

**TECHNOLOGY**

# IT spending unaffected by turmoil

**SUCHIT LEESA-NGUANSUK**

Investment in information technology (IT) in Thailand remains on a strong upward trend despite the political instability, says a leading consulting firm.

Vilaiporn Taweelappontong, a partner at PwC Consulting (Thailand), said companies are gearing up to upgrade their IT infrastructure in preparation for the arrival of the Asean Economic Community late next year and the imminent digital transition.

Based on the 17th annual global CEO survey conducted by PwC this year, she said Thailand ranked eighth out of the company's top 10 most attractive growth prospects.

"Banking and financial companies as well as IT firms are the active sectors boosting IT spending," said Ms Vilaiporn.

A total of 117 chief technology officers from 42 countries and territories — 93% of respondents — say they believe the global economy is likely to recover over the next 12 months, up from 74% last year.

Respondents also outlined plans to expand business and increase their workforce as they believe advanced technologies will help them create innovative products and services.

Some 90% of chief technology officers say technological advancements could transform businesses.

Ms Vilaiporn also said South Africa, Mexico and Indonesia will provide the highest business growth prospects over the next 3-5 years.

However, a shortage of skilled professionals is the key challenge facing the Thai IT industry. Some 68% of chief technology officers say they are struggling to find talented employees.

The survey said the value of the networked devices market is expected to reach 50 billion baht by 2020, up from 12.5 billion expected next year.

Nontawat Poomchusri, managing director of Accenture Thailand, said Thai companies have no plans to suspend or reduce their IT spending as technology is believed to enhance their organisations' products and services.

Major IT investments are mobile phones, business analytics, cloud computing and digital television, particularly in the airline, tourism, retail, telecom, banking and insurance sectors.