

TO YOUR HEALTH

Thailand needs to increase its use of research and smart technology if it wants to become an Asean medical hub. **3**

Medical upgrades urged

Pandemic seen as opportunity for technological adoption



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FROM LEFT
Ms Theetanun, Kamthorn Kanchanawatee, managing director for Supreme Products, and Mr Naritcha speaking at the seminar.

LAMONPHET APISITNIRAN SUCHIT LEESA-NGUANSUK

Thailand needs to step up efforts in using research and smart technologies to support healthcare businesses to better compete with foreign countries if the country wants to become a medical hub in Asean.

The country should use the pandemic as an opportunity to catch up on trends in healthcare, said Naritcha Torsutkanok, vice-president of the Medical and Health Device Manufacturers Industry Club.

Medical experts and businessmen have called on the government to strengthen the Thai medical industry.

“Operation costs in hospitals will continue to increase and technological costs will affect the healthcare system,” said Pongpat Patanavanich, vice-chairman and managing director of TPP Healthcare International, at a seminar co-organised by the *Post Today* and *Bangkok Post*.

“The country cannot always rely on technological imports. We need to develop technology and innovations ourselves,” he said.

China can produce medical equipment at relatively low cost, which fuels price competition in the global market. Without strengthening capabilities, said Dr Pongpat, Thailand may further lag China.

He said the industry can adopt more virtual health treatments, robotics and artificial intelligence to help hospital personnel improve efficiency and streamline workloads.

Theetanun Rattanasanyanuphap, director for the Telecommunication Policy and Management Bureau, said the National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission has conducted a pilot test with Siriraj Hospital and Huawei to use 5G-signalled unmanned vehicles for the delivery of medicines and medical supplies across hospital buildings.

The project, which uses the 2600-megahertz spectrum range for

5G, is aimed at easing workloads, reducing interactions between people and improving logistics, she said.

Digital technology and infrastructure, including 5G networks, are vital for all sectors to bring about digital transformation.

“Thailand can move towards becoming a digital hub, which was projected as a 10-year plan, faster than expected because the pandemic is accelerating telemedicine and health tracking technology,” said Ms Theetanun.

A joint survey by the NBTC and the Bank of Thailand shows the healthcare segment has gained substantial benefits from 5G technology.