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Singapore's Research Agency ties up with French counterparts to develop innovative healthcare tools

Singapore, 10 February 2011 - The Institute for Infocomm Research (I²R), a research institute of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR), has entered into the second phase of a research and development (R&D) agreement with Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Université Joseph Fourier (UJF) and the National University of Singapore (NUS) for their joint laboratory in Singapore known as the Image, Pervasive Access Lab, or IPAL. This next phase also marks the addition of Université Pierre et Marie Curie (a.k.a. University of Paris 6) and Institut Telecom as new parties to the agreement.

IPAL opens a window for French scientists and engineers to understand the dynamic and vibrant research culture and operations in a high-growth South-East Asia economy such as Singapore and to bridge to other South-East Asian nations. This, in turn, creates tremendous opportunities for both countries in the development of intellectual property related to infocomm, media and engineering in the form of high-quality international publications, innovative research prototypes, copyrights and patents.

A signing ceremony was held on 8 February 2011 to formalise the partnership. Under the agreement, I²R will work with their collaborators in the areas of Medical Image Understanding (MIU) and Pervasive Access & Wellbeing Management (PAWM). (More details below). These are leading edge infocomm technologies, which once developed, will benefit the healthcare industry in Singapore and France.

The Medical Image Understanding (MIU) research

The MIU team aims to develop technologies and tools for discovering meaningful biomedical knowledge from visual data by interactive visualization, ontological description, and statistical modeling. These computer-assisted observations will help biologists and clinicians understand biological processes or pathologies in a more integrated way, and even at the genetic level, hence improving the decision making process in medical prognosis and treatment.

In the next three years, the MIU team will collaborate with THALES, AGFA Healthcare, Hopital de la Pitié-Salpêtrière, Tribvn, and the LIP6 laboratory (Université Pierre et Marie Curie), to develop a breast cancer grading system under the French ANR-funded TecSan programme.

The Pervasive Access & Wellbeing Management (PAWM) research

The elderly with deteriorating physical and mental functions, while desiring to keep their independence and safety, find it a challenge to remain connected to the community. Ambient assisted living (AAL) technology holds much promise to help increase the autonomy in daily activities of older people. The research projects under PAWM focus on human-environment multi-modal interaction modeling and system reasoning with ambient intelligence to enrich user's experiences.

The PAWM team is working closely with Alexandra Hospital and Peacehaven Nursing Home to design a strong reasoning engine and develop context-aware service-oriented AAL platform for elderly with mild dementia at home in the next two years, funded by the A*STAR Home2015 research program.

HE Mr. Olivier Caron (Ambassador of France to Singapore) said, "IPAL is one of the first Scientific joint laboratories created between France and Singapore. It was created in the same time and same location comprising CNRS (French National Center of Scientific Research), I²R (Institute for Infocomm Research - A*STAR), UJF (Joseph Fourier University in Grenoble) and NUS (National University of Singapore) to conduct research in imagery technologies. It has been the starting point of different other agreements and joint labs who have benefited from the reputation and experience gained by IPAL. The two new partners (Université Pierre et Marie Curie and Institut Telecom) are among the most reputable academic institutions in France which testifies to the success and the importance of IPAL in the scientific landscape."

Prof Lye Kin Mun, Executive Director, I²R commented: 'I²R is extremely pleased to extend the successful collaboration that we have had with our French and Singaporean partners for another four years. The quality and value of IPAL has been clearly demonstrated by its ability to secure over SGD\$5million in research funds from both France and Singapore for various projects. In the second phase, we are happy to welcome two new French partners, Université Pierre et Marie Curie and Institut Telecom to the programme. IPAL will continue to focus on important global challenges such as essential healthcare solutions for the world population.'

"Photo of signing ceremony showing all the partners"



Caption : From right: Prof Lye Kin Mun (Executive Director, I²R), Prof Yassine LAKHNECH (Vice President, Université Joseph Fourier, France), Prof Pierre GUILLON, Scientific Director, INSIS, CNRS, France), Mr. Olivier Caron (Ambassador of France to Singapore), Prof Seeram RAMAKRISHNA (Vice President, NUS), Prof Jean-Charles POMEROL (President, Université Pierre et Marie Curie, France), and Prof Francis JUTAND (Scientific Director, Institut Telecom, France)

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About Image, Pervasive Access Lab (IPAL)

IPAL signifies a long-term collaboration between the Infocomm and Media (ICM) research communities in France and Singapore since Oct 1998 when a full-time CNRS researcher was seconded to Singapore, and a formal international joint lab was established in Jan 2007 with 4 partners, namely, the Institute of Sciences and Technologies for Information

and Engineering (INST2I) of the CNRS, I²R/A*STAR, NUS, and the Université Joseph Fourier (UJF), Grenoble, France. Currently there are 4 French full-time researchers and 2 post-doc fully funded by the French government in IPAL.

The aim of the joint lab is to combine the complementary strengths and research cultures from both countries in strategic areas of ICM agreed by the partners for synergy in research and scientific manpower training (e.g. interns, staff exchange). Medical imaging and assisted living have been identified by the French national research agency as key research priorities.

About Institute for Infocomm Research

The Institute for Infocomm Research (I²R - pronounced as i-squared-r) is a member of the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) family. Established in 2002, our mission is to be the globally preferred source of innovations in 'Interactive Secured Information, Content and Services Anytime Anywhere' through research by passionate people dedicated to Singapore's economic success.

I²R performs R&D in information, communications and media (ICM) to develop holistic solutions across the ICM value chain. Our research capabilities are in information technology and science, wireless and optical communications, and interactive digital media.

We seek to be the infocomm and media value creator that keeps Singapore ahead. Website: www.i2r.a-star.edu.sg

About the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR)

The Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR) is the lead agency for fostering world-class scientific research and talent for a vibrant knowledge-based and innovation-driven Singapore. A*STAR oversees 14 biomedical sciences, and physical sciences and engineering research institutes, and nine consortia & centre, which are located in Biopolis and Fusionopolis, as well as their immediate vicinity.

A*STAR supports Singapore's key economic clusters by providing intellectual, human and industrial capital to its partners in industry. It also supports extramural research in the universities, hospitals, research centres, and with other local and international partners.

For more information about A*STAR, please visit www.a-star.edu.sg