

Shorter Notices

Rob Tripp. *Biotechnology and Agricultural Development: Transgenic Cotton, Rural Institutions and Resource-poor Farmers*. 2009. 280 pages, Hardbound, £ 90.00.

‘Biotechnology and Agricultural Development’ edited by Rob Tripp, explores how biotechnology can be used to increase agricultural productivity. The book examines case studies from China, India, South Africa and Colombia to study the impact of biotechnology on agricultural output.

The case studies suggest that the use of biotechnology has helped increase agricultural production and alleviate poverty. The studies included in the volume examine the impact of BT cotton and transgenic varieties on the productivity of small farmers. The agronomic performance of GM cotton has also been discussed. The studies suggest that more information about the benefits of transgenic varieties and offer of choices to growers in the use of different varieties, will contribute to greater use of the transgenic varieties. The role of technology for controlling the impact of insect- borne diseases has also been examined in one of the studies.

The book also explores the prospects of using genetically modified crops in developing countries. One of the studies examines the role of institutions in promoting the use of biotechnology. Specifically, the study examines how the poor farmers may benefit from the adoption modern technologies? What role institutions may play in this regard? What institutional shortcomings hinder the use of biotechnology? How the poor farmers may participate in input and credit markets? How the farmers’ access to information may be improved and, finally, how the regulatory regimes may be improved? Another study examines the institutional correlates for the introduction of transgenic varieties of cotton, with special focus on the seed and input industry, intellectual property regimes and input delivery. The studies included suggest that more attention should be devoted to the development of local institutions required for technology generation, technology delivery and increasing farmers’ capacity to demand more services. (Anwar Hussain)

Robin Boadway and Anwar Shah. *Fiscal Federalism, Principles and Practice of Multiorder Governance*. Cambridge University Press. 2009. 620 pages. Hardbound. US\$ 26.95.

The concept of fiscal federalism has drawn much attention over the last three decades. Developments like globalisation and conflicts, local as well regional, have made it crucial to revisit the question of the division of responsibilities amongst various tiers of the government, argue the authors. The book evaluates the merits and demerits of decentralisation and highlights the trade-offs involved in making the right choice between

centralisation and decentralisation. The standard criticisms of fiscal federalism are; causes macroeconomic instability, augments regional disparities, and promotes corruption. The authors rebut these criticisms convincingly and argue that a decentralised fiscal system presents the most viable way for improving macroeconomic governance and regional fiscal equity.

The authors present various models of federalism by differentiating between unitary forms and federal forms of constitutions. The local governance models of developed countries discussed in the book furnish lessons for fiscal reform in developing countries. The authors point out that the disparity between the revenue means and expenditures needs of the lower tiers of government is common in countries which have adopted a federalist structure. Such fiscal gaps, they argue, should be eased by transferring federal sources of revenue to the sub-national governments. The authors favour lesser reliance on inter-governmental transfers by the sub-national governments. They point out that in OECD countries, inter-governmental transfers, on average, constitute only about one-third of the sub-national expenditures, whereas this figure is as high as 60 per cent for developing countries. The authors recommend lesser inter-governmental transfers as the aim as this allows greater autonomy to the lower tiers of the government.

Talking about the function of sub-national governments, the authors emphasise that local governance not only involves providing local services, like sanitation and street lighting, but also includes protecting the life and liberty of the citizens. The authors view the expenditures on health and education as the most essential amongst the various kinds of public expenditures at the local level. They argue that the decentralised process of decision-making should lead to the kind of public service delivery that is consistent with local preferences.

The book summarises the vast and varied literature on the construction of fiscal constitutions and their implementation. It suggests that as the fiscal constitutions sketch the process of revenue generation and expenditures at various tiers of government, therefore, regulatory checks should be part and parcel of the fiscal constitution for responsible, decentralised governance. (*Abdul Qayyum Khan*)

Malcolm Gladwell. *Outliers, the Story of Success*. London: Penguin Group. 2008. 309 pages. Pak Rs 995.00.

Why some people outperform all others and what is behind some highly unusual occurrences is the subject matter of 'Outliers' written by Malcolm Gladwell, the author of *Tipping Point* and *Blink*. The author follows a journalistic style of writing to explain the secret of successful people. He uses many examples, stories, case studies and interviews to suggest what kind of people outperform. Gladwell argues that intelligence is not the only key to success, rather success is a combination of ability, opportunity and a particular environment in which the Outliers (extraordinary people) grow up.

Success also depends upon access to opportunity, the author argues. To support his contention he mentions that the famous IT guys, like Bill Gates, Paul Allen, Steve Ballmer and Eric Schmidt, were in their early twenties when the IT revolution began in 1975. These guys were well positioned then to take advantage of the new opportunities in the IT field. However the author suggests that the mere access to opportunity is not enough—opportunity can be translated into success only with hard work. The author cites

the example of Bill Joy and Bill Gates to prove his point. Bill Joy had spent around 10,000 hours doing computer programming in University of Michigan. Later his extensive practice enabled him to write the architecture language, which earned him a fortune. Similarly, Bill Gates had spent thousands of hours behind the computer since the age of 13.

The second part of the book implicitly argues that cultural heterogeneity adversely influences organisational work performance. The author cites the case of relatively higher level of plane crashes faced by the Korean airline. Deeper analysis of the causes of air crashes revealed that pilot, co-pilot and aviation officials belonged to different cultures. This cultural heterogeneity made communication difficult amongst them and thereby contributed to some air crashes. The Korean airline acknowledged that culture is at the root of some of their problems. The airline upgraded its safety standards and was bestowed with an award, in 2006, for its good safety standards and transformation. (*Hafsa Hina*)

Naureen Talha. *Jinnah's Role in Strengthening Pakistan's Economy (1947-48)*. Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008. 252 pages. Hardbound. Rs 250.00.

The book is focused on the economic management of Pakistan during the short rule of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah as the governor-general and the preparatory work that he had initiated well before the independence of Pakistan. After the introduction, the first chapter outlines the post Mughal economic condition of the Indian Muslims. According to the author, the Muslims had realised that given the western education acquired by Hindus and Parsis, the Muslims would be at a perpetual disadvantage economically. The author argues that such economic factors had contributed as much to the Pakistan Movement, as the political ideology did. Therefore, under the leadership of Mr Jinnah, the establishment of Muslim businesses and commercial organisations became a core objective of the All India Muslim League. The committed Muslim businessmen and industrialists invested their money and effort to achieve the objective.

The second chapter looks at Mr Jinnah's efforts in setting up of the Planning Committee in 1944. The very fact that Jinnah thought of setting up such a committee as early as 1944 speaks of his acumen, the committee was asked to survey the economic conditions of the Muslims and prepare them to participate in commercial activities, agricultural expansion and industrialisation. The committee submitted its report in 1945, giving adequate attention to all sectors of the economy.

The third chapter provides detail of the business bodies and enterprises established before the Partition by the Muslims on Mr Jinnah's persuasion. These included the Federation of Muslim Chambers of Commerce and Industry in 1944, commercial banks and newspaper network, including *Pakistan Times*, *Morning News*, *Dawn* and *Star of India*.

Chapter 4 furnishes detail of the suggestions put up by Mr Jinnah's industrialist friends for industrialisation of Pakistan. The suggestions included establishment of factories for manufacturing automobiles, radio and electrical goods, cement and textiles. In the services sector, the group recommended setting up facilities for banking and insurance, transport and technical education.

Chapter 5 recounts the response of the Muslims to the propaganda against the economic viability of Pakistan. Other issues, like division of assets between Pakistan and India and setting up of the central government have also been discussed in this chapter.

The last chapter of the book segregates the post-independence economic achievements of the Quaid into two parts. Part 1 is devoted to the economic achievements during the first four months of Mr Jinnah's rule while his accomplishments from January to September 1948 have been discussed in the second part. The first four months saw the establishment of the first textile mill in Karachi, Karanphuli hydro electric power plant in the then East Pakistan and four polytechnic institutes. To overcome the financial crunch, Mr Jinnah also asked the *Nizam* of the State of Hyderabad and the United States to not only lend to the infant country but also and invest in it. The second part outlines the commercial, industrial, aviation and employment policies laid down by him. However, the most important economic achievement under his leadership was the establishment of the country's central bank—the State Bank of Pakistan. To conclude the economic management of the country under the visionary leadership of the Quaid was full of promise for a nascent economy that had only begun to toddle. (*Saba Anwar*)

K. M. Nabiul Islam. *Impacts of Flood in Urban Bangladesh: Micro and Macro Analysis*. A H Development Publishing House and Community Development Library, 2006. 224 pages. Paperback. Rs 495.00.

This book deals comprehensively with typical losses from frequent floods in Bangladesh, both at micro and macro levels. The book aims at showing the non-agricultural impact of frequent floods in Bangladesh. The author has thoroughly discussed the occurrence of the different forms of floods and the impact that these had generated in urban areas.

The book examines the impact of different types of floods on the residential and commercial sectors of Bangladesh. The impact has also been examined for different socioeconomic groups. The book is of special use to the water and regional authorities responsible for assessing the impact of floods at the micro and macro levels. The knowledge of the possible damages from floods will contribute towards rational allocation of resources in the flood-prone economy of Bangladesh. Moreover the information on flood hazards, available in the book, can be used for mitigating the damages typically caused by floods. The knowledge of the vulnerability of the various sectors and properties may eventually contribute to targeting of investment towards flood protection and suitably modifying land use regulations. The book is expected to contribute towards mitigating the effects of floods through proactive management. (*Hafiz Hanzla Jalil*)