

## Chen speaks at end of corruption trial

Written by Taipei Times

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Supporters of former president Chen Shui-bian perform a skit to protest against his cont  
PHOTO: CHIEN JUNG-FONG, TAIPEI TIMES

Former president Chen Shui-bian last night began to make a statement at the end of his trial on money laundering and corruption charges at the Taipei District Court.

As of press time, Chen was still addressing the court.

After asking whether there was a time limit, the former president began to speak for the first time in weeks, almost entirely in Hoklo.

He said that ever since September, when Special Investigation Panel prosecutors held a press conference to say they would step down if they failed to successfully prosecute him, he knew he stood no chance of a fair trial.

He reiterated that the switching of judges last year was unconstitutional and that there was no procedural justice in his trial.

“Yes, the law is the last line of defense against greed,” he said, quoting comments prosecutors made on Monday. “I agree that the law is just. But are there no double standards? No political vendetta?” he asked.

Earlier in the day a prosecutor became so emotional talking about the country’s path to democracy that he broke down in tears.

Presiding Judge Tsai Shou-hsun scheduled yesterday’s court date to hear closing arguments from Chen, his court-appointed lawyers and the prosecution.

Throughout most of the session, the former president remained silent in protest against what he has described as an unfair judicial system.

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Prosecutors yesterday began their closing arguments by quoting an ancient saying by Emperor Song Taizu: "Your salary is sourced from public funds. Although it is easier to deceive the people, you can never successfully deceive God."

The prosecution used PowerPoint slides filled with color photographs of a handcuffed Chen and his family members, as well as media coverage and graphical depictions of the former first family's cash flows, to illustrate their allegations.

Prosecutor Lin Yi-chun said in the closing argument that the president should be a public servant, not "the head of a mafia that 'takes care of' private corporations."

Prosecutors said the way the former first family laundered money was on a par with international money laundering rings.

"Wiring billions of NT dollars to overseas bank accounts. Is this love of Taiwan?" Lin said.

Rebutting the accusations, Chen's court-appointed attorney Tseng Te-rong said the former president did not intend to launder money because his wife, Wu Shu-jen, had previously testified that her husband was unaware of her transferring funds to overseas bank accounts.

Tang Chen-chi, another court-appointed attorney, cited witness statements to argue that the NT\$10 million (US\$300,000) donated by former Taipei Financial Center Corp, chairwoman Diana Chen to the Democratic Progressive Party was not a bribe because it was not in a president's power to arrange personnel changes in a privately owned company.

Tseng requested that the court release Chen from detention, but Tsai told Tseng the court would deal with the request later.

The court-appointed attorneys spent more than four hours rebutting prosecutors' arguments. Tseng later told reporters that Chen Shui-bian whispered to him: "Tang is better than the lawyers I hired."

The court-appointed attorneys' arguments were printed plainly in black ink, which was a stark contrast to the prosecution's colorful illustrations and emotional speech.

At the end of the prosecutors' rebutted, prosecutor Lin Chin-kang repeatedly broke into tears talking about Chen Shui-bian's corruption charges.

"Those who oppose the former president may not be willing to admit that even though he has committed serious mistakes, there still exists righteousness in him," he said.

Yet although Chen had espoused the ideals of clean government in the past, he became corrupt, Lin said.

"To reprimand a revolutionary who, because of temptation, lost his ideals along the way, is a very cruel thing to do," he said.

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However, Lin did not mean to excuse Chen of all guilt.

“Those who know right from wrong, but choose to give in to temptation, should they take part of the responsibility?” Lin asked.

In related news, Taipei District Court judge Shen Chun-ling was yesterday assigned to hear whether Chen Shui-bian's daughter Chen Hsing-yu's travel restrictions should be lifted.

Chen Hsing-yu, her brother Chen Chih-chung, her husband Chao Chien-ming, and Diana Chen were charged on July 17 with making false witness statements in relation to the former first family's embezzlement and corruption cases.

Wu was indicted for instigating perjury by allegedly instructing her children to lie during a probe into the embezzlement charges against both herself and her husband, the prosecutor said.

Chen Shui-bian, who left office last year, stands accused of embezzling public funds, money laundering, accepting bribes on a land deal, influence peddling and forgery. He has been detained since December last year.

The Taipei District Court will announce its verdict on Sept. 11.

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