

Executive Yuan Approves the "Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu" to Meet the Homecoming Travel Demand for the Lunar New Year Holiday

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In light of the travel demand for family reunion ahead of the upcoming Lunar New Year holiday, the Executive Yuan approved in a cabinet meeting the "Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu" premised on keeping the COVID-19 pandemic under control.

The special program was jointly planned and constructed by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), Ministry of Transportation and Communications (MOTC), Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), and other relevant agencies. The primary purposes of this program are: to provide convenience and meet the travel demand for family reunion and humanitarian reasons throughout the Lunar New Year holiday by Kinmen and Matsu residents premised on ensuring comprehensive pandemic prevention in outlying islands, and to serve the guiding principle of resuming passenger transportation under the Mini-Three-Links in a gradual and orderly manner premised on keeping the risks of the pandemic under control. The key steps and details pertaining to this program are as follows:

- (1) Program duration: Two weeks before and after the Lunar New Year holiday (January 7 to February 6, 2023).
- (2) Service provision: Applications to provide services in line with the program objectives should be submitted to the Maritime Port Bureau, MOTC and will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Service will be limited to up to one round trip per day to Kinmen and two round trips per week to Matsu.
- (3) Traveler eligibility: Eligible travelers are restricted to residents of Kinmen and Matsu and their mainland Chinese spouses. The Kinmen and Matsu governments will be responsible for compiling lists and managing the registration.

(4) Border quarantine & pandemic control measures: The same measures for air transport operations apply to the present program. The MOHW will supervise the implementation of relevant measures.

(5) Review mechanisms: The implementation of the present program and future developments of the COVID-19 situation will feed into the rolling review of future arrangements of passenger service under the Mini-Three-Links.

The MAC stated that the present special program, both its preparation and implementation, will be jointly carried out by the relevant ministries, agencies, and local governments. In view of the worsening COVID-19 situation and lack of information transparency in mainland China, the government pledges that all agencies involved will implement the program in full consideration of ensuring effective epidemic prevention work to protect the health and safety of people in Taiwan, Kinmen, and Matsu. The initiation of this special program will serve as a starting point for the resumption of passenger service under the Mini-Three-Links and a beginning for the orderly post-pandemic cross-Strait exchanges.