

# **Minister Chiu's Opening Remarks for the Maiden Voyage Ceremony of the Kinmen-Xiamen Route under the “Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu”**

News Reference Material

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County Magistrate Chen (Fu-hai), Legislator Chen (Yu-jen), Distinguished Councillors, Township Mayors, Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends in the Media, Good morning! It's a pleasure to be here!

I am delighted to attend the maiden voyage ceremony for the Kinmen-Xiamen route under the "Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu" (hereinafter the "Charter Ferry Program") held by the Kinmen County government. This ceremony marks the government's all-out efforts to facilitate Kinmen residents' homecoming and family reunion for the Lunar New Year holiday premised on ensuring full control of the risks of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Today's maiden voyage is the beginning of the resumption of the "Mini-three-links" passenger service; it is also the starting point of our work towards orderly cross-Strait exchanges while ensuring complete control of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the severity of the pandemic in mainland China, it is no easy task to achieve the re-opening of cross-Strait ferry links under the Charter Ferry Program. Therefore, I would like to extend a special thank-you to all that have been involved in this program, including relevant central government agencies and the task force of the Kinmen County Government, as their hard work is what makes it possible for Kinmen residents to take advantage of the Charter Ferry Program to go home and spend quality time with their family for the Lunar New Year holiday.

We understand the disappointment some may feel about the limits on the scope of passengers and number of trips permitted under the Charter Ferry

Program; we are also fully aware of their deep hope for the relaxation and normalization of the program. However, considering the risks and threats of the COVID-19 pandemic, our government chose to prioritize the health and safety of Kinmen residents in our policymaking. Going forward, the MAC will conduct interagency rolling reviews of the “Mini-three-links” passenger service with full consideration of factors including the operation of the Charter Ferry Program, the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and other relevant developments. Meanwhile, we call on the public to cooperate with the government’s policies and measures pertaining to COVID-19 pandemic prevention, African swine fever prevention, etc., to create favorable conditions for the next stage of re-opening.

At the beginning of this year, President Tsai had already stated that only through dialogue, cooperation, and joint efforts could we help more people enjoy security and happiness. As we carry out the Charter Ferry Program, we hope to gradually restore Taiwanese people’s confidence in resuming cross-Strait exchanges and rebuild trust between relevant agencies across the two sides.

A step-by-step approach is key to the long-term sustainability of all government policies. To the extent that the COVID-19 pandemic is kept in check, our government will gradually resume healthy and orderly people-to-people exchanges across the Taiwan Strait; we also look forward to the show of goodwill and sincerity from both sides so we can lay the foundation for benign interaction with each other.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude again for the hard work from all involved parties in implementing this program; I would also like to express deep appreciation for the understanding and cooperation of fellow residents. I wish for a successful maiden Kinmen-Xiamen voyage. Thank you!