

Press Release
22 December 2022

Bhutanese Ambassador to Bangladesh spoke on the "Gross National Happiness- Bhutan's Development Philosophy" at NSU

H.E. Mr. Rinchen Kuentsyl, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Bhutan spoke on the topic: "Gross National Happiness- Bhutan's Development Philosophy". The Ambassador Talk Series: Session 1 was jointly organized by the Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) and the Office of External Affairs (OEA), NSU on December 22, 2022, at Syndicate Hall, NSU.



According to the 1729 Legal Code of Bhutan “If the government cannot create happiness for its people, there is no purpose for the government to exist”, this is the basis of Gross National Happiness (GNH). Ambassador Mr. Rinchen Kuentsyl stated that happiness from the GNH perspective has nothing to do with the common use of the word to denote a momentary passing mood; rather it refers to the deep, enduring, and abiding happiness that comes from multi-dimensional life experiences.

Some notable parts from his speech are mentioned below:

GNH is a development approach that seeks to “achieve a harmonious balance between material well-being and the spiritual, emotional, and cultural needs of an individual and society.” GNH is based on the belief that since happiness is the ultimate desire of every citizen, it must be the purpose of development to create the enabling conditions for happiness. GNH is a state policy as mentioned in the Bhutanese constitution, “The State shall strive to promote those conditions that will enable the pursuit of Gross National Happiness (Article 9, Section 2).”



The four pillars of GNH are; sustainable socio-economic development, promotion and preservation of culture, conservation of the environment, and good governance. Center for Bhutan Studies & GNH Research carries out research, surveys, and studies into GNH. GNH with its 9 domains and their indicators that capture the common aspirations of the Bhutanese people is adopted as a development framework.

The two main tools developed for operationalizing GNH are the GNH indicators and policy/project screening tools. GNH Survey is carried out every two years to assess progress and sharpen policy interventions towards GNH. Bhutan systematically assesses policies and projects through the GNH “Lens”. Bhutan orients policymakers & planners with the GNH frame of thinking. As a result, they select GNH-enhancing policies and projects & reject projects and policies that adversely affect key indicators of GNH.

The opportunities of GNH are; GNH indicators have made the Bhutanese “public policy-making framework” more holistic and thus completer and more consistent with what individuals want from development– bringing greater breadth (through 4 additional dimensions) and depth (qualitative aspects). Due to its comprehensiveness, it can provide a better measure of progress and thus ensure that development means more than economic growth or attainment of targets like SDGs.

There are some challenges too as GNH is a work in progress and there are some complexities in dealing with unconventional domains. So, there are rooms to improve its use to make informed decisions.

GNH at the United Nations: In July 2011 - the UN passed the resolution on “Happiness: Towards a holistic approach to development”. In April 2012, a High-Level Meeting at the UN on “Well-being and Happiness: Defining a new development paradigm” was held. In July 2012 - the UN Resolution on celebrating 20 March as “International Day of Happiness” was passed unanimously.

According to the King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, “Today, GNH has come to mean so many things to so many people but to me, it signifies simply - Development with Values. Thus, for my nation, today GNH is the bridge between the fundamental values of Kindness, Equality, and Humanity and the necessary pursuit of economic growth. GNH acts as our National Conscience guiding us towards making wise decisions for a better future”.

A concluding speech was given by Prof. Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Ph.D., Director, SIPG & CPS, & Chair, Dept. of PSS, NSU. The seminar was moderated by Dr. Katherine Li, Director, OEA, NSU & Adviser of CPS. Dr. Abdul Wohab, Coordinator, CPS & Assistant Professor, Dept of PSS, NSU. gave a vote of appreciation to conclude the event. The seminar was attended by academics, researchers, diplomats, journalists, Bhutanese students at NSU, and other students too.

