Ohio State Visit to India to Re-establish University Ties

COLUMBUS -- Ten representatives of The Ohio State University, led by Board of Trustees Chair Ted Celeste and President William E. Kirwan, will visit India from Jan. 17-23 to establish and re-establish ties with several Indian universities and research institutes.

The academic objectives of the trip, Kirwan said, are to establish institutional linkages, develop study-abroad language programs, facilitate faculty and graduate student exchanges and long-term research programs, and explore possibilities for joint degree programs. Additionally, the group hopes to facilitate Ohio business and cultural connections with India.

Ohio State's affiliation with Indian higher education dates to 1957, when the U.S. State Department invited the university to participate in creating three agricultural universities in northwest India. As part of the "Green Revolution," these universities (Punjab, Haryana and Udaipur) were instrumental in converting India from a country that could not feed its own population to one with a surplus of food, said David O. Hansen, director of international programs in agriculture at Ohio State and a member of the travel group.

Ohio State's colleges of Education and Engineering also had partnerships with Indian institutions. The affiliations were severed in the early 1970s when the U.S. government sided with Pakistan in its war with India. Today, the Indian government and Indian universities are looking to reinstate some of these ties and to build new ones, Hansen said.

During this visit, the Ohio State group will sign some agreements on joint research programs and lay the groundwork for re-establishing some of the old ties as well as creating new ones. During most of the trip, the group will divide and visit different sites each day. They will be focusing on agricultural, engineering and humanities programs.

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Bobby Moser, vice president for agricultural administration and dean of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, along with Hansen and Rattan Lal, professor of soil science, will represent agriculture. They will sign a memorandum of understanding with the Indian Council on Agricultural Research and visit three agricultural universities where they will participate in public forums and alumni receptions.

Kermit Hall, dean of the College of Humanities, and Richard Gunther, director of Ohio State's Center for International Studies, will meet with the Indian Council of Social Science Research and visit several universities with programs in arts and sciences.

David Ashley, dean of the College of Engineering, will visit the Indian Institutes of Technology in Delhi and Kanpur, the Science Institute of India, and the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics.

All of the group members will be guests of U.S. Ambassador Richard Celeste for a reception, and all plan to tour the Taj Mahal and to visit the Tata Institute, a research center. Kirwan also plans to meet with Rattan Tata, a philanthropist dedicated to promoting development in India.

The Ohio State delegation:
William E. Kirwan, president
Theodore Celeste, chair of the Board of Trustees, and his wife, Bobbie Celeste
Daniel Slane, trustee
Bobby Moser, vice president for agricultural administration and dean of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
David Ashley, dean of the College of Engineering
Kermit Hall, dean of the College of Humanities
Richard Gunther, director of the Center for International Studies and executive director of International Studies
Rattan Lal, professor of soil science
David Hansen, director of the Office of International Programs in Agriculture and associate dean of the College of Food, Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

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OSU to help India solve its growing food crisis

By Scott Powers
Dispatch Staff Reporter

India wants a second "green revolution" and wants Ohio State University to help foster it, just as the university did a generation ago when the first revolution helped India increase food production.

OSU President William E. Kirwan and other top university officials, who returned from India early yesterday morning, called their 10-day trade mission a huge success in re-establishing links between OSU and universities and science institutes in India.

OSU officials said they were invited to India to claim a role in that country's ambitious — and imperative — move to dramatically increase and improve food production in the country of 1 billion people.

"I've traveled on many foreign missions during my years in higher education, but I don't think I've ever participated in one that I feel accomplished as much or was as successful as this mission," Kirwan said.

The mission led Ohio State to sign several agreements with Indian universities and science institutes and laid the groundwork for several more. Those agreements will lead Ohio State and its Indian counterparts to work together on agricultural, engineering and humanitarian reforms that could benefit both, Kirwan said.

"It's a place where many universities are going. They (Indian officials) are really concerned about the follow-through. With Ohio State, there is no question," said David B. Ashley, dean of the OSU College of Engineering.

He and others gave three reasons:

■ Kirwan and OSU trustees Chairman Theodore S. Celeste personally led the OSU team.

■ Ohio State was a key player in India's first green revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, a role Indian officials have not forgotten.

■ Celeste's brother, former Ohio Gov. Richard F. Celeste, is the U.S. ambassador to India.

In addition to Ashley, the deans of the OSU colleges of Agriculture and Humanities joined Theodore Celeste and Kirwan.

"Those of us who were not in agriculture viewed it as exploratory," Ashley said. "But we found out it was much more than exploratory."

The research possibilities range from crop rotation to finding a way to clean up the Ganges River, a vital water source that is both holy and horribly polluted.

OSU is expecting exchanges of faculty and staff members and students, and to join colleagues in India in research projects funded by governments and private foundations in both countries.

The next step could come this spring, as OSU and universities in India put together a task force to set priorities.

Rattan Lal, an OSU professor of soil science who has split his career between Ohio State and research institutions in his native India, said the benefits should flow both ways. However, he said, Indian universities really need Ohio State's help right now.

Lal said India faces a number of challenges, based on increasing food production without causing further environmental degradation.