



# ข่าวเศรษฐกิจและสังคม

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## Thailand's Social Development in Q2/2017

The Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) released the official report on Thailand's social development in the second quarter of 2017. The key social highlights included in this quarter are increases in employment, income and labour productivity, improved EQ and IQ levels among Thai children, longevity and mortality improvement, improvement in overall safety in life and property of citizens, and declined rates of accident. Nevertheless, there are still some concerning issues which need to be closely monitored, including unemployment among new graduates, sickness from diseases under surveillance and the flu situation, increases in patients diagnosed and deceased from Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), electronics cigarette smoking among youth and children, the urgent need to tackle human trafficking issue, as well as consumer protection system development in the digital era. The details of these key social situations are elaborated as follows:

### **Overall employment increased, with higher wages and increased labor productivity.**

In this second quarter of 2017, the overall employment rose for the first time in past 4 quarters by 0.4 percent, with 6.3 percent increases in the agricultural sector. Contributing factors include favorable weather conditions, back-to-normal water level in dams and rises in agricultural products which incentivized farmers to expand their agricultural activities. On the contrary, employment in the non-agricultural sector declined, especially in the manufacturing, construction, and hotel and restaurant sectors, due to relatively slowly business expansions and the fact that employment usually starts once such expansions take place approximately 2-3 quarters after. Furthermore, the majority of business operators were reported to try to utilize their existing manpower, while some have employed some advanced technologies in their productions, constructions and services. These have led to a slight 1.2 increase in the unemployment rate, with a drastic spike of 24.1 percent among those who have never been employed before as it was the graduation season and a large influx of new graduates entering the labour market. It is believed that out of such high number of unemployment, 39 percent were those with university degrees. This was considered to be a normal reoccurrence as this group of working age population usually has a high rate of unemployment in quarters 2-3 each year and it usually starts declining as quarter 4 approaches. The real wage (excluding overtime pay and other benefits) slightly increased by 0.1 percent, comprising of a 1.2 percent rise in the agricultural sector and a 0.9 percent rise in the non-agricultural sector. The total labour productivity increased by 3.3 percent.

There are still some key concerning labour related issues that need to be closely followed-up in the next 6 months of 2017, including:

(1) **Impacts on employment and income in the agricultural sector from weakening agricultural product prices and floods:** in the last 2 quarters of this year, farmers tend to be affected by the anticipated weakening agricultural product prices, which have been reported to already decline on an average of 4.2 percent in May-June and will consistently decline further in quarters 3 and 4 this year, following the downward prices of rubber, maize and sugarcane. However, the price of rice is expected to be on the upward trend, following the global rice price. Additionally, the Meteorological Department has already issued an advisory warning, following its forecast of anticipated tropical storms which would cause heavy rains in many areas during August-September this year. During such months are usually the cultivating season of wet season rice, thereby affecting some related agricultural activities and employment. The government launched a number of measures aimed to relieve impacts caused by the floods during July and August, including the approval of budget allocation of 1,685 million Baht to provide 3,000 Baht financial assistance per family to the affected farmers, the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives' extended debt repayment period to another 12 more months without any additional interest charged, and the Bank's insurance scheme to guarantee against damages done to participating rice farmers, with the financial coverage of 1,260 Baht per Rai, and 6 month interest free loans to participating rice farmers to cover related expenses required for the next cultivation.

(2) **The urgent need to accelerate the skill development for Thai workers to have the right competency required by the labour market and to improve labour productivity:** the private sector's investment expanded by 3.2 percent in Q2/2017, following the consistent contractions for the previous 3 consecutive quarters. This could be interpreted as a positive signal for new employments. However, worker utilization and the employment of advanced technologies in companies' productions and services may result in changes in the forms and needs in employment, such as shorter working contracts and rising demands of workers with multi-skills.

Upon realizing the importance of correctly matching workers' skills with the labour market needs, the public sector has continuously been attempting to have the skills of new graduates improved and ready for the market through various programs, including the Dual Education system, an educational program that combines apprenticeships in a company and education at a vocational school in one course, the Pracharat (Public-Private Collaboration) project in the professional enhancement (such as Excellent Model School project), the collaboration with South Korea in dual degree education, the MOU signing initiated by the Ministry of Labour with related counterparts in skilled labour development, including Toyota

Motors Thailand, Centara hotel groups and Siam Diakin Co. Ltd., in order to equip workers with the set of skills needed for the new and more complex technology.

**(3) The follow-up on the enforcement of amended Labour Protection Act and its related regulations:** the recent amendment of the Labour Protection Act (No. 5) B.E. 2560 has made the Act and all its related rules and regulations regarding labour protection more up to date, inclusive, and impartial to all related parties. There are a number of key improvements of the Act, including, firstly, the enhancement of punishment for employing child labourers by increasing the penalty, aiming to help prevent, suppress and eliminate human trafficking problem more effectively; secondly, the amendment of the section relating to the requirement for employers to have a set of written rules and regulations regarding jobs and employment on announcement boards located in workplaces. Additionally, a regulation of the Ministry of Labour regarding increased capped amount of payment employers are required to pay for employees in the case that employees have to be admitted in hospitals has also been amended. Furthermore, the Cabinet, on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2017, has also endorsed in principle the amended Labour Protection Act (No. ...) B.E. ..., aimed to improve the protection standards of workers/employees and reduce social inequality while creating more opportunities for workers to get access to public services as mandated by the government's policies.

**The number of patients diagnosed with diseases under surveillance increased, especially influenza which had the number of its patients continuously increased.** The total number of patients under disease surveillance increased in Q2/2017 from Q2/2016 by 14.9 percent, with those diagnosed with influenza worryingly increased by 31.1 percent. Additionally, the Hand Foot and Mouth disease still needed to be closely monitored as the number of people diagnosed with such disease rose by 4.9 percent, which majorly found among children aged below 5 years old. Moreover, patients diagnosed with Depressive Disorder were also on the rise. However, this is preventable, simply by promoting more awareness, knowledge and understanding about the disorder to the general public, which makes it more pleasant for patients with such disorder to be able to live and blend in the society and get the support from their families and communities.

**Thai children's IQ (Intelligence Quotient) increased, but still comparatively lower than the international standard, while EQ in normal range.** Based on the recent survey of Thai children's IQ and EQ in 2016 by the Department of Mental Health, Ministry of Public Health, the average IQ score for students at Prathom 1 (Grade 1) was 98.23, higher than the 2011's average of 94.58, which was considered to be in the normal range, but lower than that of the international score of 100. Furthermore, it was also found that IQ scores were noticeably inequitable between children with high IQ and children with low IQ. As for the EQ (Emotional

Quotient), according to the survey, the average EQ score was in the normal range. Parents have a significant influence on the development of children, especially in early childhood years which are when the frontal lobes of the brain, the parts that are associated with memory, abstract thinking, planning, and impulse control, are the most developed. Therefore, parents' roles in creative toy selections, reading for their children or letting their children play music instruments can help with brain development of children in their early childhood years. These will, thus, help children to grow up being able to think, act, learn, solve problems, live with others and be happy, the skill set needed to live happily and successfully.

**Thai people are having higher longevity, but more attention needs to be paid to NCDs.** According to the Institute for Population and Social Research, Mahidol University, it is found that life expectancy at birth of Thai people increased from 73.28 years old in 2009 to 75.4 years old in 2017. However, based on WHO's data, it shows that the Health Adjusted Life Expectancy (HALE) at birth of Thai people is comparatively lower than the life expectancy at birth, reflecting that Thai people do not have perfect health throughout their life cycles and there are some years of ill health (sickness or disability). Moreover, based on the information gathered from the Ministry of Public Health, it shows that the number of Thai people diagnosed with NCDs has been on the rise. Adopting healthy dietary practices, regular exercise and reduction in risky behaviors have been shown to help reduce the risk of NCDs and overall improvement in the quality of life throughout one's life cycle.

**Expenditure on alcohol and tobacco consumption decreased, but electronics cigarette consumption among youth and children needs to be closely monitored further.** Expenditure on consumption of alcoholic beverages in Q2/2017 was estimated at 35,097 million baht, a 1.0 percent decline from the same period last year. Likewise, expenditure on tobacco consumption was registered at 14,878 million baht, a 0.8 percent decline from the previous year. Nevertheless, the number of alcohol consumers has the tendency to be on the rise and more attention needs to be paid to electronics cigarette consumption among youth and children as they can be easily purchased online, despite the import ban since 2014. Additionally, based on the recent survey conducted by the Department of Disease Control, it shows that youth aged 13-15 years old have the highest electronics cigarette consumption rate of 3.3 percent, with 4.7 percent among males and 1.9 percent among females. It has not been scientifically proven yet of whether or not electronics cigarettes are safer than regular cigarettes and their effectiveness in helping smokers quit regular cigarettes. Furthermore, electronics cigarettes may serve as gateway drugs for young people to start smoking cigarettes and taking other drugs.

**Crime, narcotic and drug situation has improved.** Overall criminal cases, and drugs and narcotics related cases declined from the previous quarter by 1.8 percent and 4.2 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, crimes against life, bodily harm and sexual assaults, and crimes against property rose by 7.3 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively. Therefore, crime prevention and reduction should emphasize effective law enforcement. Offenders in the same type of case should be executed equally and promptly in order to create culture of lawfulness. Measures to help offenders break the cycle of offenses should also be imposed. This can be done by improving their quality of life, providing new life opportunities by giving them basic knowledge of the profession, education, and preparation for social reintegration. Success example includes the "SHE" project by the Public-Private Collaboration between the Ministry of Justice and the Social Health Enterprise that bring inmates and female prisoners to professional training in order to create works, income, and self-reliance.

**Number of road accidents has reduced.** During the second quarter of 2017, the number of road accidents dropped from the previous quarter by 11.3 percent. Number of deaths and casualties fell by 10.9 percent and 16.2 percent, respectively. The value of loss also fell by 40 percent. There are issues that society should focus on including accidents of ambulances or emergency rescuers which are caused by the rush to deliver patients, causing the driver to drive at high speed, modification of the ambulance vans that do not meet international standards, and road users who do not make ways for emergency vans. In order to eliminate loss to road users, patients and health personnel, special safety trainings have been provided to improve their driving skills and while both emergency vehicle and rescuers have to be registered in the system. In addition, driver's license specific for emergency vehicles should also be implemented along with GPS installation that alerts the driver when exceeding a speed limit. Campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of emergency ambulance in case of violating traffic lights or using express way should also be promoted as well as campaigns to encourage road users to slow down the speed and give way for ambulances.

**Thailand continues to resolve human trafficking issues in order to protect both Thais and foreigners in Thailand.** The government is integrating with all agencies to tackle the problem of human trafficking. The government, with the collaboration of civil society, has been emphasizing on concrete actions especially the prosecution of all state officials involved in human trafficking, following up the progress of cases that are currently in public interest, and developing the collaboration in form of "Pracharat" (Public-Private Collaboration) to work with all sectors in the prevention and suppression of human trafficking.

**Open Learning Area: An education for complete human development with "Mechai Pattana School"** Mechai Pattana School in Buriram province is one example of an alternative school that offers quality secondary education in rural areas under the happy

learning atmosphere, and emphasizing on life skills and career skills. The school aims to be a lifelong learning resource for everyone in the community and becomes part of the community to create good and honest members who are eager to learn and share knowledge to others, and become a valuable human resource in community instead of just being excellent only by each own self.

**Article: “Human Achievement Index 2017: A measure for assessing human development at provincial level”**

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) passed on one of its mission, Human Achievement Index (HAI) to the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB). NESDB has started developing HDI in 2015 for the first time and it continues to generate HAI in 2017 for the second time. NESDB has revised such index with HAI 2017 having the same methodology and sub-indicators. However, each dimension now consists of 4 indicators, making a total of 32 indicators which means that HAI values are comparable.

- HAI 2017 is a composite index that aims to assess progress in human development at the provincial level in Thailand which will help improve the formulation of provincial strategies and human development plan to ultimately improve their quality of life. The policy framework would covers better health, education, occupation, sufficient income, stable living condition, better environment, warm family relationship, safe neighborhood, convenient and safe transportation, accessible communication as well as political and social participation. Composition of HAI 2017 is based on such framework which covers 8 dimensions, namely (1) health (2) education (3) employment (4) income (5) housing and living environment (6) family and neighborhood life (7) transportation and communication and (8) participation. Each dimension consists of 4 indicators so there are a total of 32 sub-indicators to assess human development progress in 77 provinces. The majority of the data is from 2016 (21 indicators) and there are 11 indicators from 2015, the latest data available so far.

- Results from HAI in 2017 show that

(1) **Overall, human achievement in housing and living environment shows the highest progress while education is the lowest.** Thailand’s HAI value in 2017 is 0.5966. HAI value in housing and living environment is the highest with the score of 0.8208 followed by family and neighborhood life, employment, transportation and communication, income and participation, respectively. On the other hand, the value in education ranks the lowest with the score of 0.4790.

(2) **At regional level, the central region has the highest human achievement level while the southern region has the lowest.** The HAI value of the central region (except Bangkok) is 0.6111 due to relatively higher achievements then other regions in 5 dimensions;

health, education, employment, income, and transportation and communication. However, participation, and housing and living environment have the lower developments compared to other regions. 3 regions with lower human developments are the North, the Northern, and the South, respectively. The southern region has the lowest HAI value at 0.5598 with the lowest developments in employment, and family and neighborhood life dimensions. For sub-indicators, the results show that every region has the highest achievement in housing and living environment. The central region has the lowest development level in participation while the northern, northeastern, and southern regions have the lowest development level in education. On the other hand, Bangkok has higher levels of human developments than the rest of the country, especially education, employment, income, transportation and communication. However, participation level remains low.

**(3) 5 provinces with highest human achievement levels** are Phuket, Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya, Lamphun, Nonthaburi and Bangkok, respectively. All 5 provinces show high achievements in employment, housing and living environment, and transportation and communication with HAI values higher than 0.6. For education, income, and family and neighbor life dimensions, the achievements are considered moderately to relatively high as each value is higher than 0.5. Meanwhile, participation level is quite low with the value lower than 0.3 especially in Phuket, Nonthaburi and Bangkok while Lamphun ranks No.1 for achievement level in participation compared to the rest of the country.

**(4) 5 provinces that have the least human achievement levels are** Mae Hong Son, Narathiwat, Chai Nat, Pattani and Sakaew, respectively. They have relatively low development levels in education and income with HAI value of education between 0.1190-0.3303 (the national average is 0.4790) and that of income between 0.2760-0.4323 (the national average is 0.5463).

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board

4<sup>th</sup> September 2017

## Key Social Indicators

Components	2015	2016	2015				2016				2017	
	Year	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
1. Employment <sup>1/</sup>												
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
%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
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
%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
Unemployed person (Thousands)	341	378	361	336	356	301	370	411	363	366	463	465
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
Underemployed person (Thousands)	272	275	281	277	251	281	292	352	217	237	356	350
2. Health and illness												
Number of patients under disease surveillance (cases) <sup>2/</sup>												
- Measles	1,015 (-14.3)	1,688 (66.3)	224	236	276	279	221	271	466	730	367	295
- Meningococcal Meningitis	2 (78.6)	17 (-32.0)	4	6	9	6	6	5	4	2	5	5
- Japanese encephalitis	632 (6.4)	772 (22.1)	164	144	178	146	179	187	231	175	259	143
- Cholera	108 (800.0)	51 (-52.7)	2	2	4	100	41	2	7	1	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
- 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
- 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
- Leptospirosis	2,151 (-49.4)	2,295 (6.7)	283	393	723	752	446	401	671	777	573	592
- 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
- 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
- Rabies	5 (-16.6)	13 (-160)	1	1	2	1	4	2	5	2	0	3
Rate per 100,000 population of death with major chronic non-communicable diseases												
- High blood pressure	12.1 (10.8)	n.a.	No quarterly data available									
- Ischaemic heart disease	29.9 (7.5)	n.a.										
- Cerebrovascular disease	43.3 (11.9)	n.a.										
- 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
- 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
- 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
- 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
4. Consumer protection <sup>3/</sup>												
4.1 Number of complaints (cases)												
- Advertisement	2,8875	2,637	632	753	742	748	727	795	509	606	548	1,380
- Label	2,552	2,010	572	726	614	640	704	559	387	360	618	472
- Contract	1,119	1,628	260	272	253	334	457	373	298	500	432	827
- Law	6	37	4	1	1	0	25	12	0	0	0	0
- Direct sales and direct marketing	566	1,097	54	159	177	176	120	244	550	183	103	128
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

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