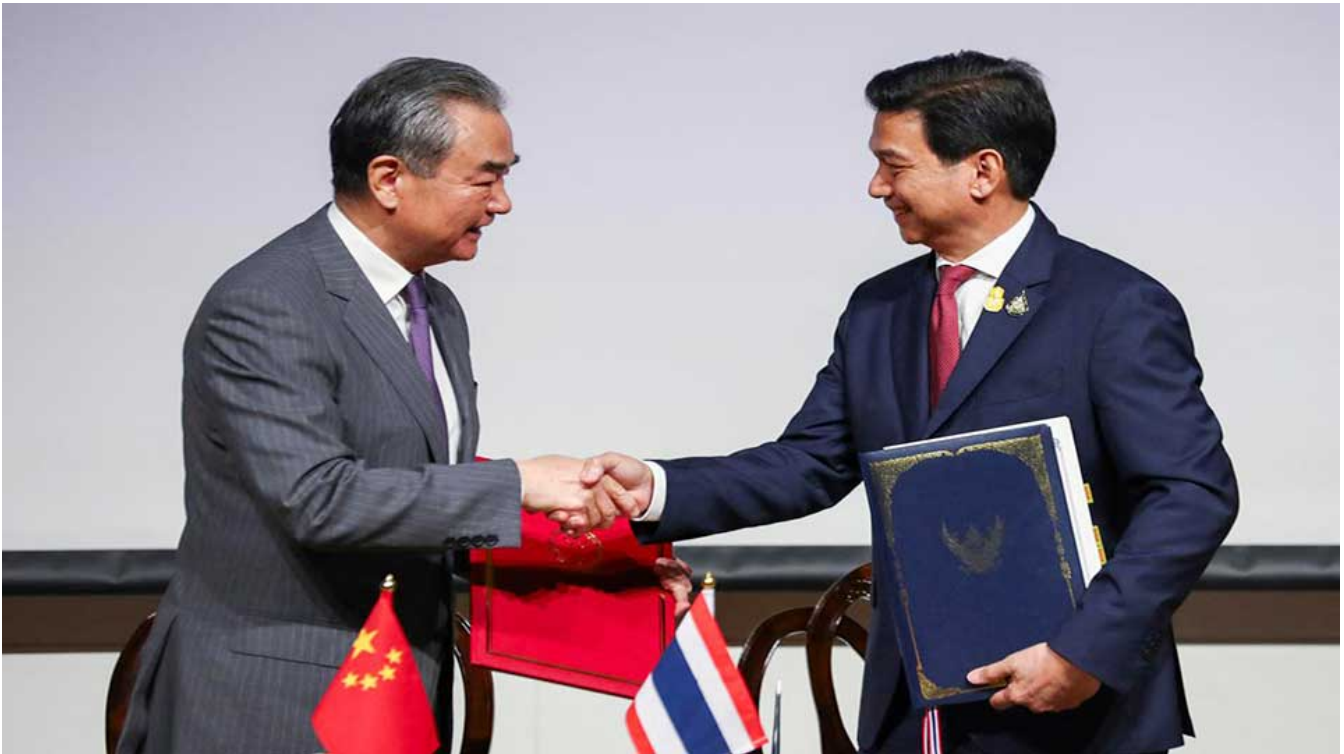


Thailand, China sign mutual visa waiver agreements

- A Monitor Desk Report

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Bangkok: Thailand and China agreed to waive visa requirements for each other's nationals to facilitate travel and tourism between the two countries, Thai Foreign Minister Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara said on Sunday.

The mutual visa exemption takes effect on March 1. Passport holders from both countries will be able to enter and stay for up to 30 days without visas. The exemption will take effect after the Lunar New Year holiday in February, a peak period for outbound Chinese travel, but in time for Thailand's Songkran festival in April.

The agreement was signed during a visit by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to Thailand.

On Sunday (Jan 28), Wang promised a "big increase in the number of Chinese tourists visiting Thailand" after the visa exemption.

Wang said the two sides should "oppose zero-sum, win-or-lose political games" amid a "turbulent international environment." Thailand has maintained its neutrality in geopolitical tensions, particularly between China and the U.S.

Thailand is counting on tourists from China to reach its target of at least 30 million arrivals in 2024 after a lackluster rebound of Chinese travel last year. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, China comprised about a quarter of Thailand's 40 million tourists.

China and Thailand agreed to hold consultations between their foreign ministers at least once a year, Parnpree said.

The two countries also signed agreements on poultry exports from Thailand, with China pledging to import specialty agricultural exports and support Chinese companies investing in Thailand, as well as cooperation on electric vehicles, digital economy and green technology.

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