



## Emergency declared in Mongolia

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Created 2008-07-02 14:48

More than 300 people have been injured and five killed in street protests in the Mongolian capital of Ulan Bator, it emerged [1] on Wednesday. A state of emergency has been declared and curfew is in effect, with parts of the capital sealed off by police. Over eight thousand protestors gathered after the preliminary results of the parliamentary elections were released on Tuesday and the government had announced victory. Government buildings were looted and set on fire and police dispersed protestors with teargas and rubber bullets. However, international observers have declared [2] the poll to have been largely free and fair.

**The toD verdict:** Mongolia [3] is one of the world's poorest countries, with one in ten people living on less than a dollar a day. The mining industry fuelled a growth [4] rate last year of almost ten per cent, but inflation [5] is rampant, rising to 15.1 per cent last year and replacing [6] unemployment and corruption as the top concern during the election. Ordinary Mongolians are also frustrated that much of the country's newly discovered mineral wealth is being siphoned off by foreign companies.

Both the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP) and the opposition Mongolian Democratic Party (MDP) have been campaigning on the economy, promising to tackle inflation and push through new legislation [8] giving Mongolia a fifty-one per cent stake in any new mining operations. However, the MPRP and the MDP disagree as to who that stake should go to: with the ruling MPRP arguing it should go to the government and the opposition MDP wanting to give it to private Mongolian companies.

At the last parliamentary elections in 2004, neither party secured a majority and were both forced into a coalition government. The issue of mining legislation was stalled, whilst foreign companies were seen by the public to be exploiting Mongolia's mineral wealth for large profits. In the meantime, the ruling MPRP grew increasingly unpopular in the capital, Ulan Bator, following allegations of government corruption.

All of this has frustrated the public greatly. Even if the current elections were "mostly fair," as international observers seem to indicate [9], a significant proportion of the Mongolian public has become so disenchanted with the current government that the elections have boiled over into violence of a ferocity unseen in Mongolia since independence.

### Twelve killed in fighting in Kashmir

An Indian army officer and eleven separatist militants have been killed in gun battles in northern Kashmir, according to an army spokesperson [10] on Wednesday. The fighting broke out on Monday [11], on the Indian side of the 'line of control,' the de facto border dividing Kashmir between India and Pakistan. No rebel group has claimed responsibility, but the Indian army is

blaming guerrillas from Pakistani-held Kashmir. Violence in Kashmir has declined [12] since both governments entered peace talks in 2004.

### **US contractors in Iraq to have immunity lifted**

Iraq's foreign ministry announced on Tuesday [13] that the US has agreed to lift restrictions giving 'private security contractors' in Iraq immunity from being prosecuted under Iraqi law. The legal status of US troops and contractors in Iraq is currently defined by a UN mandate, which expires in December, and the US wants a new agreement in place by the end of July. Negotiations with Iraq have stalled over issues [14] such as the control of Iraqi airspace and Iraq's right to prosecute foreign soldiers. The legal immunity of private security contractors has been a controversial subject since September 2007, when 17 Iraqi civilians were shot dead by contractors from US company Blackwater.

### **Somalian militants target aid workers**

An increase in attacks on aid workers in Somalia has been described by the International Committee of the Red Cross as "incredible [15]." Four local aid workers were kidnapped [16] on Wednesday and, in a separate incident, an aid worker was shot dead. Last week two international NGO workers were kidnapped [17], but later released unharmed, and in June the Mogadishu chief of the UN refugee agency UNHCR was seized [18] by armed gunmen. The kidnappings come as at least 26 people were killed in clashes between Ethiopian soldiers and militants in some of the worst fighting since Ethiopia moved troops into Somalia in 2006.

### **Israel re-opens Gaza crossing**

After shutting [18] border crossings into the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, Israel has re-opened [19] the border for the transfer of essential goods such as fuel and medical supplies. The crossings had been closed following a rocket attack on Monday which breached the Egyptian-brokered ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

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[3] <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/asia/2008/07/20087285553335559.html>

[4] <http://uk.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUKT33969120080702?pageNumber=1&virtualBrandChannel=0>

[5] <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/06/29/business/mongecon.php>

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[10] [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5i5au\\_xsReEErzI7R7i8rEWxaCVYg](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5i5au_xsReEErzI7R7i8rEWxaCVYg)

[11] [http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hC68-PzvW7\\_y-bLJ24tjhPoYKCAgD91LJNCO0](http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5hC68-PzvW7_y-bLJ24tjhPoYKCAgD91LJNCO0)

[12] <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DEL92140.htm>

[13] [http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gr71LvzNq75h\\_QC3cpJ5\\_t3ycXyw](http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5gr71LvzNq75h_QC3cpJ5_t3ycXyw)

[14] [http://www.metimes.com/Security/2008/07/01/zebari\\_briefs\\_iraqi\\_lawmakers\\_on\\_sofa/7f87/](http://www.metimes.com/Security/2008/07/01/zebari_briefs_iraqi_lawmakers_on_sofa/7f87/)

[15] [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-06-30-aidworkers-Somalia-attacks\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-06-30-aidworkers-Somalia-attacks_N.htm)

[16] <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/africa/2008/07/200871144425617195.html>

[17] <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/africa/06/28/somalia.kidnap/>

[18] [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-06/24/content\\_8430066.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-06/24/content_8430066.htm)

[19] <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2008/07/20087243759169311.html>



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