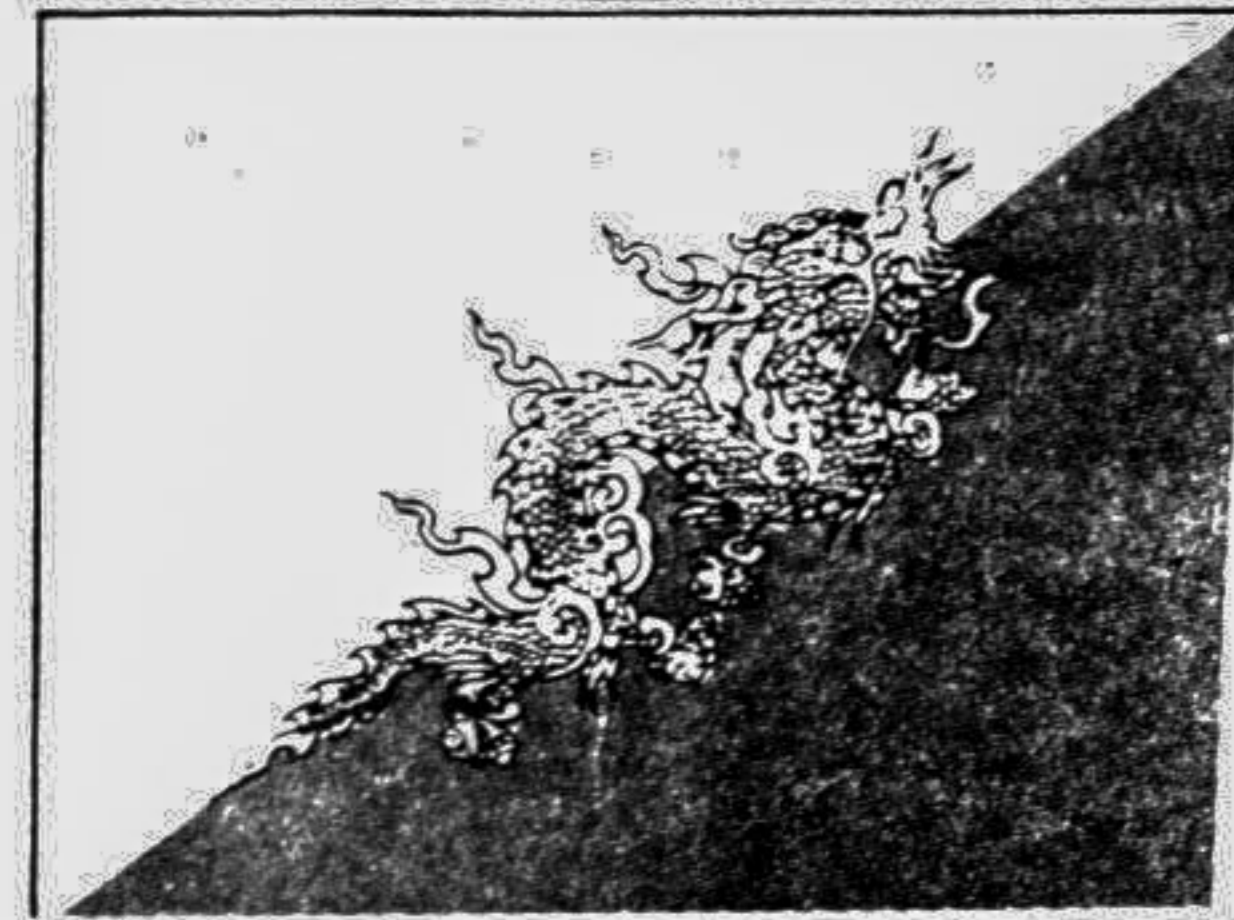


National Day of Bhutan



The Daily Star

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

December 18, 1999

The Kingdom of Bhutan Celebrates its National Day



His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck

TODAY the Kingdom of Bhutan celebrates its 92nd National Day. It is an important occasion for every Bhutanese. It is a day the peace-loving people of the Kingdom of Bhutan rededicate themselves to the Tsa-Wa-Sun (King, Country and People) which has come to symbolize unity and harmony, peace and security and above all "Gross National Happiness."

It is the day when people of Bhutan unanimously elected Gongsar Ugen Wangchuck as the first hereditary King of Bhutan on the 17th of December 1907. By uniting the country and establishing a central authority, he brought peace and stability to the country and laid the foundation for modern Bhutan. Since then, Bhutan has been enjoying unprecedented peace and stability in the Kingdom and achieved significant economic development, greatly enhancing the wellbeing and the quality of life of the people. His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck is the fourth and the present King of Bhutan.

Since the beginning of our recorded history dating back to the 7th century, Bhutan has remained as an independent, sovereign country which has not been colonized by any foreign power for which our forefathers had to overcome many internal and external threats. Although planned development was initiated only in 1961 when the first five-year plan was launched; Bhutan has achieved greater well-rounded progress

and development than many other countries, which began their development much earlier. At the same time Bhutan has been able to strengthen its unique national identity through the promotion and preservation of rich cultural and traditional heritage.

Located in the high eastern Himalayan mountain ranges, Bhutan is land-locked country with the Tibetan region of China to its north and Indian States of Sikkim, Assam, West Bengal and Arunachal Pradesh to its east, south and west. Altitudes range from approximately 300 metres above sea level in the south to the towering Himalayas in the north of over 7000 metres. The altitude at Thimphu, the capital is about 2500 metres.

Bhutan is divided into 20 districts (Dzongkhags) and each district is divided into several blocks (gewogs) consisting of number of village. Depending on the size, a district may be

divided into sub-district (dungkhags) for effective administration and implementation of the programmes and projects.

Since the time immemorial, Bhutanese people have been known for their warm and friendly nature. Unlike elsewhere, Bhutan has never had a rigid class system. Neither is social and educational opportunities affected by rank or birth. Bhutanese women enjoy equal rights with men, including the right to vote, and take active part in the affairs of the country, often holding important government posts. While the family system is mainly patriarchal, family estates are divided equally between sons and daughters. Both men and women are free to choose whom to marry and both can initiate divorce.

Bhutan has a population of over 600,000. There are several languages and many different dialects spoken throughout

Kingdom. The national language is Dzongkha, which is taught in all schools. The medium of instruction is English. "Kuensel", the national newspaper, is a weekly publication. It is published in Dzongkha, English and Nepali. The national television and radio service called the Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS) has a daily transmission in Dzongkha, English, Sharchepkha and Nepali.

The Buddhist faith has played and continues to play a profound role in the cultural, ethical and sociological development of Bhutan and its people. It permeates all strands of secular life, bringing with it a reverence and respect for the land and the environment. The Je Khempo (Chief Abbot) who

enjoys a status equivalent to the King heads the clergy who plays an important social and cultural role. Although Buddhism is the state religion, there is complete religious freedom in the Kingdom.

On June 2, 1999, Bhutan celebrated the Silver Jubilee Anniversary of His Majesty's Coronation with great enthusiasm and jubilation, marking 25 years of dedicated service to His people and the country. In His 25 years' reign, His Majesty the King travelled every nook and corner of the Kingdom to keep close contact with His people to understand their grievances and aspirations. No other person in the country has better knowledge about the land and the people of His Kingdom than His Majesty Himself.

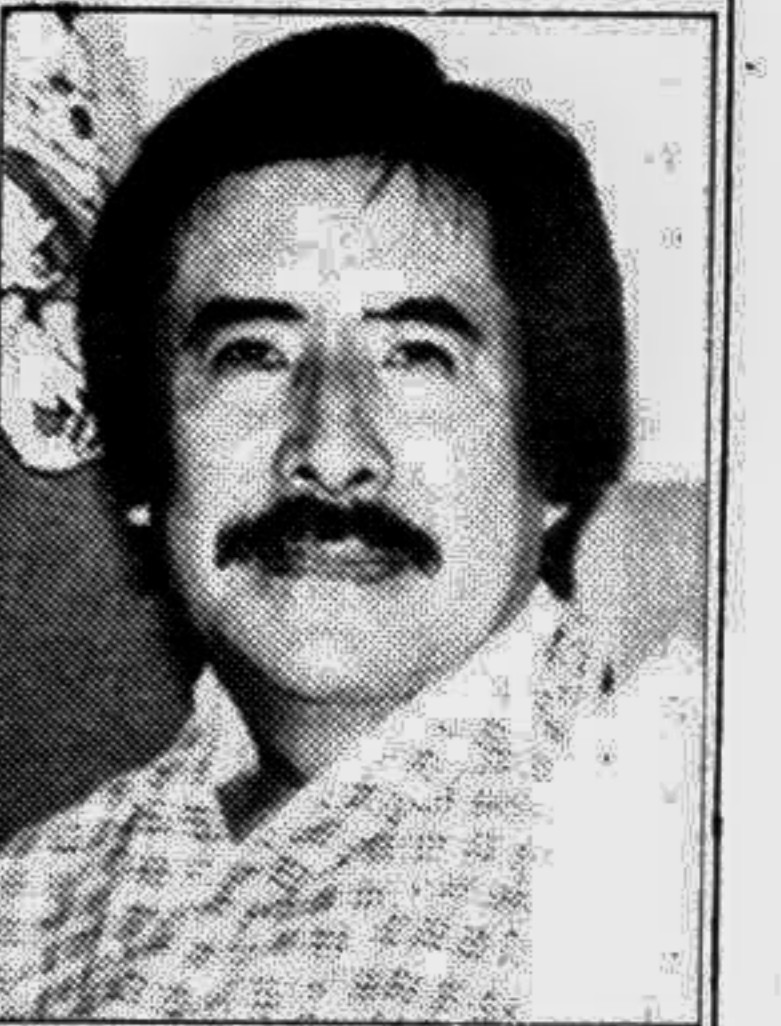
MESSAGE

Today is the National Day of my beloved country, the Kingdom of Bhutan. On this very happy and auspicious occasion, I have the greatest pleasure to greet the warm and friendly people of Bangladesh. My wife and I have lived here over a year now and over these 14 months we have come to know a lot about this beautiful country. This has certainly deepened our understanding of the country, its people, its culture and its religion. A year later, we fell much enriched which has further reinforced our admiration and respect for the warm and talented people of this "Sonar Bangla".

May I also take this opportunity to convey to the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the people of "Sonar Bangla" the warm greetings of the Royal Government and the people of the Kingdom of Bhutan. May our two countries and the peoples be blessed with lasting peace and happiness.

As our two countries prepare to enter the new millennium, may the special bond of friend-

ship that happily exist between Bangladesh and Bhutan be further strengthened in the years ahead. May our two countries and peoples be blessed with eternal peace and happiness. Tashi Delek!



Lhatu Wangchuk
Ambassador of Bhutan to Bangladesh

Bhutan at a Glance

Area	: 47,000 square kilometers
Position	: 26° 45' and 28°10' north latitude 88° 45' and 91° 10' east longitude.
Capital	: Thimphu
State Religion	: Mahayana Buddhism
Languages	: Dzongkha, English, Sharchop, Nepali and many dialects.
Unit of Currency	: Ngultrum (which is at part with Indian Rupee)
Seasons	: Spring March—May Summer June—August Autumn September—November Winter December—February
Head of State	: His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck
Head of Government	: H.E. Lyonpo Sangay Ngedup, Chairman, Council of Ministers.
Government	: Monarchy
Legislative Body	: Tshogdu (National Assembly)
Executive Body	: Council of ministers
Judiciary Body	: High Court
National Dress	: Gho for men and Kira for women
National Sport	: Archery
National Animal	: Takin
National Flower	: Blue Poppy

Some of the Many Achievements under the Present King

THE Royal Government under the wise and farsighted leadership of His Majesty the King attached top priority to four main sectors in the process of the development. These sectors are education, health, agriculture and environment. In all four fronts, phenomenal progress has been made.

Education

Today, the Bhutanese children are provided with free education. The educational institutions in the Kingdom have increased from a mere 97 to 322 over a short period of time. These institutions comprise high schools, junior high schools, primary schools, community schools, private schools, degree colleges, teachers training colleges and other tertiary institutes.

The total strength of students in 1974 was a mere figure of about 13,000. Today, the total number of students has crossed well over 100,000. The enrolment rate is 72% and the literacy rate is 60—65%.

His Majesty the King has always held a strong belief that the future of the country rests with the youth. In His address to the nation on Jun 2, 1999, He said, "I have always pointed out that the future of our country,

whether it is lifted high or brought down low, lies in the hands of the younger generation. Your actions will determine the future of our nation and we place our complete faith and hope in you to fulfil our dreams and aspirations for our country."

Health

In 1974, there were only 56 health centres in the Kingdom. Today, there are 661 such centres including two major referral hospitals, covering 90% of the population. The child immunization programme has achieved almost 100% coverage. The life expectancy of the average Bhutanese has increased to 65.9 years for men from 45.8 years and 66.1 years for women from 49.1 over a short span of time. Material mortality rate has been down to 3.8 for every 1000 live births, from 7.7 in 1974. Majority of rural population has access to safe drinking water and proper sanitary facilities. Health care is provided free of cost.

Agriculture

Since 80% of the population live in rural areas, the Royal Government attaches utmost importance to this sector with a view in increasing rural income. In fact increasing rural

income is one of the main objectives of the current five-year plan. Today, there are 159 agricultural extension centres throughout the country, which serve more than 80% of the rural population as opposed to only 15 such centres in 1974. There are many seed production centres to cater to the needs of the farmers with adequate farm mechanization centres. With the introduction of appropriate technology and good farming practices, yields in cash crops such as fruits, vegetables, mushroom, potatoes, etc. have increased manifold.

Environment

Through His Majesty's farsighted policies, today Bhutan is in a position to boast itself of possessing a pristine environmental condition, totally unaffected by human greed for material wellbeing. Bhutan is the only country in the world to maintain forest coverage of 72.5% of its total land area. 26.23% of the country has been declared as protected areas which includes wildlife sanctuaries, nature parks, reserves, etc. In addition, recently His Majesty the King presented a "gift to the earth" in the form of pristine and uninterrupted corridor of forests for the move-

ment or migration of mammals and birds through out the country. The 3,800 square kilometers of wilderness corridor established in different locations from the tropical south to the alpine region will interlink all the national parks and provide continuously protected areas to prevent isolation of the species.

Few countries in the world offer the environmental tourists quite a feast of alternatives than Bhutan. From long treks along the paths hardly walked to crystal clear streams and rivers, Bhutan is defying the rest of the world in its attempts to keep its environment intact and pollution free. The flora and fauna of Bhutan is exceptionally diverse because of a great range of altitude zones and varied climatic conditions. The Bhutanese Government closely monitors deforestation and the country's mountains are therefore still in its natural state.

Under the Royal initiative, the Royal Government has set up an Environment Trust Fund for conservation and preservation of environment. Bhutan's effort the conservation of environment has become an outstanding example for the rest of the world.

Our Heartfelt Greetings and Warm Felicitations to Our Brotherly and Friendly People of Bhutan on Their National Day

Long Live the King of Bhutan



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*Warmest Felicitations
on the occasion of the
National Day of Bhutan*

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