

Medics urge parole for A-bian

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Members of the volunteer medical team looking after former president Chen Shui-bian, including National Taiwan University Hospital physician and aspirant for Taipei mayor Ko Wen-je, second left, and the former president's attorney, Cheng Wen-lung, second right, report on Chen's medical condition during a press conference in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: George Tsong, Taipei Times

An all-volunteer civilian medical team looking after former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), who has been diagnosed as having a degenerative brain disease, yesterday called on the authorities to parole Chen and allow him to be reunited with his family for the Lunar New Year holiday.

Members of the medical team, which includes National Taiwan University Hospital physician and aspirant for Taipei mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), and doctors Kuo Cheng-deng (郭成登) and Janice Chen (陳建真), made the call at a press conference held in Taipei yesterday, along with the former president's attorney, Cheng Wen-lung (鄭文龍), and his son, Chen Chih-chung (陳智忠).

Chen Shui-bian, who is serving a 20-year prison term for corruption, was sent to Taichung Veterans General Hospital for surgery to treat sleep apnea on Tuesday last week. He has since returned to Taichung Prison's Pei Teh Hospital, where a special medical zone has been set up for him.

Cheng wen-lung said the Taipei District Court's announcement on Dec. 20 that the former president's trial on charges of corruption and seizing confidential government documents had been suspended due to concerns about his health cited a medical report produced by a team led by Kaohsiung Chang Gung Memorial Hospital vice superintendent Chen Shun-sheng (陳俊生).

The report said the former president had been diagnosed with various complications, including severe depression, a speech impediment, sleep apnea, non-typical Parkinson's disease, a

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speech disorder, mild cerebral atrophy, poor memory and early signs of dementia, among other symptoms.

Citing the report, the district court concluded that “Chen Shui-bian’s life or health would be at risk,” the lawyer said.

Ko called on the authorities to consider paroling the former president during the Lunar New Year holiday at the end of this month and eventually to release him so that he can be cared for at home.

Chen Shui-bian’s sense of direction, spatial awareness and mathematical skills are all degrading, Ko said, adding that the former president could not even give the correct answer to the equation 100 minus seven when he visited him on Thursday.

Ko said that he did not understand how a former president of the nation could have come to be in such a state, adding that a civilized society treats its enemies and captives in a civilized way.

It is sad for Taiwanese society to have witnessed such a historical tragedy, but now that the judicial system has seen medical proof that Chen Shui-bian is not fit to stand trial, it should consider releasing him or at least give him medical parole so he can be cared for at home, Ko said.

Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Chen Ting-fei (陳亭妃) said that if former Executive Yuan secretary-general Lin Yi-shih (林錫山), who was sentenced to seven years and four months in prison by the Taipei District Court for accepting about NT\$60 million (US\$2 million) in bribes from a contractor in May last year, could return home for the holidays, she saw no reason why the former president should not.

She said that Chen Shui-bian had said that Taichung Prison was a “shithole” before his condition worsened, adding that the former president would wish to be treated at home if it were possible.

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Chen Chih-chung said that his father's condition had not improved after he was transferred to Pei Teh Hospital in April last year, adding that a change of environment — medical parole at home — would be required if his father's condition is to improve.

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