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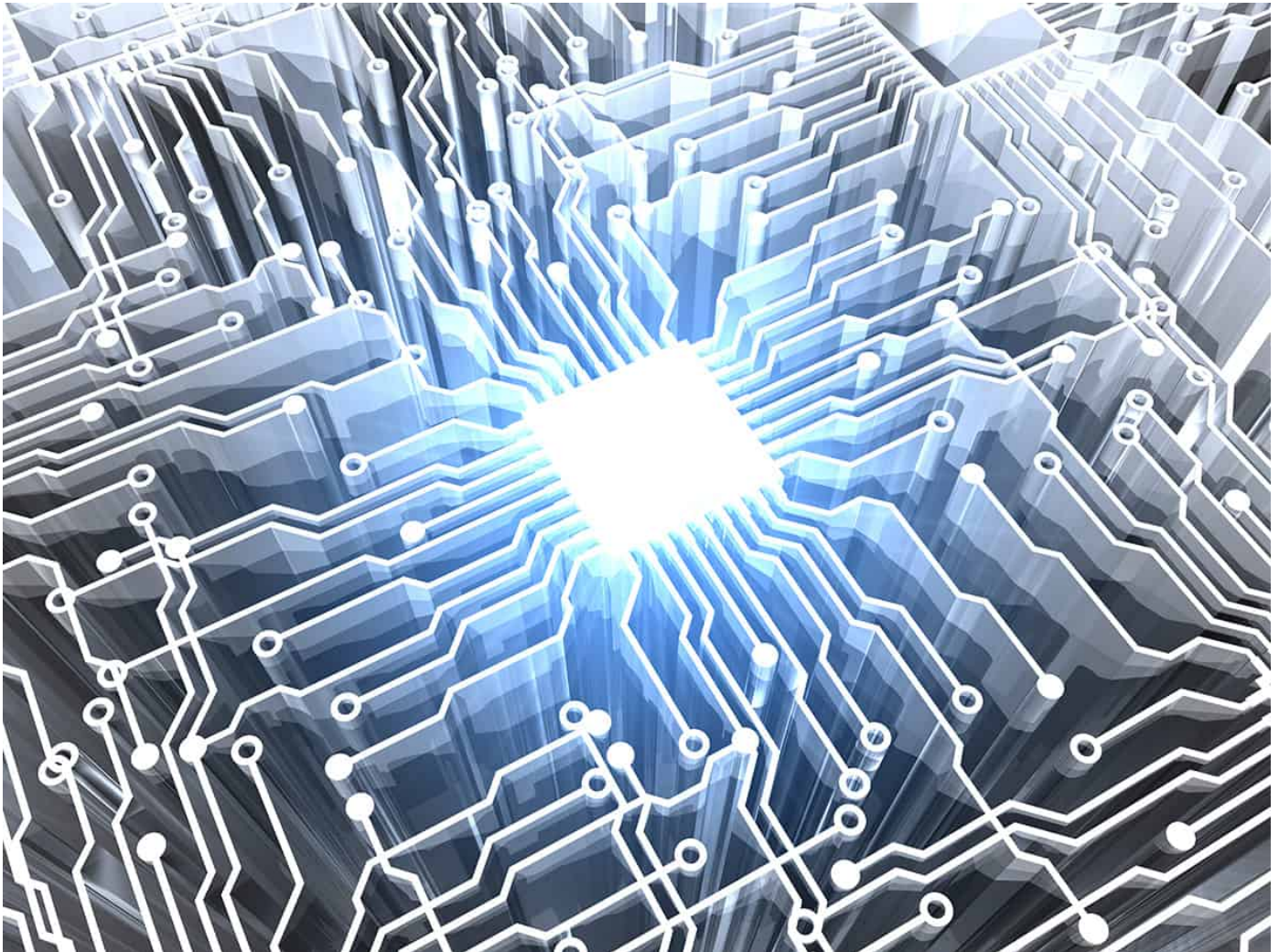
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QUANTUM | NEWS

Baidu and Alibaba plan to quit quantum computing research

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Going offline: Chinese web giants Baidu and Alibaba have announced they are quitting quantum research (courtesy: iStock/Devrimb)

The Chinese search engine company Baidu is giving up its quantum computing division by donating its entire research facility to the government-run [Beijing Academy of Quantum Information Sciences](#) (BAQIS). The company says that the two parties are currently in discussion over the details of the donation.

Baidu's quantum computing facilities were established in early 2018 after the company said it wanted to become a leading global quantum computing research institution within five years by focussing on areas such as quantum AI, algorithms and architecture. It revealed its first quantum computer, which had 10 superconducting qubits, in 2022 and later developed a 36-qubit quantum chip.

The firm made further steps towards a complete quantum computing infrastructure, by building quantum software-hardware interfaces as well as a "quantum operating system" as well as a cloud-based quantum machine-learning platform.

In March 2023, Baidu and BAQIS launched China's first quantum computing intellectual property alliance, which aimed to stimulate innovation in the industry.



Dropping out

Baidu's exit follows a similar move by the Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, which gave up its quantum research facilities last November. Alibaba's research institution Damo Academy donated its quantum lab to Zhejiang University. The company began research into quantum technologies relatively over a decade ago with reports stating it has already spent £12bn.

It is expected that the Damo Academy's 30 employees will continue with positions at [Zhejiang University](#) and in an official statement [Damo Academy](#) said it would instead become more focused on fundamental research in AI and its application in areas such as agriculture and healthcare.



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The reasons behind the sudden exits of Baidu and Alibaba from quantum tech are not entirely clear. Given it takes many years before quantum products fully hit the market, the shift in focus to other business activities may be commercially driven. Indeed, AI applications, in which both companies are active, may lead to earlier commercial success.

But as both Baidu and Alibaba have donated their facilities to government-backed academic institutions, their choices may not have been entirely made alone and perhaps reveal that the Chinese government wants a firmer grip on the nation's quantum computing development.

Martijn Boerkamp is a science writer based in the Netherlands

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