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## More Chinese firms strive to spur innovation

Nation's companies held over 1.9m valid invention patents in 2021, official says

By CAO YIN  
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The innovative vitality of Chinese businesses was further stimulated last year, as a growing number of domestic market entities registered invention patents, a senior intellectual property regulator said.

Hu Wenhui, deputy commissioner of the China National Intellectual Property Administration, said at a news conference hosted by the State Council Information Office on Wednesday that around 298,000 Chinese enterprises held valid invention patents by the end of last year, 52,000 more than in 2020.

He added that Chinese companies held more than 1.9 million valid invention patents, up 22.6 percent year-on-year.

Among them, more than 63 percent were technology-related, "which means our domestic innovation and creative abilities are becoming much stronger", he added.

Hu added that the number of such patents increased rapidly in three major fields — information technology management, computer technology and medical technology.

Kang Lixia, a lawyer specializing in handling IPR disputes from Beijing Conzen Law Firm, said that the growing number of patents in high-tech industries reflected policy moves to support business transformation, promote industrial upgrading and better meet public demand.

"China has provided a series of preferential policies in recent years to encourage domestic enterprises to innovate technologies and improve their ability in terms of self-development, which has led many companies to expand their business to high-tech areas, such as the digital economy, new energy and healthcare," she said.

"For example, since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world, online medical care services and products have been more needed among the public. As a result, many firms, including those previously focusing on manufacturing, have begun transforming and paying greater efforts to study health-care-related technologies to meet this demand."

She said that the improved policies and growing public demand have both contributed to the rapid growth of high-tech enterprises in China. "The more such businesses we have, the greater the number of valid invention patents we can see," she said.

"The concept that 'invention means creativity' is key to continuously stimulating our domestic market vitality," she added.

Meanwhile, China has also seen a rising number of patent and trademark applications made by foreign businesses.

According to the administration, China granted about 110,000 invention patents to foreign applicants last year, a 23 percent increase on 2020, and it also agreed 194,000 trademarks registered by foreign entities, up 5.2 percent year-on-year.

"The rising figures indicated that foreign enterprises are more confident in the country's IPR protection and its business environment," Hu said.

In 2021, invention patents that Chinese regulators granted to United States applicants rose 32.1 percent year-on-year, and trademarks registered by US applicants in China surged by 17.3 percent year-on-year, according to the administration.

It added that it has accelerated its review of COVID-19-related patent applications, offering a quick channel for those related to vaccine development and epidemic control.

## Aquatic advance



Researchers give a Chinese sturgeon a health checkup on Tuesday at a laboratory of China Three Gorges Corp's Chinese Sturgeon Research Institute in Yichang, Hubei province. In 2021, around 600,000 Chinese sturgeons were bred at the institute, which was a record high. The Chinese sturgeon, which has existed for more than 140 million years, is one of the first-class protected animals in China.

ZHENG JIAYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

## Green philosophy urged in BRI projects

By HOU LIQIANG  
and LI HONGYANG

In a move to advance green Belt and Road Initiative development, China has updated a guideline on environmental protection in overseas operations, with Chinese companies sticking to environmentally friendly approaches through the entire life cycle of their projects.

The guideline, unveiled on Tuesday, was jointly issued by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the Ministry of Commerce as a guide for enterprises to "implement the philosophy of ecological civilization", as well as to "promote green and high-quality development".

Ecological civilization is a concept promoted by President Xi Jinping for balanced and sustainable development that features harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

The document, which updates a 2013 guideline by the two government bodies, has been inscribed with some of the president's new visions and instructions on overseas investment and cooperation, according to the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

While addressing a high-level BRI symposium in Beijing in November, for example, Xi emphasized developing an all-weather, early warning and risk assessment platform for China's overseas projects.

With climate change as one of the major highlights, the guideline includes environment-related requirements for wide-ranging procedures in the companies' overseas operations.

Before overseas mergers and acquisitions, for example, they should assess environmental risks caused by target companies,

including environmental pollution, lawsuits and penalties, it said. Hazardous waste disposal and greenhouse gas emissions should also be given priority in the assessment.

In construction projects, companies should enhance their work on pollution control and strive to reduce the emissions of heat-trapping gases.

Aside from fixing pollution control facilities and rolling out effective measures to reduce carbon emissions, they should also intensify environmental monitoring work.

The guideline explicitly says that environmental protection is not only about pollution control, but also climate mitigation and biodiversity conservation, according to a media release from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment.

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## TECHNOLOGY GIANTS SET SIGHTS FIRMLY ON TOMORROW

Enterprises excited by prospects of integrating physical and virtual worlds

By MA SI  
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Su Zao, a 23-year-old software programmer, planned a special party to celebrate the arrival of 2022.

Instead of going out with friends in the cold winds blowing through Beijing, she used her phone to invite them to a customized digital space she had been decorating for more than a week.



This area featured a countdown wall, pictures and jars for New Year's resolutions, with Su and her friends attending the party as virtual avatars. They got together, chatted, hugged each other and played games.

"Even though all this activity takes place in a virtual space, it doesn't make it less real. It's very realistic and important to me," Su said. "With the COVID-19 pandemic affecting offline social events, an immersive online gathering offers a good alternative."

Such digital spaces have been linked by some observers to the term "metaverse", the latest buzzword to hit the global spotlight in the technology sector.

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Online See more by scanning the code.



Erik Solheim



Carrie Lam  
Cheng Yuet-ngor



Zhou Shuchun



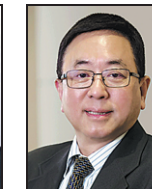
Guo Yonghang



Zhang Xiaoqiang



Peter Helis



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## Greater Bay Area expected to help bolster sustainable development

By OUYANG SHIJIA  
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The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is expected to be built into a world-class city cluster with enhanced connectivity and improved green development, speakers said at the latest Vision China event.

The GBA Development Forum (Guangzhou) & Vision China was held virtually on Wednesday under the theme "Greater Bay Area in the New Era: Toward a Green Future Built on Connectivity and Sharing".

The event, jointly held by China Daily and the information office of the Guangzhou city government, brought together officials, experts and entrepreneurs to discuss topics related to the Greater Bay Area such as its development prospects and provide advice on the construction of the area in the new era. Seminars themed "Low-Carbon Sustainable Development" and

"Connectivity for Shared Prosperity" were held during the event.

Erik Solheim, former executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme, said in the opening remarks that the Greater Bay Area is expected to play a significant role in the global green transition.

Citing the world's recent green efforts, Solheim said the Greater Bay Area, which is home to some prominent high-tech companies driving the green economy, is at the forefront of this green transformation.

"I also encourage the Greater Bay Area to take an interest in the fair transition for China, because Guangdong for sure will benefit fantastically from the green shift," he said. "There will be millions of new jobs, a better environment for people and you will contribute to the great global cause of fighting climate problems."

Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, highlighted



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the considerable achievements the Greater Bay Area has made during the past few years, saying that Hong Kong will make more efforts to boost connectivity and foster low-carbon and green development.

She said the government of the Hong Kong SAR hopes to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with other cities in the development of low-carbon communities, and the development of carbon reduction technologies and talent training, to jointly contribute to achieving the country's carbon neutrality goals.

Zhou Shuchun, a member of the Standing Committee of the 13th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, said the Greater

Bay Area is one of the regions with the highest degree of openness and the strongest economic vitality in the country, playing a significant strategic role in the overall development of the country.

He said that the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions and the nine cities in the Pearl River Delta region have significant economic strength, incomparable geographical advantages and solid foundations for cooperation, giving strong impetus to the development of the Pearl River Delta and even the whole country.

Zhou's views were echoed by Guo Yonghang, acting mayor of Guangzhou. Guo said the Greater Bay Area, despite the impact of COVID-19, has made steady progress in systems and mechanisms, infrastructure connectivity, technological innovation, industrial development and exchanges, showcasing that cooperation between Guangzhou, Hong

Kong and Macao enjoys a solid foundation and broad prospects.

Zhang Xiaoqiang, executive vice-chairman and CEO of the China Center for International Economic Exchanges, said the Greater Bay Area is a template for high-quality development, as well as a strategic pillar supporting the new paradigm of high-level opening-up.

Zhang said the area should fully implement the development concepts of innovation, coordination, green, openness and sharing to realize high-quality development.

Looking ahead, Zhang expected more creative integrated policies, measures and rules will be formulated and implemented in cities in the Greater Bay Area. He said the area needs to focus on rule and mechanism connectivity among the cities and further upgrade the level of market integration.

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