

## China and Taiwan Expand Accords

By [EDWARD WONG](#)

BEIJING — Chinese and Taiwanese officials signed agreements on Tuesday expanding charter flights, maritime shipping and cooperation on food safety issues, bringing their governments closer together as both struggle to overcome economic slowdowns.

The agreements were finalized on the second day of a planned five-day visit to [Taiwan](#) by a mainland delegation led by Chen Yunlin, the head of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, the main negotiating body for [China](#) in matters related to Taiwan.

Mr. Chen is the most senior Chinese Communist Party official to visit Taiwan since 1949, when the Kuomintang, Taiwan's governing party, lost the Chinese civil war and occupied Taiwan while in retreat. The mainland Chinese government considers Taiwan a rebel province that must be restored to China. Many Taiwanese prefer to maintain the status quo while others lobby strongly to move toward formal independence.

Taiwan's economic growth has lagged behind China's in recent years, spurring the Taiwanese in March to elect [Ma Ying-jeou](#), a long-time Kuomintang politician, as president. Mr. Ma ran on a platform of improving the economy through closer ties with the mainland. The presidential election and an earlier parliamentary election were seen as referendums on the policies of [Chen Shui-bian](#), the former president whose family members are accused of corruption and whose party, the Democratic Progressive Party, leans toward Taiwanese independence.

The agreements reached on Tuesday were a result of the attempts made by Mr. Ma's government at engagement with the mainland. In June, just after he was inaugurated, Mr. Ma sent a delegation to Beijing to sign an agreement establishing a regular weekend schedule of charter flights between China and Taiwan.

Mr. Ma's popularity has plummeted in recent months, partly based on criticism that he is giving away too much to China, but he pushed forward with a second round of talks.

The new transportation agreement raises to 108 from 36 the number of weekly round-trip charter flights, according to a summary of the agreement posted on a Web site run by the Taiwanese government. The flights are expected to run daily, with 21 cities on the mainland and eight in Taiwan receiving service.

The planes will also fly in a direct line between cities over a route north of Taiwan. Charter flights between China and Taiwan currently take a longer route through Hong Kong airspace because of security concerns.

Under the new routing, direct flights between Taipei and Beijing will take two hours, and flights between Taipei and Shanghai will take 80 minutes. China and Taiwan will add direct cargo charter flights as well, with 60 scheduled per month.

The two governments will also open direct shipping channels for passengers and cargo. China will open a total of 63 ports and Taiwan will open 11. To avoid political sensitivities, ships will not fly national flags.

The two governments also agreed to expand free exchange of information regarding food-safety issues. If any product is considered faulty or dangerous, a government will recall it and halt its shipment, according to the agreement.

Discussion of the issue arose because mainland China has been grappling with its biggest food safety crisis in years. In September, Chinese dairy products were discovered to have been contaminated with [melamine](#), a toxic chemical used in plastics that has been regularly and illegally added to dairy products and animal feed to falsify a high protein count. At least four infants have died and 53,000 children have fallen ill from kidney complications resulting from melamine. Suspect Chinese foods have been recalled around the world, including in Taiwan.

China and Taiwan also agreed to start direct mail service. "With the four agreements, direct transport and mail services that compatriots on both sides have been longing for over the past 30 years have become a reality, and will provide more convenient channels for cross-straits economic exchanges," Mr. Chen said Tuesday, according to Xinhua, the official state news agency of mainland China.

Mr. Chen met on Monday and Tuesday with his Taiwanese counterpart, Chiang Pin-kung, head of the Straits Exchange Foundation. After the agreements were signed on Tuesday, the two appeared together and held up large books containing the signatures.

Mr. Chen's arrival on Monday was marked by a handful of protests. Democratic Progressive Party supporters have loudly denounced Mr. Chen's visit, and one of his mainland colleagues was knocked to the ground by a Taiwanese politician while on a recent visit to the Confucius temple in the southern city of Tainan, where the party has strong support. The south of Taiwan has a committed pro-independence leaning.

Mr. Chen also said Tuesday that the mainland would give Taiwan two pandas as gifts before the year's end. In exchange, Mr. Chen will accept two rare animals from Taiwan: an endangered goat and a spotted deer.