

Coffee break

A chat with an interesting, influential or innovative voice in Oregon business

Jin Lan

Challenge: As a business consultant and native Chinese, Jin Lan sees Oregon falling



behind other states in dealings with China. Lan, who coordinated Chinese Ambassador Zhou Wenzhong's

visit to Portland last August, has considerable *guanxi*, as connections and relationships are called in China. He aims to jump-start relations with the growing economic giant.

"Oregon has a low exposure," says Lan, president of Octaxias Co., which has a half-dozen employees in Beijing. "I want a successful project out of the three or four we're targeting."

Opportunities he sees:

Investment, trade, tourism. Lan, 47, says the Oregon-Fujian Sister State Association, which he heads, hasn't made much business progress during the 24 years since the state paired with the province facing Taiwan.

But Fujian officials will visit Oregon shortly to consider investing in the tea industry and air-freighting seafood to Beijing. Lan is working with Oregon officials to attract Chinese tourists. A TV crew from Fujian's city of Xiamen will shoot the

Portland Rose Festival parade. Lan also wants to gather Fujian's 50 wealthiest entrepreneurs for a Portland conference.

Obstacles: "They have very little knowledge of even where we are. We have a very sort of loose and segmented effort in the state." Oregon, Lan says, trails Washington, California and even Nevada, which has a tourism office in Beijing. We really need a political salesman to take leadership. When the ambassador visited, we didn't have a single congressional member show up."

Progress: Lan shepherded Oregon legislators and officials through high-level meetings in China recently, during a trip that also took him to Dubai, Egypt and Turkey. This week he's helping to host a Portland visit by Gao Zhansheng, China's new San Francisco-based consul general.

Storied past: Lan, who grew up in Qingdao and Beijing, arrived in Oregon in 1983 to attend Portland State University. Later he became Powell's Books' international marketing director. He still wanders Powell's aisles, as a customer, and enjoys playing badminton. Lan bases his consulting business in Vancouver, but feels allegiance to Oregon. "I've benefited a great deal from this area," he says, "and I really want to make some contribution."

— Richard Read

People

News highlights

NEWS UPDATE: CREDIT CRISIS

Northern Rock bond sale plan arranged

The British Treasury said Monday that it would facilitate a sale of the troubled mortgage lender Northern Rock by converting a pool of the company's assets to bonds for sale to investors.

Under the plan, Northern Rock would sell government-backed bonds bundling a collection of home loans, unsecured consumer loans and some investment-grade securities to help repay about 25 billion pounds, or \$49 billion, it borrowed from the Bank of England last September.

The arrangement is intended to ensure that taxpayers will not have to pay for the bank's rescue and help continuing negotiations with two potential buyers, Richard Branson's Virgin Group and the investment firm Olivant Advisors, which have struggled to finance their bids in the current market conditions.

"This takes us closer to the end game," said James Hutson, an analyst at Keefe, Bruyette & Woods. The two bidders will "continue to move forward with their proposals."

The Treasury and the Bank of England rescued Northern Rock last September when the U.S. subprime crisis and the tightening of credit markets led to a shortage of funds and the first run on a British bank in a century.

Economy: Bush stimulus plan doesn't calm investors

conomic stimulus package of as much as \$145 billion. Bush's "shot in the arm," economists said, did not convince the rest of the world that the United States will escape a recession or that it will either.

In reference to the global stock sell-off, Jeanie Mamo, a spokeswoman for the White