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**H**ow would you describe standing a foot away from an explosive device? A misfortune, probably.

How would the folks at Explomo Technical Services Pte Ltd describe it? Their passion, their job, the reason they go to work every day, fully aware that explosives that fail to detonate, or unexploded ordnances (UXO), pose the risk of unpredictable detonation if not disposed of safely.

It is this solid performance from home-grown explosives specialist Explomo both locally and overseas that has won it the E50 Special Recognition Award – Internationalisation.

### Punching above its weight

Fresh from his postgraduate studies at Oxford University and Imperial College in the United Kingdom, Anthony Lye Chee Fei discovered his passion for all things explosive.

After dabbling in several defence and security-related businesses, an opportunity arose for Mr Lye.

Explomo Technical Services Pte Ltd was founded in 1988 to clear ammunition for a defence-related government agency after live firing exercises in Pulau Senang.

As a subcontractor to that government agency, Explomo enjoyed a stable revenue stream. However, with the entrance of new players, competition intensified.

In pursuit of sustained growth, Explomo ventured overseas.

In 2005, it won its first overseas project when it was contracted by the Taiwanese government to remediate a military training ground.

This project heralded a new era of growth for Explomo. Today, Explomo also has a presence in Brunei, Malaysia and Kuwait.

To complement its services involving UXO, Explomo has expanded its service lines to include Civil Defence Shelter installation and maintenance, and pyrotechnic displays.

However, the investigation, scanning and safe disposal of hazardous products has remained its main revenue driver. How is Explomo able to compete internationally with resource-rich foreign companies?

Apart from finesse in relationship management, it boils down to competence and being better than the competition.

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PHOTO: EXPLOMO TECHNICAL SERVICES

to each project. You need to be better than the rest," Explomo group chief executive officer Mr Lye said. Explomo relies on word-of-mouth and its irrefutable 30 years track record of safety and efficiency to win international open tenders.

"In our business, you will be the winner if you can provide the right solution to the client," Mr Lye said.

### Growing the business

What do the fireworks at national events and the civil defence (CD) shelters at the MRT stations along the Downtown Line have in common? They are among the suite of other services Explomo offers.

Leveraging its ability to form strong ties with overseas counterparts, Explomo entered into an exclus-

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# Explomo banks on the Big Bang

Disposal service firm for hazardous material with 30 years' safety track record aspires to make quantum leaps in its performance

ive agreement with Switzerland-based shelter technology specialist Andair AG. Explomo is now the sole dealer of shelter components such as ventilation parts, as well as the main agent for engineering and testing services for installed CD shelters in Singapore.

Since 1989, Explomo is also a major provider of pyrotechnics and special effects to event organisers. The Singapore National Day Parade, 1998 Commonwealth Games and 2011 ICC Cricket World Cup are among some of the events that Explomo has worked on.

As automation technology and artificial intelligence (AI) have the potential to improve work processes and enhance efficiency, Explomo is incorporating AI and new video analytics technologies into its UXO and ammunition disposal services.

It plans to use unmanned aerial vehicles to scan military training sites exposed to hazardous materials. Mr Lye expects this to reduce the time needed for pre-work preparation.

### A specialised manpower company

At its core, Explomo is a "specialised manpower company", according to Mr Lye.

While utilising the latest technology can improve accuracy and efficiency, what really makes the business tick is the expertise of Explomo's employees. Many were combat engineers trained by the Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit of the Singapore Armed Forces and possess skills and knowledge that can be applied in other situations.

Explomo's employees are also no

strangers to the tough conditions the job involves.

For instance, in Kuwait they have had to contend with sandstorms and extreme heat. While rewarding, the job requires mental, physical and emotional fortitude. "They must be passionate, they must like to blow things up!" Mr Lye quipped.

Explomo believes in nurturing its employees. It offers generous loans for staff to pursue further education.

"We owe it to them. My staff have made the difficult choice of investing their time in Explomo and in me. If they don't become better financially or intellectually, Explomo would have failed them," said Mr Lye.

### Stringent safety requirements

Looking after employees' safety is a priority at Explomo. The hazardous nature of the job is manifested in the some 30 licenses that Explomo is required to attain to operate in Singapore, including arms licences, explosive licences and disposal licences. Only two other companies in Singapore have managed to obtain the same number of licences. "This is hard work, and the job is dangerous," Mr Lye added.

As with all other aspects of its business, Explomo does not settle for anything less than being the best. It was awarded the Port Dickson Safety Award for completing a project in Malaysia with zero accident rates, and the American Society of Safety Engineers – Gulf Cooperation Council Health, Safety, and Environment Award (ASSE GCC HSE Award) for providing excellent workplace safety to its employees in Kuwait.

### Explosive future ahead

Explomo has come a long way since its formation and now has businesses spanning different regions generating consistently strong cash flows. Yet, Mr Lye believes that it

should move quicker than it has. "I want the company's growth to be in quantum leaps!" Mr Lye said. "We are doing well, but we cannot scale up by remaining on the same spot."

Entering new markets, providing new services and enhancing current work processes by investing in technology are some of the options that Explomo is mulling.

For example, the company has now allocated resources towards developing a bomb disposal video game, which it believes will capture the interest of law enforcement agencies and military forces around the world.

On the E50 Special Recognition Award – Internationalisation, Mr Lye is delighted with the recognition accorded to Explomo for its successful expansion overseas, but he is not resting on his laurels: "How good we are now is irrelevant. What matters is where we will be five years later."

If the evolution of the company over the years has shown anything, it is that Explomo is well-placed to achieve the growth its founding father has envisaged for the company.

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