

China slaps tariffs on 128 US items

CHRIS BUCKLEY

Beijing: The Chinese government hit back on Monday at President Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum by acting on a threat to put tariffs as high as 25 per cent on imports of 128 American-made products, including pork and seamless steel pipes.

The Chinese ministry of commerce indicated that the tariffs, which it first publicly suggested almost two weeks ago, were intended to pressure the Trump administration to back down from a simmering trade war. In addition to imposing additional tariffs on steel and aluminum from China and other countries, President Trump has threatened to put protective duties on other Chinese-made products worth \$60 billion.

"We hope that the United States will rescind its measures that violate World Trade Organisation rules as quickly



Workers cut pork in Chicago. (Reuters)

as possible," the ministry said in an online statement about China's retaliatory tariffs. "China and the US are the world's two biggest economies, and cooperation is the only correct choice. Both sides should use dialogue and consultation to resolve their mutual concerns."

The Chinese retaliation was no surprise. But Beijing appeared to go a step beyond its initial threat last month to counter the US' tariffs on steel and aluminum.

The ministry of commerce

said then that it could impose tariffs in two stages: first, a 15 per cent duty on 120 products, including fruit and wine, and then, after further assessing the impact of the US' tariffs, a 25 per cent tariff on eight other products, including pork, an important moneymaker, especially in farming regions in states that voted for Trump.

But the latest announcement said the tariffs that will take effect on Monday covered all 128 products, including the 25 per cent charge on pork.

The ministry said it had Chinese public opinion on its side after asking for views about the trade measures. Over recent weeks, China's state-run news media has condemned the Trump administration's protectionist steps and presented China as the innocent defender of open trade.

In fact, China imposes relatively high barriers on many imports.