

## International

# Hong Kong filings show Thailand's Yingluck has Cambodian passport

## A dramatic escape from her homeland

**HONG KONG:** Fugitive former Thai premier Yingluck Shinawatra used a Cambodian passport to register a company in Hong Kong, records show, lending weight to reports she used the neighboring kingdom to make her dramatic escape from her homeland. The former prime minister was also recently named chair of a Chinese port operator in Guangdong province, mainland corporate filings seen by AFP reveal, as her family's political dynasty grow their business presence in southern China.

Yingluck and her billionaire brother Thaksin Shinawatra were both elected prime minister but were toppled in coups — Thaksin in 2006 and Yingluck in 2014. Although they live in self-exile, the duo retain significant support in rural and poorer parts of Thailand, a politically troubled kingdom which is due to go to the polls later this year after five years of military rule.

Yingluck went on the run in August 2017 during a graft case where she was convicted of running a rice subsidy scheme that cost Thailand billions of dollars. She and her supporters say the case was politically motivated. Senior junta officials said Yingluck skipped bail and fled the country via Cambodia, an allegation the government in Phnom Penh has always denied. But publicly searchable corporate filings in Hong Kong show Yingluck holds a Cambodian pass-

port, using it to register as director of a company called "PT Corporation Company Limited" on August 24, 2018. Cambodian authorities did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Separate mainland records show Yingluck was appointed chairwoman of Shantou International Container Terminals Ltd, in Guangdong, on December 12. The company was listed as 70 percent owned by a subsidiary of the family of Li Ka-shing, Hong Kong's richest man. But a spokesperson for parent company CK Hutchison told AFP the subsidiary had recently divested "to a Singaporean investor who has subsequently brought in (an) other investor".

Hong Kong's land registry shows the residential address given for Yingluck's PT Corporation — a mansion in Hong Kong's exclusive Peak district — is owned by Chen Huaidan, a wealthy Chinese-Singaporean businesswoman. Chen is also listed as a director of Shantou International Container Terminals. Like many of Thailand's ultra-wealthy, the Shinawatra family trace their lineage to Guangdong and regularly make trips to their ancestral village there, as well as the neighboring international financial hub Hong Kong.

The South China Morning Post reported that Thaksin and Yingluck visited their village of



**HONG KONG:** A general view shows the K11 Atelier building (C), the corporate address listed for a company registered by fugitive former Thai premier Yingluck Shinawatra using a Cambodian passport. — AFP

Taxia over the weekend, an event that drew crowds of locals but was largely scrubbed by Chinese censors. Thaksin, who is wanted in Thailand for a separate graft conviction he says

was politically motivated, has a company registered in Hong Kong with a Montenegro passport. He divides most of his time between Dubai and London. — AFP

## Delhi cows and elderly to moo-ve in together

**NEW DELHI:** Delhi plans to create a special home for both elderly people and some of the Indian megacity's thousands of cows, in a new animal welfare blitz also aimed at reducing numbers of monkeys and stray dogs. The local development minister Gopal Rai said as he unveiled the program on Wednesday that "cows and senior citizens will co-exist, taking care of each other" in the planned pilot facility in southwest Delhi.

"When a cow dries up, people leave her and she ends up in a gaushala (cow shelter). Similarly, humans too are abandoned and sent to old age homes, even by rich families," local media quoted Rai as saying. Other steps include "birth control" measures for the Indian capital's ubiquitous, mischievous and occasionally dangerous monkeys, the sterilization of stray dogs and electronic chips for cows and pets.

In addition, people unable to look after their cows — a common sight on Delhi's roads, impeding traffic and eating rubbish — will be able to house the animals in special hostels for a small fee. Ever since Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party stormed to power in 2014, cows — sacred for Hindus — have won a near-VIP status. Rumors of cows being taken for slaughter have sparked murderous reprisals and religious riots. Every month, some 600 cattle are rounded up in Delhi and relocated to five shelters. A 2012 livestock census found there were more than five million stray cows across India and more than 12,000 in Delhi. — AFP

## Founder of S Korean 'spycam' site jailed

**SEOUL:** The female co-founder of South Korea's largest porn site has been jailed following months of mounting public fury over the spread of secretly filmed spycam pornography. Tens of thousands of women have rallied in recent months against the growing phenomenon of spycam videos, known in Korean as "molka", which mostly involve men filming women without their consent in toilets, changing rooms and in public.

Soranet — which had more than a million users until it was shut down in 2016 amid widespread outrage — carried thousands of such clips among reams of other X-rated content. Producing and circulating all forms of pornography is illegal in South Korea. The site's female owner, surnamed Song, was sentenced to four years in prison and fined 1.4 billion won (US\$1.25 million) on Wednesday for aiding and abetting the distribution of obscene material, including sex videos featuring minors.

The 45-year-old, who founded Soranet in 1999 with her husband and two others, "seriously damaged and distorted people's universal dignity and value", said a court statement. It added that she had "enjoyed huge profit" from the site. Song had lived as a fugitive in New Zealand for years but was arrested in June when she returned to Seoul after authorities annulled her passport. Her husband and another couple known to be co-owners of the site — all of whom have Australian citizenship or permanent residency — remain overseas.

Spycam crimes reported to South Korean police surged from around 1,100 in 2010 to more than 6,500 in 2017, with many of the videos shared or sold online. According to official statistics, about 98 percent of offenders are men — from teachers and professors to pastors and police officers — while more than 80 percent of victims are women. Despite South Korea's ban on pornography, many videos are widely consumed on servers based in foreign countries, or secretly downloaded on file-sharing sites. — AFP

## Bangladesh man jailed for altered pix of PM

**DHAKA:** A Bangladeshi man who distorted and posted photos of the prime minister has been sentenced to seven years in jail under tough internet laws that critics say are used to muzzle dissent. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, re-elected in December in polls tainted by violence, mass arrests and claims of rigging, has been accused of increasing authoritarianism. Mohammad Monir, 35, was found guilty late Wednesday by a Dhaka cyber tribunal for doctoring and publishing on social media images of Hasina and ex-president Zillur Rahman.

"He posted those distorted images in his Facebook status and made derogatory remarks in the photo captions," prosecutor Nazrul Islam Shamim told AFP. He was convicted under section 57 of the South Asian country's Information and Communication Technology (ICT) laws. Shamim said that since the cyber court began functioning in 2013, at least seven people have been sentenced to jail for similar offences involving Hasina and others. At least 200 more such cases are pending and in various stage of trial, he said.

Rights groups have documented how the ICT laws have been used to silence criticism in the country of 165 million people. In recent months the ICT laws has been replaced by Digital Security Act, which critics say gives the authorities even wider powers to curb freedom of expression — a charge rejected by the government. — AFP