

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Reading and speaking

You are going to read a newspaper article about the Sultan of Brunei. He is the richest man in the world.

Pre-reading task

- 1 Have you heard of the country of Brunei?
Do you know where it is?
Is it in the Middle East/East Asia/West Africa?

THE RICHEST MAN IN THE WORLD

A year ago the Sultan of Brunei gave a birthday party for his eleven-year-old daughter. It was in the ballroom of Claridges Hotel, in Mayfair, London. It cost £100,000, but for the Sultan this is not a great amount of money. He is so rich that he can buy whatever he wants.

A few years ago he built the biggest palace in the world. It has 1,788 rooms, 5 swimming pools, 257 toilets, 44 staircases and 18 lifts. The dining room can seat 4,000 people. There are 564 chandeliers with 51,490 light bulbs. A servant is employed full time to change bulbs – about 200 a day. The total cost of the palace was \$400 million. The Sultan invited his friends to see it but they didn't like it – they said it looked more like a multi-storey car park than a palace. What could the Sultan do? You guessed – he built another one!

Brunei is one of the smallest but richest countries in the world. Its wealth comes from oil and gas. Most people think that Brunei is in the Middle East but it isn't. It's in East Asia, on the north coast of the island of Borneo. It sells the oil and gas to Japan, and earns \$2 billion a year – that

- 2 Check in your dictionary that you understand the following words:

extravagant (adj)
wealth (n)/**wealthy** (adj)
chandelier (n)
despite (prep)
to share (v)

shy (adj)
reserved (adj) e.g. a reserved person
outgoing (adj) e.g. an outgoing person

Reading for information

Now read the article quite quickly. As you read, check if you were right about where Brunei is.

Decide what you think is the most extravagant way the Sultan spends his money. Discuss your ideas in pairs.

is \$229,000 every hour – from it. And the beauty is that there are so few people to share all this money. The population of Brunei is only 230,000. The Sultan and his brothers are the government.

- 35 Despite all this money and power the Sultan is a very shy man. He is 42 years old but still looks like a schoolboy. He says very little at international meetings. When he was

nineteen he married his cousin, Princess Saleha, who

was then sweet, pretty, and only sixteen. Time passed and she became more and more reserved. In 1980 the

Sultan met an air hostess called Mariam Bell, who is

half Bruneian, a quarter Japanese, and a quarter English. She is much more outgoing in her manner than

most Bruneian girls, and the Sultan fell in love with her.

He married her, too, and now has two wives and two families all living happily

together in the new palace. The Sultan's total wealth is

more than \$25 billion. He owns hotels all round the world: the Dorchester in

London, the Beverley Hills

Hotel in Los Angeles and the Hyatt Hotel in Singapore. He has a fleet of private planes, including an airbus. One

of his London houses has the biggest garden in the city, except for Buckingham Palace. With all this, is he a happy

man? Nobody asks him that.

