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“2023-2024 Korea-Thailand Mutual Visit Year,” Discussion on Expanded Tourism Exchange

-“2023 Korea-Thailand Tourism Forum,” Discussing Ways to Activate Tourism Cooperation with Thailand, a Key Southeast Asian Market

- From September to October, the Mutual Visit Year Celebrates Grand K-Tourism Festivals in Bangkok, Phuket, and Chiang Mai

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (Minister PARK Bo Gyoon, MCST) and the Korea Tourism Organization (CEO KIM Jang Sil, KTO), hosted the “2023 Korea-Thailand Tourism Forum” at The Shilla Seoul’s Yeong Bin Gwan on June 27 (Tue). The forum, celebrating the “2023-2024 Korea-Thailand Mutual Visit Year,” served as an avenue to discuss strategies to expand tourism exchanges between the two countries.

Thailand was the largest Korean tourist market among ASEAN countries pre-COVID, with approximately 570,000 visitors in 2019. As of the second week of June 2023, Thailand still holds the top spot. The recovery of the Thailand market, a key Southeast Asian market, is crucial for South Korea to reach its goal of attracting 30 million foreign tourists by 2027. To this end, the two countries agreed to promote tourism exchanges in key areas, such as smart, sports, and culinary tourism, to honor the 10th founding anniversary of a strategic partnership between the countries and the “2023-2024 Korea-Thailand Mutual Visit Year.”

In commemoration of the “Korea-Thailand Mutual Visit Year,” the forum, moderated by Professor LEE In Jae from Gachon University’s Department of Tourism Management, included a presentation on “Strategies for the Development of the Tourism Industry through K-Culture” by Professor Kamon Butsaban of Chulalongkorn University in Thailand, a talk on “Thailand’s Post-COVID-19 Tourism Strategy” by Thai Senator Weerasak Kowsurat, and the “Significance and Direction of the ‘Korea-

Thailand Mutual Visit Year” by LEE Jae Ho, Senior Researcher at the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy, followed a discussion on ways to promote tourism cooperation between both countries.

The forum, which brought together government and public organizations, academia, and the tourism industry, was attended by MCST Tourism Industry Policy Bureau Director-General KIM Sang Wook; KTO Vice President LEE Jae Hwan; former Minister of Tourism and Sports (Thailand) and current senator Weerasak Kowsurat as one of the speakers; Assistant Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Thailand) Mongkon Wimonrat; Deputy Governor of Tourism Authority of Thailand Tanes Petsuwan (in charge of Asia and the South Pacific) and Nithee Seepree (in charge of digital research and development); and Thailand Ambassador to Korea Witchu Vejjajiva, among others. A “Korea-Thailand Travel Mart” with over 50 participants from the tourism industry of both countries was held as a pre-event at 9:30 a.m. on the same day.

To maintain the forum’s momentum, a “Korea Tourism Festival” featuring alluring elements of K-culture such as K-beauty and K-content will be held in downtown Bangkok, a basecamp of K-tourism, in September and October to coincide with the Thailand Korean Cultural Center’s 10th anniversary. Business-to-business (B2B) events will be organized in Phuket and Chiang Mai to spread the atmosphere of the “Korea-Thailand Mutual Visit Year” across Thailand and stimulate Thai people’s desire to visit Korea.

“Thailand and Korea have commonalities in the sense that Thailand is focusing on fostering the creative culture industry through its 5F policy of Food, Film, Festival, Fashion, and Fight, similar to how Korea is expanding the global reach of K-culture.” PARK Jong Taek, Director-General of the MCST Tourism Policy Bureau, said, “Through this forum, we aim to strengthen our network with Thailand, a key base for the spread of the Korean Wave in Southeast Asia, and proactively market the appeal of K-tourism, enhanced by the premium effect of K-culture.”

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