

Speech
by
H.E.Mr. Weerasak Kowsurat
Minister of Tourism and Sports
at the “Connections Plus” Corporate Meeting Planners’ Fam Trip
Monday, June 30, 2008
QSNCC, Bangkok

Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great honour to be here to join this wonderful celebration of the 3rd Connections Plus 2008. I would like to express my appreciation to the Thailand Convention & Exhibition Bureau, or TCEB, Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), airlines and six MICE agencies to host this strategic event in Bangkok.

Connections Plus 2008 aims to promote quality meetings and incentives travel traffic to Thailand. I am delighted at the success of this week’s fam trip for corporate meeting planners.

As you are all aware, tourism places high on Thailand’s policy agenda, and business tourism has also grown tremendously over the past five years. In order to create the conditions to accommodate this growth, TCEB was established under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, with a mandate to promote the MICE sector in Thailand. And since its establishment in 2004, I am sure you will agree with me by saying that Thailand’s MICE industry has keep beyond our expectations. Today, Thailand is emerging as one of the world’s preferred destinations for

international business meetings, exhibitions and other global events, winning many awards and accolades along the way.

Currently, Thailand Meetings & Incentives segment is growing about 20 percent per year. This year we anticipate that around 380,000 (three hundred eighty thousands) delegates will come to Thailand, generating revenue of 25 billion baht. For Meetings and Incentives segment, it is part of overall 65 billion baht of MICE industry. The rapid growth in business tourism is set to continue in coming years.

In addition, the Royal Thai Government has designated the years 2008-2009 as “Thailand Investment Year”. In order to enhance investment climate, we have encouraged collaboration between all concerned agencies including private sector to deliver the best possible professional services for business travelers and tourists alike. The Connections Plus 2008 event, under the theme of “Thailand Team-Up”, is a perfect example of accomplishment of close cooperation. Therefore, I would like to extend my gratitude to all concerned, for your hard work and collaborative efforts in making Connections Plus 2008 an exciting and memorable event for everyone.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A second important feature of the Thailand Investment Year 2008-2009 is that, some major incentives have been provided by Thailand Board of Investment (BOI). This scheme has been especially targeted to help tourism-related businesses such as hotels, convention and exhibition centers.

We intend also to capitalize on Thailand’s strategic position as a gateway to the entire ASEAN and the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), and develop Thailand as a regional tourism and MICE hub. This includes major

investment plans in infrastructure, roads and aviation routes that can expand the tourism base for tourists traveling within Thailand, and open up new opportunities for tourists to travel to the World Heritage Sites of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Yunnan Province in the People's Republic of China.

For Thailand, the year 2008 represents a truly exciting moment in the evolution of our MICE industry sector. We are hosting large scale events than ever. I am confident that our MICE sector's world-class capabilities are ready to meet challenges ahead of us. Let me assure you fully support from the Thai Government.

For most of you, this trip to Thailand will end tomorrow, and you will soon be back home, hopefully full of good impressions and happy memories of Thailand. I wish today represents the beginning of a warm and long-lasting relationship that will bring you and your organizations back to Thailand again.

Let me close by express my sincere thanks on behalf of the Thai Government and Thai people for choosing Thailand as a destination for your MICE events. May I wish you all every success and a safe journey home. And whether for business or for leisure, we look forward to welcoming you all back to Thailand very soon.

Thank you.
