

Guzhen decision will take the wait out of patent applications

By ZHAN JI

The Chinese government has decided to test a new examination system for patent applications in Guzhen township, Guangdong province, that should be available for patent applications by local lighting companies by the year's end, according to a State official.

The system could replace the old manual exam and cut the application process for certain patents to about a week, as compared to half a year or even one or two years at present.

The decision to start a pilot program in "China's lighting capital" came from the State Intellectual Property Office (SIPO) and was announced during a recent visit to Guzhen by SIPO's commissioner, Tian Lipu.

"Very likely, the system will become operational on a trial basis this year and officially go

into operation next year," Tian said.

One local official explained the decision to China Daily in this way: "Most new lighting gadgets have a life cycle of only three or four months, and the amount of time required to apply for a patent has many Chinese lighting companies deciding to just follow someone else's design."

He went on to explain that, "The frequent infringements either force local lighting companies into lengthy lawsuits or make them reluctant to develop new products. Sooner or later that prevents the healthy development of the lighting industry."

In a supplemental move, SIPO will leave an access to the intelligent search system of outer design and provide online access to the application process in Guzhen to deal with the increasing number of patent applications, Tian said.

Guzhen companies submitted 4,649 patent applications over the past three years, a year-on-year growth of 33.28 percent. Township companies were granted a total of 2,411 patents in that period, for an incredible year-on-year growth of 54 per cent, statistics show.

Earlier this year, the township established a lighting industry intellectual property rights (IPR) rapid-response center in the wake of an agreement reached by SIPO and the Zhongshan government on a mechanism for dealing with IPR issues more rapidly.

The center is the first of its kind in China for a single industry and comes complete with a circuit court to hear related cases, while offering a wide range of services such as patent applications, IPR protection information, resolution of disputes and information on judicial protections.



A very long street in Guzhen, Guangdong province, devoted almost entirely to lighting fixtures.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Paris of the lighting world

By LAO ZHAN

Guzhen, a part of the city of Zhongshan, on the Pearl River Delta in Guangdong province will be holding an international fair for lighting solutions and applications for light emitting diodes (LED), next week.

The township has a reputation at home and abroad for its long connection with the lighting business and has been referred to as "China's lighting capital". It holds a lion's share of China's lighting market and has a substantial number of lighting companies.

The 10th China (Guzhen) International Lighting & LED Applications Fair is set for Oct 18 to 21 and is being sponsored by the Zhongshan municipal government, the China Lighting Association, and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade's light industry council.

It is expecting more than 600 exhibitors, including 276 LED firms, who will all be looking for business opportunities.

The 9th session, a year ago, had 613 enterprises showing their wares and more than 70,000 buyers from all over China and various countries and regions around the globe.

The fairs are a crucial part of the township's efforts to develop further and grow into a global lighting hub in the foreseeable future, one official pointed out.

"Guzhen has just got the go-ahead to become a platform of both the province of Guangdong and the city of Zhongshan for upgrading the lighting industry, and we'll redouble our efforts to turn it into a global lighting hub with the focus on marketing, technological development, and innovation," said Yu Xipen, the Guzhen township Party head.

Yu explained that the township's breakthrough in lighting industrial improvements will be LED lighting and the local government will subsidize any LED lighting companies that are present at the fair.

He went on to say that it will set up a national marketing center for the lighting industry, and an international procurement center, while improving the pricing system.

The township will also step up lighting-related innovation and design industry, and increase its efforts to protect intellectual property rights.

Guzhen's 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) calls for the lighting industry to have an industrial output value of 40 billion yuan by the year 2015. At least two of the lighting companies are expected to have annual sales of more than 5 billion yuan each, and 30 companies with sales of more than

100 million yuan each.

The sales target for the lighting industry overall is 50 billion yuan by 2015, with at least 3 billion yuan worth of online sales.

Guzhen's lighting products currently account for more than 60 percent of China's market.

The township is also anticipating at least 3,000 industry professionals from China and elsewhere to come for training programs or because of incentives.

"Guzhen wants to be a pacesetter for the industry, just as Paris is for the fashion world," Yu concluded.

The township reported a total of 8,045 lighting-related companies in 2010, which posted an output value of 17.31 billion yuan, an increase of 8.14 percent from 2009.

The first Guzhen fair was held back in 1999. It became an annual event from 2004 on.



Foreign and local visitors showing a lot of interest in Guzhen's lighting fixtures.