

Chinese tour of Md. shows trade needs

By JAMES GUTMAN

"We now know better what their [trade] interests are," said Thomas S. Saquella, executive assistant to Maryland Secretary of Economic and Community Development James O. Roberson.

He was speaking of the results, which he contended were the only intended results, of the visit by the mainland Chinese trade delegation to Maryland. That visit ended yesterday, when the delegation flew from Baltimore-Washington International Airport to New York, without any concrete new trade agreements between Maryland companies and the Chinese.

There are, however, potential agreements brewing that Mr. Saquella said were furthered by the establishment of formal contacts with Chinese provincial officials during the visit. The Chinese, he said, were particularly interested in science and technology they saw in Maryland and in poultry operations they toured on the Eastern Shore.

There also are some other areas where there are current or possible future exchanges involving Maryland companies.

McCormick & Co., the Hunt Valley-based seasonings producer that has bought spices from mainland China for several

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years, has expressed interest in buying more spices there, Governor Hughes said Thursday.

A company spokesman said yesterday that it buys small quantities of cinnamon and red pepper from China but won't, for competitive reasons, say how much. McCormick would like to buy more of those spices from China but can't now because that country's prices on the products are not competitive, nor is there any indication that will change, he said.

The Rouse Company invited Wan Li, who headed the Chinese delegation, to send an urban planning representative to live in Columbia and work for the firm there for three-to-six months.

The purpose would be for the representative to "be exposed" to planning and development of new communities and other large-scale development projects in which the company is involved, said Rouse spokesman David L. Tripp. Mr. Tripp said the offer has not yet been formally accepted, nor have any concrete details about it been worked out.

More concrete agreements may result from the visit of a Maryland delegation led by Governor Hughes to China next April. The majority of the members on that trip, originally slated for next month, are scheduled to be Maryland businessmen, including representatives of McCormick and Black and Decker Manufacturing Company, accompanied by Mr. Roberson and perhaps a state agriculture official.

But a few Maryland companies said one major obstacle must be overcome before trade with China can flourish. The slow-moving Chinese bureaucracy, one firm said, for example, requires more patience and manpower than it can muster to complete a trade agreement. Mainland China just does not understand how American business operates, according to the company.