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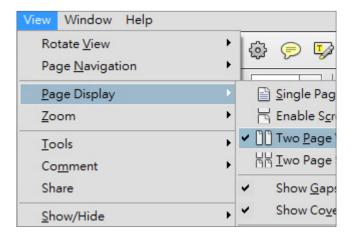
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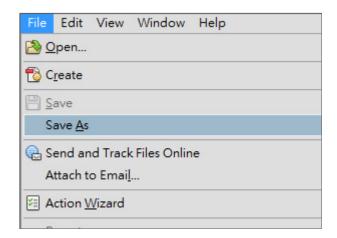
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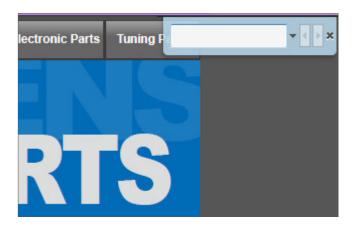
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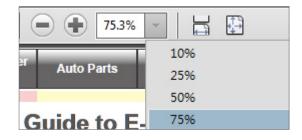
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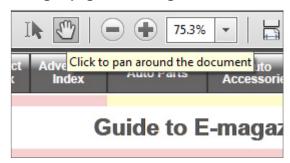


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Raymond Yeh says his company is differentiating itself from mainland Chinese competitors by developing a range of niche products.

By KEN LIU

Epistar of Taiwan and KAIFA of China Joint Venture Acquires American LED Maker Bridgelux

The joint venture of Epistar Corp. of Taiwan, Shenzhen Kaifa Technology Co., Ltd. (KAIFA) of mainland China and Kaistar Lighting (Xiamen) Co., Ltd. has acquired American LED chipmaker BridgeLux Inc., opening a new chapter in cooperation between Taiwanese and mainland Chinese LED makers on overseas acquisition.

The joint venture is 47.88 percent held by KAIFA, a leading manufacturer of contract electronics products in mainland China, and 40 percent by Epistar, currently the world's No.1 LED chipmaker by production capacity. Both Epistar and KAIFA are publicly held companies.

Epistar's vice president and spokesman, S.H. Chang, points out that the joint venture spent US\$130 million on the acquisition.

He adds that the deal sets a good example for the cooperation between LED makers on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait regardless of reportedly mounting anxiety among Taiwan's manufacturers in various industries about "red supply chains," a term obviously coined to refer to rising homegrown, integrated manufacturing capacity in mainland China purposefully promoted, encouraged by Beijing to reduce the nation's dependence on imports and to raise self-content ratio.

Chang rationally points out that there is no point for Taiwanese manufacturers to worry about the phenomenon of red supply chains, which also includes Taiwanese manufacturers, with his company, as example, supplying chips to KAIFA.

He notes that an added advantage of the acquisition is incidental ownership of BridgeLux's patents, which will spare Epistar, whose chips are used as backlights inside KAIFA's end-user products like TVs, from facing patent lawsuits in the United States. Protected by the patents, Epistar can look to explore new opportunities to ship more chips when KAIFA exports more products to the U.S.

Chang sees Taiwan's LED makers and the mainland's system-product manufacturers creating a win-win situation for themselves since Taiwan's LED makers have expertise in epitaxy, chip slicing and module making while the mainland's system-product manufacturers have built huge capacity to meet global market demands.

Taiwan's industry executives point out that the mainland's epitaxial-wafer makers and packaging providers in the LED industry are still qualitatively inferior to their Taiwanese competitors, but an increasing number of mainland Chinese heavyweight manufacturers make their contracts available to competition between mainland's

homegrown manufacturers and Taiwanese manufacturers, but with the purpose of strengthening their compatriots. The mainland Chinese LED suppliers usually undersell products in an effort to win contracts, forcing their Taiwanese competitors to do likewise.



LEDinside: Mainland China's LED Packaging Market up 19% in 2014

By KEN LIU

Mainland China's light emitting diode (LED) packaging market grew 19 percent year on year, to US\$8.6 billion in 2014, mainly driven by demand from the lighting sector, according to market consultancy LEDinside, a subsidiary of the Taiwan-headquartered TrendForce Corp.

The market organization's studies show that the top-10 packagers in the mainland together dominated a 45.6 percent share of

the mainland's market last year, gaining two percentage points from the previous year.

Also the studies show, while rankings keep reshuffling in the China market, the market is becoming an oligopoly or one whose market share is dominated by a few top players. Last year, Nichia Corp. of Japan and Everlight Electronics Co., Ltd. of Taiwan remained the top-two players, MLS Co., Ltd. of the mainland emerged as the No.3, and Cree, Inc. and

Philips Lumileds Lighting Co. came in fourth and fifth, respectively.

LEDinside's studies indicate that the rapid penetration of LED in the mainland's commercial and residential lighting sectors was pivotal to drive up China's LED packaging demand last year.

The mainland's market for packages used in mid-sized and large backlights for TVs has slowed mostly due to improved technologies that enable fewer LEDs to generate more light. But the mainland's demand for the packages used in small-sized backlights for mobile devices has continued climbing as a result of the increased share commanded by homegrown smartphone brands in China's market.

LEDinside's mainland China-headquartered market analyst, Yu Bin, points out that in 2014 Western LED packagers raked in total revenue of US\$2.35 billion, increasing 17 percent year on year, which was clearly down from the 40 percent annual rate they had in 2013.

Compared with the Western manufacturers, Taiwanese packagers' sales in China rallied 16 percent in 2014 to a total of US\$740 million after a year-on-year recession of 1 percent in 2013.

However, the market share of Taiwanese packagers in the mainland overall is on a downtrend because of their comparatively low cost-performance (C/P) ratio and the rapid rise of the mainland's competitors.

But LEDinside points out that last year some Taiwanese packagers adjusted their strategy to release inexpensive products with quality warranty in an effort to boost C/P ratio. The manufacturers include Everlight and Unity Opto Technology Co., Ltd., which have so far fared pretty well in China's LED backlight market with the new strategy.

The mainland's homegrown packagers have steadily grabbed bigger share of the mainland market, ending 2014 with total sales of US\$5.49 billion, a gain of 21 percent from the previous year. The mainland's first-tier homegrown packagers, such as MLS, the Foshan Nationstar Optoelectronics Co., Ltd., the Guangzhou Hongli Optoelectronics Co., Ltd., the Shenzhen Jufei Optoelectronics Co., Ltd., and the Shenzhen Refond Optoelectronics Co., Ltd. have maintained annual sales growth of over 30 percent.

LEDinside's studies indicate that Western manufacturers have made most of their advanced technologies, patents, and brand names to dominate the high-end share of the European and American markets, but their advantages are diminishing and they are losing some markets to Taiwanese and mainland Chinese competitors, whose technologies have improved considerably.

Yu points out that given technology and patent have been the primary hurdle to entry into the high-end market in America and Europe, many mainland Chinese manufacturers are eagerly seeking collaboration with international players. For instance, Shenzhen Refond and Shenzhen Jufei signed agreements respectively early this year to be licensed to use Toyoda Gosei Co., Ltd.'s white LED patent.

He expects to see more mainland Chinese packagers enter into patent and technology deals with international players to realize their goals to tap Western high-end markets.





LED

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Pleo Inc.

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The maker supplies huge range of products, including invisible alabaster spotlights, ceiling lighting, wall-mount lighting, walkway lighting, wall lamps, desk lamps, ceiling lamps, track lights, spotlights, LED lamps, pendant lights, garden lights, down lights, outdoor lights, streetlights, work lights, commercial lighting, bathroom lighting, and vanity mirror lighting.

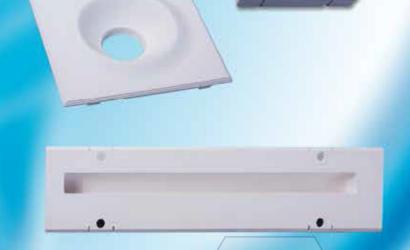
Besides lighting fittings and accessories of acrylic, glass, ceramic and metal, the maker also offers lamp holders, lamp sockets, lamp trays, and light tube supports.

Able to turn out various products to meet all kinds of market demands, the company is equipped to handle stamping, lathing, deep drawing, die casting, sand casting, lost-wax casting, extrusion, laser cutting, and welding, as well as being equipped with machines for injecting plastic products, vacuum forming PC/acrylic parts, and blown-glass accessories.

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The company's other significant advantage include full inspection of every single product before shipping and consolidated shipment in one container as much as possible so as to minimize customers' cost. (KL)

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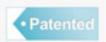
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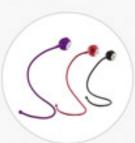
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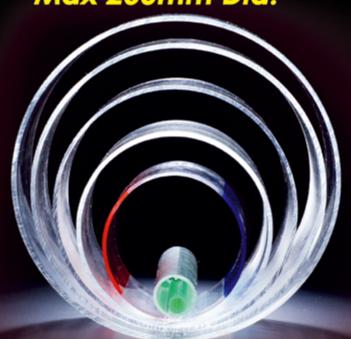
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