

## **Huawei's role in Thailand's 5G development**

**By Suwatchai Songwanich, CEO Bangkok Bank (China)**

Despite some countries attempting to restrict the expansion of China's Huawei Technologies, Thailand is going in the opposite direction. In February, Huawei was one of three international companies invited to join Thailand's first 5G trial. The trial, which was joined by Huawei, Nokia and Ericsson, was to test self-driving cars and remotely operated robots at Kasetsart University in Chonburi.

5G is critical for future economic development as it will revolutionise industries such as transport, farming, manufacturing and medicine. With connectivity up to 100 times faster than current internet speeds, 5G will enable the development of the breakthroughs such as Internet of Things and self-driving cars. This is especially relevant to Thailand as we seek to become a leading centre of technology development and manufacturing in Southeast Asia.

Huawei likens its importance in the industry to being a top sports player. For example, in New Zealand, after its participation in 5G development was blocked by the government, Huawei took out full page advertisements in local newspapers saying 5G without Huawei was like rugby without New Zealand, pointing out that New Zealanders would miss out on the latest technology and pay more for the service.

Certainly, Huawei is one of the top global leaders in 5G, so restricting its participation will have an impact on any country's development. Huawei is the largest global producer of 5G equipment and has been investing heavily in 5G research since 2009. When reporting its 2018 financial results the company said that it had secured 26 commercial 5G contracts to build 5G networks internationally, shipped more than 10,000 5G base stations, and provided digital transformation contracts to 160 cities and 211 Fortune Global 500 companies.

Huawei sees Southeast Asia as one of the most promising regions for future growth and has set aside an investment budget for Southeast Asia of Baht 2.5 billion over the next three years, which will focus on OpenLabs, cloud development and cultivating ICT talent. Thailand will play a central role in this, as Huawei has established its regional headquarters here. Meanwhile, last year, Huawei's global cloud service centre was built in the EEC (Eastern Economic Corridor) and Huawei has also worked together with the Thai government to build a 5G test lab to improve the 5G ecosystem

Thailand aims to be one of the first countries in ASEAN to introduce commercial 5G and aims to do so in 2020. Many national and international telecommunication companies will be needed to achieve this important milestone. Most certainly Huawei will be among them.

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