

Press Release

Singapore, 19 November 2009

Singapore celebrates the inauguration of the new premises of its Solar Energy Research Institute – SERIS

Cutting-edge laboratories offering industry-focused research and development in diverse areas in solar energy

Today, another key milestone in the development of Singapore's clean energy industry is achieved. The Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (SERIS) at the National University of Singapore (NUS), which was first announced last year, unveils its state-of-the-art laboratories and facilities dedicated to the solar industry. With a total budget of about S\$130 million for the next 5 years, SERIS will conduct use-inspired R&D and establish collaborations with the international solar industry. Jointly supported by the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB) and NUS, SERIS will substantiate the remaining portion of its operating budget with industry revenue. The core funding from the EDB originates from the National Research Foundation (NRF) and is part of the Clean Energy Strategic Programme.

“Singapore is proud to add SERIS as a prime component of its overall technology development strategy. With its selected focus areas, SERIS will serve as one of the main drivers for innovation and cutting-edge R&D in Asia's booming solar energy industry”, says Dr. Tony TAN, Chairman of the NRF, who is the guest of honour for the inauguration.

More than 250 local and international guests from the government, the industry, and the research fields are expected to attend today's inauguration ceremony of the new premises of SERIS, located within NUS' Kent Ridge Campus.

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"Clean Energy has been identified as a growth sector for Singapore. Through its use-inspired solar research focus, SERIS will strengthen our Clean Energy industry ecosystem. SERIS will also play a major role in positioning Singapore as an attractive home for the brightest solar research talent from around the world," said Mr. Leo YIP, Chairman of the Singapore Economic Development Board.

"SERIS is NUS' contribution to national efforts to build a global clean energy hub. The R&D activities of SERIS complement the research activities of NUS in the areas of solar photovoltaic electricity generation and solar buildings. We see an opportunity for Singapore and NUS to make a significant impact in research and innovative application of solar energy technology, an area of rising importance in Asia and beyond," added Prof. TAN Chorh Chuan, President of the National University of Singapore.

SERIS is in the midst of a robust ramp-up of its manpower, equipment, and facilities. It targets to employ more than 100 researchers by 2012. The institute takes a holistic approach by focusing on the development of materials, components, processes, and systems for solar electricity generation (photovoltaics) and for energy-efficient buildings. In addition, SERIS also focuses on very low-cost, highly flexible nano-structured solar cells for roll-to-roll manufacturing.

To facilitate such research, the institute offers new high-class characterisation and calibration laboratories, cleanroom facilities, and related office space. SERIS operates R&D pilot lines for both silicon wafer and silicon thin-film solar cells and, for its silicon wafer line, is capable of processing industry-size materials. In addition, 100 m² of cleanroom space is set aside for industry for test bedding and development of novel PV production equipment. SERIS will expand from its current size of more than 3,000 m² to a total of approximately 5,000 m² of space by the end of 2010.

SERIS has also established a one-stop certification and testing centre that offers the full suite of solar module testing according to international standards. The SERIS facilities provide a unique service platform for the solar industry. This centre covers more than

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900 m² of laboratories and outdoor testing facilities and is situated in the iQuest building at the International Business Park. It will begin operations at the end of this year.

“Our laboratories and knowledge base in the areas of solar electricity generation and utilisation of solar energy in buildings are now in place to serve the industry. With our industry-oriented expertise, global network with leading R&D institutions, and high-class technical infrastructure, SERIS is set to make Singapore an important regional hub for the further research and development of solar energy in Asia,” states Professor Joachim LUTHER, CEO of SERIS.

Following strategic targets set out by the Singapore Government, SERIS actively supports the industry in increasing performance and decreasing costs of solar cells and modules. The institute also focuses on technologies and developments tailored to the tropical environment of Southeast Asia. This applies in particular to building technologies. SERIS aims to develop, improve and adapt products to optimise their performance and durability in the region.

“SERIS, with its carefully selected R&D focus areas, is the ideal platform for serving and supporting the industry in an excellent and efficient way. By facilitating knowledge and innovation transfer from R&D to the industry, we believe SERIS will enable significant cost-reduction and increased system performance, as well as the effective commercialisation of new ideas in the growing solar markets in Asia,” summarized Dr. Erik SAUAR, Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer of Renewable Energy Corporation (REC), Norway. REC is currently building the world’s largest vertically-integrated silicon wafer solar cell manufacturing facility in Singapore.

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