

A-bian's relocation sparks fury, clashes

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Protesters led by Democratic Progressive Party Chiayi County branch director Huang Li-chen clash with police while protesting the government's decision to relocate former president Chen Shui-bian and its failure to grant him medical parole as President Ma Ying-jeou presides over a Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) meeting in Chiayi yesterday afternoon.

Photo: CNA

During a visit by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) yesterday to Chiayi County, a group of Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) politicians and their supporters protested the transfer of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to Taichung Prison's Pei-te Hospital, accusing the Ma administration of treating the former president inhumanely.

Ma, who doubles as Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman, presided over a KMT meeting in Chiayi yesterday afternoon. Outside the KMT's Chiayi County branch, about 100 protesters led by DPP Chiayi County branch director Huang Li-chen (黃立倫) clashed with police while protesting against the government's failure to grant Chen medical parole.

"Come out and explain [your actions] to us, Ma Ying-jeou!" they shouted as a number of protesters clashed with police as they tried to enter the meeting venue.

The police blocked the protesters from entering the office and forced them to leave without an opportunity to meet with the president.

Ma defended the Ministry of Justice's transfer of Chen to the prison hospital as a respectful and reasonable arrangement, dismissing criticisms that the transfer represented cruel treatment.

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“Transferring former president Chen to the prison hospital sets a precedent in the history of prison administration. It is reasonable for the ministry to exercise its authority and provide Chen with respectful treatment,” he said.

The Ministry of Justice moved Chen from the Taipei Veterans General Hospital in Taipei to the Taichung prison hospital on Friday at 5:30am, while debate continued over whether Chen, serving a 20-year jail sentence for corruption, and who has been diagnosed with severe depression, sleep apnea, non-typical Parkinson's disease, a speech disorder and mild cerebral atrophy, should be granted medical parole.

Chen's son, Chen Chih-chung (陳智雄), politicians from the pan-green camp and supporters of the former president have all condemned the abrupt transfer and accused the government of placing political considerations above Chen's medical wellbeing.

DPP Legislator Chiu Yi-ying (邱毅) even kicked the office door of Minister of Justice Tseng Yung-fu (曾榮富) on Friday before rushing in and demanding an explanation for the transfer.

The first KMT politician to publicly voice support for Chen Shui-bian's medical parole, Taipei Mayor Hau Lung-bin (郝龍斌), yesterday said the transfer to the prison hospital was “not the best solution.”

“We hope the medical staff at Pei-te Hospital pay close attention to former president Chen's condition. [The ministry] should still consider granting Chen medical parole if his condition worsens,” he said.

Hau also expressed concern about Chiu's door-kicking and said such behavior was not helpful to calls for medical parole for the former president.

The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) yesterday said it has asked prosecutors to investigate the group of DPP lawmakers who on Friday damaged the door to the minister of justice's office and interrupted a press conference.

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The MOJ said in a statement yesterday that while Deputy Minister of Justice Chen Ming-tang (陳明堂) was holding a press conference on Chen Shui-bian's transfer, the DPP lawmakers barged into the event, interrupted Chen Ming-tang and yelled remarks such as "the ministry is politically prejudiced" and "shame on the ministry."

The statement went on to say the group of DPP lawmakers then went to Tseng's office, where they proceeded to kick the door before entering the office shouting: "Chicken (雞) come out."

The justice ministry said the lawmakers' actions might have violated laws against employing threats or violence against public officials, interfering with public functions, destroying public property and insulting public officials.

The MOJ plans to send the case to the Taipei District Prosecutors' Office for investigation, it added.

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