

The revamped SSIA sets a new goal for Singapore's semiconductor industry

As a collective voice for Singapore's semiconductor industry, the SSIA will act as a platform for networking between companies as well as enhance the manpower landscape.



A panel discussion during the MIDAS semicon summit 2009

Formerly known as the Microelectronics IC Design and Systems (MIDAS) Association, the Singapore Semiconductor Industry Association (SSIA) is a rebranding and restructuring of the semiconductor association in the city-state. The launch of SSIA in April was a milestone for the association, having proven itself in the expansion of the semiconductor industry in Singapore.

Before the restructuring, MIDAS' main function was to promote the growth of the vibrant IC and systems design industry here. SSIA now has a greater goal in

mind: To expand its charter to include members from companies spanning across the local semiconductor ecosystem, including integrated device manufacturers, fabless companies, electronics manufacturing services companies, equipment and service providers as well as research institutes, polytechnics and universities. SSIA has positioned itself as the perfect platform for these stakeholders of the Singapore semiconductor industry to come together and share their insights and business expertise through focused group meetings, monthly CEO talks and industry lunches.

SSIA's expansion as a strong industry representative underscores the importance of the semiconductor industry to the country's economy. In 2009, the semiconductor industry accounted for 58 per cent of the electronics manufacturing output, which in turn was 18 per cent of the total manufacturing output in Singapore. As the second largest city in the world in terms of wafer capacity, Singapore is fast becoming one of the world leaders in semiconductor technology, with a market share increasing to 11 per cent of semicon output. As such, the conglomeration of all the stakeholders in the semiconductor industry represents an ambition that hews with Singapore's long-term economic goals.

The industry is at an exciting stage. It is expected to grow by more than 10 per cent in 2010, according to the Global Semiconductor Alliance (GSA). New areas for expansion are opening up: Medical semiconductor output like biochips, biosensors and medical electronics devices is expected to increase 12 per cent annually through 2011 according to Foshan Roson Medical Instruments Reports while green electronics is advancing in computing, automotive applications, solid state lighting and energy harvesting.

"SSIA will play an important role in being a voice for the semiconductor industry, and in catalyzing industry-driven initiatives to strengthen our manpower capabilities and enhance the productivity and competitiveness of Singapore's semiconductor industry," said Damian Chan, Director, Electronics, EDB.

An SSIA core focus is to support R&D and capability development. For instance, by using its network to match Electronic Design Automation (EDA) companies and fabless IC design houses, it helps to streamline and optimise fabless companies' search for a suitable EDA company. This increases efficiency and decreases incompatibility, an initiative that benefits all parties involved.

The group will also focus on helping its members grow their business by publishing industry reports, to keep members in the loop about the latest news in the industry as well as empower newcomers in the industry with information crucial for initial startup operations.

A significant part of SSIA's objective is to enhance Singapore's talent and manpower landscape.

Since its inception in 2008, the University-Industry Collaboration initiative has allowed students to form joint projects with industry players, helped them

get relevant training from these corporations and encouraged them to join the industry. The SSIA will participate in roadshows organised by the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and give presentations to encourage students to take up semiconductor engineering as a field of interest as well as career.

Competing in the semiconductor market has become increasingly challenging, as product launches need to be faster and product life cycles have become significantly shorter. This creates challenges for the already highly complex supply chain in this industry, requiring extremely specialised technologies and talents. SSIA can help develop and strengthen the semiconductor industry by bringing together industry players, creating new opportunities for new players to come in and developing the industry's manpower component.

George Scalise, President of Semiconductor Industry Association (USA) said in a meeting prior to the launch: "The SSIA will benefit not only the producers based in Singapore, but also the worldwide microchip industry as we work together to address common concerns, including driving technological progress, growing the market, and supporting continuous improvement in environmental, health and safety practices throughout the industry." ■

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