

Mongolia national day

Mongolian society continues to evolve politically, economically

Every July 11, Mongolia and its people celebrate the anniversary of the country's independence, which they gained from China in 1921.

The national day on July 11 is also the start of the three-day Naadam sporting festival, focusing on three traditional Mongolian games: wrestling, archery

and horse racing. In 2010, Naadam was inscribed on UNESCO's representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Located in the northern Mongolian Plateau in Asia, Mongolia is a landlocked country between Russia and China. With an area of about 1.5 million sq. km and

a population of around 3.1 million, Mongolia is the 19th largest country and the most sparsely populated independent nation in the world. Ulan Bator, the capital and largest city, is home to about one third of the population.

Amid the tides of democratization influenced by the end of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, the first free parliamentary elections took place in Mongolia in 1990. Ever since, the country has rapidly moved on the path toward a new society and has undergone big changes politically and economically.

Mongolia's main industry is shifting from traditional cattle breeding to mining and manufacturing, backed by its abundant mineral resources. Its economy has exploded in recent years, as a relatively stable political environment has drawn in foreign investors keen to exploit the country's vast untapped reserves of coal, copper and gold.

Mongolia maintains positive relations and has diplomatic missions in many countries, including Japan, China, India, Russia and the United States. The government has focused a great deal on encouraging foreign investment and trade. As a result, foreign investment quadrupled last year to nearly \$5 billion, according to government data.

On June 28, Mongolians went to the polls to elect a new legislature — known as the State Great Hural — tasked with distributing the spoils of a mining boom that has brought rapid growth but also rising inequality to the resource-rich nation.



A horseman prepares his racehorses on July 3 for the July 11 to 13 Naadam festival on the grasslands of Tov Province, southwest of Ulan Bator, while Mongolian honor guards (top) prepare national flags during a July 9 rehearsal for a military parade for the Naadam festival in front of the Parliament Building at Sukhbaatar Square in the capital Ulan Bator. AP

The ruling Mongolian People's Party (MPP) and the main opposition Democratic Party (DP) both say they want to ensure a fairer distribution of wealth in the vast and remote nation, although neither has given any detailed indication of how this will be achieved.

According to a July 5 summary of the election by the Japanese Embassy in Mongolia, the DP won 31 seats (an increase of four from before the vote) in the 76-

seat body, while the MPP won 25 seats (a decrease of 16). A coalition of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party led by former President Nambaryn Enkhbayar, who was charged with corruption earlier this year, and the Mongolian National Democratic Party won 11 seats.

The election results will likely lead to a coalition government being formed in August, with a key task of ensuring the country's wealth is equally distributed.

Japan-Mongolia relations mark 40th anniversary

This year marks the 40th anniversary since diplomatic relations between Japan and Mongolia were established in 1972.

During the time of the socialist regime in Mongolia, the differences in political systems between the two countries did not allow closer bilateral relations to develop. However, as Mongolia became liberalized in 1990, relations between Mongolia and Japan started to develop in numerous fields and a number of high-level visits have been conducted.

Most recently, from March 10 to 15, Mongolian Prime Minister Sukhbaatar Batbold paid an official working visit to Japan and met Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo.

While welcoming the development of the existing close and friendly relations in various areas, including trade and investment that have been fostered through fruitful cooperation over the years, the two leaders acknowledged the importance of further increasing trade and investment between the two countries from the viewpoint of developing mutually beneficial and complementary relations through close collaboration, broad business ties and sharing of expertise.

Taking into account the complementary structures of the two economies, the two leaders shared the view that the conclusion of an economic partnership agreement between Mongolia and Japan, which will be the first free trade agreement for Mongolia, will not only contribute to strengthening the existing political and economic ties between the two countries, but also become one of the significant steps

in building the Mongolia-Japan strategic partnership.

Reaffirming the desire of further strengthening and developing their economic and commercial relations on the basis of mutual benefit, coupled with the celebration of the 40th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Mongolia and Japan, the two leaders hereby decided that the governments of the two countries should enter into negotiations on the Mongolia-Japan Economic Partnership

Agreement as soon as possible.

From June 4 to 7, the first round of the negotiations for the EPA between Mongolia and Japan was held in the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator.

The second round will be held in Tokyo this autumn.

With information taken from the official websites of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry.



National determination: A woman inserts her ballot into an electronic vote-counting machine in Tov Province during the Mongolian legislative election on June 28. AP

Congratulations
to the People of Mongolia
on the Occasion of
the Mongolian National Day



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