

## Government & People... of Bhutan

In 2008 Bhutan will emerge as a fully democratic nation, albeit with a revered King, not dissimilar to Thailand. The current King, His Majesty King Jigme Singye Wangchuck is Bhutan's fourth King and he will step down in favour of his son, the Crown Prince (HRH DASHO JIGME KHEGAR NAMGYAL WANGCHUCK). The current King initiated the concept of GNH (Gross National Happiness of the people) as opposed to GDP being of more importance in Government decisions. Only time will tell if this concept continues after true democracy takes effect.

The population of fewer than 700,000 is made up primarily of indigenous Bhutanese known as the Drukpa. Three main ethnic groups, the Ngalops, Sharchops and the Lotshampas make up today's Drukpa. The Ngalops migrated from the Tibetan plains and are the importers of Buddhism into Bhutan. The Sharchops reside predominantly in eastern Bhutan and their origin can be traced to the tribes of north Burma and northeast India. The lower southern regions are inhabited by Lhotshampas who are mostly agricultural workers. The geography of the land kept each ethnic group separate until the middle of the 1900's when roads were built across the country. The contrasting ethnic diversity has meant that a number of different languages and dialects are spoken throughout the kingdom. The National language is Dzongkha, which along with English, is taught in all schools.