

## Songs, films to educate Bhutan voters

Bhutan is playing five specially composed songs on the kingdom's two government-controlled radio stations aimed at educating voters ahead of the first general elections in 2008.

'The Election Songs aim to motivate and inform the Bhutanese voters to come forward and participate in the electoral process with the highest sense of pride,' Bhutan's Election Commission said in a statement.

The peppy tracks in the local language are being aired through Bhutan Broadcasting Service and Kuzu FM Radio since the past two weeks.

The commission has launched a series of communication materials following a directive by King Jigme Singye Wangchuck to acquaint Bhutan's with the electoral process.

'As one of the measures to implement the Royal Command, the Election Commission of Bhutan is happy to release the communication materials, including a Bhutan Voter Guide, a documentary film, and the Election Songs,' the statement said. The guidebook contains information on every aspect of the electoral process, while the film was based on mock elections held in August.

An estimated 75 percent of the 400,000 eligible voters have already registered their names with the Election Commission with the last date fixed on Dec 31, 2006.

King Wangchuck last December made a landmark decision to abdicate the throne in favour of his eldest son, Crown Prince Jigme Khesar Namgyal Wangchuck, 25, before Bhutan adopts a constitution and elects a prime minister in 2008.

The transition began five years ago when the king handed over the powers of daily government to a council of ministers and empowered the national assembly to force a royal abdication if three-quarters of its membership backed the motion.

Bhutan in 2004 year unveiled a 34-point constitution and the same was sent to some 530,000 citizens for their views. The constitution is expected to be ratified after a referendum.

Once adopted, it replace a royal decree of 1953 giving the monarch absolute power. King Wangchuck is the fourth ruler in the Wangchuck dynasty that came to power in December 1907.

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