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HEADLINE: Schaefer to Keep Eye on Trade as He Views Sphinx

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BODY:

It began as a sort of working vacation, a little time for Maryland Gov. William Donald Schaefer to stroll the streets of Cairo, make a long-desired pilgrimage to the Great Pyramids, and in his free hours, drum up some business for his state.

Instead, it has become a full-scale diplomatic assault that will put Schaefer in the company of princes and prime ministers during the next two weeks and, according to state officials, make him the first governor to visit Saudi Arabia on a trade mission.

"It was for me to go look at the pyramids, and while I was walking along, talk to some businessmen," Schaefer said before he and an entourage of about 30 left yesterday for the three-nation trade mission and sightseeing tour. The visit will begin in Israel today, move to Egypt on Tuesday, then trek to Saudi Arabia for three days starting next Sunday.

"I don't know what we will bring back" in trade contracts or investment, Schaefer said of his sixth trip abroad since taking office in 1987. "I know we will bring back a closer relationship."

In 1987, governors from 43 states made 87 foreign excursions, according to the National Governor's Association; as of last year, more states had representatives in Japan than offices in Washington.

"International trade is a relatively new weapon in the state economic development arsenal, but it has proved to be a very effective way of promoting states and products," said Deirdre Curley, director for international and foreign relations at the governor's association.

The mission will cost taxpayers \$ 100,000 for Schaefer, three Cabinet secretaries and 13 other state officials. Hilda Mae Snoops, Schaefer's longtime companion and the official Maryland hostess, will pay her own way, as will a dozen business leaders and Schaefer associates who are tagging along. The price is low, according to Schaefer's staff, because it is off-season in Egypt and Israel, and the Saudi Arabian government is footing the bill for that leg of the mission.

The trip will offer plenty of time for touring and socializing -- the itinerary includes the Yad Vashem Holocaust

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museum, lunch with a group from the Baltimore Jewish Council that is touring Israel now, stops at the pyramids, the Sphinx, the Cairo Museum, and a sound-and-light show at Karnak, Egypt. Schaefer said he has long wanted to see the pyramids, particularly since reading a book several years ago about the discovery of King Tutankhamen's tomb.

From a trade perspective, it is all something of a novelty. Curley said that state trade missions to the Middle East have been rare, since governors typically focus on Japan, Europe and other more traditional markets. Indeed, the Saudi Arabian trip, billed as the first-ever by an American governor, wasn't initiated by Schaefer at all, but by Prince Salman bin Abdulaziz, governor of Riyadh Province.

True to the notion that all business is personal, Schaefer's press aide, Louise Hayman, said the governor met the prince during a reception at a Baltimore art gallery. He later received an invitation to visit Saudi Arabia, which imported about \$ 53 million worth of Maryland products in 1987.

The state is taking full advantage of the opportunity. While there, Schaefer will have a private meeting with the prince, while his Cabinet members meet with local officials to tour a hospital, dairy, port and university. There is even a session scheduled on pollution in the Arabian Gulf and Chesapeake Bay.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO, WILLIAM DONALD SCHAEFER.