



ASIA/MONGOLIA - One of the poorest countries with the greatest mineral wealth in the world

Ulan Bator (Agenzia Fides) - It was the month of July 2001 when a Canadian company announced the discovery of one of the largest gold deposits in Oyu Tolgoi, in the Mongolian Turquoise Mountain. Since then, mining companies around the world directed themselves towards the Gobi desert in search of fortune, causing huge disagreements within the country. Much of the Mongolian population is leaving their job, so far mainly focused on the production of cashmere, to look for a job at the big mining companies, or simply to seek fortune alone. There are in fact hundreds of artisanal mining companies which have been set up, without the minimum technological equipment, unprotected, in conditions of extreme danger. Many of the seekers of gold are trapped by landslides. They are the so-called 'ninja' miners, 300 000 people spellbound by the prospect of gold, in a country that lives in extreme poverty. They descend to 15 meters deep and 15 more meters horizontally, with ropes, with no support among the rocks, they collect plastic bags filled with sand. As one digs, the other separates the sand, and the third checks if the police come. The multinational mining companies are competing for a country of 1.5 million square kilometers with one of the world's largest reserves of gold, silver, iron, coal, zinc, uranium, tungsten, nickel, phosphates. In a State stifled by corruption, the Mongolian workers receive 12 euro per month for the mining industry. (AP) (Agenzia Fides 16/3/2012)