

SEF chief calls for 'open minds'

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Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (蔣經國) yesterday urged the public to look at the upcoming cross-strait talks with an open mind, adding that he would conduct all negotiations under the principle that Taiwan is the focus and that the interests of the public come first.

Chiang said he hoped the Chinese people and the international community would see Taiwan's democracy and rationality during exchanges between the SEF and its Chinese counterpart, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).

"The two sides take turns holding the meetings. This is to showcase the principles of equality and dignity," he said. "Through reciprocal negotiations, we show our confidence and unity."

Chiang made the remarks while briefing the board of directors of the foundation in the run-up to his meeting with ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin (陳雲林). The meeting is scheduled to be held in Taichung next week.

The two sides will address four issues and sign four agreements on fishing industry cooperation, quality checks of agricultural products, cross-strait cooperation in standard inspection and certification and the prevention of double taxation.

They will also "exchange opinions" on an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA). As the administration plans to sign the proposed pact next year, it hopes to place the issue on the agenda of the next round of cross-strait talks scheduled for the first half of next year.

Chiang said both sides would not negotiate the planned accord nor sign it during his meeting with Chen next week.

Borrowing the concept of Time magazine, which described the first decade of the 21st century as the "decade from hell," Chiang said Taiwan's situation was not any better and described the last 10 years as the "lost decade."

With the fourth round of cross-strait talks approaching, Chiang called on the public to view the upcoming Chiang-Chen meeting with an open mind.

"We will have the public interest in mind and follow the principle set forth by Premier Wu Den-yih (吳登益)," he said. "That is, all policies must be necessary for the country, supported by the people and supervised by the legislature."

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) said in Chiayi on Sunday that details of the negotiations on an ECFA would be reviewed by the legislature. He also said that the proposed pact would not concern sovereignty and was only economic in nature.

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The planned accord would also help remove the hurdles blocking the country from joining other regional economic entities, he said.

Meanwhile, in response to a proposal by political cartoonist and chief executive of the online broadcasting network Yushan TV, Lin Kuei-yu (林錫山) — better known as Yu-fu (俞夫) — to “catch Chen Yunlin alive” during his visit, Chiang said it was the government’s responsibility to ensure Chen’s safety.

In a blog post, Yu-fu said he had discussed some “secret plans to catch Chen alive when he’s in Taiwan” with Taiwan independence advocates Koo Kwang-min (吳光民) and Koo’s wife, Cecilia Koo (吳鳳姿), and asked Internet users to help locate Chen’s whereabouts.

He called on Internet users to use laptops and cellphones with Internet access to provide updates on Chen’s location and send live videos of any protests.

Yu-fu declined to reveal what the “secret plans” were.

Asked by lawmakers to comment on the matter, a National Police Agency official said the agency’s job was to maintain order and help the meetings proceed smoothly.

The official said Yu-fu’s remarks could cause clashes and were “inappropriate.”

The Criminal Investigation Bureau said it would launch a probe to determine if Yu-fu’s behavior constituted incitement.

Minister of the Interior Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華) said yesterday that he did not know whether Yu-fu was serious about his plan, but vowed to respond with care.

Meanwhile, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Spokesman Tsai Chi-chang (蔡智彰) held a press conference yesterday to present the party’s stance on next week’s meeting, proposing “three calls, three stances”

Tsai said that first, the DPP was calling on the government to sign any agreement or statement that would commit it to transparency and monitoring by the legislature.

Second, the DPP calls on the SEF to review the implementation of past agreements accurately and to make corrections if necessary, he said.

Third, in terms of the content of an ECFA, the DPP calls on the government to fully communicate with the legislature in advance and obtain public approval through a referendum.

As for the three stances, Tsai said the DPP demands that negotiators on the Taiwanese side make the Taiwanese people’s health and safety a priority on the issues of both agricultural quarantine and measurement standards, and protect Taiwanese laborers’ and fishers’ rights, while ensuring its right of jurisdiction on the issue of double taxation to clarify the public’s

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doubts about the meeting.

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