



OWNERSHIP = WEALTH?

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With the world's human inhabitants commonly taken up with having worldly possessions of immeasurable worth, the gap between the rich and the poor seems to be ever-widening. It has come to a point where the top 15 richest countries are way ahead of their neighbors by leaps and bounds.

The latest compilation for the world's richest countries based on per capita figures, according to US-based Forbes magazine has the following countries listed in descending order: Qatar, with the third largest natural gas reserves in the world; Luxembourg, with a per capita Gross Domestic product of \$81,466; Singapore, with GDP of \$56,694 brought about by its being a finance, manufacturing and technology hub; Norway, with GDP of \$51,959; the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei; UAE, also oil-rich and possessing one of the world's most developed economies; the USA, unsurprisingly; Hong Kong, with its major capitalist service economy, low taxation, free trade and currency; Switzerland, with one of world's largest account balances as a percentage of GDP; the Netherlands, now enjoying an elected parliament and the blessings of democracy; Australia, with its impressive national performance in aspects such as quality of life, education, health, economic freedom, protection of civil liberties and political rights; Austria, known for its remarkably-high standard of living; Ireland, with its friendly people, beautiful scenery, Guinness, and traditional Irish pubs; Canada, with its diversified economy and rich natural resources; and Kuwait, with the world's fifth largest oil reserves. (Source: <http://ph.news.yahoo.com/photos/the-richest-countries-in-the-world-1330405787-slideshow/richest-countries-photo-1330405430.html>)

Those of us who barely eke out a living in countries which have not been so-ranked can only read in awe and amazement, and yes, envy. The world hasn't been created in equal terms, as such rankings show. The most beautiful countries seem to be the richest, too.

However, this should not be a cause for despair. Although the richest countries stay up there with their exceptional GDP's and abundant resources, the fact remains that majority of the world's nations are still of the average, if not gutter-level, GDP's. The financial stability enjoyed by a very small minority has not really trickled down to the world's majority.

This does not mean that poorer nations have worse economies because of poor national performance. Economic performance is dictated by numerous factors. It doesn't mean that the nation's citizens are lazy and squander much of what they earn.

Government has much to do with a nation's economy, just as its people's commitment to improving themselves will always factor in as a special component of economic success. I have seen fellow citizens work themselves stiff and still earn meager income, mainly because of the ineptitude, corruption and plain stupidity and selfishness of those in power.

What we have is relative, what we are is relevant, what we become will be a revelation of our present actions. Let us not waste what we have and what we are, so that what we become will be full of immense pride and joyous celebration.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In what aspects are countries of the world commonly ranked aside from GDP?
2. Do you sometimes wish you lived in a different country? Why or why not?
3. What are the causes of hardships experienced by poor countries? Explain your answer.
4. Have you ever experienced desperation and total wretchedness? How did you address the problem?
5. What are your views on the way your country is going nowadays?