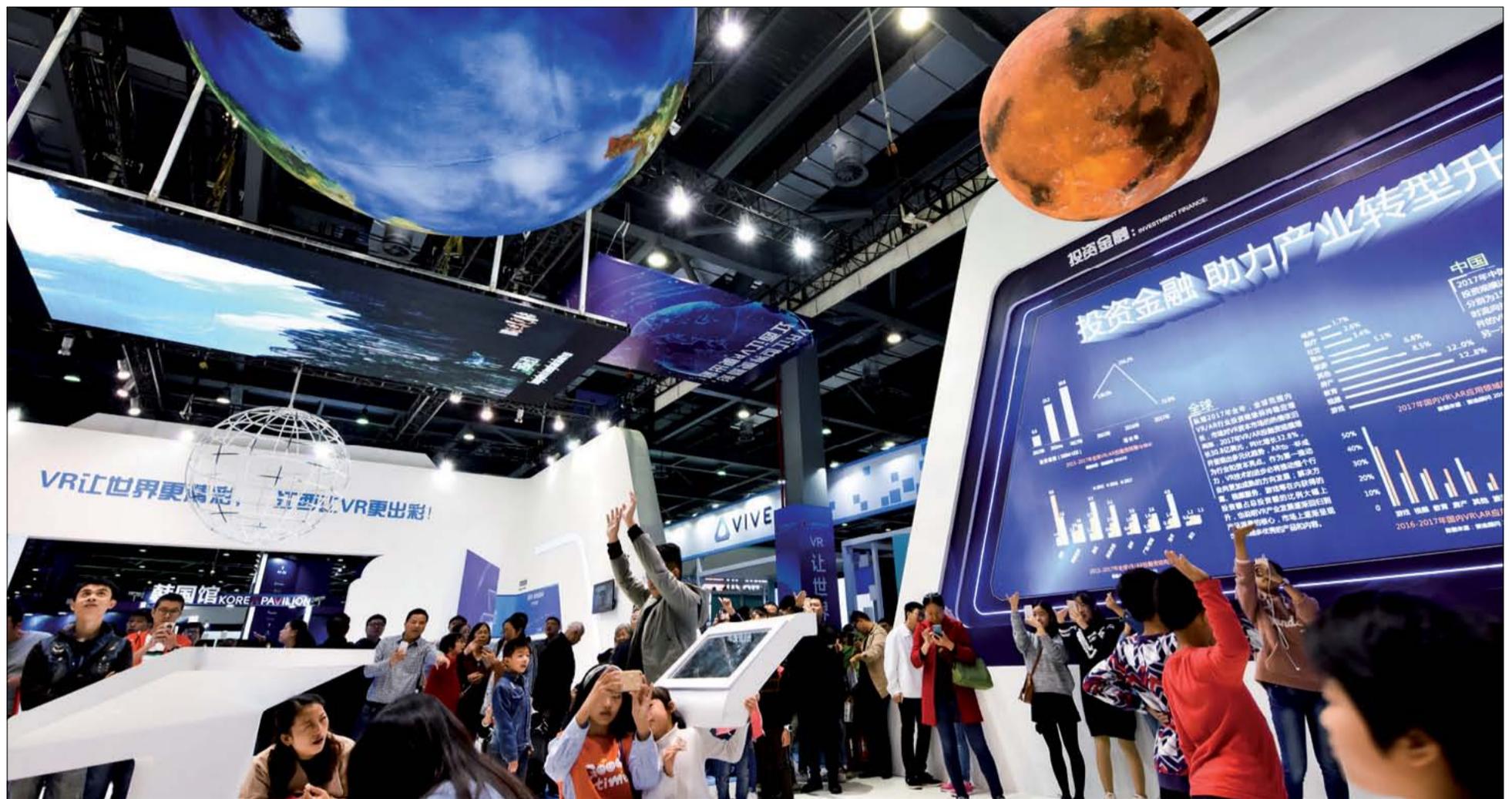


# Jiangxi on track to be VR power center



2018 World Conference on VR Industry was held from Oct 19 to 21 in Nanchang, Jiangxi province. WANG YONG/PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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It may sound futuristic when you can “touch” products while shopping online instead of merely viewing pictures. But, the idea has been met with unprecedented enthusiasm in eastern China’s Jiangxi province.

The three-day 2018 World Conference on VR Industry, organized by China’s Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Jiangxi provincial government, was held in Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi Province, from Oct 19. It drew more than 150 representatives of national and global tech giants, including Microsoft, Alibaba, Qualcomm and Huawei, to share the latest developments in virtual reality (VR).

Nanchang’s VR industry has seen rapid growth in recent years after it launched a national VR industrial base project in early 2016. The Jiangxi provincial government said last year VR will be the focus of the emerging local economy and manufacturing.

Wang Yibin, vice-chairman of the Jiangxi Industry and Information Technology Commission, said Nanchang’s VR sector has been on the fast track of development, with some 50 VR-related enterprises registered in the city so far.

The cluster of VR enterprises can also be seen in cities like Ganzhou, Shangrao and Ji’an, laying the foundation for the prompt growth of the industry in Jiangxi.

Jiangxi’s income from the main business of the digital-information business rose 19.2 percent year-on-year to more than 200 billion yuan last year. The speed of growth was six percentage points higher than the national average level. Total profits reached 13.17 billion yuan – up about 16.4 percent over 2016.

“There are various VR companies around the world. But, Nanchang is the first place targeting to become a VR innovative center, industrial center and platform,” said Jack Ma Yun, Alibaba Group Holding executive chairman, in a keynote speech at the conference.

Three strategic cooperation framework agreements and 154 cooperation projects were sealed during the conference, according to the provincial industry and information technology commission. It’s estimated that total investments could reach 63.15 billion yuan (\$9.1 billion).

US tech titan Microsoft is one of the partners. It has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the government of Nanchang’s Honggutan New District, with plans to have its first incubator project centering on VR and mixed reality

(MR) in Nanchang.

Teng Wen, vice-president of Microsoft’s greater China region, said he could tell from the conference that VR/MR companies, projects, talents and investments are congregating in China and in Jiangxi.

He said Microsoft hopes to leverage its brand, technology and platform, as well as the Jiangxi provincial government’s policy and industrial support, to build up the innovative incubator. He expected it to expand the province’s emerging industries, including artificial intelligence and VR, and promote the digital transformation of traditional industries.

VR companies are bullish about the technology’s application to Jiangxi’s tourism. In the exhibition hall of Nanchang’s Han Dynasty Haihunhou Historic Site Museum, visitors can trace the life of Liu He with a VR film. Liu He, known as Haihunhou, was one of the emperors during the West Han Dynasty, owning the Haihunhou tomb in Nanchang.

Chen Hong, a professor at the Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications, reckoned that cultural consumption would become one of the most potential markets for VR and augmented reality (AR) application. It can rebuild a historical scene and provide an immersive



experience for visitors.

“Using the 3D digital form to present the history of Haihunhou could strengthen the propagation force of history and culture,” said Hong Xu, co-founder and general manager of Shanghai-based VR solutions company DGene.

He noted that VR solutions could serve content producers and drive local tourism development.

AR glasses startup Oglass founder and Chief Executive Officer Su Bo said Jiangxi has the strength in developing VR/AR visual display devices as it has many established optical instrument manufacturing companies, such as Phoenix Optical.

A Jiangxi native, Su pays particular attention to his hometown’s VR/AR development. “The current stage is the best time for Jiangxi to develop its VR/AR market application, based on the new generation of information technology,” he said.

“Industries that have good developments need to build application enterprises locally and then expand to other places.” With a solid industrial foundation, he suggested that Jiangxi could enlarge local VR/AR industrial application first, step into the retail side gradually and, ultimately, expand beyond the province.

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