



Webinar

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Plotistan Subsidized Land giveaways and Public Land Management In Pakistan

Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics



Public land is an important component of aggregate wealth of country. Whereby, a local government has a say on sale of public land and developed in order to ensure its long-term viability and efficient utilization. Public land especially urban land has an immense opportunity to consider it as portfolio of assets for investment and industrial purposes. But, in Pakistan the situation is opposite, whereby a large section of the population finds it impossible to purchase their own piece of land to build a home, incredibly valuable land is given to a small group of people at unreasonably low costs in terms of subsidized land giveaways/ plotistan to specified class of citizens as a tangible benefit in terms of their services, boosting the culture of plotistan.

The other worst scenario is the inefficiency in the management of public land records, delivery of land transactions and information services to the public is not professionally and technically managed. It is not adequately handled due to the lack of seriousness of government officials, governance issues, and lack of openness. Patwari's are the fundamental building block to hold and manage the record of public land ownerships apart from any central repository. The need is to properly manage the record and efficient utilization of land based financing is necessary.

To discuss the culture of plotistan, Pakistan Institute of Development Economics-PIDE hosted a webinar titled "Plotistan - Subsidized Land Giveaways and Public Land Management in Pakistan" in which 'Dr. Nadeem ul Haq- Vice Chancellor PIDE' served as a moderator and Mr. Shahid Mehmood, Senior Research Fellow at PIDE was the speaker.

Key objectives

- To be familiar with the importance of public land as part of public wealth
- To understand the evolution, history, management and legal footings of public land management system in Pakistan
- To know the genesis of plotistan culture
- To identify the emergence and mushroom growth of the housing societies

Key Messages

- Public land is considered as an important source of public wealth. Its efficient utilization especially of urban land brings productive benefits and as a remedy against exploitative taxation policies for funding development.
- In Pakistan, government holds vast amount of land, but there is no exact figure of land acquisition and land giveaways as there is no central data repository.
- Despite attempts to computerize land records, Patwaris retain their power and are seen as a fundamental component of the land management system since they have the right to transfer, sale, and purchase of land.
- Due to the mis-management and inefficient utilization of public land and illegal occupations, government has been bearing huge opportunity cost in terms of forgone benefits.
- The roots of culture of perks and plots can be traced back to the British colonial period, where by a piece of land for agriculture purpose was offered against the loyalties to the British crown at extremely low and subsidized rates as an incentive.
- In 1947, a wave of migrants descended upon the Pakistan. Government had no option other than to settle the refugees by providing the 1,200 acres' land to Karachi cooperative housing society that led to the beginning of government intervention in the housing culture later called a plotistan.
- It was the civilian government that granted the urban settlements and later regularized it. The mushroom growth of cooperative housing societies and development authorities on the public land had emerged post 1970's and well entrenched in the government arenas by legal footings.
- Under 1973 constitution of sub-clause (3 'e' 'ii') of Article 24, government is mandated to provide housing and related facilities to all or "any specified class of citizens" it could be armed forces, judges. Bureaucrats etc...
- The land acquired from the local people to make a housing society is occasionally done by enforcement or in other case the amount given to them is far below than the real market value.
- In terms of subsidized land giveaways to specified class of citizens, the avenues of unfair advantage of acquiring land to the government is the application of district collector (DC) rate (subsidized), which is way below the market rate.

- Rather than to maintain the check and balance of the quality services of housing society, government is forming joint ventures with private parties to develop government housing societies, so they carve up the land between themselves by different avenues.
- The gold mine properties, where a government can earn millions of rupees per month doled out in terms of subsidized land in the form of exclusive clubs and subsidized plots.
- Government must focus on public land in terms of portfolio of assets for investment and industrial purpose to expand the economy, motivate youngsters to become entrepreneurs and businessmen rather than dole out this valuable property in terms subsidized land.

Conclusion:

The public land is a natural resource for aggregate wealth of a country. Government has a sole responsibility to make its efficient utilization as a scarce natural resource. The poor administration and illegal occupations of public land has cost tremendously to the country. So far, irregularity and record maintenance of land acquisition and dishing out sponsored plots has made multitudinous issues for the country. Thus it a need of time, rather than to promote the plotistan culture and perks and privileges attached with it to only favored class of citizens, it is governments prime responsibility to use its land in terms of portfolio of assets for investment and industrial purpose to expand the economy.



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