

Governor's Column – 5/12/02

As you read this, the message of Mississippi is being sold a world away in Japan.

On this business mission to Japan, I will be meeting with several companies already doing business in Mississippi, such as Calsonic Kansei and Sumitomo. The mission will include a visit with Carlos Ghosn, President and CEO of Nissan, as well as some of the Nissan suppliers.

Meetings are scheduled with Unipres, which is currently building a facility in Forest, and M-Tek, which broke ground on its facility in Gluckstadt this past week. These are just two of the Tier One suppliers bringing additional jobs and investments to the Nissan project.

During our time in Japan, we will also visit with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, trade organizations such as JETRO Tokyo, Keidanren and the American Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

This is part of the work that must be done to sell Mississippi to markets around the world, and the work is paying off. In the past two years, more than 21,000 new jobs have been created and over \$6 billion has been invested in the state.

The markets in Asia have tremendous potential for our state, and we must create our own opportunities and take every opportunity presented to us to open these markets up for our products. That's the goal of this mission.

Mississippi exports led the nation during the first half of 2001. Our exports were up 30 percent, and totaled \$3.5 billion worth of products. According to the Mississippi Development Authority, our top market was Canada. Other major markets were Mexico, Norway, Belgium, Egypt and England.

The variety of products is impressive, and includes ships, machinery, wood products, plastics and furniture. Mississippi's furniture manufacturers alone exported products to 78 countries around the world.

Now, we're working to increase our exports to Asia, and the new relationship with Nissan is helping. The fact that Mississippi was one of four states considered for Hyundai's first North American plant is not lost on businesses in Asia, either.

This is all to say that Mississippi is doing great things in the world market. We are competing against other states and countries, and we're taking the competition to a higher level.

When you look closely at what we're doing, the action of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce this past week seems even more laughable. They claim Mississippi is not the best place to do business – an incredibly irresponsible and inappropriate statement.

Obviously, Nissan thinks Mississippi is a great place to do business. Hyundai must think that as well, since we were one of four finalists for their plant. We must be doing something right, if Whirlpool chose to close plants in Canada and expand its facility in Oxford. There must have been some reason Alcoa chose not to close its plant in Hernando, instead opting to double the size of its operations and its workforce.

The message of Mississippi is being sold this week in Japan, but it's a message we work hard to get across every day around the world. And, it's a simple message.

Mississippi is open for business.