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'Aggressive marketing is needed'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Malaysian Industrial Development Authority and Tourism Malaysia have been urged to be more aggressive in marketing the country in Germany, German ambassador to Malaysia Juergen A.R. Staks said today.

He said this was necessary if Malaysia wished to attract more German tourists as well as companies.

"It is not that they don't want to come here. It is a question of marketing," he said at a briefing on the outcome of German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder's visit.

Schroeder arrived for a three-day official visit on Sunday and left this morning for Singapore.

He said that MIDA had an office in Cologne while Tourism Malaysia had an office in Frankfurt.

Staks said previously, German carrier Lufthansa used to fly into KL International Airport and private German carriers organised chartered flights to Langkawi and Penang but these had since stopped.

"All these are connected with marketing ...the average German on the street is not that much informed about where Malaysia is located," he said.

Schroeder said he had informed Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the Malaysian authorities should do more promotion of its tourist attractions, among others, stating its advantages compared to the neighbours and organise package tours with Malaysian or other airlines.

Last July, the Malaysian authorities set up a Tourism Action Committee in Frankfurt comprising representatives from Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airlines and Malaysia Club, Germany.

Its role was to formulate short, medium and long-term strategies to re-position Malaysia as a preferred holiday destination among German tourists.

Staks said many German companies, including those specialising in high technology, were also keen to come to Malaysia.

"We definitely have not yet exploited all possibilities ...we are ready to do that and whatever we can do on our side to convince German companies such as establishing fact finding missions will be done as in the past," he said, adding that the German-Malaysian Chamber of Commerce could also assist in this endeavour.

At present, about 300 German companies operate here.

Staks said apart from strengthening bilateral relations, Schroeder's visit was also aimed at enhancing ties between Asean and the European Union.

"Let me emphasise that the visit was extremely successful in atmosphere, in human contact and substance. I can't remember any subject of bilateral, regional or international importance that was not touched ... it was a meeting of friends and we want this relationship to continue," he said.

Staks said Germany was also eager to receive more Malaysian students to study in its universities, especially in the engineering and applied sciences fields.

"We are trying to get the German federated states to let these students study at their universities," he said.

Staks said both leaders were also of the opinion that the Cultural Agreement between both countries should be signed as soon as possible.

Staks said Schroeder has also invited Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to visit Germany and that Abdullah has accepted the invitation.