

Chen Shui-bian parole decision expected today

Written by Taipei Times

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The fate of jailed former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) request for medical parole is to be decided by noon today, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) said yesterday.

Deputy Minister of Justice Chen Ming-tang (陳明堂) pledged that the decision would be made public at about noon on the first workday of the year — after a 10-member assessment team headed by Agency of Corrections Director Wu Sen-chang (吳森昌) reaches its final determination.

He added that a hunger-strike protest carried out by former vice president Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) — who was hospitalized on Thursday — would not be taken into consideration.

It was widely expected that Chen Shui-bian would be released on medical parole on New Year's Eve.

However, the ministry did not reach a decision, saying that traffic congestion prevented some important documents from reaching the agency headquarters before the work day ended.

It added that it faced staff vacancies during the long holiday weekend.

The ministry's explanation has been widely dismissed by political pundits and netizens as an excuse to delay releasing Chen Shui-bian.

A survey conducted by the Chinese-language Apple Daily newspaper found that 74.1 percent of respondents perceived the ministry's explanation as a "lame excuse."

Chen Shui-bian, who was president from 2000 to 2008, has served more than six years of a 20-year sentence for corruption, but his health has been rapidly declining over the past few years, with symptoms such as loss of motor control and incontinence.

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A team of doctors has recommended his release on medical parole, given his worsening conditions.

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