Thailand's Social Development in Q3/2017

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) released the official report on Thailand's social development in Q3/2017. The key social highlights included in this quarter are increases in income and labour productivity, declines in the number of debt default cases, and declined rates of accident. However, there are still some pressing issues needing monitoring, including declined employment and increased unemployment, increased number of patients diagnosed with diseases under surveillance and flu situation, insufficient physical activity, increased spending on alcohol and cigarettes, less overall safety in life and property of citizens, and long term care system development. The details of these key social situations are elaborated as follows:

Declined employment, with slight increased unemployment. Steadily improvement in overall income and labour productivity.

In Q3/2017, the overall employment declined by 1.6 percent, with a 1.2 percent decline in the agricultural sector due to the droughts during July to August, causing severe damages to crops, fishery and livestock in many provinces nationwide, and a 1.8 percent decline in the non-agricultural sector, mainly in the manufacturing, construction, wholesale, hotel and restaurant sectors. Despite the relatively positive production expansion in the non-agricultural sector, employment still declined. Two main factors contribution to such decline can be elaborated as, firstly, changes in the pattern of production, with higher employment of more advanced technology in both production and business processes, and secondly, more export expansion in capital intensive industries, such as electronics, automobile and chemical product industries, while labour intensive industries, such as textile and clothing industries, had witnessed relatively slow export growth with some products pending to be redistributed out of inventory.

The overall unemployment slightly increased by 1.19 percent, comprising of the previously employed and new graduates. 43.4 percent of the unemployed new graduates have university education attainment of which 85 percent of them spent longer than 6 months seeking for employment. As for those who had been previously employed, 65 percent of them had secondary school attainment and lower and had been seeking employment for longer than 3 months. The latter had higher risk of becoming unemployed compared to other groups of the unemployed as they might find it more challenging to obtain employment, especially nowadays that firms can employ advanced technology to replace labours in order to complete repetitive tasks. The real wage (excluding overtime pay and other benefits) merely increased by 0.1 percent, with a 2 percent increase in the agricultural sector. However, labour productivity impressively increased by 6.0 percent.

Labour issues that need further consistent monitoring are as follows:

(1) **Employment is anticipated to be improved based on the forecasted economic growth and increased redistribution of commodity productions among smaller producers**. The Thai economy has been anticipated to keep showing the sign of improvement, especially the private-sector investment and international trades which have been revived since the beginning of this year. This will result in a boost in confidence among business owners. Furthermore, it has also been witnessed that more commodity productions have been redistributed to trading partners or smaller producers, leading to more employment growth.

(2) **Agricultural sector adaptation due to consistent decline number of workers wanting to work in the sector**. It has statistically shown that the number of workers employed in the agricultural sector has been persistently declining from as much as 42 percent of the total labor force in 2001 to just merely 31.2 percent in 2016. 47 percent of those working in the sector are aged 50 years and over and 72 percent are those with primary school attainment or lower. Additionally, the relatively heavy workloads make the sector less likely to attract further replacement workers. Therefore, both the sector itself and its workers need to adapt accordingly, especially the learning of advanced and applied technologies and how to incorporate them in order to compensate for the declining number of workers. Recently, many applied technologies have been employed within the sector, such as the use of drones in carrying tanks of fertilizers and pesticides in order to spray crops which is safer to the health of farmers as well as more time, labour and input efficient or the use of weather forecast technology which can quite correctly predict the rain volume within the next 24 hours, making the harvest planning more efficient.

(3) **Skills development for the digital era of labor markets**. It is believed that there will be increasing uses of AI, Big Data and Internet of Things in the production and management processes, especially in the large and medium-sized enterprises which have a high tendency to opt for more automatic production processes in order to increase production efficiency. This will lead to changes in the pattern of production and services, such as the use of highly precise AI system to analyze and collect statistical data in the banking industry as well as in marketing; the use of automation in production processes, making it more likely that firms will only keep workers in necessary positions such as machine operators and increases in the number of online businesses such as E-commerce, Online booking and Check-in which will inevitably impact those in sales and customer service positions. Furthermore, the demand of online system operators will also increase accordingly, thus, the new generation of workers needs to be equipped with essential skills that enable them to effectively and flexibly respond to new job patterns and the needs of employers in the digital era. Such skills are, for example, world knowledge, technology skills, Big Data analytical and collective skills, multi skills, language skills as well as flexibility.

Household debts increased but at a decelerating rate. Household debts in Q2/2017 were 11,602,553 Million Baht, a slight increase from the same quarter last year but at a decelerating rate, accounted for about 78.4 percent of GDP. The outstanding commercial bank credits for consumption increased in Q3/2017, while the nonperforming loans ratio increased by 2.74. Nevertheless, the cases of debt default of personal loans and credit cards which take longer than 3 months declined.

The overall number of patients diagnosed with diseases under surveillance increased. Mental health of the recent flood victims needs to be monitored. In Q3/2017, the overall number of patients under disease surveillance increased from Q3/2016 by 23.8 percent, with the number of influenza patients, which mostly found among people aged 15-24 years old, nearly doubled and Pneumonia increased by 9.3 percent due to sudden changes in the weather and the current flu outbreak. Additionally, the mental health of the Thais needs to be closely monitored as the number of people with depression and anxiety has seemed to be on the rise, especially during the floods in the South. The Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health, has been deploying their personnel to the affected areas to provide the mental health needs and support to the flood victims, using their specific strategy of applying "seek", "listen" and "referral" technics, which can preliminary help ease tensions and anxiety.

Promotion of sufficient physical activity among the general public is needed in order to help reduce the chances of getting NCDs. NCDs are considered to be in the leading causes of death among the Thais, with a tendency to increase. Insufficient physical activity is considered as one of the key risk factors for NCDs, thus the promotion of sufficient levels physical activity among the general public is urgently needed in order to reduce such risk. According to the recent survey on physical activity among the Thais, it reveals that for the past 10 years, 1 in 3 Thai people have insufficient physical activity, with the inactive hours can be up to 14 hours a day on average and it is believed to be higher in the future. However, it is found that working age people and elderly tend to be aware of the growing danger of NCDs, thereby, starting to have more physical activity, but youth and children still have relatively low level of physical activity in their daily lives. Recently, many responsible bodies have been trying to advocate the importance of exercise and physical activity in educational institutions, workplaces, local communities and healthcare facilities.

Expenditure on alcohol and tobacco consumption increased, thus the enforcement of tax and pricing measures needs to be incorporated with other related measures in order to effectively curb such increased consumption. Expenditure on consumption of alcoholic beverages in Q3/2017 increased by 2.2 percent from the same period last year, while that of cigarette rose by 6.1 percent. Household consumption expenditure on alcoholic beverages and tobacco was 3.4 of total household expenditure. Thus, the government's enforcement of tax and pricing measures needs to be done in combination with other related measures, including marketing

measures, such as a ban on product advertisement, a ban on sale promotion, and restriction on access measures, such as placing more restriction distribution channels, reducing the sale availability hours, distribution and smoking area zoning, as well as educational campaigns designed to provide more information on harmful complications of alcohol and tobacco consumptions.

Drug cases still increased, resulting in the government's attempt come up with both crime preventative and suppressive measures designed to create a safe society. Total criminal cases and drug cases increased by 9.9 percent and 17.8 percent respectively compared to the same quarter of last year. Crimes against life, bodily harm and sexual assaults, and crimes against property decreased by 10.6 percent and 12.6 percent, respectively. Therefore, the government had aimed to both prevent and suppress crime cases in order to create safe society. The government also focused on suppressing influential groups involved in war weapon industry, especially those large groups with linked networks which could disguise their businesses in other forms, such as entertainment businesses and online product sales, both domestically and internationally. The year 2017 has also been the year of drug suppression. The government has emphasized on enticingly purchasing drugs from the sale networking, controlling more on the country's borders to prevent narcotic substances import and export more effectively, and on employing advanced technology to detect drugs.

Number of accidents has reduced, more awareness still needs to be raised among the general public of the risks and seriousness of accidents in order to promote road safety. Road accidents during the Q3/2017 decreased by 10.1 percent from the same quarter last year. The number of road accident related deaths and casualties reduced by 2.7 percent and 56.3 percent respectively, while the value of damages caused by road accidents decreased by 66.7 percent. Motorcycle accidents accounted for 38.5 percent of the total accident type. Most Thai people still lack awareness of the risks and seriousness of road accidents such as driving while under alcohol influence, with sleep deprivation, eating while driving, using phone while driving, driving faster than the law restriction, or not complying with traffic rules such as closely overtaking, illegally overtaking, and using inappropriate cars. Therefore, safety awareness campaigns should be done continuously, especially on the subjects of risks and seriousness of road traffic accidents, in order to instill consciousness and discipline and to improve road safety. Moreover, effective enforcement of related laws, with stronger penalties, is crucially need, while the younger generations need to be educated to understand and be aware of the seriousness of the accident. These measures can help reduce road accidents more effectively.

Open Learning Area: The innovation of elderly care. The invention of elderly care system is an important mechanism that can help elderly people live a good life, become more self-reliant and live in society with self-esteem and self-worth. The public and private sectors have been creating new innovation, with the use of advanced technologies, such as "Dinsow Robot",

emergency medical call via touch screen, or innovation by folk wisdom such as innovation of medical aid from waste materials in the area. All of these innovations create activities for elderly to participate in and, furthermore, change their lifestyle to have a better health quality without any chronic diseases, such as "Sa-Mor-Mai" body massage used for treatment of body aches, "Abacus" foot massage used for relaxation of the diabetic foot. In addition, there are community-based innovations such as "Saensuk Smart City" for elderly who live alone or innovation of schools for the elderly. There are campaigns that encourage youth to create new invention for society, such as walking stick which can automatically alert when users fall.

Article: "Long-term Elderly Care System in Thailand"

Recent demographic change has led to an increase in the proportion of elderly people in Thailand during the past years. In 2017, the proportion of elderly people to the total population is 17.13 percent and the figure is expected to be about one third in 2040. 56.3 percent of these are medium-old and old-old elderly people, resulting in an increased number of dependent elderly with the need of health care services from 15.5 percent in 2009 to 20.7 percent in 2014. Increasing in the number of elderly with chronic non-communicable disease has also resulted in a higher number of dependent elderly, while the potential for elderly care of the family members decreases with family size. The number of elderly who live alone has increased which creates higher demand for long-term care services.

The Elderly Care Services approach focuses on the use of families and communities as a basis for care by encouraging the elderly to help themselves as long as possible, and taking care the elderly who cannot help themselves. Certain strategies for long-term care for the elderly were established and impelled through the cooperation between the Ministry of Public Health, National Health Security Office (NHSO), The National Municipal League of Thailand, and The Sub-District Administration Organization in order to support long-term care of local administrative organizations. There are 3,013 sub-districts (Tambon) joined and passed the criteria, 4,577 care managers, 18,308 care givers, care plans for 53,880 elders and 106,710 dependent elders were taken care of. There are about 50,000 volunteers of the Care-for-the-Elderly-at-Home Volunteers Project, and 878 centers for the life quality development and career promotion of the elderly.

The long-term care model of Thailand for the elderly is divided into: (1) non-institutional-based care as supporting by home care and community care which long-term care services are provided for the local dependent elderly in both medical and social services. There are care facilities for elders or patients who are suitable for rehabilitation, giving health advices, along with developing the potential of the elderly in terms of occupation, income, social activities and environment, such as Elderly Allowance, Career Promotion, and organizing facilities for elderly people to participate in social activities. (2) Institutional-based care, including residential home,

nursing home, long-stay hospital, and hospice care home, which private sector plays an important role in providing these services and it is increasing in trend.

Issues of the development of long-term care services for the elderly include:

1. **Current support and development:** (1) Support for community based elderly care in accordance with each area by opening public spaces to create all levels of cooperation, developing database, promoting the deployment of family doctor team and increasing the number of practiced personnel (care managers) in order to expand caregiver service, improving financial regulation and supporting local budgets. (2) Promoting and supporting long-term care package for elderly people in order to increase the potential of the family, which plays an important role in the health care and daily living assistance of the elderly. (3) Promoting technological innovation to assist the elderly in their daily living such as remote care and follow-up of remedial care, injury prevention technology, health promotion, health rehabilitation, and follow-up therapy.

2. **Setting standards by level of care** by issuing regulations to register and supervise the quality services from private care providers.

3. **Support for mid-term care services** by using secondary care hospitals as a base for day care to help elderly people who are well and at home, and developing a social care plan along with medical care plan to provide full care services for the elderly.

4. **Promote legislation and create financial instruments for the provision of services** such as promoting long-term care law for the elderly in order to be driven in all agencies in the same aspect, development of health insurance system including long-term care, use of Social Impact Bonds to enhance the private sector's role in providing elderly care services in various forms.

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board
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Key Social Indicators

Components	2015 Year	2016 Year	2015 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2016 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2017 Q1	Q2	Q3
1. Employment [1]													
Workforce (Thousands)	38,548	38,266	38,279	38,404	38,811	38,767	38,312	38,160	38,683	37,911	38,216	38,267	38,168
%YOY	-0.07	-0.73	-0.45	-0.10	-0.11	0.38	0.09	-0.64	-0.22	-2.15	-0.25	0.28	-1.31
Employed person (Thousands)	38,016	37,693	37,612	37,752	38,330	38,371	37,684	37,394	38,263	37,430	37,443	37,538	37,647
%YOY	-0.16	-0.85	-0.53	-0.17	-0.24	0.28	0.19	-0.95	-0.18	-2.45	0.64	0.39	-1.63
Unemployed person (Thousands)	341	378	361	336	356	301	370	411	363	366	463	465	453
Unemployment rate (%)	0.88	0.99	0.94	0.88	0.92	0.80	0.97	1.08	0.94	0.97	1.21	1.22	1.19
Underemployed person (Thousands)	272	275	281	277	251	281	292	352	217	237	356	350	271
2. Health and illness													
Number of patients under disease surveillance (cases) [2]													
- Measles	1,015 (-14.3)	1,688 (66.3)	224	236	276	279	221	271	466	730	367	295	479
- Meningococcal Meningitis	2 (-78.6)	17 (-32.0)	4	6	9	6	6	5	4	2	5	5	7
- Japanese encephalitis	632 (6.4)	772 (22.1)	164	144	178	146	179	187	231	175	259	143	193
- Cholera	108 (800.0)	51 (-52.7)	2	2	4	100	41	2	7	1	2	2	2
- Hand, food and mouth	41,392 (-37.1)	79,910 (93.1)	9,217	7,771	14,594	9,810	10,066	19,012	39,589	11,243	11,450	19,958	35,168
- Dysentery	7,042 (-13.1)	6,726 (-4.4)	1,804	1,956	1,774	1,508	1,820	1,841	1,887	1,178	1,329	1,410	1,130
- Pneumonia	216,959 (8.0)	245,211 (13.1)	56,556	42,176	57,754	60,473	65,661	45,244	72,851	61,455	63,869	53,578	79,622
- Leptospirosis	2,151 (-49.4)	2,295 (6.7)	283	393	723	752	446	401	671	777	573	592	1,166
- Dengue fever	144,952 (53.6)	63,931 (-53.6)	7,538	24,409	60,768	52,237	14,840	7,874	25,744	15,473	8,203	7,732	20,866
- Influenza	77,926 (52.1)	169,362 (117.3)	24,206	10,840	18,397	24,483	43,634	14,135	58,535	53,058	19,742	18,518	109,057
- Rabies	5 (-16.6)	13 (-160)	1	1	2	1	4	2	5	2	0	3	2
Rate per 100,000 population of death with major chronic non-communicable diseases													
- High blood pressure	12.1 (10.8)	n.a.											
- Ischaemic heart disease	29.9 (7.5)	n.a.											
- Cerebrovascular disease	43.3 (11.9)	n.a.				No quarterly data available							
- Diabetes	19.4 (10.9)	n.a.											
- Cancer and tumors	113.7 (5.5)	n.a.											
3. Social security													
- Patients from road accidents (cases)	6,271	8,259	1,629	1,542	1,356	1,850	2,275	1,838	1,797	2,457	2,304	2,111	1,756
- Crime against person (cases)	25,602	20,218	6,020	6,531	5,901	6,681	6,415	6,140	5,606	5,106	5,120	5,032	4,573
- Property crimes (cases)	48,770	38,964	10,885	12,690	12,960	11,792	18,796	16,792	18,402	17,543	15,167	14,102	14,486
- Narcotics (cases)	279,266	270,595	82,998	66,667	64,632	64,900	65,493	61,029	70,330	77,880	77,627	61,399	71,250
4. Consumer protection [3]													
4.1 Number of complaints (cases)													
- Advertisement	2,8875	2,637	632	753	742	748	727	795	509	606	548	1,380	928
- Label	2,552	2,010	572	726	614	640	704	559	387	360	618	472	486
- Contract	1,119	1,628	260	272	253	334	457	373	298	500	432	827	734
- Law	6	37	4	1	1	0	25	12	0	0	0	0	0
- Direct sales and direct marketing	566	1,097	54	159	177	176	120	244	550	183	103	128	156
4.2 Hot line 1166 (cases)	49,708	47,329	12,293	12,300	12,865	12,250	11,666	10,555	12,438	12,670	12,071	12,681	9,432

Source: 1/ Labor force survey report, National Statistical Office, Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

2/ Bureau of Epidemiology, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Health

3/ Office of the Consumer Protection Board, Office of the Prime Minister