

Judges fail to rule on extending Chen Shui-bian detention

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The Taiwan High Court yesterday heard arguments from prosecutors, former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and his defense lawyers on whether to extend Chen's detention after the current period expires on Dec. 24.

The judges announced that a decision would be delivered to the former president before his current period expires.

In the morning, Chen appeared at the appeals court for a pre-trial hearing on his embezzlement and money laundering cases. Part of the hearing was held behind closed doors because secret diplomatic projects were being discussed.

Later Presiding Judge Teng Chen-chiu (滕盛九) announced that the court would hold a hearing to decide whether to keep the former president in prison after Dec. 24.

When the judges asked for Chen's opinion, he said he believed the judges had already made up their minds to keep him in detention, so it didn't matter what he thought.

Chen said President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) remarks on Wednesday attributing the lack of progress on Chen's cases as one of the main reasons the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) performed poorly in the recent local elections showed there was no chance that he would be released.

On Sept. 24, high court judges ruled to keep Chen detained for another three months because they said the crimes he had been found guilty of were serious and, as a former president, he had more opportunity to flee the country than an ordinary citizen. They also expressed concern about the large amount of money and other assets the former first family has overseas.

Chen then filed an appeal of the detention ruling, which was approved by the Supreme Court on Oct. 8. The Supreme Court judges ruled that High Court judges should reconsider whether their reasons for Chen's detention were sufficient and to hold a second detention hearing.

The High Court then again ruled that Chen should be kept behind bars. Chen filed an appeal but the Supreme Court said on Nov. 5 that the reasons listed by the High Court were adequate.

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