

Court adds two months to Chen detention term

Written by Taipei Times

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The Taiwan High Court yesterday extended former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) detention by another two months from Dec. 24.

High Court judges wrote in their ruling that after hearing arguments from prosecutors and the defendant, they believed that the reasons for Chen's detention, including a flight risk and fear that he would collude with witnesses, remained valid.

In response to the argument by Chen's attorneys that his lengthy detention harmed his right to a defense in court because it limited the time he has to meet with his lawyers, judges said Chen has been allowed unlimited access to his lawyers ever since the trial began at the Taipei District Court.

Therefore, the judges said, the detention does not affect Chen's right to self-defense.

The High Court ruled that Chen needed to be detained to ensure a smooth litigation process because he stands accused of serious crimes and there are still dozens of witnesses and defendants who have yet to testify in court.

For Chen, the extended detention ruling means he will probably spend Christmas and the Lunar New Year in detention.

The former president has been held at the Taipei Detention Center since Dec. 30 last year.

This is the second time that the High Court has extended Chen's detention. The first time was on Sept. 24, when judges ruled that Chen should remain in detention until Dec. 24 as 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.

Judges also expressed concern about the large amount of money and other assets the former first family has overseas.

Chen then filed an appeal against the detention ruling, which was approved by the Supreme Court on Oct. 8.

The Supreme Court ruled that High Court judges should reconsider whether their reasons for Chen's detention were sufficient and hold a second detention hearing.

The High Court then 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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