

# Building housing for seniors requires rethink of priorities

**SOMLUCK SRIMALÉE**  
THE NATION

SEVERAL Thai property developers are building residences to cater to the needs of ageing citizens, as they see a growing demand in the market.

For example, Chiang Mai developer Meesuk Thailand Co Ltd points to their Villa Meesuk Residence, a project designed for the aged and which includes a nursing unit to take care of ageing members at the residence. The project also has a collaborative programme with hospitals to take care of their customers 24 hours daily for seven days.

"We cater to the needs of the elderly," Meesuk director Sasiwimol Singhanetr told *The Nation* in a recent interview.

"There is a abundant space for family visits and our on-site clinic has a direct link to a nearby hospital in case of an emergency."

All 28 units in the condominium have been taken up through sales and rental, and the nursing home provides 24-hour care for ageing people with congenital diseases, she added.

Meesuk plans to expand with the construction of 14 single-detached houses priced at Bt4 million a unit. "Residential demand for the elderly is growing, as the country moves towards an ageing society.

However, a thorough understanding of their requirements and daily necessities is needed in planning a project for the elderly," Sasiwimol said.

The key to providing residential for senior citizens is to ensure their healthcare is properly managed, because that is essential to their continuing enjoyment of a quality life at home, she said.

In Bangkok, Sansiri Plc has joined with Samitivej Hospital to launch Samitivej Virtual Hospital, a next-generation healthcare service expected to propel the industry towards the 5G era.

Leveraging the latest digital technology, Samitivej Virtual Hospital allows users to consult a doctor anywhere, anytime via smartphone, Chairat Panthuraamphorn MD, the chief executive officer of Samitivej and BNH Hospitals, said recently.

Under this programme, the hospital has also joined with Muang Thai Life Assurance Plc, Advanced Info Service Plc, Line Thailand, Siam Commercial Bank Plc and SCG Cement Building Materials Co Ltd to provide the service for their members.

## LPN, Thai Red Cross team up

LPN Development Plc, in collaboration with the Thai Red Cross Society, is developing a condominium project, "Sawangkanives", for the elderly at Bang Pu district in Samut Prakan province.

Facilities planned for the project include a library, communal living room, games room,

swimming pool, green park and fitness centre. Interiors of the residential units will be built with hygienic raw materials, and the bathroom will have handrails and anti-slip tiles.

"This project is tailor-made for the elderly," said Opas Sripayak, the company's chief executive officer and managing director.

AP (Thailand) Plc is also planning a condominium project for seniors in 2020, with support in design and technology from its Japanese partner, Mitsubishi Estate Group, after a visit to its construction sites in Tokyo last year, said Vittakarn Chandavimol, the company's chief of corporate strategy and creation department.

"Ease of movement is the priority in designing a residential unit for the elderly. For example, there should be no tub in the bathroom as it is safer and easier for them to have a shower instead, and there should be no steps throughout the unit," he said.

"Also, an area for family activities is needed.

Even though a senior may not be able to participate, they will surely be happy to be present."

A study by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) found that Thailand has been moving towards an ageing society since 2005 with a growing demographic of citizens aged 60 or above. It has now risen to 11.23 million, or 17.13 per cent of the population.

"Thailand will become a full-fledged ageing society in 2021 with senior citizens making up 20 per cent or 13.1 million of the population," the report noted. Among them, those aged 70-79 and above 80, will account for 37.2 per cent and 19.1 per cent respectively, amounting to 56.3 per cent of the aged population.

According to health reports, the number of seniors needing assistance for their daily activities, such as moving around the house, eating and bathing, rose to 20.7 per cent in 2014 from 15.5 per cent in 2009. Those totally dependent on help made up 1.3 per cent of the total.