

## DEFENCE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AGENCY: SINGAPORE QUALITY AWARD WINNER

# Giving an edge to S'pore's defence

DSTA is investing in its capabilities to bolster Singapore's defence and security. BY FRANCIS KAN

**W**HETHER it is investing in its people, fostering innovation or investing in capabilities, the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) is committed to continuously improving its performance.

The agency implements technology plans, acquires defence equipment and supplies, and develops defence infrastructure for the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) to meet the national security needs of Singapore. As part of this mission, DSTA provides leading-edge technological solutions to the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF).

DSTA has successfully leveraged the Business Excellence framework in recent years to carry out its mission. It is the only organisation to have received the Singapore Quality Award (2017), People Excellence Award (2016) and the Innovation Excellence Award (2014) in the last four years. It is also one out of five organisations to win all three awards since its inception.

"DSTA is humbled and honoured to have received the Singapore Quality Award, the People Excellence Award and the Innovation Excellence Award. As we celebrate the SQA, we are mindful that our past successes is no guarantee of future successes," said Tan Peng Yam, chief executive, DSTA.

### PEOPLE POWER

DSTA's vision – "Inspired people, bringing innovation to all we connect" – is focused on nurturing and motivating staff to embrace innovation in all aspects of their work. The agency's approach to talent development is encapsulated in its two in-house frameworks. The DSTA Staff Development Framework empowers staff to chart their career development and ensures that they build deep competencies.

The iLEAP Framework (imagination, Leadership, Environment, Appreciation and Process), meanwhile, weaves in-

novation as an integral component of DSTA's culture, encouraging staff to challenge norms and giving them time and space to come up with new ideas.

To help them do this, the organisation set up a cross-disciplinary Digital Hub that provides support for its engineers to experiment, develop prototypes and bring their ideas to fruition.

"DSTA's vision underpins our commitment to develop our people and foster a culture of innovation in the organisation. We actively engage our staff in the conceptualisation and implementation of new corporate initiatives," said Mr Tan.

The achievements of DSTA staff have been recognised at various platforms. In July 2017, for instance, two of the agency's programme teams were recognised at the Institution of Engineers, Singapore (IES) Prestigious Engineering Achievement Award for technology innovation and engineering.

Six DSTA projects were also named by IES as among the top 50 engineering feats in Singapore since its independence in 2016. In the field of green technology, the organisation was honoured with the Building and Construction Authority Green Mark Champion award this year for introducing green and sustainable features in defence facilities, while meeting the operational requirements of Mindef and the SAF.

These included the DSTA Integrated Complex, which received the Green Mark Platinum award – the highest award for an individual building.

DSTA employees are also invited to sit on various international and national level committees, share at international forums and conferences, and

are accredited by international confederations. To help its staff feel connected to the organisation so that they are motivated to go the extra mile, DSTA uses a data-driven approach to maintain a high level of staff engagement through Staff Engagement Surveys that measure job motivation, supervisory practices, respect and communication and teamwork. These efforts have resulted in a lower



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### HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

DSTA's work contributes to the Mindef and SAF technological capabilities, making a difference to Singapore's defence and security in the process.

To better exploit technologies arising from rapid technological advancements in frontier domains, DSTA Labs was established to provide a one-stop facility for the agency's engineers to collaborate and harness emerging technologies, including data analytics, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things.

As DSTA continues to help develop capabilities for the SAF, it has also expanded its support to the wider public service. To help improve public service procurement competency and engineering expertise, DSTA has been designated the Centre of Excellence for Public Sector Procure-

ment and the Centre of Excellence for Command, Control and Communications. The agency will also be working with the Singapore University of Social Sciences on a certificate programme in procurement for public servants.

The fruits of these and other efforts have culminated in DSTA's multiple wins at the BE Awards in recent years. However, Mr Tan believes that these accolades are only milestones on an ongoing journey.

"The SQA is just part of our excellence journey to ensure that we are able to contribute significantly in providing the defence and security of Singapore the technological edge. The award is testament to the hard work, commitment, and passion of our staff and will galvanise the organisation to work even more collaboratively with our colleagues in Mindef, SAF, the public service as well as our partners in the academia and industry," he said.

"We will continue our excellence journey to find new ways to stay relevant and responsive in a fast changing world characterised by technological disruptions."