

Translation

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Clerk to Panel on Commerce and Industry
Legislative Council
(Attn: Miss Polly Yeung)

Dear Miss Yeung,

**Research and Development Centre
on Information and Communications Technologies**

At the meeting of the LegCo Panel on Commerce and Industry held on 21 February 2006, the Hon Sin Chung-kai submitted written questions concerning the details on the development of the Research and Development (R&D) Centre on Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to be hosted by the Hong Kong Applied Science and Technology Research Institute Company Limited (ASTRI). In this regard, the following supplementary information is prepared for the Panel's reference.

Relationship between the R&D Centre and ASTRI

The R&D Centre will not be an independent legal entity. It will be subsumed under ASTRI. Therefore, the R&D Centre will not have its own organisation and manpower structure, or will its structure overlap with that of ASTRI. ASTRI will strengthen its internal infrastructure to take up the new role of the R&D Centre. The strengthened supporting areas include basic administrative functions (e.g., corporate communication, facilities management, human resources, information technology, procurement, quality management, accounting, legal and company secretariat), project specific functions (e.g., intellectual property management, programme management and monitoring and strategic planning) and technology transfer functions (e.g., technology dissemination, industrial outreach, market and industry analysis).

Market Research

The newly formed market research team in ASTRI will focus on the ICT market and conduct research data analysis. It will also provide competition intelligence to ASTRI's R&D research teams to help identify their research directions and provide information to the industry. Unlike other consultancy firms/research institutions, business associations and industrial supporting centres in the market, the research teams will conduct researches and analysis focusing on technology and competition intelligence perspectives rather than at the product or macro-economic level. Moreover, the team will regularly publish newsletters or reports about the ICT industry to the industrial members of the R&D Centre. It will also regularly launch industrial fora to the public. In the longer run, the team will also provide contract services to the industry for carrying out specific research projects to meet market development needs.

Technology Transfer

Besides the market research team, ASTRI will also expand the existing technology transfer team to cope with the upsurge in workload resulting from the significant increase in the number of technology transfers. The expanded technology transfer team will be led by a department head plus three to four supporting staff members. The team will carry out more industrial outreach programmes and will proactively solicit customers' feedback other than the current technology transfer tasks. ASTRI expects that it would carry out over 120 technology transfers annually after five years.

Recruitment of R&D Personnel

ASTRI's recruitment channels include newspaper and Internet advertisements (ASTRI's website and job searching websites), local campus recruitment and Mainland recruitment, through which 60 additional R&D staff members will be recruited. The qualifications and R&D working experience depend on the seniority of the post. Normally ASTRI requires a good engineering background (with bachelor to doctoral degree) plus several years of related working experience. It is expected that about 70% of the new appointees will be Hong Kong residents and around 30% will be recruited from other areas (including Mainland and overseas).

Nurturing Technology Talents

ASTRI has all along been dedicated to nurturing local technology talents. Through increasing number of technology transfers, bringing in global technology firms to Hong Kong through collaboration, carrying out more contract research for the local industry on development of new products or technologies; and spinning off of projects which found new partnering companies, ASTRI will not only create more

hi-tech employment opportunities, but also enhance local technological human resources. ASTRI hopes that it can upgrade the technology level of our industry, expand and create new technology industrial base and nurture technology entrepreneurship.

Role of Industry

During the formulation of the five-year plan and the operation mode of the R&D Centre, ASTRI visited a number of industrial associations in the ICT industry to listen to their views, obtained inputs from universities and launched fora to introduce the research programme and roadmap to the industry and public.

When drafting the annual project plan and the R&D roadmap, ASTRI will first collect feedback and suggestions from the industry. Their comments will be incorporated in the plan for advice by ASTRI's Domain Advisory Committee (consisting of local academic and industry leaders in the respective technology area) and Technology Advisory Committee (consisting of international experts). The revised plan will subsequently be submitted to the ASTRI Board and the Innovation and Technology Commission for approval. By going through these procedures, it can be ensured that the projects proposed by ASTRI will suit the needs of the industry while having substantial technology elements.

Selection and Vetting of R&D Projects

ASTRI will not propose any project without specific customers in mind. It normally takes two to three months for a project to go through the proposal, selection, vetting and approval processes. After the establishment of the R&D Centre, projects are expected to obtain support and contribution from the industry, or else they will normally be rejected. Nevertheless, projects with industry support still have to go through the same selection, vetting and approval processes and will take a similar timeframe in securing approval.

I hope the above information can give Members a clearer picture on the proposed R&D Centre to be hosted by ASTRI.

(Anthony Wong)
Commissioner for Innovation and Technology

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