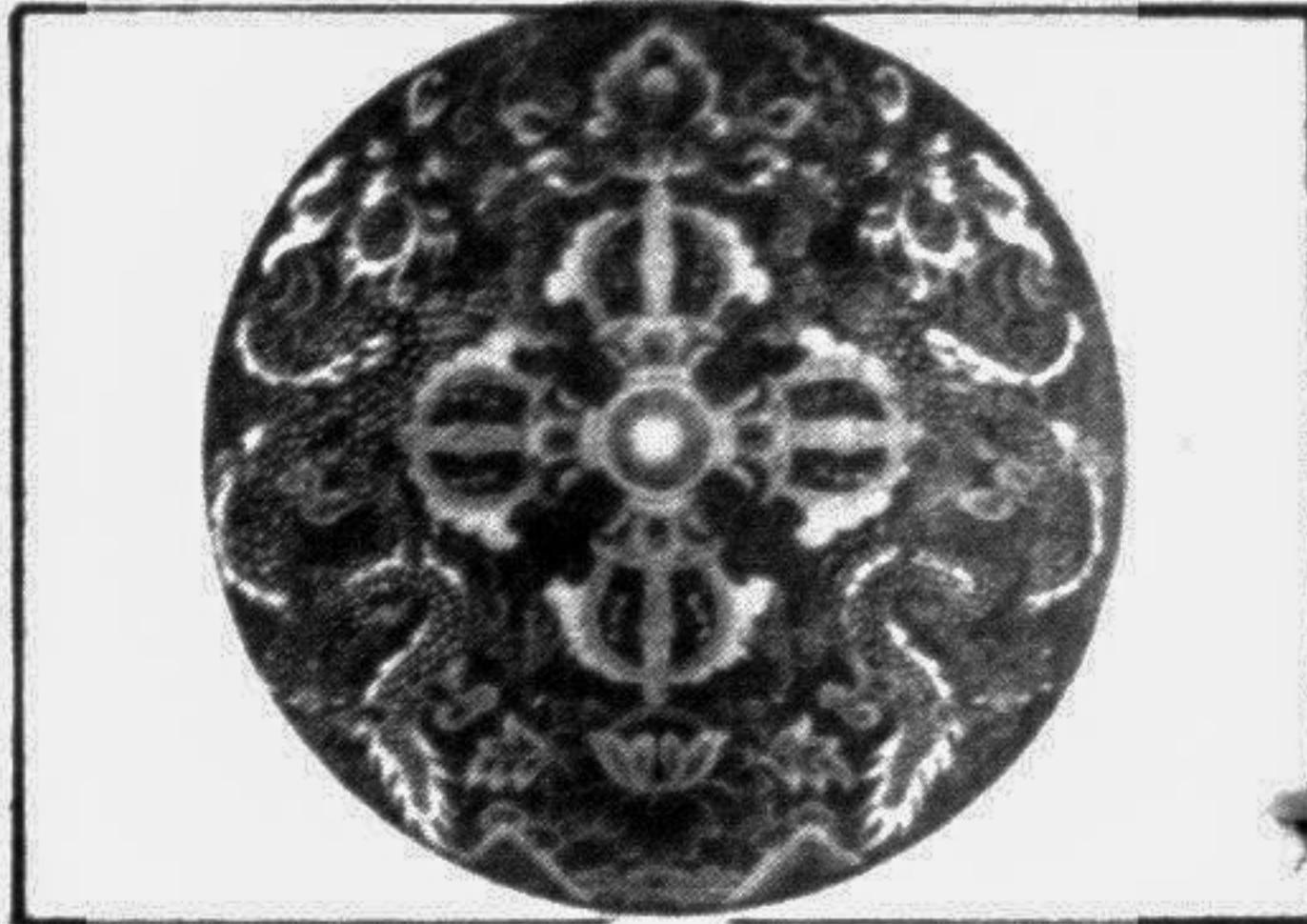


National Day of Bhutan



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His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk King of Bhutan

Born in Dechhencholing Palace, Thimphu, on November 11, 1955. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk received his early education in Bhutan from private tutors. Later, he studied briefly at St Joseph's School, Darjeeling, before proceeding to England for further studies. In 1970 His Majesty returned to Bhutan and joined the Ugyen Wangchuck Academy at Paro, where his education included familiarisation with the kingdom's rich spiritual and cultural heritage.

As Crown Prince, his mind was moulded from a very tender age by his enlightened and progressive father, the late King Jigme Dorji Wangchuk. From 1972 onwards, he participated in the meeting of the Cabinet, and was appointed the first Chairman of the Planning Commission. He was installed as Tongsa Penlop on May 5, 1972 amidst nation-wide rejoicing.

Three days after the premature passing away of the late King in Nairobi, Kenya, on June 21, 1972, His Majesty ascended to the throne at the age of 17. The formal coronation took place two years later on June 2, 1974, when Heads of States of neighbouring countries and representatives of numerous friendly countries attended the coronation celebrations.

His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk is one of the youngest leaders in the world. His Majesty combines in his person a deep love for the kingdom's cultural and natural heritage with an appreciation of the need to harness modern science and technology for the kingdom's progress. His Majesty is hardworking, conscientious and serious and he travels regularly throughout the kingdom to study at first hand the problems, needs, and aspirations of his subjects. Whether in Thimphu or on tour, His Majesty is freely accessible to the humblest of his subjects, and he takes personal pains to redress their grievances and to promote their welfare. His Majesty has decentralized the administration as he believes that the participation of the people is essential in the task of building a self-reliant nation. His Majesty firmly believes that Gross National Product is as important as Gross National Happiness is as important as Gross National Product. His Majesty's reign has been marked by peace, progress, and prosperity within the kingdom, gradually expanding contacts with the outside world, and enhanced cooperation with India in diverse fields.

His Majesty is a keen conservationist and he had done much to preserve the kingdom's rich flora and fauna. His Majesty's youthful vigour and dynamism finds ample expression in sports and outdoor life. His Majesty is also extremely fond of reading books on a wide range of subjects.

A year before his death, his father the late King had said, "If I were to say a prayer, I would wish that in my son's time the people of my country become far more prosperous and happy than they are today." Under the wise benevolent and far-sighted leadership of His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuk, that wish has certainly been fulfilled.

Bhutan-Bangladesh Trade Relations

THE friendly relations between Bhutan and Bangladesh dates back to the dawn of Bangladesh's independence. Bhutan was the second country to recognise Bangladesh, and ever since, Bhutan has been keen to foster closer relations with Bangladesh.

In 1980 Bhutan and Bangladesh exchanged resident Ambassadors and have since strengthened their ties.

Close cooperation between the two countries led to the signing of the Trade Agreement in 1980, whereby both the countries aspired to promote their bilateral trade. However, due to time involved in identifying viable transit routes, actual trade did not commence until 1988.

Despite a late start, trade between the two countries has developed significantly since then.

Bhutan's major exports to Bangladesh consist of fruits, fruit products, timber, dolomite, cement, limestone, stones and boulders, calcium carbide and coal.

On the other hand, Bangladesh's major exports to Bhutan consist of jute products, condensed milk, garments,

edible oils, leather products, ceramic products and pharmaceuticals.

Trade between two countries over the last six years had been in favour of Bhutan. This imbalance would however be less if one takes into account the unaccounted imports by small traders and tourists who frequently visit Dhaka. It has been estimated that garments and other items worth more than US\$1.5 million are imported annually into Bhutan by small traders and tourists of Bhutan.

Although the smallest of Bhutan's population and her economy have not favoured any large scale imports, recent trends have been encouraging. A variety of products from Bangladesh that includes dairy products, jute carpets and products, garments, vegetable oils, leather products and ceramic products have been gaining popularity in Bhutan with consistent efforts by Bangladeshi exporters to take advantage of the favourable terms of trade between the two countries. Exports from Bangladesh to Bhutan could increase significantly, bridging the present imbalance.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS: The Kingdom of Bhutan covers an approximate area of 46,500 square kilometres, roughly 150 km north to south and 300 km east to west. However, because of the mountainous terrain, the actual distance on the ground is more than twice as long. The king is bordered by the Tibetan region of China and the Indian States of Sikkim, West Bengal, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

The terrain is among the most rugged and mountainous in the world, as most of the country includes part of the Himalayan ranges. The land rises from an elevation of about 160 metres above sea level in the south to more than 7,550 metres above sea level in the north. The variations in climate are correspondingly extreme. Southern Bhutan is generally hot and humid, while the high Himalayan mountains in northern borders of Bhutan are under perpetual snow. Climate can vary considerably between valleys and within valleys depending on levels of altitude. Rainfall, in particular, can differ within relatively short distances due to rain shadow effects. Annual rainfall is concentrated in the monsoon season—mid June to September. Rough estimates of rainfall are:

Flora

The flora of Bhutan is exceptionally diverse as a result of a great range of altitudinal zones and varied climatic conditions. An estimated 56% of the country is covered by forests of alpine scrub, fir, mixed coniferous species, temperate scrub,

and broadleaf species. In addition to a wide range of species, there are many species unique to Bhutan: about 47 species have been listed (Grierson and Long, 1984), and it is thought that there are many more which have not been identified. Moreover, much of Bhutan's flora has remained undisturbed so that Bhutan probably has the richest flora in the Himalayan region. The floral wealth of Bhutan is highly appreciated by both Bhutanese and the outside world. Many tree species are of high timber quality, while others are tapped for resin. Over 300 species largely of alpine plants are used in Bhutanese traditional medicine. Horticulturalists all over the world prize Bhutanese flora. Grierson and Long (1984) list 168 species introduced to Europe from Bhutan, including many wild relatives of cultivar species: strawberries, cherry, and apple. These plants have significant value as a genetic resource for crop improvement.

Fauna

Because Bhutan's flora has remained undisturbed, a number of rare animals can still be found in Bhutan. The exact number of species is unknown, but over 160 species have been reported. Rare animals include the langur, takin and blue sheep and are distributed quite widely. Tigers, leopards, snow leopards, red panda, gaur, serow, Himalayan black bears, brown bears, wild pigs, musk deer and various kinds of deer are common in many parts of Bhutan. The phobjikha valley



The elusive snow leopard of the high Himalaya

An exotic rhubarb flower of the high Himalaya

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