

# Beijing plays down 'Made in China 2025'

**Officials at half-yearly briefing more muted than before concerning modernisation plans**

**Jun Mai**

jun.mai@scmp.com

China's plan for industrial and technological upgrading should be viewed objectively by the international community, the ministry behind it said yesterday, as Beijing continued to play down its ambitions in an apparent effort to avoid antagonising the US.

At a half-yearly briefing on the country's industrial developments, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology made only muted references to "Made in China 2025", despite describing it just six months earlier as having witnessed a raft of "significant and symbolic achievements".

When asked by the *Post* whether the programme was still on track, ministry spokesman Huang Libin said it was a long-term strategy that needed to be treated objectively by the global community.

"[China] has conducted a strict compliance assessment [of the plan] according to the rules of the World Trade Organisation and China's pledge on joining the WTO," he said, adding that many countries, including the US, had developed similar programmes.

The tone of the briefing was very much in keeping with suggestions made recently by Zhong Wei, a professor at Beijing Normal University. In a report published by the *Post* in June, he said that if Beijing wanted to ease concerns about its global ambitions, it should stop touting the Made in China initiative as a development strategy and instead present it simply as a guideline for upgrading its manufacturing sector.

The plan, unveiled by Premier Li Keqiang in 2015, is intended to guide the country's industrial modernisation, including replacing foreign technologies with home-grown alternatives in such areas as robotics and electric cars.

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It has been a thorny issue between Beijing and Washington. When the US first threatened to impose 25 per cent tariffs on US\$50 billion of imports from China, it said they would apply to products "related to 'Made in China 2025'".

Huang said the trade war had yet to have a significant effect on the economy. "We hear complaints from [Chinese] companies that US clients have requested a suspension of orders and deliveries, but so far it has had only a limited impact on the industrial sector."