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Former Phuket governor accused of B321mn illicit wealth

PHUKET: The National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has ruled that former Phuket Governor Chamroen Tipayapongtada amassed more than B321 million in illicit wealth while serving as a provincial governor and government official.

corruption

By The Phuket News

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According to the NACC, its commissioners resolved that Mr Chamroen accumulated assets worth B321,670,858.30 that were disproportionate to his legitimate income and for which he was unable to provide a lawful explanation.

The alleged illicit assets were accumulated while he served as governor of Phuket Province, Nakhon Sri Thammarat Province, Phang Nga Province and Satun Province, as well as during his time as a government official, the NACC said.

Investigators found that large increases in wealth were recorded in the names of Mr Chamroen, his spouse and a minor child, but the origin of the assets could not be verified.

The assets identified by investigators include:

- Bank deposits in Mr Chamroen's name totaling B1,488,514.80
- Bank deposits across 13 accounts in his spouse's name totaling B260,846,734.80
- Land and buildings in his spouse's name across 22 items valued at B47,445,608.70
- A land and building property in the name of a minor child valued at B5,690,000
- Six vehicles in his spouse's name with a combined value of B6,200,000

The NACC ruled that the assets constituted unusual wealth accumulation under Thailand's anti-corruption law, noting that the assets were either acquired without legal justification, increased abnormally compared with declared income, or were inconsistent with asset declarations submitted by the official.

The commission said it will forward the investigation report, evidence and its findings to the Office of the Attorney General, requesting prosecutors to petition a court to order the assets seized and transferred to the state.

The NACC will also notify the relevant authority to pursue disciplinary action, which could include dismissal from the civil service on grounds of corruption in office under the Organic Act on Prevention and Suppression of Corruption.



If the identified assets cannot be fully seized, the court may order enforcement against other assets belonging to the accused for up to 10 years, the commission added.

Mr Chamroen resigned from government service in 2023 after serving as Governor of Satun.

He served as 46th Governor of Phuket from October 2015 through September 2016, and was transferred to the post of Governor of Nakhon Sri Thammarat province on Oct 1, 2016. He later took up the post of Governor of Phang Nga Province on Oct 1, 2019.

In the same announcement, the NACC also ruled that Prasert Kaithong, a former mayor of Khlong Luang Municipality in Pathum Thani Province, had amassed unusual wealth of B3 million.

The commission said the case relates to the purchase of a 1-rai 2-ngan plot of land in Khlong Nueng subdistrict in 2016 for B3mn, which was registered jointly in his daughter's name. Investigators found Mr Prasert could not explain the source of the funds used to buy the land.

The NACC will also forward that case to the Attorney General to seek a court order for the assets to be confiscated and for relevant authorities to consider removing him from office.

The NACC noted that its findings are not final and that those accused are presumed innocent until a court issues a final judgment.