Specter of tariffs leaves consumers leery of costs

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By China Daily |   
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With US President Donald Trump's signing of a memo on Thursday that could lead to tariffs on up to $60 billion of goods imported from China, many in the US are gauging what the impact will be.  
On Monday, three retail associations - The Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA), the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) and the National Retail Federation (NRF) - sent a letter to the president expressing concerns about the impact on US consumers should China retaliate against the tariffs.  
Indeed, Cui Tiankai, China's ambassador to the US, said on Thursday that China will respond in kind.  
"Let me assure those people who intend to fight a trade war. We will certainly fight back. We will retaliate," Cui said in a video on the Chinese embassy's Facebook page. "If people want to play tough, we will play tough with them and see who will last longer."  
The US Chamber of Commerce also opposed the tariffs in a statement last week. Before Thursday's announcement, China Daily spoke to some customers of retail stores in the Washington area.  
Major US retail stores such as Macy's, Target, Walmart and Best Buy are concerned about the impact the tariffs could have on their bottom lines, said Rick Helfenbein, president and CEO of American Apparel & Footwear Association.  
The tariffs also could affect American working families as a hidden tax, he said.  
The current trade environment between the US and China already has had an impact. On Thursday, Best Buy, the largest electronics retailer in the US, announced that it no longer would sell smartphones from China's Huawei.  
Huawei, the third-largest smartphone vendor in the world behind Apple and Samsung, also had been expected to announce a partnership with AT&T in January at CES to sell its Mate 10 Pro phone, but the carrier reportedly backed out because of US political pressure, cnet.com reported.  
Jose Ferman, a Macy's furniture sales representative, said that most of the items in the home section of his store are made in China.  
"Everything is made in China, even a plastic cup," Ferman said. If you make it more expensive (through tariffs), then all of our things will be too expensive.."  
Dianne, who asked to be identified only by her first name, is a retired teacher who said she likes to shop at Macy's.  
"I am personally against it," she said in regard to the tariffs, "because I think we should have open trade. I think in the long run the tariffs will do more harm to the US economy."  
Another man said that people from his region could benefit from a tariff on imported steel, given that many had lost their jobs in steel mills.  
"Initially, it's good," he said, but wondered whether it would be beneficial to the national economy in the long run.  
"I don't know the dynamics of the trade war. I heard him (Trump) saying it's good, but I don't see how it is good," for tourists visiting Washington, said Dexter Morse, manager of the Washington Welcome Center, which sells souvenirs.  
Morse said that at least 80 percent of the store's products were made in China, including t-shirts, mugs, caps and pens.

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