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SMIC explores solar business

Claire Sung, Shanghai; Esther Lam, DIGITIMES [Wednesday 19 March 2008]

Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation (SMIC) will spread the focus of its wafer fabs across different areas in China, with those in the northeast and northwest to be allocated for the company's deployment in the solar business, revealed company CEO Richard Chang speaking at SEMICON China 2008 (March 18-20).

Chang said SMIC has been assessing its deployment in the solar business and finds the mentioned regions suitable due to their long daylight hours. However, he did not reveal further details about the company's progress.

In addition to solar energy deployment, Chang also updated SMIC's overall deployment in China. SMIC will centralize advance process development at its two 12-inch fabs in Beijing and Shanghai. The Beijing fab will focus on 90nm and 65nm R&D, while supporting the Shanghai fab on the development of 40nm.

For the establishment of a 8- and 12-inch fab in Shengzhen, Chang said SMIC will primarily use its 12-inch fab capacity to feed demand from motherboard and system makers, as Shengzhen is the key hub for the leading players in those sectors. He said the Shengzhen fab will focus on advanced system-on-chip (SoC).

NAND flash production will be focused at the company's Wuhan fab, alongside logic IC production. The fab will operate at 90nm, 70nm and 65nm process nodes, Chang updated. BiCOMOS process and PMW IC production will be focused at the Tianjin fab.

Regarding the company's 8-inch wafer production deployment, Chang said SMIC will have high-voltage process, power management IC (PWM IC), analog IC, as well as micro electro-mechanical systems (MEMS) done at its Chengdu fab. The 8-inch fabs in Shanghai will also serve as backup to support high-voltage process production.

Despite being a DRAM foundry partner for Elpida Memory, Chang said the market outlook for DRAM is to remain uncertain for the next 1-2 years. He was cited by a Chinese-language *Commercial Times* report in saying that the company would reduce its sales exposure to DRAM. DRAM fabrication on 70nm is not competitive anymore, Chang noted. Whether DRAM on 65nm copper process manufacturing is competitive enough is still subject to further observation, Chang added.

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