

## **The “Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu”: Maiden Voyage of Matsu Route Took Place on January 8**

MAC Press Release No. 002

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) issued the following press release upon the maiden voyage of the Matsu route under the “Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu” (hereinafter the “Charter Ferry Program”). MAC Deputy Minister Chiu Chui-Cheng, Deputy Magistrate Wang Chung-ming of Lienchiang County, and Deputy Director-General Liu Chih-hung of the Maritime Port Bureau went to Kinmen on the day of the maiden voyage to inspect ticket sales and on-site CIQS (customs, immigration, quarantine, security) clearance at the Fu'ao Harbor Visitor Information Center. They also extended welcome to Matsu residents participating in the maiden sailing under the Charter Ferry Program.

Today's maiden voyage departed at 10 am from Fu'ao Harbor in Nangan, Matsu, with the Taiwan-registered Jishun 10 ferry carrying 24 Matsu residents and their mainland Chinese spouses to Langqi, Fuzhou in mainland China. The return trip departed at 12:45 pm, carrying 14 Matsu residents and their mainland Chinese spouses, and arrived at the Fu'ao Pier at 2 pm, marking a smooth maiden voyage.

The MAC stated that the government understands that cross-Strait “Mini-three-links” passenger service has a considerable impact on local development in Kinmen and Matsu. The main purpose of the Charter Ferry Program is to facilitate homecoming and family reunion for Kinmen and Matsu residents over the Lunar New Year holiday. In response to the hope expressed by some travelers that the government can expand the “Mini-three-links” passenger service to help more Taiwanese citizens return home from mainland China, the MAC said that the implementation of this program would serve as an important reference in the subsequent promotion of the resumption of the “Mini-three-links” passenger service.

Service on the Baisha-Huangqi route of “Mini-three-links” in Matsu is currently undetermined since mainland China has not yet opened Huangqi Port. The residents of Matsu generally hope that the Baisha-Huangqi route will be opened as soon as possible since the sailing time is shorter— only about one-third that of the Fuao-Langqi route. In the event that the route cannot be resumed during the Charter Ferry Program, relevant service will be shifted to the Fuao-Langqi route.