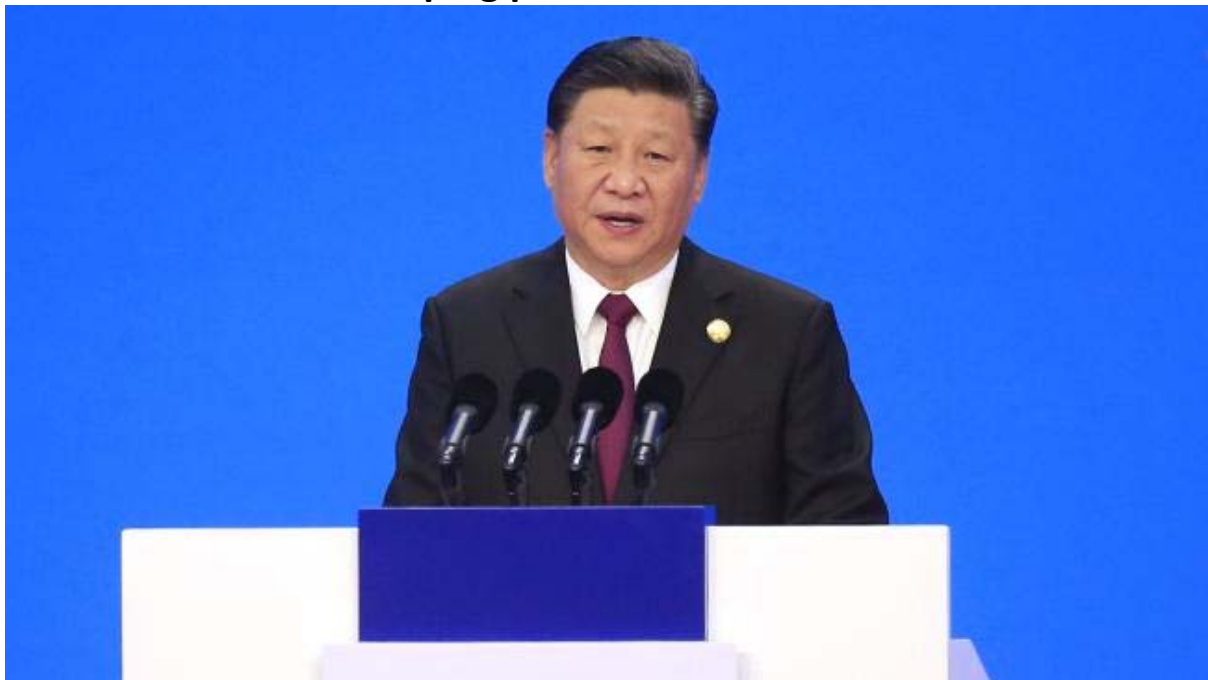


## Chinese President Xi Jinping promises to 'embrace the world'



Xi Jinping promised to 'embrace the world' in a speech that mentioned the word 'open' more than 50 times in Shanghai yesterday. Picture: AP

Glenda Korporaal, China correspondent, 12:00AM November 6, 2018

Shanghai: Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged yesterday to further open up the world's second-largest economy, releasing a package of measures to spur imports and foreign investment.

"It is our sincere commitment to open the Chinese market," Mr Xi said as he opened the first China International Import Expo in Shanghai.

Mr Xi promised to "embrace the world" in a speech that mentioned the word "open" more than 50 times.

Measures outlined to a VIP audience, including Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Australian Trade Minister Simon Birmingham, included lower tariffs and easier Customs clearances, and a further opening up of the telecommunications, education and medical services markets.

The five-day expo, which has attracted representatives from 152 countries and 3600 companies, is designed to promote China as pro-trade and opposed to the protectionist measures promoted by US President Donald Trump.

Although it was announced more than a year ago, it comes at a time when China is under pressure from US trade wars and blunt attacks from Mr Trump while its economy is slowing.

While he did not mention Mr Trump by name, Mr Xi used his speech to take a swipe at his protectionist, America-first policies. “All flowers in full blossom make a beautiful spring,” he said. “Openness brings progress, seclusion leads to backwardness. Practices of the law of the jungle and winner-takes-all only represent a dead end. Inclusive growth for all is surely the right way forward.”

Warning that the world’s recovery from the global economic crisis was still “unstable”, Mr Xi hit out at what he called “beggar thy neighbour” actions. “Recovery is still unstable. There is a need for a concerted effort to foster new growth drivers,” Mr Xi said. “Beggar-thy-neighbour policies, isolation and seclusion will result in stagnation and an unhealthy world economy.”

He said the world needed to “establish a set of global economic and trade rules that is fair, reasonable and transparent, and promote trade and investment liberalisation to make the economy more open through greater exchanges”.

He pledged to stimulate imports, boost consumption, foster new areas of high-end consumption, and “continue to unleash the potential of the domestic market and expand the potential for imports”. He promised to reduce restrictions on foreign investment and show more respect for foreign commercial law in China.

Foreign business groups complain that while Beijing is expanding imports to serve its manufacturers and consumers, it blocks access to industries including finance and logistics and is trying to squeeze foreign competitors out of promising fields such as information security.

Mr Xi said China would reduce the negative list of areas where foreigners cannot invest. “We respect international business rules and practices, and provide equal treatment of all types of businesses operating in China,” he said. “We protect lawful rights and interests of foreign companies operating in China. “China has pursued development with the door open and succeeded in transforming a semi-closed economy into a fully open economy. Openness has become a trade mark of China. China’s door will never be closed. It will only open still wider.”

Mr Xi is mustering international support at a time when Mr Trump has imposed duties on more than \$US250 billion worth of Chinese imports, and threatened to hit a further \$200bn.

China has imposed tariffs on only \$US110bn worth of imports from the US, arguing that their trade disputes need to be settled by negotiation within the global trading system.

Mr Xi is due to meet Mr Trump at the G20 summit in Argentina later this month — a move China is hoping could provide the basis for a resolution of trade tensions.

Glenda Korporaal