




April 3, 2010

Brad Owen
Lieutenant Governor



TO: People with an Interest in International Trade

FROM: Lt. Governor Brad Owen 

SUBJECT: Invitation to Join Our Mission to India Nov. 12 to 24

When I recently sat down with my friends Debadutta Dash and Habib Habib at a Seattle convention, I was somewhat prepared to hear a “sales pitch” about why the state of Washington should increase our trade activities with India. After all, these two gentlemen are the co-chairs of the Washington State India Trade Relations Action Committee (WASITRAC).

In fact I did hear a very good pitch, one that now has me nearly as enthused as they are about trade and investment opportunities we have in that country. Their words intrigued me so much that I have agreed to co-lead a trade mission there (along with Congressman Jim McDermott and Tay Yoshitani, the Port of Seattle’s CEO, and Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon), on Nov. 12 to 24 in order to learn more about our trade opportunities with the world’s second most populous country.

I invite you to join this important trade mission. Three days of the trip will be in India’s seaport state of Orissa, located on its East Coast along the Bay of Bengal, but we will visit other parts of India as well. In fact, another three days will be spent at the India International Trade Fair at Pragati Maidan in New Delhi, where we will engage in a number of meetings with high level business leaders and government officials from across the country, as well as attend cultural events.

Why India? Why Orissa? Mr. Dash and Mr. Habib are quick to remind me:

- India is the world’s largest free market democracy. Commercial investment opportunities are everywhere there, and government policies make market entry and trade very easy. Moreover, India has not been affected by the financial crisis that has impacted the U.S. and much of the rest of the world. In fact the country anticipates growth of 6 to 7 percent in its gross domestic product this year!
- Trade between the U.S. and India is growing rapidly, up sharply over the past five years. Imports from India to the U.S. rose from \$11.5 billion in 2003-04 to \$20.7 billion in 2007-08. Yet less than 1 percent of Washington’s current exports find its way to that country – a number that can no doubt be improved upon!

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- India has a growing “middle class.” According to the U.S. Department of State, while two thirds of the population lives on \$2 a day or less, more than 50 million Indians have a disposable income ranging from 200,000 to 1,000,000 rupees per year (\$4,166-\$20,833). Estimates are that this middle class will grow ten-fold by 2025. I believe Washington can help supply the needs of this improving economy as it grows.
- Attracted by jobs in the high-tech sector, thousands of people of East Indian descent have immigrated to Washington state over the past decade. In fact, the government of India has expressed so much interest in Washington that it intends to open a consulate office in Bellevue – possibly as early as next year. I believe stronger trade ties with India are a natural outcome of an increasingly important bond with that country.
- The state of Orissa has 300 miles of coastline and the deepest sea port in India at Dhamra, making it strategically located near ports in China, Japan and Korea and an easy stop for ships laden with Washington exports. Several other ports are under development along this same coastline, creating great opportunities for collaboration with engineers, architects and other specialists.
- Orissa is rich in natural resources, but if these are to be extracted it must be done in an environmentally responsible way. We have this expertise, and can show them how.
- India has a very advanced educational system, especially in its universities. That could lead to many opportunities to engage in significant educational exchange programs.
- These are just a few of the reasons we should be looking more closely at India. Many more reasons can be found on the WASITRAC Web site at <http://www.wasitrac.org/> , along with the tentative itinerary for our mission.

In my 13 years as lieutenant governor I have had the good fortune to lead many missions overseas to help the state explore new opportunities in trade and culture with other countries. While I don't look for missions to go on, I do carefully consider each invitation from other governments and associations and weigh them in interests of potential benefit to our state before making a commitment to travel. This one has great potential for benefiting our state. I hope you will agree.

For more information on costs, plans and accommodations please send an email to info@wasitrac.org.

Thank you for your interest. I will look forward to seeing you on this important mission!

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