

Prison prohibits Chen appearances at political events

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Former president Chen Shui-bian, left, and his son, Chen Chih-chung, stand on stage at a campaign event in Kaohsiung on Saturday last week.

Photo: Chang Chung-yi, Taipei Times

Taichung Prison yesterday announced that it has banned former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) from attending events of a political nature after he breached agreements with the prison by taking the stage at a campaign event last week.

Chen on Saturday last week attended a rally in Kaohsiung for his son, Chen Chih-chung (陳致中), who is leading in opinion polls and is expected to be nominated by the Democratic Progressive Party as one of its Kaohsiung city councilor candidates for the nine-in-one local elections on Nov. 24.

Following a days-long investigation into Chen Shui-bian's appearance at the campaign event, the prison has decided to no longer grant the former president's applications to attend political events, Taichung Prison Deputy Warden Lee Chin-kuo (李欽國) said.

He added that while Chen Shui-bian was goaded by supporters to take the stage, he still contravened the prison's "four noes": no taking the stage, no talking about politics, no speeches and no interviews.

The prison hopes that Chen Shui-bian will cherish his medical parole and abide by an affidavit he signed on Jan. 5, 2015, promising to obey rules for inmates on medical parole, Lee said.

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He added that if Chen Shui-bian breaks the rules again, his parole would be terminated, regardless of his medical condition.

Chen Shui-bian had served more than six years of a 20-year sentence for corruption before his release on medical parole in 2015.

Even though the former president refrained from speaking and only hugged his son on stage, the event was politically charged, which could invite public criticism and jeopardize his safety, the prison said.

It is difficult for organizers of political events to control the crowd or schedule, the prison said, adding that due to Chen Shui-bian's health, he sometimes stumbles when walking.

These factors could pose risks to his safety, which could invite criticism and compromise social harmony, it added.

Chen Chih-chung said that his father "had a bad feeling" that the prison might face pressure following the rally.

However, he quoted Chen Shui-bian as telling him that no matter how dire the situation, he would always strive to "remain a man of the people."

Chen Chih-chung said he would always support his father and stand by his side.

Additional reporting by Ko Yo-hao

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