

Nanofilm launches S\$66m lab with NTU to develop nanotechnology products

By Daphne Yow

daphneyow@sph.com.sg

NANOFILM Technologies International has partnered Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to launch a corporate laboratory to develop nanotechnology products.

The S\$66 million joint investment lab hopes to develop non-toxic coatings for medical implants; and protecting coatings to make hydrogen fuel cells more efficient, reliable and affordable.

Singapore-listed Nanofilm sells nanotechnology solutions such as special coatings for engine parts and consumer electronics.

The new 19,000 square foot lab will allow Nanofilm to combine its expertise with that of NTU's faculty in smart electronics, clean energy and materials science.

"From a commercial perspective, we see the corporate lab as part of our efforts to build upstream research," Gian Yi Hsen, group chief strategy officer at Nanofilm, told *The Business Times*.

The collaboration will help Nanofilm tap NTU's access to talent as well as its experimental capabilities, he added.

"Instead of a company building up everything on our own, leveraging (NTU's expertise) helps us to accelerate the pace."



Left to right: Dr Tan Chong Wei, senior research fellow at NTU; Professor Lam Khin Yong, NTU vice-president (industry); Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat; and Dr Shi Xu, founder and executive chairman of Nanofilm, at an exhibition marking the launch of the Nanofilm-NTU corporate laboratory on Tuesday. PHOTO: AZMI ATHNI, ST

Four broad technologies have been identified as focus points for the lab. First, the lab looks to develop cost-effective and efficient coating equipment technologies. Second, it will conduct research for advanced materials such as coatings to protect surfaces from wear and tear.

Third, the collaboration will look at nano-fabrication technologies to produce optical and sensory components such as lenses for use in augmented and virtual reality devices. Fourth, it will research fuel

cell technologies to produce affordable hydrogen energy.

The lab will also accelerate the research and development efforts of local enterprises by offering its technology, equipment and expertise, said Professor Lam Khin Yong, vice-president for industry at NTU.

Helming the lab are Professor Tay Beng Kang from NTU's School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Nanofilm's Dr Eric Phua. Nanofilm was spun off from NTU in 1999.

The company has had a tough

year. Revenue for the first nine months of 2023 declined 29 per cent to S\$128 million, as consumer electronics demand fell.

Nevertheless, Nanofilm's Gian said the company is still in a strong financial position. "The investment in the corporate lab is a long-term commitment... We see this as a very important investment into future capabilities."

Shares of Nanofilm are down 35.9 per cent this year. They closed on Tuesday (Nov 28) at S\$0.885, down S\$0.015 or 1.7 per cent.