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Mahathir-Tourism

TOURISM INDUSTRY NEEDS FUND TO ATTRACT AMERICANS

By: Amin Husaini Harun

NEW YORK, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Malaysia can expect to see more American visitors with the personal interest shown by the Prime Minister himself, said a leading tour operator here.

Saying that the interest shown by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was "rare" among heads of government, president of the United States Tour Operators Association Robert E. Whitley said the Prime Minister had indicated the need for matching funds between Malaysia and the United States in promoting Malaysia in the US.

Dr Mahathir had an hour-long meeting with several leaders of the US tourism industry here Monday, on the second day of his four-day visit to the US.

Speaking to Malaysian media after the meeting, Whitley said the 80,000 American tourists who visited Malaysia yearly could easily be doubled if more promotions were carried out jointly by the industry of the two countries.

He said there were two important factors that attracted Americans to visit Malaysia -- her friendly people and her natural resources.

Whitley said Malaysia's tourism infrastructure was among the best in the world and its hotel rates competitive.

He said the drawback which the association noted was the perception among Americans of the distance between the two countries. With aggressive promotion, this perception could be overcome.

He hoped the media could assist the industry by promoting Malaysia's major events and destinations as an ongoing effort to expand the tourism industry.

Northwest Airlines Senior Vice president Douglas C. Birdsall said his company had recently signed a major agreement with Malaysia Airlines in promoting the tourism industry in Malaysia.

He said the industry in Malaysia was consumer friendly to Americans and by working together, more tourists from the US would be making their way to Malaysia in future.

-- BERNAMA

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