

“Asia is the place where smart cities are awakening”

An interview with Seng Heng Chuah, Managing Director of Safran Identity & Security in Singapore

BIOMETRIC DEVICES & AUTOMOTIVE

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The Asia Pacific region is one of the most vibrant markets for digital security. With an office in Singapore, Safran is at the technological heart of this region. We spoke with Seng Heng Chuah, Safran Identity & Security's new Managing Director for the APAC region.

What's the digital security market like in the Asia Pacific Region (APAC)?

Seng Heng: We are experiencing a very dynamic market here due to the burgeoning middle class, improvements in standards of living and increasing purchasing power. Asian consumers are known to be young and extremely technology savvy. They expect hassle-free, easy-to-use digital solutions. Despite the fast growth in standard of living over the past years, Asian customers are still price sensitive. All these characteristics translate into the way of doing business, which is extremely challenging. You need to be able to offer avant-garde solutions but at a really competitive price. The range of security solutions in this market has grown beyond Safran's traditional market base of smart card solutions, and we are answering this need perfectly, through a wide portfolio of technologies for both public and commercial markets.

What are the most significant challenges in the APAC digital security market, and how can Safran help customers overcome them?

Seng Heng: The dynamics of the Asian market are creating solid opportunities for secure consumer services, particularly in the telecom and payment industries. For example, in Indonesia only around 20 percent of the 250 million populace have bank accounts, and the majority of transactions are still paid in cash. To leverage the potential new users of payment technology we need to reassure them by offering them a safer and easier experience. To capitalize on this expanding market we must overcome challenges such as how to redefine banking mindsets and increase the adoption of banking, cards and payment technology, and how to create an attractive payment experience.

IOT and big data have also received enormous attention across the world, but we need go beyond the hype and create real value. That is why in my opinion we will need to focus on the commercial applications of IoT technology and its impact on the bottom line. Apart from smart cities there are other industry sectors offering significant IoT technology potential – for example smart manufacturing and smart logistics. Another important area is national security and public safety. In Asia-Pacific, this market forecast includes double digit growth throughout the 2015-2022 period. Safran Identity & Security is well positioned to respond to this growth and to accompany internal security, border control and police modernization.

Whatever segment we are working on, it is clear that as leading actor of the security industry, our biggest opportunity is to foster partnerships with key industry players such as IT vendors or Enterprise System Integrators for project deployment.

What are the most exciting digital developments today in your region – and for Safran?

Seng Heng: What is interesting in the security industry is how fast everything is moving; we need to be at the front end of deployment. There are tons of exciting digital developments, and two of the most exciting of those in the APAC region is the Internet of Things (IoT) and Big Data. There's no doubt that Asia is the place where smart cities are awakening. Sensors and connected objects are transforming our cities. Asian cities are already using IoT and Big Data to change the way traffic moves, to conserve energy and water, to increase business productivity and to improve the lives of citizens.

One of Safran's current and most exciting projects here in Singapore is being conducted in partnership with the airport operator Changi Airport Group, which has been voted the World's Best Airport by travelers at the World Airport Awards a number of times. Our biometric boarding solution, including facial recognition technology, has been selected to supply the soon-to-be-built Terminal 4 (T4) facility at Changi (scheduled for completion in 2017) airport. We will provide a full biometric passenger boarding solution comprising self-service bag-drop kiosks, integrated border clearance and self-service boarding gates. It will incorporate Safran's biometric applicant management system, MorphoPass, as well as the company's MorphoWay automated gates. It's the first time that facial recognition technology will be used at Changi Airport. The solution eliminates the need for manual identity verification by staff. When fully deployed, the new biometric system will provide passengers with a less intrusive and faster security process at baggage drop-off, airside access, passport control and boarding. This integrated passenger processing system will transform the passenger experience, making it easier and safer, and support Changi Airport in keeping its position as one of the most modern and secure airports in the world.