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**TOP DEALS**

# Top 10 Deals of 2000

by **RON STARNER**

## **Nissan — Canton, Miss.**

***\$950 million; 4,000 jobs***

With nearly \$300 million in state incentives sweetening the pot, Nissan Motor Co. announced in early November 2000 that it would build a \$950 million automotive assembly plant near Jackson, Miss.

After considering Alabama as the other location finalist, the Japanese company selected a site in Madison County, Miss., just south of the town of Canton. Some 4,000 new jobs will be created in this city of 12,000 people.

"This is the largest plant Nissan announced they will build this entire year and is in the top 1 percent of all economic development projects announced in the entire United States this year," said Mississippi Gov. Ronnie Musgrove.

The governor called two special legislative sessions last year to spur statewide economic development. The first session resulted in Mississippi lawmakers approving Musgrove's "Advantage Mississippi Initiative," a package of bills that substantially increase incentives for companies creating high-paying jobs. The second special session focused on "an act to induce the location of a major capital economic development project proposed for Madison County" — the Nissan plant.

From site selection to project announcement, the deal took all of five months-- astounding for a process that normally takes 12 to 18 months.

Mississippi's \$295 million incentive package includes assistance in hiring and training workers; helping with preparation for the Nissan site, including water and sewer improvements; and building a highway that gives the site access to Interstate 55.

Other incentives could reduce Nissan's state tax burden by as much as \$20 million. In addition, Mississippi is offering incentives for major automotive suppliers to locate near the Nissan plant.

In return, the state receives 4,000 high-paying jobs and a breakthrough facility. Jobs at the new Nissan plant will pay an average wage of \$23 an hour — significantly higher than the average state wage.

The Canton facility marks Nissan's first major new plant since declining sales prompted the automaker to adopt a three-year "revival plan" in October of 1999. The company bounced back last year, recording its best net income over a six-month stretch in a decade.

Nissan officials say that construction of the 2 million-sq.-ft. (185,800-sq.-m.) plant should be completed by the summer of 2003.