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`Our budget not enough to promote nation in the US'

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board's efforts to promote Malaysia in the United States is hampered by a lack of funds.

A spokesman said the current budget for promotional activities there was not enough.

"We are restricted by the limited budget. America is a large country. If we are to cover every area, we need to have a big budget which we don't," he said.

The spokesman said this in response to a message conveyed to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by several American tourism-related industry officials who had said not enough had been done to promote Malaysia as a leisure destination in the United States.

Dr Mahathir, who is in New York to address the United Nations General Assembly, has also had meetings with several groups.

On the lack of funds, he said if the board were to sponsor a programme on American national television, it would exhaust its entire year's budget in just one show.

"But that does not mean we are not doing anything at all. We are doing whatever we can in our own small way."

The spokesman said the board had two offices in America - Los Angeles and New York - which covered the west and east coasts respectively.

He said they also had programmes on regional television networks. "Of course the effect is not nationwide but again, these are our focus areas."

The spokesman said the board also conducted Incentive Travel and Meeting Exhibition shows annually.

"Currently our officers are in Chicago for this show. It is organised for people in the tourism industry.

Form time to time, he said, they organised educational trips to Malaysia for media and tourism industry agents from America.

He pointed out that tourist arrivals from America had increased by 47 per cent to 6,870 until July this year from the beginning of the year compared to the same period last year.

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