What went wrong with World Scout Jamboree?

By Kim Min-jong, Kim Minseo

The 25th World Scout Jamboree Competition was held in Saengnokwonju, South Korea from Aug. 1 to 12. 43,232 adolescents from 158 countries around the world gathered to experience the culture of South Korea. However, problems arose due to insufficient preparation and insufficient use of the 300 billion won budget, but the event was pushed ahead despite such troubles.

With the goal of “Safe from Harm,” Jamboree aimed to create a safe environment by preventing any abuse, but the reality was different. A considerable amount of economic growth was expected in terms of 6 trillion won that was presumed to be earned by becoming the host, but the lack of preparation for the heat wave and hygiene problems rather undermined Korea’s global reputation.

On April 27, 2012, then governor of Jeonbuk Province Kim Wan-joo requested officials of the Korean Scout Federation to cooperate so that Jamboree Competition could be held in Saengnokwam. 11 years later, President Moon Suk Yeol was appointed honorary president of the Korean Scout Federation and promised government support. South Korea’s Jamboree Competition featured diverse activities in terms of Korean culture, including rural experience programs and Better World Tent, a place where the spirit of world scouting can truly be realized through exhibitions and lectures.

Jamboree participant Seoyul Lee shared her experience at the criticized international gathering. Bugs were everywhere the moment Lee got off the bus. Cockroaches and grasshoppers would jump up from the ground every step she took, and the bathrooms were no exception. “I had to use the bathroom sink to put in my contact lenses, but gave up since the sinks were full of upside-down bugs floating around,” Lee said. The most insufferable part of the program was the heat. The campground was a vast field with no single tree in sight, leaving no shade for participants to escape from the heat.

Leading up to the World Scout Jamboree, Lee had anticipated once-in-a-lifetime experiences with scouts from over 100 countries. She was indeed able to interact with fellow participants and exchange patches, yet the experiences fell short of her expectations. The facilities should have been better inspected, and sites should have been opted for places more appropriate for hot weather. Despite this let-down, she still enjoyed certain aspects of the event.

“The paragliding was done on a level field without any wind, lasting only ten to fifteen minutes,” Lee elaborated. “However, the magic shows and Korean folk music performances in between were phenomenally good. The itinerary seemed to change every few minutes, the participants were all cheerful and actively engaged.”

Seo Yoon Min from the Division of International Studies conveyed her thoughts on the incident. Min pointed out that the failure seemed largely due to the lack of preparation on time, and expressed her belief that a greater sense of responsibility should have been exercised.

“It is a shame that we were not able to utilize this opportunity,” Min said. “It would have been the perfect chance to represent Korea and leave a positive impression on so many countries.”

Other than such opposition, there were also some students who expressed that the competition’s outcome was not merely negative. Min-ji Kim, from the Department of English Language & Literature, expressed her opinion on the World Scout Jamboree.

“The recent Jamboree Competition will set a good precedent and serve as a basis for better preparation when hosting future events,” Kim said. “Also, I heard that some participants were satisfied with how they were able to attend a K-pop concert, which I think is a good step to bring South Korean culture to foreigners.”

Keeping in mind the difficulties in attracting a large group of people, South Korea needs more responsibility for their flaws, and the National Assembly and the Presidential Office should cooperate to redirect all the work associated with international events.

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