

Chen Shui-bian to attend Taipei event

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Former president Chen Shui-bian, center, returns to his hometown Tainan on Jan. 20 last year after being granted medical parole.

Photo: Yang Chin-cheng, Taipei Times

Former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) is planning to attend a fundraising dinner for the Ketagalan Foundation in Taipei tonight, despite Taichung Prison advising against his attendance, Chen's son, Chen Chih-chung (陳智雄), said, adding that his father would comply with all of the preconditions of his medical parole set by the judicial authority.

Although Taichung Prison said in a press release yesterday that it would be "inappropriate" for Chen Shui-bian to attend the fundraising event because of its political nature, Chen Chih-chung yesterday told media in Kaohsiung that his father "would definitely go to Taipei to attend the fundraising dinner held by the Ketagalan Foundation," saying that the dinner was not a political event.

"He will do so, in order not to cause trouble for the judicial authorities. We see the matter as a medical issue, and it should not be mixed up with politics," Chen Chih-chung said.

In the same press statement, Taichung Prison said that Chen Shui-bian would be allowed to attend private gatherings with friends, under the conditions that the events be kept private, and that he should not get on stage, speak in public or talk to the media.

Asked to comment on the issue at an anti-drug conference in Taipei, Minister of Justice Chiu Tai-san (邱太三) said that he would support the prison authority's decision, adding that "a fundraising dinner would certainly not be an appropriate place" for private meetings.

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Unnamed prison officials also said that Chen Shui-bian should “be prepared to go back to prison if he violates the conditions of his medical parole.”

The Chens have been living in Kaohsiung since the former president was released from Taichung Prison on medical parole in January last year.

According to his family, Chen Shui-bian on Monday submitted a formal application to the prison seeking permission to attend the event to be held by the Ketagalan Foundation, of which he is a founding member.

The application also requested permission for Chen Shui-bian to return to his former residence in Taipei before returning to Kaohsiung on the same day.

Officials at Taichung Prison, which is under the Ministry of Justice’s Agency of Corrections, on Thursday decided to reject the former president’s request to attend the fundraising dinner, but said he was permitted to attend private gatherings.

Due to Chen Shui-bian’s insistence that he would attend the fundraising dinner, the prison yesterday relaxed his parole conditions.

It released a statement saying it would permit the former president to meet and speak with his old friends.

“It can be at a reserved private room at the fundraising dinner,” the statement said.

Taichung Prison deputy warden Su Kun-ming (蘇昆明) said: “As long as Chen Shui-bian does not appear within the confines of the Ketagalan Foundation event — he could appear at an area nearby the dinner function, or at a place which is demarcated off the main event — then he

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would not be in violation of the conditions of his medical parole.”

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), who was a former member of Chen Shui-bian’s medical team, said: “President Tsai Ing-wen [蔡英文] must feel troubled as I am.”

“It is very difficult to say whether Chen Shui-bian should attend, it is a tough question to answer,” Ko said.

Additional reporting by CNA

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