

Shorter Notices

Akhtar Hasan Khan. *The Impact of Privatisation in Pakistan.* Ferozsons (Pvt). Ltd. 2012. Paperback. 166 pages. Rs 395.00.

This book critically examines the practice and the process of privatisation in Pakistan which started by the early 90's and resurged in the first decade of the twenty-first century. The study was sponsored by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). The book not only debates the international practice of privatisation but also discourses the basic theory of privatisation. The basic arguments given in favour of privatisation are the efficiency of the private sector in allocation and utilisation of investment and resources, reduction of fiscal deficit, and enlarging of the stock market. However, most of the developed and developing countries which are economically performing well have achieved this without adopting privatisation as the major step in the public policy. The privatisation of some sectors and units like, financial institutions, KESC, PTCL, Steel Mill, and Oil and Gas Mills also bring into the debate very efficiently. The basic conditions for the success of the privatisation process have also been deliberated. The first and foremost condition is the transparency at every step from advertisement to the final payments in the process of privatisation. The other essential condition is the proper sequencing and the spread of privatisation over a long period instead of rushed and bunched privatisation. Equally, the selection of the sector to be privatised or not is also important. The success of privatisation is also dependent on other favourable conditions, provision of which is the responsibility of the government. Privatisation for the sake of privatisation is critically debated and the book unfolds many shortcomings of the privatisation. As privatisation diverts investment from new technologically advanced ventures into buying public sector units, therefore this could be retarded for the economic growth. Similarly, the privatisation process is not foreign direct investment but permanent remittances of profits. Privatisation has also a negative impact on the employment as indicated by the past experiences of the privatisation in Pakistan. The argument of reduction of fiscal deficit can also be discarded as the privatisation leads to reduction in tax revenues and more tax evasion. On the same token, the belief that privatisation promotes more efficiency of units seems also vague in case of developing countries. The present government should be very cautious about privatisation, keeping in view the past experience and should not privatise those sectors and enterprises which are considered as strategically important and deal with the provision of basic goods at subsidised rates. Rather, the attention should be paid on the improvement of the management of these public sector units. Moreover, if the privatisation is indispensable then the best mode is through the sale of shares to the general public. (*Ahmad Waqar Qasim*).

Sarah S. Aneel, Uzma T. Haroon, and Imrana Niazi (eds.). *Peace and Sustainable Development in South Asia—The Way Forward*. Sustainable Development Policy Institute and Sang-e-Meel Publications. 2012. Hard Cover. 305 pages. Rs 1200.00.

This book is a collection of papers presented at the Thirteenth Sustainable Development Conference hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad in 2010, on the topic 'Peace and Sustainable Development in South Asia', and was attended by participants from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan. The book is divided in five sections: Peace and Conflict; Environment and Climate Change; Governance and Urbanisation; Water and Sanitation; and Food Security. Section I. Peace and Conflict—delves on how the management of development, given diversity of people (religion, ethnicity, caste, gender), creates scenarios of social conflict. Section II. Environment and Climate Change—takes up important issues regarding financing for climate change, and how local communities can be empowered as a first line of defense to ward off impending climate disaster. Section III on Governance and Urbanisation deals with major issues of informal settlements as well as land grabbing by powerful élites and how political participation of the disempowered can be used to achieve a more equal and sustainable pattern of development. Section IV on Water and Sanitation draws upon the Bangladeshi experience, where a bottom-up approach has yielded significant cost benefits for achieving Millennium Development Goals for water and sanitation. This section also highlights how participatory techniques can be used to deal with storm waters through rain water harvesting and canal maintenance. Last, but not the least, the issue of food security for the socially backward communities in the Himalayan region is analysed, where access to resources is generally restricted to higher-class communities, and how equal access to these resources and help achieve food security for a large section of the society. The main message that comes out of this endeavour is that since local communities mostly bear the adverse impact of human activities on our environment, through climate change and related hazards, any mechanism to deal with it must seek their active involvement. (*Lubna Hasan*).