

Tencent developed its own AI program Jueyi, which has scored several victories in matches around the world.

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"If we develop a simulator, define its parameters, let it fully explore, study and make mistakes, programs will make out how things work, far exceeding our imagination," Ma said.

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Ma said Chinese IT companies were actively developing AI.

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Internet giant Baidu set up a national deep learning technology lab in Beijing in March. The lab gathered AI experts from Baidu, Tsinghua University, Beihang University and the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology. "The Internet is just an appetizer. The main course will be AI. In the future, machines will develop to a point where they can understand humans and their intentions," said Li Yanhong, chair of Baidu.

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Baidu has invested heavily in machine-aided study, image recognition, voice recognition and driverless vehicles.

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"AI will be a magnanimous industry and will last for a very long time. I'm certain that the industry will develop fast in the next 20 to 50 years," Li said.

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At a AI conference in Beijing last week, Zhang Yongqiang, deputy director of Zhongguancun Management Committee, said the AI industry would see a "new age," promoted by many government policies.

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In May last year, the government made a three-year action plan to develop AI.

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The industry market size was 23.9 billion yuan (about 3.5 billion U.S. dollars) last year, and will reach 38 billion yuan (about 5.5 billion U.S. dollars) in 2018, according to the China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

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AI has been applied widely in security, finance and medical fields. DeepGlint is a Beijing-based company which has developed a smart video surveillance system, which will help police track suspects.

"If you upload facial images, or other information such as clothing, height, body size and car license plate number, into the system, it will scan hours of video for matches," said Zhao Yong, DeepGlint founder. "It is impossible for police officers to scan millions of hours of video footage to locate a suspect, but it is possible for the system to do it."

"CEO" " " "

"Machines can do what people can't. We must make machines our best partner, rather than letting them replace us," said Jack Ma, founder of Internet commerce giant Alibaba. "We shall not be worried about how much the Internet is impacting traditional business. Rather, we have to use Internet and AI to our advantage."

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