also celebrated in the Inner Mongolia region of China.

### **Sports and recreation**

Mongolia's Naadam festival takes place over three days in the summer and includes horse racing, archery, and Mongolian wrestling. These three sports, traditionally recognized as the three primary masculine activities, are the most widely watched and practiced sports throughout the country.

Horse riding is especially central to Mongolian culture. The long-distance races that are showcased during Naadam festivals are one aspect of this, as is the popularity of trick riding. One example of trick riding is the story that the Mongolian military hero Damdin Sühbaatar scattered coins on the ground and then picked them up while riding a horse at full gallop.

Other sports such as table tennis, basketball, and soccer are increasingly getting popular. More Mongolian table tennis players are competing internationally.

Wrestling is the most popular of all Mongol sports. It is the highlight of the Three Manly Games of Naadam. Historians claim that Mongol-style wrestling originated some seven thousand years ago. Hundreds of wrestlers from different cities and aimags around the country take part in the national wrestling competition.

Wrestling There are no weight categories or age limits. Each wrestler has his own attendant herald. The aim of the sport is to knock one's opponent off balance and throw him down, making him touch the ground with his elbow and knee.

The winners are honored with ancient titles: the winner of the fifth round gets the honorary title of nachin (falcon), of the seventh and eighth rounds zaan (elephant), and of the tenth and eleventh rounds arslan (lion). The wrestler who becomes the absolute champion is awarded the title of avarga (Titan). Every subsequent victory at the national Naadam-festival will add an epithet to the avarga title, like "Invincible Titan to be remembered by all".

Beginning in 2003, the Mongolian parliament adopted a new law on Naadam, making amendments to some the wrestling titles. The titles of iarudi and Hartsaga (Hawk) were added to the existing above-mentioned rules.

The traditional wrestling costume includes an open-fronted jacket, tied around the waist with a string. This came into use after the champion of a wrestling competition one year was discovered to be a woman. The jacket was introduced to ensure that only men could compete.

Football is also played in Mongolia. The Mongolia national football team begun playing again in the 1990s; it has yet to qualify for a major tournament. The Mongolia Premier League is the top domestic competition.

Mongolia's traditional wrestlers have made the transition to Japanese sumo wrestling with great success. Asashōryū Akinori was the first Mongolian to be promoted to the top sumo rank of *yokozuna* in 2003 and was followed by his countryman Hakuō Shō in 2007.

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The Beijing Olympics has been Mongolia's most successful games ever, winning two gold and two silver medals. Naidangiin Tüvshinbayar won Mongolia's first ever Olympic gold medal in the men's 100-kilogram class of judo. Bantamweight Badar-Uugan Enkhbat has won Mongolia's first gold medal in boxing from the International Olympic Game in Beijing, 2008.

Medal	Name	Sport	Event
Gold	<a href="#">Naidangiin Tüvshinbayar</a>	<a href="#">Judo</a>	<a href="#">Men's 100 kg</a>
Gold	<a href="#">Enkhbatyn Badar-Uugan</a>	<a href="#">Boxing</a>	<a href="#">Bantamweight</a>
Silver	<a href="#">Otryadyn Gündegmaa</a>	<a href="#">Shooting</a>	<a href="#">Women's 25 m pistol</a>
Silver	<a href="#">Püevdorjiin Serdamba</a>	<a href="#">Boxing</a>	<a href="#">Light flyweight</a>

Several Mongolian women have excelled in pistol shooting: Otryadyn Gündegmaa is a silver medalist of the 2008 Olympic Games, Munkhbayar Dorjsuren is a double world champion and Olympic bronze medal winner (now representing Germany).

## Transportation in Mongolia

### Railways:

The Trans-Mongolian Railway connects the Trans-Siberian Railway from Ulan Ude in Russia to Erenhot and Beijing in China through the capital Ulan Bator. The track has a few side lines, most notably to the copper mines of Erdenet. A separate network exists in the east of the country around Choibalsan, connecting to the Trans-Siberian in Borzya. Mongolia uses a broad gauge 1.524-m track system. The total length of the system is 1,810.

### Roadways:

Mongolia has a 49,250 km road system. This system consists of 1,724 km of paved roads with the remaining 47,526 km consisting of unpaved trails and paths through the countryside.

### Waterways:

Mongolia has a total of 580 km of waterways. However, only Lake Khövsgöl has ever been heavily used. The Selenge (270 km) and Orkhon (175 km) rivers are navigable but carry little traffic. The lakes and rivers freeze over in the winter and are usually open between May and September.

## Air Transportation

As of 2006, Mongolia has a total of 44 airports. Of these, 12 have paved runways. 10 of these paved runways range in length between 2,438 and 3,047 m. The other paved runway is between 1,524 and 2,437 m.

Of the 32 remaining airports with unpaved runways, 2 of them have runways over 3,047 m, 3 have runways between 2,438 and 3,047 m, 24 have runways between 1,524 and 2,437 m, two have runways between 914 and 1,523 m, and one has runways under 914 m. Mongolia also has 1 heliport.

Domestic carriers include MIAT, Aero Mongolia, and Eznis Airways.