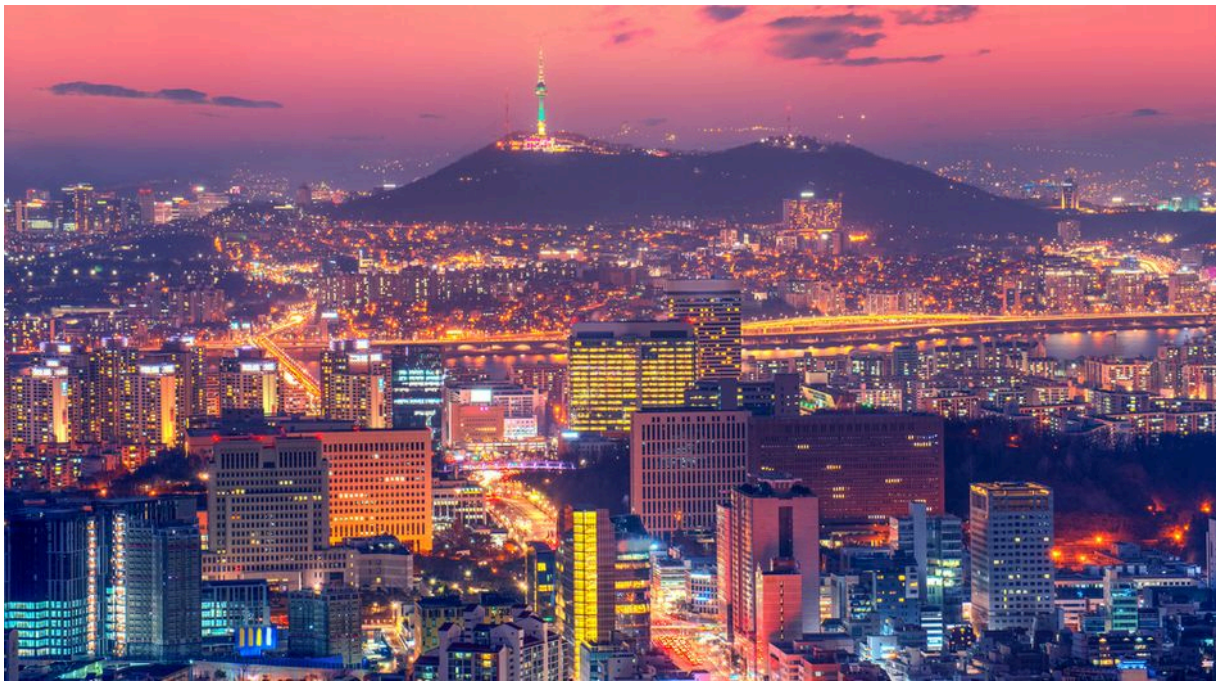
South Korea's Intellectual Discovery is in the process of becoming a big league, mainstream NPE

Jacob Schindler

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Litigation settlements with Sony, Microsoft and Google headline the first year for South Korean patent fund Intellectual Discovery under the leadership of a new financial backer and CEO

About one year ago, Korean patent licensing firm Intellectual Discovery (ID) named businessman Jang She-ik as its new CEO. Through a personal investment in the company, Jang, a onetime CFO to multiple KOSDAQ-listed tech firms, also became the company's largest shareholder.

Dongsuk Bae, who still leads ID's patent business, told *IAM* that the investment marked a turning point for a firm which began life as a government-supported patent aggregation project. With the state's stake in ID reduced to just around 10%, he said, there would be a clear focus on profitmaking. At the time, the organisation was involved in around 10 ongoing litigation campaigns.

Throughout 2020, it looks as though the Korean licensor racked up some favourable developments in its wide-ranging US assertion efforts.

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Through litigation vehicle Throop LLC, which lists ID **subsidiary** Golden Wave Partners as its parent, it told US courts of settlement agreements with Sony, Microsoft and Google during last year. While many ID campaigns have focused on technology developed by Korean institutions, this one centred on two patents which were originally granted to CalTech and cover wireless augmented reality communications systems. The accused products include smart eyeglasses marketed by the three major tech companies.

ID affiliates also expanded existing campaigns during 2020. An entity called Kaifi LLC, another Golden Wave subsidiary, is asserting a former KAIST patent related to internet networks against mobile carriers. Kaifi reached a settlement with AT&T in August, and a few weeks later, the company brought new cases against Verizon and T-Mobile.

Another ID litigation effort that remains unresolved is a series of cases brought by Sequoia Technology LLC, which pit it against Dell, HP Enterprise, Hitachi and Red Hat. Initiated in 2018, the disputes centre on a patent from Korean research lab ETRI which relates to metadata storage.

Recent transactions suggest ID is lining up further licensing and litigation efforts involving US assets.

In September, ID renewed its partnership with ETRI, becoming the **exclusive licensee** to a portfolio of 16 US patent assets belonging to the state-run lab, Kyung Hee University and Kwangwoon University. The rights appear related to video encoding and decoding and are quite young, with several in the application stage and six having issued during 2020.

Assignment records show that in November, ID **transferred** a portfolio of 53 US patents to a new entity called Wireless Alliance, LLC. That could signal the prelude to a new monetisation effort involving wireless rights originally acquired by the fund from sources including KT Corporation.

Significantly, ID under new management also did a small deal with Samsung Electronics in November – which may be a first. The NPE was assigned three US patents in the **transaction**.

In effect, the company is looking like a fairly conventional NPE set up around licensing and litigation campaigns. As of now, its key allies appear to remain the top patent-owning powers in South Korean industry and academia. With a stronger focus on the monetisation side of things and looser ties to the government, it will be interesting to see whether it's able to forge new partnerships inside and outside of its home market.



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