

Taiwan High Court to meet soon on Chen's detention

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The Taiwan High Court said it would hold a hearing on Wednesday at the earliest on whether to keep former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) in detention.

Chen's current term of detention expires on Friday.

The courts are in the process of moving Chen's corruption and money-laundering case from the district court, where the first verdict was passed down by judges in Judge Tsai Shou-hsun's (蔡守訓) courtroom, to the Taiwan High Court for an appeals process.

The High Court will assign judges for the appeals through a random drawing this week. With the exception of four judges who are due to retire or seriously ill, all 86 high court judges are required to participate in the drawing.

The selection process will be closely watched because the Council of Grand Justices has yet to announce their interpretation on the constitutionality of switching of judges in Chen's case.

A panel of judges ordered last December that Judge Chou Chan-chun (周昌春) be replaced by Tsai in the trial of Chen and 12 codefendants. The change prompted complaints of procedural flaws and political interference.

The Supreme Prosecutors' Office's Special Investigation Panel (SIP) said on Friday that it had submitted its appeal of the sentences given to Chen, his wife Wu Shu-jen (吳淑珍), his son Chen Chih-chung (陳智中), daughter-in-law Huang Jui-ching (黃璦晶), Wu's friend Tsai Ming-che (蔡明哲), former first family bookkeeper Chen Chen-hui (陳陳輝) and contractor Kuo Chuan-ching (郭煥景).

In their appeal, prosecutors said the sentences of some of the defendants were disproportionate to their involvement in the crimes, and that certain money-laundering crimes should be ruled on independently instead of including them as part of the corruption case.

The Taipei District Court found Chen Shui-bian, his wife and 11 codefendants guilty on Sept. 11 and sentenced the former president and his wife to life in prison and fines totaling NT\$500 million (US\$15.4 million).

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