

Mongolia’s third prime minister in a year faces political infighting and external crises

ULAANBAATAR, Mongolia (AP) — Mongolia has named its third prime minister in nine months as the ruling party tries to overcome internal power struggles at a time of mounting economic pressures and political infighting at home.

The hope is that Uchral Nyam-Osor can manage the divisions in the Mongolian People’s Party that toppled his two predecessors and brought him to power. He called for unity after parliament confirmed his appointment.

“As others unite to confront crises, we cannot afford political infighting that weakens our economy,” he told lawmakers.

Who is the new prime minister?

Uchral was elected as leader of the Mongolian People’s Party and speaker of the parliament last November. Before entering politics, he was a popular hip-hop artist known as “Timon.”

The 39-year-old lawmaker has positioned himself as a reform-minded leader focused on modernizing the country’s regulatory environment. He wants to end a Soviet-era system that gives officials the power to issue permits, creating fertile ground for corruption. Mongolia transitioned to democracy in 1990 after decades of Communist rule.

Uchral is a former minister of digital development and communications who promoted transparency reforms and digital governance initiatives. He has played a role in efforts to attract foreign



investment to the resource-rich country, including a uranium-related agreement with France’s Orano Group in early 2025.

How was he chosen?

The Mongolian parliament has been paralyzed following a boycott last month by the opposition Democratic Party and infighting in the ruling party. Together, that meant not enough members were showing up for the legislature to hold votes.

The previous prime minister, Zandanshatar Gombojav, who submitted his resignation to resolve the crisis, had come under pressure because one of his senior ministers faced corruption

allegations.

Uchral was seen as a compromise between factions in the Mongolian People’s Party loyal to the president and the supporters of another former prime minister, Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai.

A total of 107 of the parliament’s 126 lawmakers voted, with 88 supporting Uchral — or 82% — clearing the way for him to take office.

Zandanshatar, who is close to the president, had replaced Oyun-Erdene, last June. All three prime ministers are from the Mongolian People’s Party.

What are Mongolia’s challenges?

Uchral warned that Mongolia is enter-

TOUGH JOB. Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman and the head of the United Russia party Dmitry Medvedev, right, and Chairman of the Mongolian People’s Party and Chairman of the State Great Khural Uchral Nyam-Osor pose for a photo during their meeting at the Gorki state residence outside Moscow. Mongolia has named its third prime minister in nine months as the ruling party tries to overcome internal power struggles at a time of mounting economic pressures and political infighting at home. (Ekaterina Shtukina, Sputnik Pool Photo via AP, File)

ing a period of three overlapping crises: rising global fuel prices, volatile commodity markets, and deepening domestic political divisions.

He highlighted the country’s heavy reliance on coal and copper exports, warning that price swings could erode government revenue and strain public finances. The government is also demanding a greater share of the financial benefits in talks with mining giant Rio Tinto over the Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold mine.

Mongolia, a landlocked country that depends entirely on imported fuel, is vulnerable to supply disruptions and price hikes. The government has asked Russia to keep fuel prices stable, and Moscow has indicated it would respond favorably in the near term, Zandanshatar said at a ceremony to transfer power to Uchral.

Uchral’s appointment comes amid renewed concern among foreign investors over Mongolia’s political instability, frequent policy changes, and reputation for corruption and regulatory unpredictability.

Asia scrambles to conserve energy as Iran war disrupts oil & gas supplies

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higher travel and fuel costs. Airlines are raising fares on international routes to offset surging fuel prices, with some budget carriers doubling ticket prices on popular routes, according to local media.

Vietnam

In the export-driven industrial sector of Vietnam, higher fuel and freight costs are lifting production expenses. State media reported steel, textiles, and footwear manufacturers are facing rising prices, while retailers say suppliers are seeking price increases or even pausing deliveries.

Rising diesel prices are also pushing up transportation and agriculture costs. Tourism and passenger travel are coming under strain. Authorities warned of possible jet fuel shortages in April, urging airlines to review flight schedules and prepare for potential cuts.

The government says it is using price controls to curb sharp increases in fuel costs and keep the market stable.

Thailand

Energy supply disruptions have also hit Thailand, where more than half of electricity is generated by LNG, around 40% of which is imported from the Middle East.

Thailand’s emergency energy plan suspended petroleum exports, ramped up coal output and hydropower generation, and directed government offices to conserve energy.

As Thailand turns to the spot market to bid for costly LNG cargoes, experts warn energy prices will rise as the national

subsidy budget is depleted.

Indonesia

Indonesia has so far managed to hold back raising energy prices, but that relief was expected to only last until after Eid al-Fitr, the Muslim holiday marking the end of Ramadan.

As the war rages on, analysts expect that Indonesia will soon face a difficult choice: continue costly subsidies that shield consumers from higher prices, or scale them back to stay within national budget limits — a move that risks stoking inflation.

The Philippines

The Philippines has rolled out cash assistance of 5,000 pesos (\$83) to about 139,000 tricycle taxi drivers in Manila to help offset surging fuel costs. The program is set to expand nationwide to include other public transport drivers, while fuel subsidies will also be extended to fishermen and farmers.

Government offices also shifted to a four-day work week to cut energy consumption, and proposals are under review to bring down biofuel prices.

Pakistan

To offset the energy crunch, Pakistan ordered schools to shut for two weeks and cut free fuel allocations for government vehicles by 50% for two months.

Officials say alternative oil supply routes are being explored, including imports from Saudi Arabia. Energy shipments are also arriving through the Red Sea port of Yanbu.

To save energy, the Pakistan Day

parade was cancelled. The anniversary was instead marked with a simple flag-hoisting ceremony.

India

India has stepped up domestic production of cooking gas and prioritized distribution to households. Industry groups say the move has tightened supplies for commercial users such as hotels and restaurants.

Nearly half of India’s crude oil imports and LNG pass through the strait. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) remains a primary cooking fuel for millions of households, making stable supplies critical for both daily life and broader economic activity.

Two Indian-flagged LPG carrying vessels have crossed the strait since the conflict began, relieving some pressure.

A giant steel pipe’s mysterious overnight growth spurt baffles a Japanese city

By Mari Yamaguchi
The Associated Press

TOKYO — A giant, underground pipe rose more than 32 feet out of a construction site in a busy area of the Japanese city of Osaka, nearly reaching an elevated road overnight, unseen by any witnesses.

The steel pipe’s unexpected growth spurt was reported to police by a pedestrian who saw broken pieces of asphalt falling from the cylinder, baffling people passing by and causing traffic congestion.

One office worker who passed by the site told NHK public television that he could not understand how it happened. Another man who works nearby said he first wondered if a new road support might have been built overnight.

The pipe, with a diameter of 11.5 feet, towered as high as 42 feet at one point, according to the Osaka construction

Nepal

Nepal’s sole distributor of petroleum products, the state-run Nepal Oil Corporation, began rationing cooking gas by filling gas cylinders only by half its capacity — to about 7.1 kilograms (15 pounds) — to stretch supplies to more households.

Gasoline prices were also raised by about 10% and authorities urged households to switch to induction cookers to curb gas use.

Delgado reported from Bangkok, Thailand. Associated Press writers Yuri Kageyama in Tokyo, Japan, Huizhong Wu in Bangkok, Thailand, Aniruddha Ghosal in Hanoi, Vietnam, Jim Gomez in Manila, the Philippines, Munir Ahmed in Islamabad, Pakistan, Niniek Karmini in Jakarta, Indonesia, Hyung-jin Kim in Seoul, South Korea, Shihuan Chen in Beijing, China, and Binaj Gurubacharya in Kathmandu, Nepal, contributed to this report.

department.

The pipe’s unexpected elevation from the ground occurred at a sewer construction site where workers had been connecting an existing sewer line with a channel designed to hold excess rainwater to prevent flooding.

The pipe was being used as a retaining structure to keep the surrounding soil from collapsing during the operation, officials said. A short time earlier, workers had drained water from the pipe, which may have caused the empty apparatus to float, they said.

The pipe was lowered back to just several feet above the ground after firefighters cut a hole on the side and injected water to push it back into the ground.

City officials said they plan to cut the last 5.2 feet of the pipe that remain visible, an operation that would cause a road closure for several days.

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