

PROFILE of The Week

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Making Others Happy is Super-happiness!

Imagine if Stabroek Market Square in Guyana is converted into big tent on Sundays. The traffic comes to a standstill and there are concerts, food, fashion and music that reflect the culture of the population. Imagine if these Sunday celebrations were done throughout the country the impact it would have on the sense of well-being. How about relocating the Georgetown Prisons and use the space to build a Jagan-Burnham Park for all to enjoy? We could sit in the Walter Rodney Pavilion and celebrate the talents of the nation. Who needs a prison in the middle of a city?

Why stop in Guyana? Imagine further if the public squares in other countries became a meeting place for a grand celebration the difference it would make to our collective happiness. Music, food, dance, relaxation, sharing and spending time with each other may not cure poverty. But they may contribute to a renewal, a togetherness that is so desperately lacking in many societies.

The constitutions of a number of countries state specifically that the happiness of its citizens is a desired objective. In the United States constitution, 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness' is clearly enunciated as a strategy of good governance. Since 2002, West Germany, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Belgium, South Korea and Dubai have become outspoken about the need for happiness to be a plank of effective social and economic policy.

Money can't buy happiness. The United States is a good example of a country that has become rich-

er but has failed to make the top 10 in the World Happiness index. Norway replaced Denmark as the happiest country for 2017 and the others in the top ten for that year were Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden.

In 2019, the Scandinavian countries again top the list of 156 countries with Finland in the number one spot. The others in the ten include Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada and Australia. In the Caribbean, Trinidad is 39 while Jamaica is 56. Guyana does not feature in the list; India is 140 while Burundi is last. What makes a country happy? Social planners argue that a happy nation will meet certain requirements.

People in happy countries will enjoy a high Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but this is only one of many other factors. They will have longer life expectancy rates, 'live longer, healthier lives; have more social support, have freedom to make life choices, experience less corruption, and more equality of

happiness.'

Professor Jeffrey Sachs says that the United States has focused more on economic growth and has neglected the happiness of the people. The US he says, 'is chasing money' while the social fabric and faith in government is deteriorating. Costa Rica, a relatively poor Latin Amer-

ican country, is ahead of the US because it places emphasis on human and environmental health.

The International Day of Happiness was inspired by Bhutan, a country with a population of about 750,000 persons. It was Bhutan that came up with the idea of a Gross National Happiness index in

which material and spiritual development are integrated in a synergy to produce the wellbeing of its citizens. In the 2019 report, Bhutan ranks at 95.

There are four pillars of Gross National Happiness as follows: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural

Product.'

But the present seems to be encroaching on Bhutan in a hurry. Television was first introduced there in 1999 and the internet in 2000. Violence has increased and family values have become strained. Nevertheless, the idea of an International Day of Happiness was powerful enough to

among the happiest countries.

In 2016, it was Denmark, and in 2017 it is Norway and in 2019 it is Finland. Why is that these countries top the list even though they have a 'long, cold and dark winter?'

It is argued that the answer comes down to 'neighborly support between citizens and state support programs for those in need.' Do economists and statisticians take social capital into account when they look at wellbeing? When Denmark topped the list in 2016 it was found that social support in times of need was crucial to feelings of security and wellbeing. According to one Danish economist money was not as important as social life.

The freedom of the individual to make decisions, to participate in the political-making process and to help each other in times of need is particularly striking in Denmark and indeed in Scandinavian countries.

While income tax is high the social benefits are apparent. For example, maternity leave in the United States is around 10 weeks but in Denmark families receive a total of 52 weeks of parental leave.

The children have access to free or low cost child care. This enables mothers to return to their previous jobs. One Norwegian explains that his country is the happiest because, 'the schools, health care, police, all the bureaucracy treat people with respect and makes us happy, makes us trust each other, makes us feel a part of the whole community.'



Guyana: Are we the happiest country in South America?

persuade several nations to adopt a resolution at the United Nations to dedicate a day for it.

In 2012, a UN Conference on Happiness took place and on March 20, 2013 the first International Day of Happiness was celebrated. In the last four years, Scandinavian countries have topped the list as being

preservation and environmental preservation. According to travel writer John Wehrheim, Bhutan has managed to balance the material and spiritual needs of the people. He adds that Bhutan is a land where work and 'worry are low priorities and Gross National Happiness wins over Gross National