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The Problems of Population Growth in Thailand
and its effects on economic and social development
Abstracts

National economic development is one of the most important policies of the present government. While the country accelerates in her economic development, it has been found that her fundamental changes, especially in the growth of population, which has been increasing very rapidly. The first population census taken in B.E. 2454 indicated a total population of 8.3 million. After five decades, the latest census indicated in B.E. 2503, a total population of 26.2 million, which is a three-fold increase in population growth. Considering the rate of population for the inter-census calculated at the compound rate, the rates of population growth are as follows:- 2454 - 2462 = 1.36, 2462 - 2472 = 2.26, 2472 - 2480 = 2.89, 2480 - 2490 = 1.89 and 2490 - 2503 = 3.2. These showed that the trend in population growth is increasing at a high rate. Apart from the period from B.E. 2480 - 2490 where the trend in population growth had become lower through the adverse affects of war and economic depression. After that period the growth of population has tended to increase rapidly to a total population of 30.0 million now, and will continue increasing in the near future. The population projection for Thailand on the basis on the sex and age distribution of the 2503 population is made, by using the population census results and making various corrections and assumptions. The estimate is that the population of Thailand will continue to increase rapidly. At a conservative estimate (assuming fertility decline and a rapid mortality decline) and that the total population of Thailand will be 50.0 million in B.E. 2523. Such a rate of acceleration in the growth of population will result in problems and obstacles to the economic and social development projects, not only at present, but also in the future.

In writing this thesis, the writer sets up the hypothesis that the growth in population is increasing rapidly now and will continue to be so in the near future. This population growth might be an obstacle to economic and social development. The test on this hypothesis has been made and the conclusion is that the more rapidly the population increases, the higher become the child population, lacking of power to produce will increase, this will create a heavy load of dependent children on the working population. Which is an added disadvantage in their efforts to save for themselves and invest for economic development. If the economic development expands at the present rate, the problems of unemployment and underemployment as a result of acceleration the growth is population will correspondingly increase, with higher rate of population growth, the investment for increasing the productivity of the nation, must increase proportionately. The investment will also be expanded on at the rate of saving increase. However, the saving can hardly be expected to increase, while the average per capita income in Thailand at its low level. Hence accelerating population growth may aggravate the problem of capital shortage in developing the country, this is the most important obstacle to economic development. The rapid population growth in Thailand, can increase the pressure of population on the land, especially the cultivable land. It would reduced the cultivated land per head in proportion to agricultural population, and so retard the increase in productivity of

in productivity of agricultural labour. If there is no change in productivity, the output per agricultural labour will be reduced. According to the said increase there will be the problem in production of agricultural population who depends only on agriculture will make it insufficient for their livelihood. This poses a migration problem. Agricultural labour will tend to seek employment in other places, particularly in towns, and continues to pose social problems such as shelters, slums, unemployment, etc. The problem of accelerating population growth raises the problem of insufficient food production, if the productivity of agricultural labour remains unchanged. The expansion in health, education and social services will have to keep in step with the growth in population. The necessary expansion of these will need a great deal of finance and reduce vital capital, which raise the more shorter of capital for economic development. Education and health development is essential for an increase in productive capacity in the long run. If the country is developed out of step with population growth, the standard of living will be reduced, which will obstruct further economic and social development.

In support of the writer's hypothesis, the writer would like to suggest that the government pay immediate attention to the problems of population growth. If these problems are further left as they are, it will be hard to have them solved. In fact now, these problems are not quite of a serious nature, but these will become more complicated in the future. Again, in accelerating economic development, the government will have to lay down the policy for both population control and economic growth. One is by investing its capital for gaining the greatest efficiency to raise the rate of development hastily. Another is to slow down the rate of population growth, in order to make the rate of development higher than that of population growth, and this will make the country accelerate itself up to the standard attained by most of the developed countries. At the same time the government has to improve the quality of the population growth, by encouraging operational man-power planning throughout the public and private sectors of the economy, so as to contribute to its development and bring about increases in the income and employment levels of the growing population, that is the aim of the economic development of the country as a whole.
