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Samsung Spinoff Likely to Grab Foundry Share

Samsung Electronics' plan to spin off foundry operations from the system LSI division is expected to increase Samsung's share of global contract chipmaking at the expense of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) and smaller rivals.

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Rambus Tips IoT Security Service

SAN JOSE, Calif. — Rambus is extending its existing security software to include a service that manages cloud connections for nodes on the Internet of Things (IoT). STMicroelectronics and Qualcomm are the first two chip makers showing support for the Rambus IoT Device Management service.

The new offering adds software modules for managing encrypted services such as authentication and over-the-air updates to Rambus CryptoManager, its existing software for provisioning IoT keys. It will be available at the end of the year for an undisclosed price.

The Rambus offering aims to ease the job of securing IoT nodes to cloud services to prevent breaches such as distributed-denial-of-service attacks. The Mirai attack late last year raised attention on the need for better IoT security, an issue being addressed by an increasing number of products and industry initiatives and expected increases in spending on IoT security.

iNAND Drives Toward Automotive Market

TORONTO — Western Digital is directing its iNAND embedded flash to the automotive market.

The company's iNAND storage portfolio came with the SanDisk acquisition; the latter company has previously positioned it for the increasingly high demands of smartphones, such as professional-grade digital photography and 4K Ultra-HD video playback.

Under the Western Digital umbrella, the technology is seeing opportunities for it to meet the evolving demands of advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS), infotainment and safety systems, and other data storage requirements of connected vehicles. Gartner is forecasting that by 2020 connected and autonomous car data traffic per vehicle may reach more than 280 petabytes per year, essentially making the connected car a data center on wheels.

With Ixia Acquisition, Keysight Moves Up the Protocol Stack

Boston — With Keysight Technologies recent acquisition of network testing equipment manufacturer Ixia, the world's largest test-and-measurement company gets a little larger — by about 1,800 employees.

Formed in 1997, Ixia has been a leading supplier of hardware and software for network testing, operating at communications protocol layers 2 through 7. Keysight's expertise has traditionally come from the physical (layer 1), whether that be electrical, optical, or wireless. Keysight, when it was part of Agilent Technologies, had developed some products for wireline protocol testing but exited the business. Indeed, the company sold a line of network testers to Ixia in 2009. Thus, the acquisition brings Keysight back into the network-testing market. To learn more about how Ixia fits in with Keysight, I spoke with Jay Alexander, Keysight's Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer, by phone.

Imagination Sells SoC Design Group

SAN FRANCISCO—Sondrel, an IC design services firm based in the U.K., has agreed to buy Imagination Technologies Group plc's IMGworks division for an undisclosed sum.

The IMGworks group provides SoC design and software integration services for designs based around Imagination's IP cores and system integration of OEM products with chips using Imagination's technology. The IMGworks engineering team will join Sondrel's existing team, creating an IC design group with more than 250 people, according to Sondrel (Theale, England).

Imagination (Kings Langley, England) said earlier this month that it would sell off two of its core businesses, MIPS and Ensigma, after announcing in April that it was notified by its largest customer, Apple, that it would no longer license its graphics cores. Imagination has said that it is negotiating with Apple to resolve the dispute and arrive at a new license and royalty agreement.

Samsung Spinoff Likely to Grab Foundry Share

TAIPEI — Samsung Electronics' plan to spin off foundry operations from the system LSI division is expected to increase Samsung's share of global contract chipmaking at the expense of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (TSMC) and smaller rivals.

Samsung's chip operations, consisting of memory and system LSI, will be split into three, making the foundry business an independent unit, according to the Korea Economic Daily.

The separation of Samsung's contract chipmaking from its branded semiconductor business would remove a conflict of interest with potential customers such as Nvidia and MediaTek, and create a new threat to dedicated foundries such as TSMC, according to analysts such as Andrew Lu.