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Thai court strips ex-Prime Minister of \$1.4 billion

Thailand's Supreme Court today ruled that the family of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra be stripped of 46.3 billion baht (US\$1.4 billion) in frozen assets, more than half of a contested \$2.3 billion fortune. According to the court, the seized assets were illegally gained while Thaksin was Prime Minister; specifically, his familial involvement and connections with Shin Corporation.

In a statement released by the court, the judges said that Thaksin had adjusted government policies to favor telecommunications businesses, including Shin Corporation, a large telecommunications company owned by Thaksin, and his family, and sold to a Singapore investment firm in 2006. Additionally, Thaksin was alleged to have deposited shares held in Shin Corporation with family members whilst in office - a move to avoid, under Thai law, illegally holding any company stock while

Prime Minister. Additionally, he was found to have unfairly promoted a \$127 million loan to Burma - benefiting a satellite communications firm controlled by his family.

In a response from an undisclosed location outside Thailand, Thaksin contested the ruling, claiming the case was politically motivated and that, "the court was used to get rid of a politician." In his remarks, he said that he came by his wealth legally, and he would continue his fight against both the ruling and the party that ousted him in 2008. In Thailand, Thaksin's red-shirted supporters publicly opposed the verdict; although, no significant disturbances have been reported despite government warnings over the possibility violence. Instead, protesters say they plan a mass demonstration against the ruling sometime in March.

At least fifteen dead after stampede at Mali mosque

According to a government official, at least 26 people were killed in a stampede on Thursday at a historic mosque in the northwestern city of Timbuktu, Mali.

"There were 26 killed and 40 wounded," Oumar Sangare, the Internal Ministry spokesman, told Reuters. However, other news agency reports put the death toll as low as fifteen.

An official, who requested to remain anonymous, said the accident could have begun as a result of renovation work on the Djingareyber mosque—which is made primarily of mud, and was built in the fourteenth century. Construction work blocked off some of the roads, and that could have been a factor in the incident. "The

mosque is being renovated, financed by the Aga Khan, and the work is carried out by South African specialists," the official told the Agence France-Presse (AFP) news agency.

"Because of these renovations, the passage on the north side of the mosque is closed off. On that side, to get through, the faithful found an improvised alleyway. But the alley couldn't take the number of people using it. So there was a stampede. Somebody shouted 'someone has died' and panic took over," the same official went on to say.

Others have remarked that rescue services responded "very quickly" to the stampede, and helped the "many injured."

The Xinhua news agency reports the stampede started when an elderly woman fell in one of the town streets near the city's main mosque, where a sermon was being conducted in front of a large crowd; a passersby then rushed to assist the woman, apparently disrupting the crowd's movement and causing the stampede.

"People were circling the mosque, a ritual at each Mouloud [the observance of the Prophet Mohammed's birthday] and there was a huge crowd build up," commented Mohamed Bandjougou, one of the witnesses to the event, to AFP by telephone. "There were at least fifteen dead. The bodies were taken to the morgue."

Authorities warned the number of injured may actually be higher than reported, saying that "we cannot rule out the fact that the number of those injured will increase because some of them are still hiding in their homes instead of coming to the hospital." A hospital source (cont)

commented that some of the people hurt were in critical condition, and needed to be evacuated to the capital, Bamako, as soon as possible.

The mosque's imam, who gave his name as Asseyuti, commented on the incident. "We're in mourning. What happened is a real trauma. We accept the will of God. He gives us life, he takes it away," he said.

According to an official statement, Malian president Amandou Toumani Toure is traveling to Timbuktu from Bamako in light of the stampede.

Rwandan army officer sentenced to 25 years for genocide

Lt Colonel Ephrem Setako — a former Rwandan army officer — has been sentenced to 25 years in prison for ordering the killing of between 30 and 40 people during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. He was found guilty on Thursday of genocide, crimes against humanity, and murder.

Setako was convicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) in Arusha, Tanzania. He was acquitted of further charges including complicity to commit genocide, murder as a crime against humanity, and pillage as a war crime.

The ICTR, set up by the United Nations in the wake of the genocide, released a statement via its website saying "the Chamber found that Setako ordered the killings on 25 April 1994 of 30 to 40 Tutsis at Mukamira military camp in Ruhengeri prefecture and around 10 other Tutsis there on 11 May 1994". He is thought to have been one of the key architects of the genocide.

Setako had been head of the Division of Legal Affairs in the Ministry of Defense at the time of the genocide. He was arrested in 2004 in Amsterdam and brought to Arusha. His trial began in 2008 and lasted until June 2009; 55 witnesses gave evidence. The head of the prosecution team, Ifeoma Ojemeni

Okali, responded to the sentence saying that Setako should have been imprisoned for life for his crimes.

The judgement follows the conviction earlier this month of former Rwandan military officer Col. Tharcisse Muvunyi, who was sentenced to 15 years for public incitement to commit genocide. Approximately 800,000 Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus were massacred over 100 days during the genocide.

Three Google executives found guilty over Italian video

An Italian court convicted three Google Inc. executives Wednesday of criminal charges for breach of privacy. David Drummond, Google's chief legal officer, Peter Fleischer, its global privacy counsel, and George Reyes, a former executive, were given six-month suspended prison sentences after being found guilty of violating the Italian privacy code.

The Google executives were convicted for not removing a video uploaded to Google Video in 2006, showing an autistic boy in Turin being beaten and insulted by teenage bullies at school. The video was up for two months, during which it was viewed 5,500 times. Google Italy pulled it down two hours after being notified by police, following complaints by the boy's father and Vivi Down, an Italian organization representing individuals with Down syndrome. The uploader and several of her classmates were sentenced to ten months community service by a Turin court.

Prosecutor Alfredo Robledo told the Associated Press that the decision puts the rights of individuals ahead of those of businesses. "This is the big principal affirmed by this verdict. It is fundamental, because identity is a primary good. If we give that up, anything can happen, and that is not OK", he stated.

Matt Sucherman, Google Vice President and Deputy General Counsel for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, said that "[the verdict]

attacks the very principles of freedom on which the internet is built." He continued that under European law, video-sharing sites are protected from liability for the content of material posted. "If that principle is swept aside and sites [...] are held responsible for vetting every single piece of content that is uploaded to them [...] then the Web as we know it will cease to exist, and many of the economic, social, political and technological benefits it brings could disappear." He said Google will appeal the decision. Danny O'Brien, international outreach coordinator for the Electronic Frontier Foundation of San Francisco (an international non-profit digital rights advocacy group), described the decision as a "threat". "If intermediaries like Google or the person who hosts your Web site can be thrown in jail in any country for the acts of other people and suddenly have a legal obligation to prescreen everything anyone says on their Web site before putting it online, the tools for free speech that everyone uses on the Net would grind to a halt", he said.

Russian Wikipedia reaches half a million articles

The Russian Language Wikipedia surpassed 500,000 articles at 10:02 UTC on February 25, 2010, after "Ys", an article about a Joanna Newsom album, was created by Nurse fiction, a newcomer to the Wikipedia.

Russian Wikipedia is the tenth largest language edition of Wikipedia, boasting over three hundred and fifty "Featured Articles" and 930 "Good Articles", shown to be the best in the freely-editable encyclopaedia. Russian Wikipedia is also one of the few languages to adopt the Flagged Revisions system.

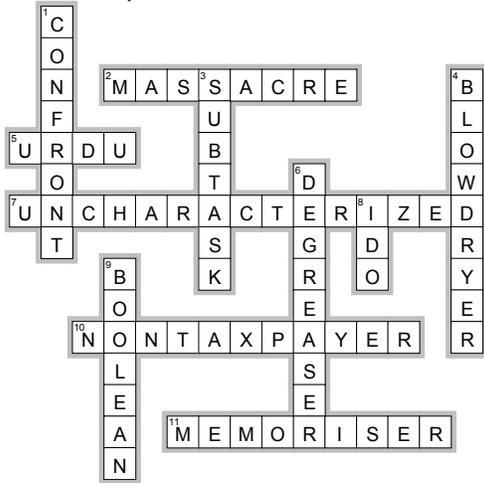
Wikipedia is a multilingual encyclopaedia that can be edited by almost anyone with an internet connection, meaning that the Russian Wikipedia has 437,862 registered users with 12,929 making at least 1 edit within the last (con't)

month. The youngest known user is 10 years old, and the oldest is 80.

Last year, the Russian chapter of the Wikimedia Foundation, the organization behind Wikipedia, started active work supporting Wikipedia editions in the numerous languages used in Russia — such as Tatar, Chuvash, Ossetian and Yakut.

Puzzle of the Day

Yesterday's solution



EclipseCrossword.com

Quote of the Day

If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility.
~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow ~

Word of the Day

laud *v*
To praise; to glorify.

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