

Chen's detention extended two months

Written by Taipei Times

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Supporters of former president Chen Shui-bian hold placards as they protest outside Ta
PHOTO: PATRICK LIN, AFP

The Taipei District Court ruled yesterday to extend former president Chen Shui-bian's incarceration at the Taipei Detention Center for two more months.

"The court ruled to extend [Chen's] detention by two months starting from July 26," Taipei District Court spokesperson Huang Chun-ming said.

The court cited several of the reasons used in its previous detention rulings — the concern that Chen would collude with witnesses, destroy evidence or try to abscond, and because he has been charged with serious crimes that could bring him a prison term of seven years or more.

However, it also cited Chen's "interference" with the case by talking to the public through friends and colleagues who visited him at the detention center.

The ruling said that even behind bars, Chen is capable of exerting pressure on the judiciary, so it was difficult to imagine how much damage he could do to the judiciary if he were not detained.

The court believed there were no other means, such as bail or placing restrictions on residence, to substitute for detention, Huang said.

Chen has been held at the detention center since Dec. 30. This is the third time Presiding Judge Tsai Shou-hsun has ruled to extend his detention.

Chen has declined to speak in his defense or answer questions since May 7 to protest what he calls an unfair judicial system, except to speak briefly at his detention hearing last Friday.

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In response to Chen supporters saying they would “shut the court down” if his detention was extended, Huang said the court respects the protesters’ right to freedom of speech, and it would arrange security for its officials if necessary.

Judicial Reform Foundation executive director Lin Feng-jeng criticized the ruling, saying the court’s action was “excessive” and the reasons for the detention had ceased to exist.

Lin said the court cited new reasons for detaining Chen because “they know the original reasons have become too flimsy.”

He urged the judges and prosecutors to find other means of preventing Chen from absconding because detention should be used as a last resort.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) spokesman Cheng Wen-tsang said the court ruling was unacceptable. The party believed there was no need to keep Chen in custody, and the latest extension went against the consensus of legal professionals, he said.

Cheng said the court had heard all witnesses in the case, so Chen would have no need to conspire with them. The DPP also believed that as a former president guarded by security agents around the clock, Chen would have no chance of fleeing if released, he said.

He criticized President Ma Ying-jeou for signing the UN’s International Convention on Civil and Political Rights into law earlier this year, but then ignoring reform of the legal system.

In related news, Chen was recently diagnosed with tendonitis in his right foot. The detention center said doctors put a cast on his foot on Saturday.

The doctors said the tendonitis was caused by an abnormal bone growth, and that Chen had also been prescribed medication for the condition.

□ ADDITIONAL REPORTING BY RICH CHANG

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