

Beijing denounces US duties ahead of visit by Obama

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China denounced as protectionist new US anti-dumping duties on steel pipes and launched its own investigation into imports of US-made automobiles yesterday, a week before a visit by US President Barack Obama.

It also called for Washington's swift recognition that China is a market economy, which would make it harder for the US to declare Chinese products are dumped.

China's calibrated response may be an attempt to avoid a tense atmosphere in the hope of concessions during Obama's visit.

The US on Thursday slapped preliminary anti-dumping duties of US\$2.63 billion on Chinese-made pipes used in the oil and gas industry, in the biggest US trade action against China to date. That follows countervailing duties on the pipes, announced in September.

"China resolutely opposes the abuse of protectionist measures," China's Commerce Ministry said on its Web site.

Obama will visit China for several days from Nov. 15 and trade disputes are likely to feature prominently.

China's investigation would target sedans with engine capacity of 2 liters and above, as well as sports utility vehicles, the Commerce Ministry said, issuing a long list of incentives and tax breaks granted by the US federal government and the state of Michigan.

"We hope that the US will set aside its biases and as quickly as possible recognize China's market economic status, thoroughly overcoming its double standards and giving equal and fair treatment to Chinese firms," it said.

In trade meetings with US officials last week in Hangzhou, the Chinese pressed for recognition as a market economy, before the 2016 deadline negotiated when it entered the WTO.

"We hope that the US will abide by the principles of free trade and non-discrimination in trade under WTO rules in handling this issue," Chinese Vice Minister of Commerce Yi Xiaozhun (易小筑) said.

Washington promised to set up a panel to consider the issue.

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