

Taipei District Court to announce former president's verdict on Sept. 11

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The Taipei District Court yesterday set Sept. 11 as the date it will announce its verdict in the corruption cases against former president Chen Shui-bian.

The former president has maintained that the money he sent overseas was from leftover campaign funds that he dedicated to classified foreign relations building, while denying that the money was earned through illegal dealings.

The court will hear the closing defense from former first lady Wu Shu-jen and the former president on Monday and Tuesday respectively.

Chen was indicted on Dec. 13 last year on charges of embezzling government funds, money laundering and forgery, along with 13 co-defendants, including his wife. He is incarcerated at the Taipei Detention Center.

Presiding Judge Tsai Shou-hsun also set Aug. 4 as the date on which the court will hear arguments on whether the couple's son Chen Chih-chung and daughter-in-law Huang Jui-ching, and others would be allowed to enter plea bargaining.

The younger Chen and his wife had promised to wire the family's overseas funds of about NT\$1.2 billion (US\$36 million) from Swiss accounts and paper companies back to Taiwan as part of the conditions to enter plea bargaining.

However, none of the money has been remitted because Swiss authorities froze the funds based on the two country's judicial mutual assistance agreement. Taiwanese prosecutors are in the process of requesting that the money be unfrozen and wired back.

Meanwhile, Tsai yesterday heard closing arguments from former Hsinchu Science Park chief James Lee, who is also a co-defendant in Chen Shui-bian's trial. Lee, along with Chen Shui-bian, is charged with taking kickbacks from a government land deal in Longtan, Taoyuan County.

Lee yesterday admitted to taking NT\$30 million (US\$1 million) in bribes and pleaded to the court for a light sentence. When Lee testified as a witness in Chen Shui-bian's trials, his testimony contradicted what he told Special Investigation Panel prosecutors.

Prosecutors argued that Lee's contradictory remarks showed he had been trying to cover up for the former president and Wu, and advised against a lighter sentence.

Prosecutors allege that in a meeting at the Presidential Office between the former president, Lee and other government officials, Chen Shui-bian proposed that the administration first rent the plot of land, then buy it and eventually include it as part of a science park.

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Prosecutors allege that the plan was for the former first lady to collect NT\$400 million (US\$12 million) in bribes as part of a deal between the government-run Hsinchu Science Park and Dayu Development Corp.

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