

Chen still silent as trial nears close

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Former president Chen Shui-bian yesterday again refused to answer questions at his trial at Taipei District Court.

Presiding Judge Tsai Shou-hsun scheduled yesterday's session to have Chen examine case files. All of Tsai's questions to the former president regarding whether he had any comments about the files went unanswered.

As usual, the former president kept silent and did not make any gestures to protest what he has called an unfair judicial system.

Chen has relinquished his right to call witnesses or speak in his defense, saying he did not need to do so because he was innocent.

Prosecutors and Chen's court-appointed attorney, Tseng Te-rong, also said little yesterday, telling the court they would save their comments until a later date for closing arguments.

Tsai set Tuesday as the date for the closing arguments.

Outside the courthouse, more than 100 of the former president's supporters from groups including the Southern Taiwan Society and the Northern Taiwan Society gathered to demonstrate against his continued detention.

Holding up signs that read "Unjust judiciary" and "Release A-bian now," the protesters called on the Grand Council of Justices to declare the switching of judges in Chen's case unconstitutional.

Huang Yung-tien, who was among the hundreds of protestors who gathered on July 10 for a detention hearing, returned yesterday, protesting with his hands in handcuffs.

Several protesters shouted "Tsai Shou-hsun, go to hell" and "A-bian is innocent."

In January, Chen's office asked the council to rule on the legitimacy of his pre-trial detention and the switching of judges from Chou Chan-chun to Tsai.

While Chou presided over Chen's case, he twice ruled against detaining Chen. Tsai has repeatedly ruled to detain him.

In December last year, a panel of judges ordered that Chou be replaced by Tsai, who would preside over all of Chen's cases, which would be merged.

The switch was controversial, with some claiming it was and politically motivated. Some legal experts said the decision to merge the trials had violated judicial procedures.

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