

Chen Shui-bian summoned for hearing

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The Taiwan High Court has summoned former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to appear at a hearing on July 7 for a hearing on whether he is healthy enough to stand trial on several corruption charges that have been suspended on the grounds of his poor health.

The summons was issued after Judge Tseng Te-shui (曾德水) said that Chen, who is on medical parole, might now be well enough to stand trial in several cases, including an indictment for intervening in a string of bank mergers in his “Second Financial Reform” program during 2004 to 2008, his second term in office.

Chen was sentenced to a 20-year jail term for corruption, but was granted medical parole in January 2015 after being diagnosed with dementia and Parkinson’s disease.

Tseng is one of the judges responsible for reviewing Chen’s role in the bank merger case, and said that if deemed fit to stand trial, he would have to defend himself in several cases that have either been suspended or appealed.

These include charges of embezzlement, money laundering, illegal possession of confidential government files and subornation of perjury, Tseng said.

Meanwhile, Taichung Prison is evaluating whether Chen has violated the terms of his parole when he attended a political fundraiser in Taipei on May 19.

Before attending the gathering, Chen was told he should not to enter the event’s main venue, not to go on stage and not to make a speech.

However, he sat at a table at the gathering and a prerecorded video of him giving a speech was shown.

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The prison sent Chen an official reprimand telling him to “improve” his behavior and present another medical evaluation by the end of this month to prove that he still needs medical parole.

A spokeswoman for Chen’s medical team, Chen Chao-tzu (陳昭珠), said the prison has invalidated her team’s professional judgement and has violated her patient’s human and medical rights.

However, the High Court and the prison yesterday stressed that their decisions were routine matters.

The court said the July 7 hearing is just “routine” court business, while the prison said it would wait for a written reply from Chen before deciding whether further action was necessary.

In related news, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), a former member of Chen Shui-bian’s voluntary medical team, attended a team meeting on Monday, and Northern Taiwan Society chairman Chang Yeh-sen (張業森) said that they encouraged Ko to urge President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) to grant the former president amnesty.

In response to media queries yesterday, Ko said the medical team has its opinion, but his own opinion is that although not dealing with an issue is also a method of handling a problem in politics, he still thinks the president should try to solve the issue and that facing the problem is the first step to solving it.

“I think the issue should be put to an end, but how it should be done should be considered by President Tsai,” he said. “Just like being stuck on handling cross-strait issues is not a good solution.”

“China can solve the Mao Zedong (毛澤東) issue, why can Taiwan, being a society with democratic freedom, not deal with the Chen Shui-bian issue? This is unreasonable,” Ko said.

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