



Gov. Rauner, Consul General deepen economic ties between Japan, Illinois

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MARION - Gov. Bruce Rauner traveled today with the Japanese Consul General for the Midwest to meet with key educational and manufacturing leaders in southern Illinois, where the state's business ties with Japan are paying dividends in jobs.



Today's schedule included a tour of the Aisin Manufacturing campus in Marion. The company's footprint has grown from one plant to three since the Japanese firm's first Illinois groundbreaking in fall 2001.

"Aisin — an esteemed, world-class auto supplier — is among the many examples of Illinois' strong relationship with Japanese investors," Rauner said while touring with Consul General Naoki Ito. "We have over 630 Japanese companies at 1,206 locations, employing more than 44,000 Illinoisans."

"Aisin is very pleased to support the Japan Consulate-Midwest visit to our plant and honored that Gov. Rauner was able to attend," said Glenn Edwards, executive vice president of Aisin Manufacturing in Marion, where a combined 2,500-plus are employed at the three Aisin Group plants. "This type of interaction and activity is key to a positive, long-term business relationship."

Before the tour, business, government and educational leaders gathered for a working luncheon at Rend Lake College, a community college in Ina. New Southern Illinois University System Chancellor Carlo Montemagno, Rend Lake College President Terry Wilkerson, state Sen. Paul Schimpf, R-Waterloo, and state Rep. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro, were among attendees.

Boosting coordination between colleges, universities and manufacturers to ensure a well-prepared, well-educated workforce is among the Rauner administration's signature goals.

Jonathon Hallberg, executive director of the Jefferson County Development Corp., said Marion and other southern Illinois communities have benefited greatly from the Illinois-Japan connection, which dates back more than 140 years.

"Illinois has tremendous locational advantages for companies, with major cost advantages in the downstate area in particular," Hallberg said. "I think that is why you have seen sustained investment by companies like Aisin, the Koito Group, and German-owned firms like Continental Tire the Americas LLC in our area. These international partnerships are the backbone of our local economy."

Rauner said Japanese companies have driven economic development throughout the state. In smaller communities like Shelbyville, Lawrenceville, Marion and Mattoon, they form the foundation for robust economic development, he added.

Mark Peterson, president and CEO of Intersect Illinois, said Wednesday's activities were a great follow-up to the governor's fall trade mission to Japan.

“We are delighted that Consul General Ito is visiting southern Illinois to see the depth of the Illinois-Japan relationship,” Peterson said. “This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the strength of Illinois’ manufacturing sector, workforce and partnership with academia to meet the needs of business.”