

Envoy: Promote M'sia in Europe

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia needs to promote itself more to Europe, especially Germany, by stepping up marketing and follow-up visits by its tourism officials, German Ambassador to Malaysia Jurgen A. R. Staks said.

Currently, he said, it was not well known to Europeans because it lacked sustained tourism promotion in those countries.

"Generally for Germans, Southeast Asia means Thailand, Singapore and Bali. They identify these places with their beautiful beaches, landscapes and friendly people.

"All these are available in

Malaysia but they are only known to a limited number of Germans," Staks said in an interview.

He said although the number of German tourists to Malaysia increased by 71% from 43,341 in 1999 to 71,200 in 2000, there was enormous potential for the number to increase greatly.

"Malaysia is an attractive tourist destination because it is cost-effective, affordable and attractive," he added.

Staks will be leaving for Germany next week to make arrangements for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's visit to Germany from March 18 to 21.

Asked about areas in which

Malaysia could forge closer ties with Germany, Staks said that it could be done through more dialogues, exchange programmes and other common activities.

"My personal interest is to foster people-to-people-programmes. We must know each other much better. We must learn from each other.

"We share many common values and aspirations although we have different cultures, are ethnically different and live in different environments.

"It is extremely exciting for me to see and to experience how Malaysians live and I am sure it will be the same for Malaysians who visit Germany," he said.