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HEADLINE: Schaefer will leave for E. Europe today

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BODY:

Gov. William Donald Schaefer leaves this afternoon on a trip to Eastern Europe, where officials hope to turn that region's political change into cash for Maryland businesses.

They also hope the trip - to the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary and Austria - will boost the fortunes of Baltimore's port, now reeling from the effects of lingering labor problems and stiff competition from Virginia's seaports in Norfolk and Hampton Roads.

It will be the Schaefer administration's sixth overseas trade excursion, and the governor's second trip to the Soviet Union. Press secretary Paul Schurick said, "This has the potential to be the governor's most successful international trade mission" because of the hunger in those nations for Western goods.

The governor will be accompanied by his secretaries of transportation, economic development and agriculture, plus University of Maryland President William E. Kirwan and executives from 20 Maryland firms.

The meetings will give Maryland firms a head start in establishing joint ventures with emerging Eastern European businesses, said Peggy Chaplin, chairman of the international business committee of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce.

"That is something that is sorely needed in the state of Maryland," she said. "We are in an age of globalization and economic interdependence and Gov. Schaefer is recognizing that."

While the trade missions are highly popular with business leaders and in line with efforts by other states to sell themselves on the international market, Mr. Schaefer has not always fared well politically in pushing such trade efforts before the General Assembly.

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The state has created a "one-stop shop" in Baltimore's World Trade Center as part of the international division of the state's economic development department. The division this year has a budget of about \$4.5 million and 24 employees.

Previous trade missions are credited with bringing a \$10 million plastic recycling facility to Baltimore County, an office of a Japanese pharmaceutical company to Bethesda and the expansion of an Italian-owned firearms manufacturing firm in southern Prince George's County.

In the days leading up to this trip, the governor's office announced a graduate scholarship program for Eastern European students to attend the University of Maryland and unveiled a research exchange agreement between the university and the Academy of Sciences in Moscow.

Mr. Schurick said Mr. Schaefer and his aides have been briefed by State Department officials and, while their meetings in the Soviet Union will primarily be with economic rather than political leaders, Mr. Schaefer is ready to deal with political controversy if warranted.

The governor and his entourage will return May 17.

GRAPHIC: Photo, Gov. William Donald Schaefer is headed to Eastern Europe.