



People visit an exhibition at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference, or WAIC, in Shanghai this week. — Dong Jun

WAIC speakers share vision of AI reshaping all industries

Zhu Shenshen

Scientists, business leaders and officials talked about artificial intelligence and metaverse applications and landscapes on smart driving, drug research, architecture, e-commerce and astronomy at the World Artificial Intelligence Conference, or WAIC, held in Shanghai this week.

They covered self-driving taxis, systems for China's FAST or the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope and various local AI applications, covering metaverse-style Shanghai landmarks, including the iconic Oriental Pearl TV Tower.

Shanghai's AI output has surpassed 300 billion yuan (US\$43.5 billion) annually, double the figure in recent years. One-third of AI talent

in China are based in Shanghai, Mayor Gong Zheng said in his opening keynote speech at the WAIC.

AI and metaverse have brought "the fourth industrial revolution" with changes and opportunities for the whole of society, according to Zou Ciyong, managing director of the UNIDO or the United Nations Industrial Development Organization.

Robin Li, Baidu chairman and CEO, expected China's autonomous driving to be upgraded directly to the L4 or Level 4 from the current L2, as the technology for it is well ready.

The Baidu-powered self-driving taxi received 1 million orders in July from 10-plus cities, he revealed, adding that technically speaking, a city can be ready for self-driving open-

road tests "within 20 days."

Baidu's PaddlePaddle AI platform now has 4.77 million developers and serves 180,000 organizations. It has set up an AI platform center in Zhangjiang of the Pudong New Area, serving various AI scenes covering finance, energy, industrial and retail.

Huawei's AI service is used in drug research and various industrial sectors. The company now has more than 20 city-level AI infrastructure networks nationwide, which greatly improves urban management and people's daily life, Ken Hu, Huawei's rotating chairman, told the WAIC.

China plans to build a national AI computing network using AI as a public resource like water and electricity to boost the digital economy.

Several metaverse and AI



People experience AI technology at the WAIC. — Jiang Xiaowei

upgrade plans were released during the opening session, including the TV tower, the site of the First National Congress of the Communist Party of China, Zhangjiang Group, and the National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai), the venue of the upcoming China International Import Expo.

The three-day event, covering the opening ceremony, forums and exhibitions, is accessible to the public virtually in a "metaverse zone," with functions such as a panoramic forum bulletin board, HD

image quality and teleporting of virtual characters.

Virtual avatar hosts Shen Xiaoya from SMG and Xi Jiajia attended the WAIC opening ceremony and the online interactive sessions. The opening session attracted about 10,000 visitors in metaverse.

Meta, previously Facebook, believes AI and metaverse can be used in culture and e-commerce sectors, playing important roles to show Chinese culture and promote made-in-China products globally, according to Jayne Leung, Meta China president.