

Chen calls for release of his father

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Former President Chen Shui-bian should be released from custody since his family had agreed to return funds from overseas accounts to Taiwan, his son Chen Chih-chung said yesterday.

The former head of state has been detained since Dec. 30, 2008 as a suspect in cases of corruption and money laundering. Expectations that he would be released rose after his relatives agreed last week that Switzerland could wire about NT\$700 million into accounts designated by Taiwan prosecutors.

The Taiwan High Court discussed the ex-president's continued detention last week, but it has not announced its decision yet.

The younger Chen told a news conference that as the Taiwan High Court was reaching the end of its review of the cases, with a verdict scheduled for June 11, there was no need to keep his father behind bars.

The law stipulated that a suspect should not be held longer than necessary for the review of the case, he told a news conference held in the company of senior lawmakers from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party.

He added that the date for his father's release should not be dependent on the progress in wiring the funds from Switzerland to Taiwan. The case was now in the hands of the Swiss judiciary, Chen said, rejecting accusations that it was his family's reluctance to cooperate with prosecutors which was slowing down the process.

The case had damaged the international image of Taiwan's judiciary and its claims of impartiality, he said.

The funds in the Swiss accounts allegedly formed part of money transferred abroad on behalf of former First Lady Wu Shu-jen.

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Ex-President Chen was sentenced to life in prison and a fine of NT\$200 million by the Taipei District Court last September 11. Wu received the same prison term and a NT\$300 million fine.

The former president has denied he did anything wrong, saying the funds were mostly political donations. Chen has described the court cases against him as part of a politically motivated campaign of revenge by the administration of President Ma Ying-jeou.

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