

Lu plans to visit Chen Shui-bian

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Following the announcement of her intention to visit imprisoned former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to mark International Human Rights Day on Wednesday next week, former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) yesterday gave President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) an ultimatum — if he does not release Chen by Christmas Day, she would go on a hunger strike until Chen is released.

Chen is serving a 20-year term for accepting bribes during his eight-year presidency. Suffering from deteriorating health, Chen has not been granted amnesty or home care by Ma, despite repeated appeals by medical experts, human rights advocates and Chen's supporters.

At a news conference held yesterday at the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Taipei office, Lu announced a list of "visitors" that she hopes will accompany her on Wednesday, including Taoyuan County commissioner-elect Cheng Wen-tsan (鄭文燦), Changhua County commissioner-elect Wei Ming-ku (魏明谷), Chiayi mayor-elect Twu Shiing-jer (吳錫爵), Penghu County commissioner-elect Chen Kuang-fu (陳光復) and Greater Tainan Deputy Mayor Yen Chun-tso (嚴震生).

Many of the DPP county commissioners invited have not yet replied, but it is hoped that they would answer the call and seek to appeal to what little conscience Ma has left and save Chen Shui-bian, Lu said.

The past six years of imprisonment have been hard on the former leader and he is very ill, Lu said, adding that given his poor health, the legal cases in which Chen Shui-bian is involved are in limbo because of his inability to appear in court due.

Chen Shui-bian's condition can wait no longer and the Ma administration should seek to release him on medical parole by Wednesday at the earliest, Lu said, adding that if Ma does decide to release him, she would greet Chen Shui-bian in front of Pei Te Prison.

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