

## Introduction

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The notion of local governance in Asia is the focus of this issue of *Asian Review* by The Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University. With the increasing influence and impact of international connectivity nowadays, it is difficult to deny that political actors at a local level are not completely separated from those at the regional and international level.

The analyses of interesting case studies in Asia will be illustrated in this issue, ranging from the article by Kasidech Somboonkitichai who has explored the post-war situation in Lebanon, arguing that consociational democracy is the most favourable way to maintain peace and stability in the area. Given the fact that Lebanon is an Islamic state with its own unique historical context, the author argues that transformative liberal approaches are incompatible to the nature of the local politics among the Lebanese elites. Next, Dinara Umarova has brought the case on the local governance of Kazakhstan, which is rarely discussed in the circle of the Thai academic journal. In the article 'Development of the Cities: Kazakh Case', the author argues that the capital city of Kazakhstan 'Astana' is competitive both at the national and regional level. The poverty and unemployment rate has been constantly low. Meanwhile, the life expectancy average, monthly wages and gross regional product per capita have been increasing. The rural area around Astana is also important as it is expected to be the key area that provides food and construction materials in the future.

Athikho Kaissi's article 'Democratization, Conflict and

“Act East” Policy: Challenges to Mediate Non-State Armed Actors of Northeast India in Southeast Asia’ is interesting in the fact that it does not only focus on the politics in South Asia per se, but also the impact upon Southeast Asia as well. With the focus on the State of Assam, with a long historical interaction with not only the Tai-Kadai ethnic groups but also others, the author argues that the approach of Act East by the government of India requires a democratic mechanism to deal with the conflicts in the region. The fourth article ‘Documenting Factors Contributing to the Emergence, Proliferation and Development of Migrant Learning Centers in Thailand’ by Amanda Mowry shed light on the fact that Burmese migrants have been constantly fleeing domestic political unrest and crossing the border to take refuge in Thailand for over the past three decades. Accordingly, the education issue of their children born in Thai territory has become an issue, and Migrant Learning Centres have been established with the financial support of the Thai state and international donors.

Next, Sutida Tonlerd and Vethang Mason explain the historical development of Lao local government from the colonial heyday to the present. Albeit being descriptive, this article has contributed to the academic circle in local governance in that primary sources in politics are difficult to be acquired but they are historically framed and narrated in the form of academic text. This shall be the first step that benefits the discussion on Lao local government in the future. The final article ‘From Government-Centric to People-Centered Government: A Reform of the Administrative Service in Zhejiang Province, China’ by Orachon Saechang discusses the key aspect of the connection between local and global interactions. Implying by the topic, the voices of the people have been more heard even in China. The complicated and time-consuming bureaucratic procedures are no longer expected with the implementation of the policy “Visit Once at Most”. The Chinese government has planned for an administrative reform to provide a better service to the Chinese citizens.

These interesting articles are woven together to be this issue of *Asian Review*. As a guest editor, I must thank all the contributors and Assistant Professor Jirayudh Sinthuphan for giving me this priceless opportunity. I must also thank the Institute of Asian Studies for bringing the topic of the local-international relations to the table of academic discussion.

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