

DIGITAL

Businesses ready to roll with clear 5G timeline

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Business operators are keen on 5G adoption after seeing a clear-cut schedule from the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) to proceed with 5G licence auctions next month.

Yesterday the Economic Reporters Association organised a seminar titled "In-depth Outlook of Flagship Industries in 2020".

Jareeporn Jarukornsakul, chairman and chief executive of WHA Corporation Plc, said the group is preparing four business units — logistics, industrial development, utilities and power, and digital platforms — to capture opportunities related to imminent 5G technology.

Previously the NBTC said WHA sought permission to run a 5G testbed in collaboration with mobile operators.

"5G technology is not only for mobile and internet users, but also for new development of Thailand's industrial and logistics sectors," said Ms Jareeporn.

She said WHA wants to test 5G technology in a regulatory sandbox for a micro-grid for WHA's power and water businesses.

"WHA is developing related digital platforms that gather customers' data in industrial estates and logistics

warehouses to create a database of 5G users," said Ms Jareeporn.

"5G will disrupt many sectors and improve related infrastructures."

Wichian Premchaiswadi, vice-chairman of the Digital Council of Thailand, said 5G will connect three technologies used in every industrial sector: Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and robotics.

"Each device using the three technologies can talk to other devices through the 5G network, so it should increase business efficiency and reduce operating costs," said Mr Wichian.

He said the current network is LTE (long-term evolution), which has a connection of 10,000 devices per square kilometre.

"5G promises connections of 1 million devices per sq km, so the country's industrial sector will benefit from this broadband network. The internal automation system can connect together when working," said Mr Wichian.

He said 5G technology will bring about new digital-related businesses such as telemedical services, smart agriculture, remote monitoring, smart power grids, autonomous driving and drones.

"The network will lead businesses to increase value and yield in the long run," said Mr Wichian. "However, 5G

technology still requires massive investment for related infrastructure and devices, and a network standard has yet to be determined. For example, the iPhone 11 is not 5G-compatible."

Chairat Triratanajaraspon, president of the Tourism Council of Thailand, said the digital platform is disrupting the tourism sector, increasing independent travellers because they can find information online. Many startups have developed digital platforms to support online booking for accommodation, flights and attractions.

"Some 60% of tourists are independent, reducing bookings from local operators and agents," he said.