

LAND



Pic. 1: map

FACTS

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Surface: | 1.565.500 km ² |
| Capital: | Ulaanbaatar |
| Form of government: | democracy |
| Inhabitants: | 2.7 Mio |
| Population Density: | 1,78/km ² |
| Average Income: | 30\$/Month |
| Life Expectancy: | 67 (F) / 62 (M) |
| Language: | Mongol |
| Religion: | Buddhist Lamaist 50% |
| | None 40% |
| | Shamanist and Christian 6% |
| | Muslim 4% |

INTRODUCTION

Mongolia is a landlocked nation, bordered by Russia in the north and the Peoples Republic of China in the south. With the same size as Iran, Mongolia is th 18th largest country in the

world by area, but has only a very small amount of arable Land. Much of its area is covered with grassy steppe, bordered by mountains in the north and the Gobi desert in the south. 30% of its population is nomadic or semi-nomadic, almost 40% of the population lives in the capital city Ulaanbaatar.

HISTORY

Mongolia was the center of the Mongol Empire in the 13th century wick lasted more than one century. After this period, it fell back to a small state, which was than conquered by the Chinese Qing dynastie in 1636 and divided to Inner- and Outer Mongolia. Both Inner and Outer Mongolia declared independence in 1911, but only Outer Mongolia, which is the area of todays Mongolia, succeeded with Russian help. In 1919,



Pic. 2: Gandam Monastery, Ulaanbaatar



Pic. 3: Nadaam Festival Opening

Inner Mongolia was reoccupied by chinese troops, and since then, belongs to China. In 1921, the Russian Civil War was driven out to Outer Mongolia. In 1924, the Mongolian Peoples Republic was proclaimed, and Mongolia was closely aligned to the Soviet Union. In WWII, Mongolian forces fought on the side of the USSR, which defended Mongolia against Japanese attacks. In 1928 Horloogiyn Choybalsan rose to power. Under his rule, forced collectivization, purges, and the destruction of the Lamaist monasteries in 1937 took place. In this time, 38.000 Mongolians died, among them almost the whole intelligence of the country and 18.000 lamaistic monks. In October 20th, 1945, a referendum about independence of Outer Mongolia was held, induced by China, which recognized the MPR in 1949.

In 1990, the communist party, which until then continued to align itself closely to the Soviet Union, relinquished control over government. In 1992 a new constitution was formed that abolished the MPR and created a hybrid parliamentary/presidential state.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Mongolia is devided in 21 Aimags (provinces) and one Khot (city). Further subdivisions are the Sums and Bags. There are 329 Sums, which are subdivided in 1620 Bags. The capital city Ulaanbaatar is a federal district. In June 2005, President Nam-baryn ENKHBAYAR was elected, head of government is Prime Minister Tsakhi ELBEGDORJ since august 2004. Domestic policies are more stably than in most other democracies in Asia. The former conflict with China is setteled and since the 1950s, relations between the two countries get better and better. Central topics of the last election campaign where free-market economy, corruption and unemployment.

CLIMATE



Pic. 4: „Children's Park“, Ulaanbaatar

Pic. 5: heavy rainfall in summer

The climate is extremely continental with short, warm summers in which almost all of the precipitation takes place, and long, dry and cold winters. Average daily temperatures vary between -25°C in the winter and 20°C in the summer. Average annual precipitation lies slightly over 200mm. The climatic conditions distinguish from north to south, which has influence on the migration routes of the nomadic population.

TOPOGRAPHY

The terrain varies from vast semidesert and desert plains and grassy steppe in the central Mongolia, mountains in the west and southwest and the Gobi Desert in south-central. The lowest point is Hoh Nuur with 518m, the highest point is Nayramadlin Orgil (Huyten Orgil) with 4,374 m in the Altai Mountains in the west. In some areas, limited natural fresh water resources are found. Deforestation, overgrazing, and the converting of virgin land to agricultural production increased soil erosion from wind and rain. Desertification and mining activities had a deleterious effect on the environment

VEGETATION

Only 1% of the area is arable. Apart from this small amount of land, the vegetation confine to low steppe grass. In the more fertile regions in the noth and north-east, various trees such as Siberian cedar, larch, poplar, sallick, pine can be found. Some medical herbs such as plaintain, bergenia, rooseroot, thorniopsis can be gathered in summer.

SOCIETY

In the efforts of the former regime to build up a modern communist state, the traditional pastoral nomadic economy was almost totally destroyed, and in the process of collectivization, big parts of the population where brought to permanence. After the owerthrow of the communist government, the system of kolkhozes broke down and lots of unemployed people set out to the countryside where they could survive in taking up their traditional way of living. Today, about one third of the population is nomadic or seminomadic. In the summer, lots of families move from the cities in the countryside where seminomadic life still predominates.

But nevertheless, life in mongolia has become more urbanized, as the population in the cities encreases very fast. The population growth rate is estimated at 1.54%, in the time between 1960 and 2003, the population almost trebled. Almost a third of the population lives in Ulaanbaatar, other big cities are Edernet (79.000 citizen), Darchan (72.000 citizen) and Tchoibalsan (44.000 citizen).

Mongolia's birth rate is estimated at 1.4% (2000 census). About two-thirds of the total population are under age 30, 36% of whom are under 14.

About 85% of the population are ethnic Mongol, which consist mostly of Khalka (90%). The remaining 10% include Durbet Mongols and others in the north and Dariganga Mongols in the east. There are several small ethnic minorities, of which the biggest are turkic speakers like the Kazachs, Tuvans and Uighurs with 7% of the whole population. The rest are Buriat, Russian, Chinese and Tungusic speakers.

Traditionally, Tibetan Buddhist Lamaism was the predominant

religion. However, it was suppressed under the communist regime until 1990, with only one showcase monastery allowed to remain. Since 1990, as liberalization began, Buddhism has enjoyed a resurgence.

The role of the woman in the society changed drastically in the communist era. Traditionally, the women where responsible for miling the mares and raising the children. Women where the unquestioned head of the yurt. This manifested drasticaly therein, that if a woman killed her husband within a arm lenght away from the oven, it was no murder and even not considered as a crime at all. They where equally envolved in the process of building up the yurt and often responsible for the felt production. The male members of the family had to look after the herd. Nevertheless, the oldest male member was still the head of the family and responsible for all importent decisions, like the dates for the removal of the herd and family or the decision to sell parts of the herd. After the communist revolution, within the process of settling down, the women gained more and more rights for education, and lots of them got employed in the new arising jobs, like arts and crafts and the booming tourism sector today.

Literacy rate is quite high (around 90% for age over 15) within both mal and female parts of the population, but falling since the last 14 years due to the economic pressure since the overthrow of the communist system. In over 170 universities in Mongolia are about 108.000 students, of which about one third on private educational facilities. Most students strive for a education abroad, e.g in th USA, Russia or Germany.

Still more than 36% of the population, mostly in cities, life below the poverty line, which causes a severe problem with alcohol and crime in Ulaanbaatar.

Images:

Pic. Nr 1: source: <http://www.demis.nl/home/pages/wms/demiswms.htm>

Pic. Nr 2-5: author: Paul Lambeck, 2005

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