

China embarks on state-led search for ‘disruptive’ innovations as it seeks to take the lead on tech

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- However, some of last year’s ‘disruptive’ innovations seemed obscure, such as the device that allowed people to control lifts without touching the buttons

China’s Ministry of Science and Technology plans to launch another nationwide search for “disruptive” innovations, or game-changing technological breakthroughs, even though a similar campaign last year failed to come up with anything spectacular.

China’s National Disruptive Technology Innovation Competition will soon be accepting applications from companies and research institutions, and those in areas such as semiconductors, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and high-end manufacturing equipment, are being encouraged to apply.

While there is debate over how effective a top-down government search for disruptive technologies can be, the ministry said in a statement that the effort aims to spot research results with the potential “to shake up the industry and replace mainstream products”.

“Identifying and exploring strategic, forward-looking, and innovative disruptive technologies … will be a powerful engine for our country to achieve tech self-sufficiency,” the ministry said.

In last year’s competition, the Chinese government hand-picked 36 projects from nearly 3,000 participants, but did not say what was awarded to the “winners”. However, such endorsements from the central government can often translate into benefits such as favourable government tax policies and subsidies, which are designed to encourage technologies that are considered important for the country.

Competition participants first need to present their innovations to provincial authorities, who carry out an initial screening before sending the applications to the science and technology ministry.

For example, the technology bureau of eastern Jiangsu province said it handled eight submissions last year that were recognised as disruptive, including a polluted water treatment system developed by Nanjing Lotus EP Technology, and a human body chip designed by the medical equipment research institute of Southeast University in Suzhou.

However, some of last year’s so-called disruptive winning innovations seemed obscure. One was an [elevator button device](#) that allowed people to control the lift without touching the button, which was pitched as a way to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

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China's desire to shake its reliance on imported core technologies, particularly from the United States, has put the nation on a state-led drive for technological progress. Hopes are high that China could make breakthroughs in key areas so it can find shortcuts to technology supremacy.

Along with the efforts of the technology ministry, China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) is reviewing lists of the country's industrial enterprises to spot "little giants", namely small-sized companies with competitive niche products that can help China fill gaps in its supply chain.

MIIT recently published [a detailed selection criteria for little giants](#) and said the government would provide them with preferential treatment such as subsidies and tax cuts. The country also created [an open platform](#) to accelerate the development of domestic desktop operating systems to reduce its dependency on Western technologies in this area.

Source:

https://www.scmp.com/tech/big-tech/article/3184480/china-embarks-state-led-search-disruptive-innovations-it-seeks-take?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3184480