



1. Industrialization and social problems

Industrialization, as a process of reorganizing economic activity with a view to transforming from a primarily agrarian economy into a more specialized and capital-intensive economy, could change the face of society profoundly:

- The growth rate and gross domestic product go up and the quality of life is improved.

- Social division widens, because in order to industrialize the economy fast and effectively, all resources will be concentrated. Under the market mechanism, the profit motive will play an important role in this concentration. Those who are active and creative, have abilities to organize and apply techno-scientific achievements to production will become rich and gain high income, and on the other hand, those who lack these qualities will fall prey to poverty and unemployment. This division is very common in the process of industrialization under the market mechanism. It exists in many countries and becomes a globally knotty problem.

The above-mentioned changes show that the industrialization could accelerate the economic development on the one hand, but on the other hand it could widen divisions in society, cause social unrest which affects badly the economic development. This situation forces governments to carry out industrialization in parallel with measures to solve social problems.

2. Solving social problems in ASEAN countries

After obtaining political independence, ASEAN economies were

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SOCIAL POLICY AND INDUSTRIALIZATION IN ASEAN COUNTRIES: LESSONS TO VIETNAM

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underdeveloped with low living standards. To escape from this situation, their governments had to carry out industrialization along with social programs by:

- Mechanizing agriculture first: This policy aims at preventing famine, ensuring food supplies and stabilizing social life before the industrialization could take place. Moreover, to develop the agriculture means to make the best use of favorable natural conditions to produce agricultural products of high value and encourage exportation and domestic industries.

- Developing the manufacturing industry evenly: this policy aims at meeting necessities of life of the ma-

jority of people. ASEAN governments have tried to create a reasonable market structure by balancing the supply and demand, giving preferential treatment if need be and creating favorable legal infrastructure. They also developed new industrial estates in rural areas or suburbs, and considered the even distribution of investment to all provinces as an important way to solve social problems.

- Developing education: The government allows the education service to develop, including private educational institutes; and encourages application of techno-scientific advances with a view to improving laborers' skills. The government supports and helps all organizations and individuals to invest in techno-scientific researches; encourages experts in exile to come back; contracts with foreign experts; organizes forums on technological application, etc. Besides supplying knowledge and skill in applying techno-scientific achieve-

ments to production, all governments paid attention to dissemination of Confucian teachings in order to educate people in discipline and sense of responsibility. This policy has helped to accelerate the industrialization in many ASEAN countries.

- Respecting social and racial equality: To carry out this policy, ASEAN governments have tried to improve the living standards of the poor. Many measures have been taken to realize this aim: controlling prices of basic necessities of life of the majority of people (food, essential consumer goods, etc.); creating jobs by developing labor-intensive industries. Laws on employment, basic wage rate and

social security were also made with a view to realizing more even distribution of wealth.

As multiracial nations, ASEAN countries have paid attention to this problem. Racial equality is considered as the main target of social policy. In Malaysia, a New Economic Policy has been adopted in order to protect the ownership, employment and social role for the Malays. Indonesian Government also paid attention to improvement of living standards of minority groups.

- Paying attention to the quality of life: Many regulations on pollution control, food standards, development of health care services, etc. have been introduced.

These measures and policies not only created a good condition for social stability and progress, but also mobilized all social classes to take part in development programs, thereby making the industrialization process shorter.

Besides positive effects, the industrialization and efforts to solve social problems also led to many negative effects such as the widening gap between rural areas and cities, unemployment, poverty, backwardness... These facts are common in different nations. In addition, the pollution of the environment also affected badly the quality of life. Some governments seem ignorant of the gap between the rich and the poor therefore they don't take appropriate measures to solve it, or don't pay attention to results of these measures. This gap has become wider and wider. This problem must be a focus of our attention.

3. Some opinions about Vietnam's social policy

From ASEAN experience, some lessons could be drawn:

a. There must be a social policy during the process of industrializing the economy: This is a must for every government because the industrialization aims at economic development and economic efficiency. One of the indispensable conditions for this process is the social stability which can make the majority of people ready to take part in it. In order to create this condition, each government has to work out a policy to make the people become aware of their benefits in the industrialization.

ASEAN government didn't pay attention to social problems accidentally, therefore, in order to make people rich, nation strong, society civilized and equitable, proper attention must be paid to the social policy which is as important as the policy on industrialization. The combination of

the two tasks will bring about an interactive process aiming at development for the society and its members. In other words, social programs could be inserted into industrialization plans.

b. Although the aim of a social policy is to make the society stable, safe and equitable, but the act of selecting a specific measure or policy must be based on actual characteristics and conditions of the country in a certain stage of development. Realities in ASEAN countries show that at their first stage of industrialization, ASEAN governments have focussed on solving basic and essential needs of the society, but in next stages, they have directed their efforts towards realizing social equality, supporting the poor, struggling against unemployment and pollution, etc. Some governments also paid attention to racial equality, giving support to minority groups in order to help them keep pace with the country as a whole. This approach is meaningful to Vietnam. It allows us to make a list of priorities in the social policy which can be feasible (appropriate to current conditions of the economy) and maintain dynamics needed for industrialization and economic development.

c. In the social policy, ensuring everybody a minimum level of living standard is a matter of great importance to the social stability and the industrialization as well. Like other ASEAN members, Vietnam is inevitably facing problems caused by the industrialization under the market mechanism. They are the difference in income between social classes, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and so on. Therefore the social policy must give priority to the poor, help them obtain a minimum living standard or have chances to improve their fates. Studying measures taken by ASEAN governments, we saw that the improvement of their labor skill is a very basic solution. To carry out this measure, the Government has to make programs to develop education

and health care services.

Other measures such as supplying loans and equipment, improving the infrastructure, changing the structure of industry or encouraging the poor to make family planning are also necessary, especially when they haven't got abilities to satisfy their necessities of life yet.

d. Developing industries in every area is one of measures to solve social problems in ASEAN countries. We can easily see that in recent years, provinces with developed industries, especially state-run ones, could rapidly change the face of its communities. This is also an effective measure to combine the industrialization and solving of social problems. This measure must be carried out all over the country, especially in remote areas where ethnic groups live, and the Government had better pay attention to the development of labor-intensive industries.

e. Besides developing the market economy, the Government has to play the leading role in solving social problems, especially pressing ones such as unemployment, poverty, pollution, social evils. The Government must be the most intelligent brain which has ability to realize and prevent beforehand all bad effects of the industrialization.

(*) ASEAN countries referred to in this article include Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines which have achieved many good results in last decades.

