

China to levy low tariffs on more than 600 commodities in 2010

BEIJING, Dec. 15 (Xinhua) -- China is to impose temporarily low import tariffs on more than 600 commodities next year, the Ministry of Finance (MOF) announced Tuesday.

The targeted commodities comprised resource commodities, including coal, granite, and phosphate ore; key components for optic communications; medical products, including plasma and vaccines; and some advanced production machines, the MOF said in a statement.

It did not specify the duration and tariff rates.

The move aims to support agriculture and rural development, technologies that will benefit industrial upgrading and equipment manufacturing, energy and environment conservation, according to the statement.

The statement said the government would further lower import tariffs on six commodities, including fresh strawberries, from Jan. 1, a move to honor the commitments of cutting tariffs it made on joining the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, said the statement.

But it gave neither the names of the other five commodities nor tariff rates on the six commodities.

The general tariff level would be left unchanged at 9.8 percent next year, the same as the previous three years, said the statement.

The limited scope and margin of lower tariffs was the reason the general tariff level was left unchanged.

China's general tariff level stood at 15.3 percent in 2002.

The tariff level for farm produce had been reduced from 18.8 percent in 2002 to 15.2 percent, and for industrial products, it had been cut from 14.7 percent to 8.9 percent, said the statement.

China would expand the scope of the conventional tariffs and increase the margins of preference in 2010 to boost bilateral and multilateral trade with other countries, said an official with the MOF.

More favorable tariffs would be introduced to imports from 17 countries including the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Chile, Pakistan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in 2010.

The average tariffs on imports from Chile would be trimmed to 1.3 percent in 2010, and that for Pakistan would be lowered to 5.3 percent.

After the launching of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area (ACFTA), 90 percent of products traded between ASEAN and China would enjoy zero tariffs, said the official.

China also plans to levy preferential duties on 41 least developing countries worldwide including

Laos and Ethiopia, granting zero-tariff to most of the imports from the these countries, according to the official.

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