

Chen to be reassessed, Lu to start hunger strike

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Former vice president Annette Lu, right, talks with new Democratic Progressive Party Greater Kaohsiung Council Speaker Kang Yu-cheng yesterday.

Photo: CNA

The medical team formed to assess jailed former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) health scheduled a third round of re-evaluation of Chen's condition for Monday after visiting Chen yesterday without concluding a report for the Ministry of Justice's Agency of Correction.

Chen, on charges of corruption, has been imprisoned since late 2008 and his health is steadily worsening.

Former Vice President Annette Lu (呂秀蓮), who served as vice president under Chen's administration from 2000 to 2008, said yesterday that she would launch a hunger strike beginning tomorrow at 4pm if the government does not release Chen on medical parole by tonight and would continue until Chen's release for medical treatment is approved.

Lu visited Greater Kaohsiung to congratulate new Council Speaker Kang Yu-cheng (康宇成) and called for city councilors from her party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), to join her planned hunger strike.

Lu requested that the city council set up a designated location for councilors to participate in the strike, suggesting that they rotate on six-hour shifts.

According to previous medical examinations, Chen was diagnosed with serious sleep apnea, major depressive disorder, prostatitis, delusional disorder and a stammer. Chen's previous

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medical team suggested that he be released for home care, but the ministry turned down the suggestion and allegedly postponed appropriate treatment for Chen.

Lu cited Article 58 of the Prison Act (監獄行刑法) for legal basis of Chen's release on medical parole, adding that she believed there were more prisoners who were not receiving adequate healthcare.

The ministry has neglected its duty, Lu said in a statement, adding a call for the Control Yuan to conduct further investigations.

Article 58 of the Prison Act says: "If inmates suffering from diseases cannot receive appropriate treatment in prison, it may be taken into account to release them on bail for medical treatment, transferring them to relevant prisons or hospitals with the permission of a supervisory authority."

Lu called on the government to adhere to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, both of which call for humane treatment to protect prisoners' human rights. Taiwan's Legislative Yuan had ratified the former in 2009, while the latter is still being pushed for ratification.

The hunger strike hopes to help secure the release of Chen for appropriate medical treatment and to reconcile the pan blue-pan green political standoff, Lu said.

Meanwhile, the Agency of Correction said that Chen had undergone X-ray examinations and blood tests, as well as undergoing MRI scans at the Greater Taichung General Veteran's Hospital on Wednesday, while having a sleep apnea risk assessment on Thursday.

The re-evaluation was headed by the hospital's deputy director Hsu Hui-heng (許惠興) and was concluded, but the results are unknown, the agency said.

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Additional reporting by Yang Cheng-chun

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