

## East Asia closes in on Europe in patent rankings

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in Geneva

East Asia is rapidly overtaking western Europe in international patent registrations in a further sign of the regional tilt in economic dynamism, especially in telecommunications and information technology.

Philips Electronics of the Netherlands was dethroned last year for the first time in the company rankings by Japan's Matsushita, the top user, with 2,100 applications against Philips' 2,041, according to provisional statistics from the World Intellectual Property Organisation, which administers the international patent filing system. Huawei Technologies of China leapt nine places to fourth position, behind Germany's Siemens.

US inventors maintained their dominance, with 52,280 registrations, a third of the record total of 156,100 filed with Wipo last year. Japan was in second place, with 27,730, and Germany was third, with 18,134.

However, South Korea overtook France to take fourth place and China, whose registrations jumped by 38 per cent, moved past the Netherlands to seventh place. With Japan, the three east Asian nations accounted for more than a quarter of all international registrations last year.

"The growth in patent filings by a number of countries in north-east Asia and their share of overall patenting activity is impressive and confirms shifting patterns of innovation around the world," said Kamil Idris, Wipo's director-general.

While China, with 5,456 applications, has seen patent registration as a key part of its industrial strategy, the other so-called BRIC emerging economies - Brazil (384), Russia (507) and India (686) - are lagging well behind.

Wipo's 184 members are to hold an extraordinary general assembly on March 31 to discuss the organisation's 2008-09 budget. The proposed SFr650m (\$597m, £304m, €403m) budget was blocked by industrialised countries last October as part of efforts to force Mr Idris's resignation. Mr Idris subsequently announced he would stand down this year.