

Ministry to ask ‘most appropriate decision’ on A-bian

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The Ministry of Justice will ask the Taipei Prison and the Agency of Corrections to make the “most appropriate decision” on former president Chen Shui-bian’s (陳水扁) treatment in about three weeks’ time, Justice Minister Tseng Yung-fu (曾榮光) said yesterday.

The ministry on Monday received a medical report from Taipei Veterans General Hospital, where the imprisoned former president has received treatment since September last year, and would authorize the two institutions to make a final decision on Chen’s future, Tseng told lawmakers in a plenary session yesterday.

“Chen Shui-bian is a former president, a prisoner and a patient. We will make the most appropriate decision on his treatment in accordance with the law and medical treatment based on the three identities,” he said.

However, Tseng ruled out the possibility of home care, which Chen’s private medical team and his supporters believe is the best way for the former president to be treated for various complications, saying that it is not an option under current laws.

The minister cited the hospital’s report as saying that the 62-year-old Chen, who is serving a 20-year sentence for corruption, is suffering from severe depression, sleep apnea, atypical Parkinsonism and hemorrhoids.

Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜華) later rejected Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Mark Chen’s (陳明文) claim that the legal proceedings in Chen’s case had been a “political persecution” and had been interfered with by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九).

“The Ma Ying-jeou that I know would never do something like this. And I do not believe the judges involved in Chen’s corruption cases tried to set him up,” Jiang said.

In a press release issued yesterday afternoon, Chen’s office cited the hospital’s assessment in its report as saying that the hospital recommended home care as the best treatment for Chen.

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It added that Chen's lawyers would apply for medical parole and a suspended judgement because of the former president's illness.

Chen's attorney said yesterday that he had asked the Taipei District Court to suspend Chen's trial on charges of illegally seizing confidential government documents, for health reasons.

The district court yesterday morning held a hearing, but Chen's attorney, Cheng Wen-lung (程文龍), told the court that the former president's health has not improved and he could not attend.

According to the Criminal Code, when a defendant is unable to attend a hearing due to ill-health, the court can suspend a trial, Cheng told the judges.

The court yesterday heard the testimony of Chou Yuan-hua (周元華), a psychiatrist in charge of Chen Shui-bian's care at Taipei Veterans General Hospital, behind closed doors.

Cheng said Chou detailed Chen Shui-bian's situation, including his various ailments.

According to Cheng, Chou told the judges it would be better for the former president to be looked after at home, or to stay in a hospital that has a psychiatric department close to his home.

Chen Shui-bian was indicted on a charge of violating the Classified National Security Information Protection Act (密示保護法) in May last year.

According to the indictment, he ordered close aides to pack and transport important documents from national security agencies, the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to his personal office in Taipei after the March presidential election in 2008, when the Democratic Progressive Party was voted out of power.

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