

China's Tencent wins first game licence in 18 months

November 18 2022



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China has granted tech giant Tencent its first licence for a video game in 18 months, ending a dry spell that had threatened its position as the world's top game maker.

Beijing moved against the country's vibrant gaming sector last year as part of a sprawling crackdown on big tech companies, including a cap on the amount of time children could spend playing games.

Officials also froze approvals of new titles for nine months until April.

China's gaming regulator, the National Press and Publication Administration, on Thursday said it had approved 70 new titles in November including Tencent's action game "Metal Slug: Awakening" and a role-playing game "Journey to the West: Return" by rival NetEase.

Licences are mandatory for video games to be published and sold in the Chinese market.

The last time Tencent obtained a major licence was in May 2021.

A Tencent subsidiary received a licence in September but it was for a free educational game.

Shares in the Hong Kong-listed company closed up more than 0.5 percent on Friday after the licensing announcement, while NetEase gained more than 3.6 percent.

The approval signals a relaxing of China's strict attitude towards tech companies.

During the crackdown, hundreds of game makers pledged to scrub "politically harmful" content from their products and enforce curbs on underage players to comply with government demands.

Restrictions announced last year allow players under the age of 18 to play for three hours a week.

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Citation: China's Tencent wins first game licence in 18 months (2022, November 18) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2022-11-china-tencent-game-licence-months.html>

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