

Reading

The passage describes how the government of Bhutan, a small country in Southeast Asia, has officially made the happiness of its citizens the number one **priority**. As you read, pay special attention to the target vocabulary words in **bold**.

Gross National Happiness



- 1 It is a widely held myth that material **prosperity** makes people happy. In fact, a key factor that **dictates** happiness is social relationships. People who rate themselves as happy tend to have regular and supportive **engagement** with family and friends. They also feel their work is valuable and **relevant**. Likewise, their personal situation is important: whether they are satisfied with themselves, their progress toward their personal goals, and their religious or spiritual life.
- 2 Med Yones, president of the International Institute of Management, developed a seven-category scale that measures a nation's mental and emotional health. Taken together, the categories can be seen as an overall indication of a country's happiness:
 1. Economic satisfaction: income, debt, savings
 2. Environmental satisfaction: **pollution**, noise, traffic
 3. Physical health: severe illnesses, access to **clinics** and **drugstores**
 4. Mental health: positive **outlook**, self-esteem
 5. Workplace satisfaction: unemployment,

job satisfaction, motivation, workplace complaints

6. Social satisfaction (including family and relationship satisfaction): domestic **disputes**, **divorce** rates, social discrimination, crime rates
7. Political satisfaction: quality of local democracy, individual freedom, foreign conflicts
- 3 One country, Bhutan, has tried to balance the economic and social aspects of happiness in a unique way. Instead of **pursuing** success solely in terms of economic criteria, such as the Gross National Product (an economic measure), Bhutan has established what's known as Gross National Happiness (GNH) as its central national **ambition**. The idea is to **foster** both material and spiritual development so that they both grow hand-in-hand. Bhutan is committed to building an economy that **preserves** its culture, which is **founded** on Buddhist spiritual values. GNH is realized through four principles: sustainable development of the economy (that is, economic growth that can be continued), **preservation** of cultural values, **conservation** of the natural environment, and effective government.
- 4 Bhutan's decision to make its citizens' happiness a **priority** seems to have had positive results. Even though it ranks quite low in personal income (124th in the world), it ranks much higher in happiness ratings. A 2005 survey revealed that nearly all Bhutanese reported being either very happy (45 percent) or happy (52 percent), while only 3 percent reported being unhappy. In 2006, *Business Week* magazine ranked Bhutan as the 8th happiest country in the world, and the happiest in Asia. This is far better than many countries with **vastly** greater wealth, such as the United States (23rd), the United Kingdom (41st), France (62nd), and Japan (90th).
- 5 Furthermore, this happiness appears not to have come at the expense of the environment. The Happy **Planet** Index, a combined measure of human well-being and the environmental

cost of supporting that well-being, ranked Bhutan 17th out of 143 countries. This shows that supporting its happiness does not require **spoiling** its natural resources.

- 6 So how has Bhutan has been able to **pursue** its unusual GNH? Because it is a small, **rural** country in the Himalayan Mountains, it is able to sustain traditions at the same time it is developing. For example, people entering hospitals with no acute health problems can choose between Western or traditional medicine. However, modern technology, such as TV, video shops, and the Internet, is now becoming more common in the country. This creates challenges for a GNH approach, which has found success by **prioritizing** national identity and culture. On the one hand, such technological exposure might let in outside values and **vices**. For example, it might raise

expectations for material goods from outside Bhutan that are not readily available. On the other hand, the Internet and e-mail would undoubtedly offer better communication in a country where mountainous terrain makes travel difficult.

- 7 It will be interesting to see how Bhutan **tackles** the problems of integrating with the wider world while also **pursuing** its unique "happiness" approach to government. It is certainly a social experiment that we all hope will **flourish** as an example of an alternative vision of what is important in life.

(636 words)

This passage was based on a number of sources, including the Gross National Happiness website: <http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/Default.aspx>.