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Local Governance and National Development

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Australia

From Efficient to Responsive Government: Developments and Prospects in Australian Local Governance

Dr. Janice Caulfield

If institutional strength and stability are the corollaries of 'good governance' (World Bank 2000) then we can, without hesitation, place the Australian government system alongside other western governments as being responsible, accountable and democratic. Yet, despite its British heritage, Australia's local government remains institutionally weak. On most measures of institutional capacity, local government in Australia does not fare well. After one hundred and fifty years, local government continues to be characterised by central control, weak finances and policy deficits. There are, however, signs that the political landscape is shifting as new ideas of 'governance' and alternative modes of public service delivery emerge, encouraged by national and state governments. These new ways of governing have resulted from a sustained period of public-sector wide reform. The reform program, intended to restore Australia's economic health and put it on an internationally competitive footing, included i) the introduction of new public management to all levels of the public sector, and ii) the implementation of micro-economic reforms, such as the National Competition Policy. In this important sense, the modernisation project in Australia has been primarily about efficiency. Ironically, the managerial reforms have contributed to changing concepts of governance which are more accountable and participatory. As a key player in the reform process local government has made, and continues to make, an important contribution to national development.

Bangladesh

Recent Developments in Administrative Reforms in Hong Kong Malaysia and Singapore

Mohammad Mohabbat Khan

The paper is an attempt to describe and analyse recent administrative reforms in two countries and one special region in China in Southeast Asia. The special region and two countries chosen are Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. These two countries and the special region have made significant strides in the arena of administrative reform (AR). A brief description about the two countries and the special region is provided. Past developments in AR is also reviewed. The major portion of the

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paper concentrates on significant recent ARs in Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. In the concluding section the analysis focuses on factors and variables that contributed to the successful implementation of significant AR measures and the lessons that can be learnt by other countries from such successes.

China

The Role and Structural Rebuilding of the Local People's Congress in Local Governance: Main Issues and Prospects in Current China

Yang Fengchun

In this article, the author discusses mainly the relationship between the local governance in China and the Local People's Congress. The highly centralized pattern has changed a lot since the initiation of reform progress, and the local governments become more and more important in the local governance. However, the current local governance pattern obviously has two shortcomings. First of all, the lack of supervision and control on local governments (especially their executive branches) leads to the over-expansion and corruption of the executive branches. Secondly, the origin of power of local governments is still the administrative transference of power on the part of the central government, so that the foundation of local governments in the local governance pattern is weak. The main reason for these two shortcomings is that in reforming the local governance pattern, too much emphasis is laid on the executive branch, while the People's Congress system is generally ignored. The dragging behind of the Local People's Congress system not only makes local governments lose their origin of power in local communities, but, with the weakening of the centralized system, make it impossible for local people to check and supervise local governments. In the long run, this will influence the social and political stability in future China negatively. The only way out is to explore some channels already provided by the political system, strengthen and rebuild the status and foundations of the Local People's Congress in local communities. The author points out some strategies in reforming the current Local People's Congress system.

Indonesia

The Reform of Local Governance in Indonesia

J. Endi Rukmo

Until the first half of 1999 Indonesia had 27 Provinces, 243 Kabupaten/Regen-

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cies and 57 Cities. Out of the 27 Provinces Indonesia has about 62,000 rural villages and kelurahan (urban villages), belonging to the lowest level of government in Indonesia. According the 2000 census, the number of population of Indonesia has reached 220 million people, out of which around 35% live in the urban areas. Jakarta Capital City Special Region is of provincial status and headed by a Governor who is responsible directly to the President of the Republic under an apart Law, it is Law No 34/ 1999 on Capital City Special Region. After East Timor released itself from Indonesia in the second half of 1999, the number of the Indonesian provinces turned less from 27 into 26, but in this reform era, there have been several regions wanting to establish their own province. Latest development showed, as per October 2000, that 5 (five) new provinces managed to be established or likely to be formally established, they are: West Irian Jaya and Central Irian Jaya (formerly part of Irian Jaya or Papua Province), North Maluku (fomerly part of Maluku Province), Banten (formerly part of West Java Province) and Bangka Belitung (formerly part of South Sumatra Province), changing the number of provinces of Indonesia from 26 into 31. Consequently, this change of number of provinces would in turn change the overall number government at the lower level.

Japan

Local Government and National Development: Evolution of Local Autonomy in Postwar Japan

Osamu Koike

The local government system of Japan is rationally centralized to achieve national development efficiently. It has contributed to rapid economic growth and the development of welfare state in a short time frame. In promoting well-balanced regional development, the central government established the National Development Plan to redistribute the wealth produced in the Pacific Belt to the underdeveloped regions. However, it has strengthened the local dependency upon national development projects and public works. Recently, the government enacted the Decentralization Promotion Law to delegate national functions to local government to change the hierarchical relationships between the levels of government, but it remains in the mode of administrative decentralization. In a post-industrialized society, however, it is necessary to empower citizens to participate in the design of communities. It suggests that the political decentralization will be a part of national reform in Japan.

Korea

Local Governance and National Development: A Case of the Republic of Korea

Chang-hyun Cho

This paper explores the historical development of various efforts to promote decentralization in the Republic of Korea. Looking back the last ten years of the development of local self-government in South Korea, one will probably get the following impressions. First is a gradualism: it takes a long time to reach where the South Korean local self-government stands today, and it also has a long way to go to where it should be. Second, the presence of a strong opposition party in parliament is essential for an expansion of the local autonomy. Third, the role of news media in arousing a public opinion in support of the local autonomy cannot be overstated. The role of the articulate public speakers as well as discussants in TV or radio's public affairs programs cannot be overemphasized. Fourth, the local autonomy was pushed as a form of political development. As the nation's economic development reached the threshold of the developed country, the political development becomes inevitable. Fifth, one cannot overstate the importance of the political education in the development of local self-government. Sixth, the usefulness of the expert training and networking should not be forgotten. While the general public was wanted for the local autonomy education, the more urgent task was an expert training and education.

Philippine

Local Governance in Naga and National Development in the Philippines: A Study in Contrast

Sulpicio S. Roco, Jr. and Wilfredo B. Prilles, Jr.

The Philippines is widely recognized to have been in the forefront of "localization." This is pursuant to the mandate of its present Constitution, which has embraced local autonomy and decentralization as a development strategy. But recent events have doused cold water to guarded optimism expressed by students of Philippine society and politics. Faced with these daunting events at the national level, what are the prospects for local autonomy and decentralization as a strategy for national development in the Philippines? What options are available to local authorities as they grapple with development challenges within their respective communities? What lessons can be derived from the emerging Philippine experience in localization?

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To help answer these questions, the experience of Naga City can be instructive. Using a timeline approach, this paper juxtaposes Naga's experience in local governance against development efforts at the national level under Presidents Ferdinand Marcos, Corazon Aquino, Fidel Ramos and finally Joseph Estrada. By comparing outcomes at the local and national level, a number of insights can be derived to provide answers to the above questions and make some generalizations on the relationship of local governance to national development.

Philippine

Participatory Governance: The Philippines Experience

Proserpina Domingo Tapales

The current demonstrations in the streets of Manila, the hysterics of the Philippine press, and the rumors flying with the breeze about President Joseph Estrada's alleged ill-gotten wealth, vices, and corruption echo events in the country which toppled the authoritarian Marcos regime. Their 1986 experience taught the Filipinos that they could bring changes in government if they remain vigilant, and if they participate in the process of governance themselves. Indeed, the post-EDSA event brought with it an acceptance and appreciation of people's important role in governance. In the maelstrom of Martial Law non-governmental (NGOs) and people's organizations (POs) considered it their duty to augment basic service delivery to the people in neglected areas The Aquino regime, which was brought to power through a coalition of different sectors including cause-oriented groups, enshrined people power in the 1987 Constitution, and operationalized the concept in grassroots governance through the 1991 Local Government Code. By October 2000 people power had put a stop to Constitutional amendment in 1997-98 which would retain certain elective authorities in power, had experienced direct participation in governance, and is in the process of yet another attempt to oust a President.

Vietnam

Local Government and Country Development in Vietnam

Pham Van Diem

Everyone recognizes that the local authorities play a very important role both in the political system and in the State administrative machinery. The latter is achieved through local democratic promotion and improvement of social, economic and cultural dimensions at the local level. Good governance at the local level seems

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to ensure the successful implementation of State policies. Based on this perception, the Vietnam Government has always taken into account the appropriate approach in launching administrative reforms which have been carried out simultaneously at both the central and local levels. Within the range of activities and initiatives to be undertaken, the focal point of public administration reform at the local level should be the enhancement of local democracy and the promotion of decentralization. This objective develops the autonomy and proactive nature of local authorities as well as benefits from the expected advantages of local level governance. Improving the performance of the local authorities and giving them greater autonomy in decision-making, developing the socio-economy and increasing the people's living standard through the creation of enabling environment for local governance are some of the main contents of public administration in Vietnam.

Japan

Better Governance or Just Another Functional Adjustments: Local Government Reforms in Japan

Kosaku Dairokuno

Faced with a series of problems ranging from a huge accumulated debt, rapidly increasing cost for the aged, too much regulation and inefficient vertical policy implementation, restructuring a stagnant economy more commensurate with the globalization to corruption involving bureaucrats, the effectiveness of the present governmental structure, once considered as a most efficient in the world, has been called into serious question. The government, in order to tackle those problems, has finally taken a bold step to restructure a whole process of governance in Japan. Decentralization, devolution, privatization, empowerment and the restructuring of central-local relationships, among others, are buzzwords of the Government Commission for Promoting Decentralization. This paper will examine the politico-economic backgrounds of the reform efforts and the prospect of the proposed reforms by the Commission. And I argue that the prime issue here, is not a simple redistribution of power and financial resources among different governing units but creation of a new framework of governance.