

Chen daughter travel request rejected

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District prosecutors yesterday rejected a request from former president Chen Shui-bian's daughter, Chen Hsing-yu, to have her travel restrictions lifted, ruining her plans to study in the US with her three children.

Prosecutors rejected Chen Hsing-yu's request "to ensure that the litigation process goes smoothly," said Lin Jinn-tsun, spokesperson for the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office.

"If the defendant wishes to do so, she may appeal," Lin said.

Lin Chih-chung, Chen Hsing-yu's defense attorney, said she would appeal the decision to the Taipei District Court.

Lin filed a petition with the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office requesting that Chen Hsing-yu's travel restrictions be lifted so that she could complete school registration in the US.

Lin Chih-chung relayed Chen Hsing-yu's message that if prosecutors were concerned about her laundering money while in the US, she would be willing to have her passport held by overseas authorities after she entered the country.

Other options she put on the table included leaving one or all of her children in Taiwan to show her sincerity about coming back to the country after finishing registration, her lawyer said.

"[Chen Hsing-yu] has been planning to study in the US for two or three years," Lin Chih-chung said. "She has already admitted to her [perjury] charges, there is no reason to keep her here [in Taiwan]."

When Chen Hsing-yu found out that her request had been rejected, she broke down, he said.

In response, Minister of Justice Wang Ching-feng said she would not interfere with individual cases nor would she give any special instructions regarding the case, adding that authorities would do everything according to the law.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesman Henry Chen, meanwhile, said the ministry, as well as representative offices and embassies abroad do not have the right or obligation to keep a person's passport while they are traveling abroad, saying such an idea would be "unimaginable."

Prosecutors placed travel restrictions on Chen Hsing-yu on June 6, three days after she was charged with giving false testimony during investigations into the former first family for corruption and money laundering.

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She was barred from leaving the country last Tuesday, after she, her husband, Chao Chien-ming, and her brother, Chen Chih-chung, admitted to giving false testimony.

Presidential Office Secretary-General Chan Chun-po promised to present a letter from Chen Shui-bian about his daughter to President Ma Ying-jeou.

The president, however, would not interfere with the judicial system in response to Chen Shui-bian's call to allow his daughter to travel, Chan said before attending a meeting at Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) headquarters.

Chan met Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Secretary-General Wu Nai-jen yesterday morning at the Presidential Office. Wu expressed concern about Chen Shui-bian's letter to Ma.

In the letter, the former president said barring his daughter from leaving the country was illegal and unreasonable, and added that his daughter might develop a mental disorder or try to commit suicide because of the restrictions.

Chan said the Presidential Office had received the letter, and would present it to the president even though it was unlikely the president would take any action.

"As far as I understand, the president will not interfere with the judiciary directly because the establishment of an independent judicial system is not easy," Chan said.

Wu also relayed DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen's concerns about the custody system and the government's respect of human rights during his meeting with Chan, and presented a written statement on the issues.

Chan said he would give the statement to Ma when the president returns from his trip to Central America, adding that Ma was still interested in meeting Tsai and discussing such issues with her face to face.

Commenting on the letter, KMT Legislator Chiu Yi criticized the former president, saying that Chen Shui-bian was trying to manipulate his case.

KMT Legislator Lo Shu-lei urged Chen Shui-bian to plead guilty as soon as possible instead of resorting to all kinds of "tricks" to influence the case.

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) criticized the decision by Taipei prosecutors

"All of Chen's family is barred from leaving the country. The public believes they are facing political persecution," DPP spokesman Cheng Wen-tsang told a press conference yesterday.

He said the party cared about Chen Hsing-yu and was sympathetic to her cause, adding the party considered the ban unnecessary.

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Chen Hsing-yu was not a major player in the Chen family case. The ban had hit her seriously and affected her career, and the party hoped prosecutors could reconsider the decision, the spokesman added.

He said the DPP requested that the government amend the Criminal Procedure Code soon, limiting the court's right to detain defendants, particularly before their trials have begun.

At a separate setting, DPP Legislator William Lai said the DPP caucus had sympathy for Chen Hsing-yu.

When prosecutors investigated President Ma Ying-jeou over his use of special allowances during his time as Taipei mayor, prosecutors never summoned Ma's daughters for questioning or prohibited them from leaving the country, but allowed them to stay abroad during the investigation, Lai said, adding prosecutors treated former president Chen and Ma with different standards.

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