

Chen supporters descend on Taichung

Written by Taipei Times

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Supporters of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and his family are descending on Greater Taichung to protest a hospital checkup today for Chen's wife, former first lady Wu Shu-jen (吳淑珍).

The checkup, to be conducted at Pei Teh Hospital — a part of Taichung Prison — will determine whether she is fit to serve the prison sentence of 17-and-a-half years she received for taking bribes and laundering the money.

The family's supporters and several pro-independence groups say that the former first lady is too frail to spend time in prison and argue that there is a clear precedent for lax treatment for prisoners with ill health.

Wu was paralyzed after being run over three times during a political event for her husband in 1985. Family members say she needs a helper around the clock and cannot take care of herself.

Sources said that more than 10 pro-independence groups will take part in the protest, including the Northern Taiwan Society and the Alliance of Referendum for Taiwan — an overwhelming response given that some organizers had initially pegged a limited turnout of no more than 100 people.

Officials at the Northern Taiwan Society say they now expect between 500 and 1,000 supporters to descend on the prison this morning.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) city councilors are also expected to play a prominent role in organizing the protest through the informal "One Side, One Country" alliance of which the former first couple's son, Chen Chih-chung (陳智雄), is a part. The DPP officially has steered clear of endorsing the event.

"People who are Taiwanese will naturally come out and voice their support [for Wu]," said Chou

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Chung-teh (鍾國雄), the head of the 908 Taiwan Republic Alliance, which is planning for 200 protesters from central Taiwan to attend.

Chou compared the judicial proceedings, which have been confirmed by the Supreme Court, to “murder,” saying it represents a political agenda against the former first family. Chen Shui-bian and Wu are currently on trial in three other cases for allegedly being involved in illegal land deals and embezzling secret diplomatic funds.

Up to 400 people are also expected to travel by bus from the south, spurred by remarks by several politicians, including DPP Greater Kaohsiung Councilor Cheng Hsin-chu (鄭欣秋), who on Monday called Wu’s treatment an “insult to all Taiwanese.”

In response, police have already begun to deploy barricades outside the prison, while ingoing and outgoing vehicles at the complex will be limited, police officials said. Up to 300 officers will be deployed.

Prosecutors have said that neither hand nor ankle cuffs will be required as Wu is taken to the hospital, a move that will likely assuage the protesters following the treatment afforded to the former president when he underwent a medical exam last month.

She is expected to arrive just after 10am, after first reporting to the Kaohsiung District Prosecutors’ Office at 8am. Sources say it is still unclear what the course of action would be should she fail the medical.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2011/02/18](#)