

DEVELOPING ECONOMIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT: THE SOUTH EAST ASIAN EXPERIENCE. Edited by COLIN MACANDREWS & CHIA LIN SIEN. [Singapore: McGraw-Hill. 1979. viii+299 pp.]

The editors claim in their preface, "... the book provides the first comprehensive survey of environmental problems within the developmental framework of the region." It is rare that a book on

a topic of this nature is published about developing countries. Apart from difficulties in obtaining information from tight lipped officials, reliable statistical and other pertinent information is hard to come by, and the researcher often has to indulge in hypothesizing on a motley collection of data ranging from newspaper clippings to publicity bulletins issued by government departments from time to time when pollution problems get out of hand.

The book contains five chapters, and each of these deals with various aspects of environmental management. The introduction (Chapter I) provides an overall view of environmental problems in South East Asia. Chapter II deals with Environmental Policy and Law. The other three chapters focus on the natural environment (Chapter III), the socio-economic environment (Chapter IV) and certain aspects of environmental management in the Philippines and Singapore (Chapter V).

The Chapter on Environmental Policy and Law contains two articles: one by Jeffrey Shane on "Environmental law in developing nations of South East Asia" and the other by Hamzah bin Abdul Majid on "Towards Environmental Management: The Malaysian Experience." Both these articles provide useful information on the organisational framework of departmental bodies that are involved in decision-making in regard to matters concerning the environment in ASEAN countries, on their administrative practices and on the socio-economic factors influencing the formulation of regulations. There is very little analysis, however, as to the impact of these laws on the common law remedies (particularly in the context of the legal systems of Singapore, Malaysia and Philippines), the opportunities for public participation in the decision-making process, the avenues for seeking redress either through administrative or judicial channels, and on the legal implications associated with the use of terms such as "water pollution", "air pollution", "solid wastes" — terms which continue to plague draftsmen engaged in formulating laws in a field where hardly any general principles or uniform concepts exist.

The writers of these articles, however, have made some thoughtful observations on the use of sanctions and incentives in the implementation of environmental management programmes. The other chapters too, particularly in view of the paucity of information that is available, would be of general interest to lawyers involved in environmental management and litigation.

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