



## South Asia :: Bhutan

### Introduction :: Bhutan

#### Background:

In 1865, Britain and Bhutan signed the Treaty of Sinchulu, under which Bhutan would receive an annual subsidy in exchange for ceding some border land to British India. Under British influence, a monarchy was set up in 1907; three years later, a treaty was signed whereby the British agreed not to interfere in Bhutanese internal affairs, and Bhutan allowed Britain to direct its foreign affairs. This role was assumed by independent India after 1947. Two years later, a formal Indo-Bhutanese accord returned to Bhutan the areas annexed by the British, formalized the annual subsidies the country received, and defined India's responsibilities in defense and foreign relations. In March 2005, King Jigme Singye WANGCHUCK unveiled the government's draft constitution - which introduced major democratic reforms - and pledged to hold a national referendum for its approval. In December 2006, the King abdicated the throne in favor of his son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel WANGCHUCK, in order to give him experience as head of state before the democratic transition. In early 2007, India and Bhutan renegotiated their treaty to allow Bhutan greater autonomy in conducting its foreign policy, although Thimphu continues to coordinate policy decisions in this area with New Delhi. Elections for seating the country's first parliament were completed in March 2008; the king ratified the country's first constitution in July 2008. The disposition of some 43,000 Bhutanese refugees - housed in two UN refugee camps in Nepal - remains unresolved.

### Geography :: Bhutan

#### Location:

Southern Asia, between China and India

#### Geographic coordinates:

27 30 N, 90 30 E

#### Map references:

Asia

#### Area:

**total:** 38,394 sq km

**country comparison to the world:** 137

**land:** 38,394 sq km

**water:** 0 sq km

#### Area - comparative:

about one-half the size of Indiana

#### Land boundaries:

**total:** 1,075 km

**border countries:** China 470 km, India 605 km

#### Coastline:

0 km (landlocked)

**Maritime claims:**

none (landlocked)

**Climate:**

varies; tropical in southern plains; cool winters and hot summers in central valleys; severe winters and cool summers in Himalayas

**Terrain:**

mostly mountainous with some fertile valleys and savanna

**Elevation extremes:**

**lowest point:** Drangeme Chhu 97 m

**highest point:** Gangkar Puensum 7,570 m

**Natural resources:**

timber, hydropower, gypsum, calcium carbonate

**Land use:**

**arable land:** 2.49%

**permanent crops:** 0.46%

**other:** 97.06% (2011)

**Irrigated land:**

319.1 sq km (2010)

**Total renewable water resources:**

78 cu km (2011)

**Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):**

**total:** 0.34 cu km/yr (5%/1%/94%)

**per capita:** 458 cu m/yr (2008)

**Natural hazards:**

violent storms from the Himalayas are the source of the country's name, which translates as Land of the Thunder Dragon; frequent landslides during the rainy season

**Environment - current issues:**

soil erosion; limited access to potable water

**Environment - international agreements:**

**party to:** Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Hazardous Wastes, Ozone Layer Protection

**signed, but not ratified:** Law of the Sea

**Geography - note:**

landlocked; strategic location between China and India; controls several key Himalayan mountain passes

**People and Society :: Bhutan**

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**Nationality:**

**noun:** Bhutanese (singular and plural)

**adjective:** Bhutanese

**Ethnic groups:**

Bhote 50%, ethnic Nepalese 35% (includes Lhotsampas - one of several Nepalese ethnic groups), indigenous or migrant tribes 15%

**Languages:**

Sharchhopka 28%, Dzongkha (official) 24%, Lhotshamkha 22%, other 26%

**Religions:**

Lamaistic Buddhist 75%, Indian- and Nepalese-influenced Hinduism 25%

**Population:**

725,296 (July 2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 166

*note:* the Factbook population estimate is consistent with the first modern census of Bhutan, conducted in 2005; previous Factbook population estimates for this country, which were on the order of three times the total population reported here, were based on Bhutanese government publications that did not include the census

#### Age structure:

**0-14 years:** 27.8% (male 102,991/female 98,730)

**15-24 years:** 20.6% (male 76,202/female 73,273)

**25-54 years:** 39.9% (male 155,216/female 134,363)

**55-64 years:** 5.7% (male 22,295/female 19,285)

**65 years and over:** 5.9% (male 22,546/female 20,395) (2013 est.)

#### Dependency ratios:

**total dependency ratio:** 48.9 %

**youth dependency ratio:** 41.8 %

**elderly dependency ratio:** 7.1 %

**potential support ratio:** 14 (2013)

#### Median age:

**total:** 25.7 years

**male:** 26.3 years

**female:** 25.1 years (2013 est.)

#### Population growth rate:

1.15% (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 102

#### Birth rate:

18.43 births/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 105

#### Death rate:

6.88 deaths/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 138

#### Net migration rate:

0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2013 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 80

#### Urbanization:

**urban population:** 35.6% of total population (2011)

**rate of urbanization:** 3.65% annual rate of change (2010-15 est.)

#### Major urban areas - population:

THIMPHU (capital) 99,000 (2011)

#### Sex ratio:

**at birth:** 1.05 male(s)/female

**0-14 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**15-24 years:** 1.04 male(s)/female

**25-54 years:** 1.16 male(s)/female

**55-64 years:** 1.16 male(s)/female

**65 years and over:** 1.11 male(s)/female

**total population:** 1.1 male(s)/female (2013 est.)

#### Maternal mortality rate:

180 deaths/100,000 live births (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 59

#### Infant mortality rate:

**total:** 39.97 deaths/1,000 live births

**country comparison to the world:** 57

**male:** 40.52 deaths/1,000 live births

**female:** 39.4 deaths/1,000 live births (2013 est.)

#### Life expectancy at birth:

**total population:** 68.44 years  
**country comparison to the world:** 159  
**male:** 67.54 years  
**female:** 69.38 years (2013 est.)

**Total fertility rate:**

2.07 children born/woman (2013 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 118

**Contraceptive prevalence rate:**

65.6% (2010)

**Health expenditures:**

5.2% of GDP (2010)  
**country comparison to the world:** 134

**Physicians density:**

0.02 physicians/1,000 population (2007)

**Hospital bed density:**

1.8 beds/1,000 population (2011)

**Drinking water source:**

**improved:**

urban: 100% of population

rural: 94% of population

total: 96% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 0% of population

rural: 6% of population

total: 4% of population (2010 est.)

**Sanitation facility access:**

**improved:**

urban: 73% of population

rural: 29% of population

total: 44% of population

**unimproved:**

urban: 27% of population

rural: 71% of population

total: 56% of population (2010 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:**

0.2% (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 95

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:**

fewer than 1,000 (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 144

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:**

fewer than 100 (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 127

**Major infectious diseases:**

**degree of risk:** high

**food or waterborne diseases:** bacterial and protozoal diarrhea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever

**vectorborne diseases:** dengue fever and malaria (2013)

**Obesity - adult prevalence rate:**

5.3% (2008)

**country comparison to the world:** 154

**Children under the age of 5 years underweight:**

12.7% (2010)

**country comparison to the world:** 59

**Education expenditures:**

4.7% of GDP (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 83

**Literacy:**

**definition:** age 15 and over can read and write

**total population:** 52.8%

**male:** 65%

**female:** 38.7% (2005 est.)

**School life expectancy (primary to tertiary education):**

**total:** 12 years

**male:** 12 years

**female:** 12 years (2011)

**Child labor - children ages 5-14:**

**total number:** 25,801

**percentage:** 18 % (2010 est.)

**Unemployment, youth ages 15-24:**

**total:** 9.4%

**country comparison to the world:** 109

**male:** 6.8%

**female:** 10.9% (2011)

**Government :: Bhutan**

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**Country name:**

**conventional long form:** Kingdom of Bhutan

**conventional short form:** Bhutan

**local long form:** Druk Gyalkhap

**local short form:** Druk Yul

**Government type:**

constitutional monarchy

**Capital:**

**name:** Thimphu

**geographic coordinates:** 27 28 N, 89 38 E

**time difference:** UTC+6 (11 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

**Administrative divisions:**

20 districts (dzongkhag, singular and plural); Bumthang, Chhukha, Chirang, Daga, Gasa, Geylegphug, Ha, Lhuntshi, Mongar, Paro, Pemagatsel, Punakha, Samchi, Samdrup Jongkhar, Shemgang, Tashigang, Tashi Yangtse, Thimphu, Tongsa, Wangdi Phodrang

**Independence:**

1907 (became a unified kingdom under its first hereditary king)

**National holiday:**

National Day (Ugyen WANGCHUCK became first hereditary king), 17 December (1907)

**Constitution:**

ratified 18 July 2008

**Legal system:**

civil law based on Buddhist religious law

**International law organization participation:**

has not submitted an ICJ jurisdiction declaration; non-party state to the ICCt

**Suffrage:**

18 years of age; universal

**Executive branch:**

**chief of state:** King Jigme Khesar Namgyel WANGCHUCK (since 14 December 2006); note - King Jigme Singye WANGCHUCK abdicated the throne on 14 December 2006 and his son immediately succeeded him; the nearly two-year delay between the former King's abdication and his son's coronation on 6 November 2008 was to ensure an astrologically auspicious coronation date and to give the new king, who had limited experience, deeper administrative expertise under the guidance of his father

**head of government:** Prime Minister Tshering TOBGAY (since July 2013)

**cabinet:** Council of Ministers (Lhengye Zhungtshog) nominated by the monarch in consultation with the prime minister and approved by the National Assembly; members serve fixed, five-year terms; the leader of the majority party is nominated as the prime minister  
(For more information visit the **World Leaders website** [↗](#))

**elections:** the monarchy is hereditary, but the 2008 constitution grants the Parliament authority to remove the monarch with two-thirds vote; election of a new National Assembly occurred in March 2008

#### **Legislative branch:**

bicameral Parliament or Chi Tshog consists of the non-partisan National Council or Gyelyong Tshogde (25 seats; 20 members elected by each of the 20 administrative districts (dzongkhags) for four-year terms and 5 members appointed by the king); and the National Assembly or Tshogdu (47 seats; members nominated by the two parties and elected by direct, popular vote for five-year terms)

**elections:** National Council elections last held on 23 April 2013 (next to be held in 2017); National Assembly elections (first round) last held on 31 May 2013; second round held on 13 July 2013

**election results:** National Council - independents 20; note - all candidates ran as independents; National Assembly - first round poll held on 31 May 2013 - percent of vote by party - DPT 44.52%; PDP 32.53%; DNT 17.04%; DCT 5.9%; second round poll held on 13 July 2013 - percent of vote by party - PDP 54.88%, DPT 45.12%; seats by party - PDP 32, DPT 15

#### **Judicial branch:**

**highest court(s):** Supreme Court (consists of 5 justices including the chief justice )  
note - the Supreme Court has sole jurisdiction in constitutional matters

**judge selection and term of office:** Supreme Court chief justice appointed by the monarch in consultation with the National Judicial Commission; other judges appointed by the monarch from among the High Court judges selected by the National Judicial Commission; judge tenure NA

**subordinate courts:** High Court (first appellate court); District or Dzongkhag Courts; sub-district or Dungkhag Courts

#### **Political parties and leaders:**

Bhutan Peace and Prosperity Party (Druk Phuensum Tshogpa) or DPT [Jigme THINLEY]; People's Democratic Party or PDP [Tshering TOBGAY]; Druk Nymrub Tshogpa or DNT; Druk Chirwang Tshogpa or DCT

#### **Political pressure groups and leaders:**

United Front for Democracy (exiled); Druk National Congress (exiled)

**other:** Buddhist clergy; ethnic Nepalese organizations leading militant antigovernment campaign; Indian merchant community

#### **International organization participation:**

ADB, BIMSTEC, CP, FAO, G-77, IBRD, ICAO, IDA, IFAD, IFC, IMF, Interpol, IOC, IOM (observer), ISO (correspondent), ITSO, ITU, NAM, OPCW, SAARC, SACEP, UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO (observer)

#### **Diplomatic representation in the US:**

none; note - the Permanent Mission to the UN for Bhutan has consular jurisdiction in the US; the permanent representative to the UN is Lhatu WANGCHUK; address: 343 East 43rd Street, New York, NY 10017; telephone [1] (212) 682-2268; FAX [1] (212) 661-0551

**consulate(s) general:** New York

#### **Diplomatic representation from the US:**

the US and Bhutan have no formal diplomatic relations, although informal contact is maintained between the Bhutanese and US Embassy in New Delhi (India)

#### **Flag description:**

divided diagonally from the lower hoist-side corner; the upper triangle is yellow and the lower triangle is orange; centered along the dividing line is a large black and white dragon facing away from the hoist side; the dragon, called the Druk (Thunder Dragon), is the emblem of the nation; its white color stands for purity and the jewels in its claws symbolize wealth; the background colors represent spiritual and secular powers within Bhutan: the orange is associated with Buddhism, while the yellow denotes the ruling dynasty

#### **National symbol(s):**

thunder dragon known as Druk

**National anthem:**

**name:** "Druk tsendhen" (The Thunder Dragon Kingdom)  
**lyrics/music:** Gyaldun Dasho Thinley DORJI/Aku TONGMI  
**note:** adopted 1953

**Economy :: Bhutan****Economy - overview:**

Bhutan's economy, small and less developed, is based on agriculture and forestry, which provide the main livelihood for more than 40% of the population. Agriculture consists largely of subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Rugged mountains dominate the terrain and make the building of roads and other infrastructure difficult and expensive. The economy is closely aligned with India's through strong trade and monetary links and is dependent on India's financial assistance. The industrial sector is technologically backward with most production of the cottage industry type. Most development projects, such as road construction, rely on Indian migrant labor. Model education, social, and environment programs are underway with support from multilateral development organizations. Each economic program takes into account the government's desire to protect the country's environment and cultural traditions. For example, the government, in its cautious expansion of the tourist sector, encourages visits by upscale, environmentally conscientious tourists. Complicated controls and uncertain policies in areas such as industrial licensing, trade, labor, and finance continue to hamper foreign investment. The import of equipment and fuel to build hydropower plants is leading to large trade and current account deficits, though new hydropower projects and electricity exports to India are creating employment and will probably sustain growth in the coming years. GDP has rebounded strongly since the global recession began in 2008.

**GDP (purchasing power parity):**

\$5.036 billion (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 171

\$4.591 billion (2011 est.)

\$4.23 billion (2010 est.)

**note:** data are in 2012 US dollars

**GDP (official exchange rate):**

\$2.196 billion (2012 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:**

9.7% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 12

8.5% (2011 est.)

11.7% (2010 est.)

**GDP - per capita (PPP):**

\$6,800 (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 142

\$6,200 (2011 est.)

\$5,800 (2010 est.)

**note:** data are in 2012 US dollars

**GDP - composition, by end use:**

**household consumption:** 36.3%

**government consumption:** 22.5%

**investment in fixed capital:** 63.6%

**investment in inventories:** 0%

**exports of goods and services:** 37.4%

**imports of goods and services:** -59.9%  
(2012 est.)

**GDP - composition, by sector of origin:**

**agriculture:** 16.7%

**industry:** 45.4%

**services:** 37.9% (2011 est.)

**Agriculture - products:**

rice, corn, root crops, citrus; dairy products, eggs

**Industries:**

cement, wood products, processed fruits, alcoholic beverages, calcium carbide, tourism

**Industrial production growth rate:**

NA%

**Labor force:**

299,900

**country comparison to the world:** 165

*note:* major shortage of skilled labor (2008)

**Labor force - by occupation:**

**agriculture:** 43.7%

**industry:** 39.1%

**services:** 17.2% (2004 est.)

**Unemployment rate:**

4% (2009)

**country comparison to the world:** 31

2.5% (2004)

**Population below poverty line:**

23.2% (2008)

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:**

**lowest 10%:** 2.3%

**highest 10%:** 37.6% (2003)

**Budget:**

**revenues:** \$615.7 million

**expenditures:** \$651.2 million

*note:* the government of India finances nearly one-quarter of Bhutan's budget expenditures (2012 est.)

**Taxes and other revenues:**

28% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 104

**Budget surplus (+) or deficit (-):**

-1.6% of GDP (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 74

**Public debt:**

64% of GDP (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 43

55% of GDP (2010 est.)

**Fiscal year:**

1 July - 30 June

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):**

10.9% (2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 204

8.8% (2011 est.)

**Central bank discount rate:**

NA%

**Commercial bank prime lending rate:**

14% (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 54

14.16% (31 December 2011 est.)

**Stock of narrow money:**

\$191.9 million (31 December 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 176

\$623.4 million (31 December 2011 est.)

**Stock of broad money:**

\$1.018 billion (31 December 2011 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 169  
\$1.16 billion (31 December 2010 est.)

**Stock of domestic credit:**

\$788.6 million (31 December 2012 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 163  
\$747.5 million (31 December 2011 est.)

**Market value of publicly traded shares:**

\$NA

**Current account balance:**

-\$312.1 million (2012 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 83  
-\$354.9 million (2010 est.)

**Exports:**

\$721.8 million (2012 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 167  
\$662.2 million (2011 est.)

**Exports - commodities:**

electricity (to India), ferrosilicon, cement, calcium carbide, copper wire, manganese, vegetable oil

**Imports:**

\$1.28 billion (2012 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 175  
\$1.185 billion (2011 est.)

**Imports - commodities:**

fuel and lubricants, passenger cars, machinery and parts, fabrics, rice

**Debt - external:**

\$1.275 billion (2011)  
**country comparison to the world:** 155  
\$836 million (2009)

**Stock of direct foreign investment - at home:**

\$NA

**Exchange rates:**

ngultrum (BTN) per US dollar -  
53.437 (2012 est.)  
46.67 (2011 est.)  
45.73 (2010 est.)  
46.68 (2009 est.)  
43.51 (2008 est.)

**Energy :: Bhutan**

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**Electricity - production:**

6.826 billion kWh (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 104

**Electricity - consumption:**

1.161 billion kWh (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 149

**Electricity - exports:**

5.5 billion kWh (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 27

**Electricity - imports:**

20 million kWh (2009 est.)  
**country comparison to the world:** 104

**Electricity - installed generating capacity:**

1.505 million kW (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 111**

**Electricity - from fossil fuels:**

1.1% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 204**

**Electricity - from nuclear fuels:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 56**

**Electricity - from hydroelectric plants:**

98.9% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 5**

**Electricity - from other renewable sources:**

0% of total installed capacity (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 114**

**Crude oil - production:**

0 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 114**

**Crude oil - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 88**

**Crude oil - imports:**

0 bbl/day (2009 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 163**

**Crude oil - proved reserves:**

0 bbl (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 111**

**Refined petroleum products - production:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 159**

**Refined petroleum products - consumption:**

1,719 bbl/day (2011 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 193**

**Refined petroleum products - exports:**

0 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 157**

**Refined petroleum products - imports:**

1,590 bbl/day (2008 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 184**

**Natural gas - production:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 106**

**Natural gas - consumption:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 122**

**Natural gas - exports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world: 69**

**Natural gas - imports:**

0 cu m (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 166

**Natural gas - proved reserves:**

0 cu m (1 January 2012 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 115

**Carbon dioxide emissions from consumption of energy:**

276,300 Mt (2010 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 191

**Communications :: Bhutan**

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**Telephones - main lines in use:**

27,500 (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 181

**Telephones - mobile cellular:**

484,200 (2011)

**country comparison to the world:** 167

**Telephone system:**

**general assessment:** urban towns and district headquarters have telecommunications services

**domestic:** low teledensity; domestic service is poor especially in rural areas; mobile-cellular service, started in 2003, is now widely available

**international:** country code - 975; international telephone and telegraph service via landline and microwave relay through India; satellite earth station - 1 Intelsat (2012)

**Broadcast media:**

state-owned TV station established in 1999; cable TV service offers dozens of Indian and other international channels; first radio station, privately launched in 1973, is now state-owned; 5 private radio stations are currently broadcasting (2012)

**Internet country code:**

.bt

**Internet hosts:**

14,590 (2012)

**country comparison to the world:** 126

**Internet users:**

50,000 (2009)

**country comparison to the world:** 174

**Transportation :: Bhutan**

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**Airports:**

2 (2013)

**country comparison to the world:** 198

**Airports - with paved runways:**

**total:** 2

**1,524 to 2,437 m:** 1

**914 to 1,523 m:** 1 (2013)

**Airports - with unpaved runways:**

**total:** 1

**914 to 1,523 m:** 1 (2012)

**Roadways:**

**total:** 8,050 km

**country comparison to the world:** 139

**paved:** 4,991 km (includes 622 km of expressways)

**unpaved:** 3,059 km (2003)

**Military :: Bhutan**

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**Military branches:**

Royal Bhutan Army (includes Royal Bodyguard and Royal Bhutan Police) (2009)

**Military service age and obligation:**

18 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; militia training is compulsory for males aged 20-25, over a 3-year period (2012)

**Manpower available for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 202,407

**females age 16-49:** 180,349 (2010 est.)

**Manpower fit for military service:**

**males age 16-49:** 157,664

**females age 16-49:** 144,861 (2010 est.)

**Manpower reaching militarily significant age annually:**

**male:** 7,363

**female:** 7,095 (2010 est.)

**Military expenditures:**

1% of GDP (2005 est.)

**country comparison to the world:** 125

**Transnational Issues :: Bhutan**

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**Disputes - international:**

lacking any treaty describing the boundary, Bhutan and China continue negotiations to establish a common boundary alignment to resolve territorial disputes arising from substantial cartographic discrepancies, the largest of which lie in Bhutan's northwest and along the Chumbi salient