

ADDRESS BY MR BOON SWAN FOO, MANAGING DIRECTOR, A*STAR & EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN, EXPLOIT TECHNOLOGIES PTE LTD FOR OPENING OF NATIONAL RFID CENTRE [29 Sep 2006]

Good morning,

Mr. S. Iswaran, Minister of State for Trade & Industry

Distinguished Guests.

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am pleased to welcome you today to the opening of the National RFID Centre, a collaboration between A*STAR, the Economic Development Board (EDB), Infocomm Development Authority (IDA) and SPRING Singapore.

RFID, as you are about to hear; is an exciting technology with a diverse range of application in logistics, retail, healthcare, lifestyle, transport and even security.

Those of you following A*STAR in general and Exploit in particular will have noticed the slew of activity we have announced lately.

Last month we had an A*STAR and Exploit event with Institute of Microelectronics (IME) when we announced a tripartite partnership between Chartered Semiconductor, IME and the industry. We also hosted another event, Poly Exploit A*STAR with five local polytechnics where the polys will help us in prototyping and productisation of ideas that our researchers come up with. Earlier in July, we had the Exploit VC Forum with the venture capital industry where we showcased our incubatee companies looking for funding.

And last but not least, those of you in the RFID industry who were at our launch of the RFID portal last year must be wondering what we will do next to up our game.

I think it is timely we update you.

Role of Exploit & A*STAR

As the commercial arm of A*STAR, we are tasked with exploiting the intellectual property created by the research institutes and thereby enhancing the economic development of Singapore as a result.

Exploit sees itself as the Chief Technology office or CTO of any large research- driven company. The CTO's role covers commercialization of the basic research undertaken by the company and jointly determining the broad direction of the research as it relates to the changing needs of the market. We had to find and chose the best technology that fits the needs of the market which will stand a chance of making it.

We know the future of the company rests on a firm foundation of continued investment in cutting edge research which will pay an uncertain reward in an equally uncertain future. We cannot predict the future, but it is our job to take bets on its course.

On a working level, we harness the resources of the Research Institutes (RIs) which adopts the role of the Chief Scientific Officer. The Chief Scientific Officer will do the research, and benchmark themselves against the best in the world doing the same thing and hopefully find they stack up favourably against them.

As part of our efforts to support the CSO's role, we lead a team to visit several countries and learn from their experiences in developing the RFID industry. After speaking to dozens of people at many companies, we came away with some clear lessons.

What the industry needed was not just money, but a proliferation of both users and applications. In order to drive the industry forward and make it relevant, we also found that we needed to diffuse the technology to as wide a community as possible to solve as wide a range of problems as possible.

The technology had to find and justify a place in real companies and real people's lives for it to have a chance of success. Without that, RFID will become another one of those great "wouldn't it be nice?" ideas who time never came.

We tried to do this on our own launching our own Exploit RFID site but soon realized very quickly that we could count on the support of our fellow agencies.

That is exactly why we have the National RFID Centre.

The Centre will focus the skills and resources of many agencies at a national scale to jumpstart the development of an economically significant RFID industry in Singapore. Each agency will come with its own perspective on the industry and have specific resources to address issues in that domain.

The RFID industry will come in to educate and share with users best practices gained from implementation experience elsewhere. The private sector's role will be pivotal to the success of the Centre because it will give the necessary "push" for adoption and users and vendors will drive its agenda.

The combination of these resources will shorten the learning curve for both adopters and vendors.

We are indeed fortunate in this journey because we are not going it alone. As Mr. Iswaran's presence today has shown, we have the support of the MTI for this.

But before I pass you on to MOS to speak on the bigger picture and national perspective of RFID, I would just like to announce that the next event for Exploit_ Simtech would touch on new industry and capability development ala Low Temperature Co-fired Ceramics (LTCC) substrate, and Liquid Forging Technology and also Incubation of new companies as well !! We will continue to add value to the economy through our research efforts.

I am most honoured and pleased to invite Minister to address us from a National Perspective. Thank you. Mr. Iswaran please.