

# Ohio 'business-friendly' to India group

By [Mark Williams](#)

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There were no announcements of any new plants, no immediate news of additional jobs.

Yet, state political and business leaders say the first visit to Ohio by a group of high-ranking business executives from India will help lay the groundwork for more investment by Indian companies.

Conversely, the Indian leaders would like to see more collaboration with American companies that could lead to additional investment in their country.

"We thought it would be good to get to the heartland of America," Adj Godrej, the leader of the delegation from the Confederation of Indian Industry, told business and political leaders during a luncheon in Columbus last week.

He credited Sen. Rob Portman with pushing the delegation of about 10 executives and staff members to visit Ohio.

The Ohio Republican met with some Indian executives when he went to India last year and had been working with the 117-year-old confederation, which has 100,000 member firms, to bring a delegation to Ohio, Portman's office said.

Ohio has 13 Indian companies that employ about 1,300 in the state. The businesses are scattered throughout Ohio and in different industries, ranging from steel to a call center.

"Global investment is very important to the state's economy," said Mindy McLaughlin, manager of foreign direct investment for JobsOhio, the state's new private job-creation agency.

The group's stops included a visit with Gov. John Kasich and a panel discussion at Ohio State University.

"I was very impressed," said Godrej, chairman of the Godrej Group, a diversified company with investments in real estate, engineering appliances and other things.

Godrej said Ohio is well-located and has a good tax structure for business. "It is a business-friendly state," he said.

Though no projects are ready to be announced, Godrej said, "Once things get activated, results can happen quite soon."

Godrej also pushed for American companies to come to India, saying the country's plan to invest \$1 trillion in the coming year in infrastructure improvements.

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The best way for both countries to benefit is for companies in both countries to collaborate, he said.

"There is a lot to learn from each other," he said.

Martijn Steger, who heads the global-business practice for the law firm of Kegler Brown Hill & Ritter, which was a co-sponsor of the luncheon, said the gathering with the Indian delegation was about building relationships that can lead to projects and to introduce the delegation to Ohio and the Midwest.

"We see this as a long-term project," he said, noting that India continues to be one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

"The goal is for corporate leaders to come to Ohio to see what a dynamic place it is," he said. "We want them to be thinking about other parts in the United States" besides the East and West coasts.

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