

Press Reform Vital

Cultural Content Is the Core of Future Industry



"I'd like to show that culture is the driving force to lead the new era by promoting the culture industry as well as tourism," said Culture and Tourism Minister Chung in an interview with 'National Policy Briefing,' the Government Information Agency news service.

"Our cultural content, securing excellence through Hanryu (Korean wave), etc., is the core of future industry," said Minister Chung, stressing that his ministry's role is really unlimited, as production of the content originates from basic arts, culture in general and cultural assets.

Adding "In the tourism arena as well, cultural content decides victory or defeat," Chung expressed confidence that his ministry would play an important role as a cultural production and export base through active technological and financial cooperation with other related ministries for the promotion of culture.

Touching on press reform, Minister Chung revealed that due to market unfairness, the press is shouldering a heavy burden, "an imbalance in the public-opinion market' and requests for its improvement are being raised from every sector of society. Chung said, "For press reform, it is necessary to

straighten out the distorted order through a comprehensive crackdown on unfair practices." For this, he disclosed he would continue to modernize the promotion of the culture industry.

"As a legal framework is a prerequisite to press reform, the government will actively cooperate in its part in preparing the framework for the National Assembly's fair and transparent discussions," the minister added.

As to the controversy over a reduction of the screen quota system, Minister Chung thinks that not all the people in the movie community are insisting on a 'desperate defense of the screen quota.' "As some people are rather talking about the necessity of serious discussion on ways of supporting production and distribution of a variety of creative movies, I will seek points of agreement through serious dialogue with movie industry people," he said.

The following are excerpts from the interview of Minister of Culture & Tourism (MCT) Chung Dong-Chea with National Policy Briefing of Government Information Agency. - Ed.

Q: What kinds of projects are you interested in promoting as minister of culture and tourism?

A: I think that basic arts and the culture industry are two sides of the same coin. I will work to have them not slant to one side or the other. Considering the difficult situation in the basic arts, special support is required. As basic arts are the root of culture, I will spare no effort to grow and support them. In terms of the industry aspects, I will strive to achieve stimulation of domestic demand and balanced development of national land through creation of leisure estates. The fields that my ministry is pursuing are so

diversified that at a glance people may think there is no interrelationship. However, they are mutually related under the big framework of 'Culture.' Policy networking effects become larger through cooperation between regions and fields. For example, the culture industry needs basic arts, culture in general, cultural assets, etc. for its content. Various policies for youths are also in the sphere of culture and art. I will promote projects in all fields without neglecting any.

Q: You have contributed considerably to the Gwangju Cultural City Project. What is the meaning of the plan and its ripple effects?

A: The Gwangju Cultural Center City is a new attempt. It is designed to realize a 'society where culture is the center of life' starting from the city, which has a pivotal function in culture as the engine of communication and creation. Since long ago, Gwangju has been a city of art and culture, imbued with symbols of human rights and democracy as well, which can create cultural assets and induce positive participation by citizens. This project must be realized successfully also from the perspective of national balanced development. In particular, whereas Busan and Gyeongju are 'film culture' and 'historical culture' centers respectively, I will promote the Gwangju project with a focus on 'future culture.' As the center of Asian culture, Gwangju will take the lead in research, education and exchange of culture content. This project will bring considerable ripple effects to society and the culture world. Construction of an Asian Culture Hall first is expected to have a 4.7 trillion-won ripple effect - 1.9 trillion won in the culture industry; 1.1 trillion won in the regional economy; 1.3 trillion won in tourism;

The government will also stand in the vanguard of improving the culture industry's production environment through continued manpower cultivation and supply.

300 billion won in creation of culture-education demand; and 80 billion won in export expansion of culture exchanges - and creation of 22,000 jobs.

Q: Despite a lot of concern, opening of culture ties between Korean and Japan is being appraised as successful. Hanryu, in particular, verified that we can assume a leading role as the Asian cultural production and export base. What are the prospects and future plan for Hanryu?

A: In Japan, Hanryu has just taken the first step now. It is a very encouraging phenomenon that Japan became aware of our culture through the movie 'Winter Sonata.' Hanryu should not be viewed in the context of who wins over whom. To maintain Hanryu, we must know our counterpart's culture through mutual communication, not through one-sided or exclusive cultural exchanges. Coupled with this, we will have to verify the excellence of our culture through performances, exhibitions, etc. by growing our ability. The government also will revamp laws and systems for preparation of the foundation to nurture the culture industry to sustain and spread Hanryu and create an investment environment for the culture industry through reinforcement of taxation and financial support. The government will also stand in the vanguard of improving the culture industry's production environment through continued manpower cultivation and supply.

Q: The recent lament of those engaged in pop music is said to be a domestic demand slowdown and under-protected copyrights due to illegal reproduction, etc.

A: Now, youth are growing up listening to Korean songs rather than Western pop songs. As such, our music is appraised as having reached the world-class level. Also our pop singers are drawing wide attention abroad, and in China, etc., illegal reproduction of our music is a serious problem, I know. Domestic or overseas, blossoming of the culture industry will be difficult if creative copyrights are not protected. As copyrights also cause trade friction, I understand that related ministries are preparing several methods for protection. My ministry also will continue to promote prohibition of illegal distribution and pursue more stringent copyright protection measures.

Q: Recent controversy over the screen quota system has become heated. Your ministry seems to be leaning toward reducing the quota. Please tell us about your position and plan to develop the Korean movie industry.

A: The screen quota system has thus far played a huge role in the development of Korean movies. It is also true that Korean movies have achieved considerable external qualitative and quantitative development. Meanwhile, maintenance of the present system may not necessarily be desirable for the stable development of the Korean movie industry, as production and screening of a wide variety of movies are rather shrinking. For continued development of the movie industry as well, I think that now is the time for political examination of the present system. In other words, there is no land where independent and artistic movies can stand. It is yet to be known when Hollywood-style movies, including blockbusters, will be an attraction.

Hong Kong movies, which enjoyed explosive growth until several years ago, declined together with a setback in audience numbers due to limited genres and dependence on the popularity of just a few stars. My ministry's steps to adjust the screen quota and its request for the movie industry to study it are a kind of agony that is necessary for our movie industry to make further advances. We are also insisting that ways to support film diversity and secure investment be achieved. We will continue our dialogue on these issues with the movie industry and plan to find points of agreement.

Q: Since you were designated CT minister, there has been speculation over whether the press reform of the Participatory Government will be pursued on a full scale. What is the press reform direction in your mind and your future plan?

A: Press reform is necessary. Is the press really performing a communication function in our society smoothly? Is it anxious to establish a proper agenda for bringing people together and to induce public discussion from a national perspective? I would like to ask if the press is fulfilling its responsibility to the extent that it is enjoying freedom of speech. How to correct the unfairness and imbalance in the press is the first step toward press reform, I think. For press reform, it is necessary to straighten the distorted market order through an all-out crackdown on unfair practices. Three major newspapers are wasting 1.6 million papers daily, equivalent to 12 billion won annually, in distributing free-of-charge papers, including cash-back or gifts. Therefore, modernization of the distribution structure, such as a common delivery system, is important for the promotion of the culture industry. However, a legal framework

For continued development of the movie industry as well, I think that now is the time for political examination of the present system. In other words, there is no land where independent and artistic movies can stand.

is a prerequisite to press reform. As for specific direction, the legislative organization, the National Assembly, will likely prepare a just, transparent and objective framework for discussion through organization of 'Press Development Council' (tentative name). My ministry will cooperate actively in whatever way necessary in the process.

Q: With implementation of the five-day workweek system, people's desire to enjoy culture has heightened significantly. What are your support policies to enable the general public to participate in cultural activities at a reasonable cost?

A: In order to stimulate a leisure culture following introduction of the

system, we announced 'Leisure Culture Activation Measures' in early July, initiated by our ministry with the participation of 13 ministries. First, we will expand leisure infrastructure within local communities, while remodeling idle regional areas and opening public institutions and schools to citizens during vacation for utilization as leisure space. We also plan to support operating expenses of programs such as culture halls of local autonomous bodies. To boost domestic tourism, in particular, we intend to increase the present annual 12 tour opportunities further and are pursuing a variety of methods, including creation of domestic leisure tourist sites to attract overseas golf tourism of 500,000 a year.

Q: What do you want to realize without fail during your tenure?

A: Through activation of tourism and culture industries, I hope to show that culture is the driving force to lead the 21st century. I will strive to be of help in stimulating domestic demand through securing the competitiveness of the culture industry and invigoration of tourism based on the cultivation of cultural content, in particular.



On- & Off-Line Korean Business News Hub

Annual Subscription Rates

| Areas | Korea | Far East | Southeast Asia | U.S., Europe, Middle East | S. America, Africa |
|-------------------|----------|----------|----------------|---------------------------|--------------------|
| Subscription rate | ₩100,000 | US\$130 | US\$150 | US\$170 | US\$180 |

Subscription Order Form

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|------|-----------|
| Expiry Date | | | |
| Name | | | Signature |
| Organization | | | |
| Mailing Address | | | |
| Tel. | | Fax. | |

- Remittee On-line Account(BCS)
- Hanvit Bank : 600-115221-13-101

Suite 1115, Hyundai Venture Ville, 713, Suseo-dong, Gangnam-gu, Seoul, 135-539 Korea
 Tel: (82-2) 6258-7870 Fax: (82-2) 6258-7877
 e-mail: btsbj@chollian.net