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Thailand's New and Youngest-ever Prime Minister Faces a Multitude of Immediate Challenges

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Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra gestures as she arrives at the Government House ahead of a royal oath-taking ceremony in front of Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn in Bangkok, Thailand, on 6 September 2024. (Photo by CHAIWAT SUBPRASOM/NurPhoto/NurPhoto via AFP).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Thailand's youngest-ever Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra is confronted by a multitude of challenges that she may not be able to surmount. At the same time, her restless father, Thaksin, has brought her more trouble by asserting that he "possesses" but does not "dominate" her.
- Such fatherly sentiment has led to yet another petition being handed to the Election Commission calling for Paetongtarn to be investigated, to ascertain whether she has condoned any unlawful interference from Thaksin.
- If found guilty, she will be ousted from the premiership, and her Pheu Thai, the chief government party, will be dissolved. And Thaksin himself will face a jail term of up to 10 years.
- In its ruling of 7 August ousting Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin for unethical misbehaviour, the Constitutional Court laid down a new precedent: Violating ethical standards is not only a legal interpretation of actions but also a matter of public perception.
- Paetongtarn has been trying to avoid the same pitfall that had led to Srettha's downfall, but will probably fail.

INTRODUCTION

Ms Paetongtarn Shinawatra's meteoric rise to the Thai premiership looks doomed to be short-lived. In the worst-case scenario, she will soon be faulted for failing to uphold ethical standards, and thus ousted from the premiership.¹

On 16 August, the 38-year-old mother of two infants won (uncontested) in the House of Representatives the premiership with a vote of 319 to 145, with 27 abstentions and 2 absentees.² With that, she became Thailand's youngest-ever head of government, and is only the second female prime minister after her aunt, Yingluck.³

If she is deemed to lack the ethical standards expected of all holders of high public offices, Paetongtarn can be disqualified from holding the premiership – just like her predecessor Srettha Thavisin.⁴ Several petitions to investigate her have already been lodged, and more are expected to follow.

At the same, her father and mentor-in-chief Thaksin is also in hot water.⁵

The National Human Rights Commission has requested the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) to conduct a formal probe into Thaksin's six-month mysterious stay in a premium suite of the Police Hospital. This is to determine whether such an extraordinary privilege – for a corruption convict serving one-year jail – was justifiable and lawful.

Thaksin's more immediate concern now is growing public suspicion that he has been unlawfully interfering with Pheu Thai, and dominating Paetongtarn. About 55% of respondents in a recent poll doubt that Paetongtarn can run her premiership without Thaksin.⁶

In its ruling of 7 August against PM Srettha Thavisin for unethical behaviour, the Constitutional Court laid down a new criterion for leadership: Violating ethical standards is not only a legal interpretation, but also a matter of public perception. The ruling resulted in the immediate ousting of Srettha from the premiership.

IN THE FIRING LINE

The first four complaints against Paetongtarn came from none other than Ruangkrai Leekitwattana, a tenacious public watchdog lawyer who is also a member of Palang Pracharat. On 19 June,⁷ he asked the NACC to determine whether Paetongtarn became a government official when she was appointed deputy chairperson of the National Committee on Soft Power Strategy.⁸

In addition, Paetongtarn was, on 6 October, appointed head of the Thailand Creative Culture Agency.⁹ The newly-established agency received about a 3,500 million-baht budget for the current fiscal year.¹⁰

The initial inquiry led to a follow-up petition from Ruangkrai on 25 August. He asked the NACC to investigate whether Paetongtarn – whom Ruerngkai assumes to be a government official – broke the anti-corruption law when she took her family on a weekend vacation at

Rancho Charnvee on 20 July.¹¹ That was when she joined her father in a weekend get-together at a luxurious resort near Khao Yai National Park. The resort belongs to the family of DPM and Interior Minister Anutin Charnveerakul, leader of Bhumjaithai, the second largest government party.

Under Section 128 of the anti-corruption law, government officials – including those who have left government jobs for less than two years – are prohibited from accepting gifts or any other valuable benefits.

Next, on 28 August, Ruengkrui asked the Election Commission to check whether Paetongtarn had resigned from all business executive posts (mostly in firms belonging to the Shinawatra family) and disposed of all of her business shares before she formally accepted the royal appointment to be the new prime minister on 18 August.¹² Such a requirement is stated in Section 187 of the Constitution, which is aimed at preventing conflicts of interest.

The most hard-hitting petition from Ruengkrui came on 3 September when he asked the Election Commission to investigate Paetongtarn to ascertain whether she has condoned Thaksin's interference in her premiership and in her leadership of Pheu Thai.¹³

In his fourth petition, Ruengkrui cited Thaksin's own admission (*a faux pas?*) on 20 August that he possesses [ครอบครอง “*krob-krong*”] Paetongtarn as his daughter, but does not dominate her [ครอบงำ “*krob-ngum*”] in her running of Pheu Thai and the premiership. Ruengkrui has attached in his petition an official Thai dictionary translation of these two Thai words: ครอบครอง “*krob-krong*” means to have in possession, to own with the capacity to control and to supervise; whereas ครอบงำ “*krob-ngum*” means merely mental domination, to dominate the thinking of someone.¹⁴

Yet another serious assault on Paetongtarn's integrity came from Palang Pracharat's deputy party leader Paiboon Nititawan. In a press conference on 29 August, Paiboon warned Paetongtarn that she was violating Section 362 of the Civil and Commercial Code, for failing to keep her words.¹⁵

Paiboon, who is a lawyer by profession, claimed that such a failure would also constitute a violation of the Constitution's Section 160, Paragraph 4, which states that [a Minister must] “*be of evident integrity*” and Paragraph 5, [a Minister must] “*not have behaviour which is a serious violation [of] or failure to comply with ethical standards*”.¹⁶

Paiboon pointed out that 39 of Palang Pracharat's 40 MPs voted for Paetongtarn to be the new prime minister, with the understanding that she would include their party in her new government coalition. Only party leader General Prawit Wongsuwan missed the voting, on 16 August, because he was busy welcoming Thai Olympians on their return from Paris.¹⁷

Two days earlier, Pheu Thai's executive committee decided to exclude Palang Pracharat and turned instead to invite Democrat Party, the second largest opposition party, to join Paetongtarn's new Pheu Thai-led coalition government.¹⁸ Paetongtarn could claim that she had to abide by the decisions of Pheu Thai's executive committee.

Rubbing additional salt to Palang Pracharat party leader General Prawit's injury, Pheu Thai was going to offer three ministerial posts to a dissident faction inside Palang Pracharat, led by party secretary-general Captain Thammanat Prompao. Thammanat has recently fallen out with General Prawit; he has declared "independence".¹⁹

However, Thammanat would not take any post in the Paetongtarn Cabinet, apparently for fear of bringing political trouble to Paetongtarn. He would instead let his allies take all the three posts.²⁰

Paetongtarn's move to reward Captain Thammanat's rebellion could give Palang Pracharat additional ammunition to attack her for attempting to instigate disunity inside Palang Pracharat – which is a crime under the political party law, as well as a violation of the ethical standards of good behaviour. Now it is only a matter of time before Palang Pracharat pulls the trigger to retaliate against Thaksin, Paetongtarn and Pheu Thai.

If found guilty, Thaksin will face a jail term of up to 10 years, and Pheu Thai may be dissolved. Dissolution of the party will entail a ban from national politics for party leader Paetongtarn and all others on Pheu Thai's executive committee.

In its ruling of 7 August against PM Srettha Thavisin for unethical behaviour, the Constitutional Court laid down a new criterion: Violating ethical standards is not only a legal question alone, but also a matter of public perception by ordinary people who can tell right from wrong.

The Constitutional Court, in a decision of 5-4, faulted Srettha for submitting the name of Thaksin's lawyer Pichit, to the King when common people could see the lawyer has a questionable past, including serving six months of jail for contempt of court in a failed bribery attempt in 2008, and losing his lawyer's licence. The Constitutional Court asserted that Pichit's misbehaviour in 2008 constituted a serious violation of ethical standards.²¹ Its ruling led to Srettha's immediate ouster from the premiership.

RUNNING OUT OF TIME

Paetongtarn had to take some time to double-check all proposed names in order to have a safe list for submission to the King.

The time-consuming vetting process was aimed at avoiding the pitfall of improperly proposing unsuitable persons. Her predecessor, Srettha, lost his premiership on 7 August after the Constitutional Court held him responsible for proposing for appointment as a minister Thaksin's lawyer, Pichit Chuern-ban, who had a questionable past.

On 1 September, Somchai Swangkarn, a former outspoken senator, dropped a bombshell by declaring on his Facebook that he had heard that at least 11 of the proposed names on the list have had some difficulties involving either legal or ethical issues.²²

Two days later, incumbent Deputy Interior Minister Chada Thaiseth abruptly withdrew his name; he then submitted the name of his daughter Sabina, to take his place on the list.²³

The King on 4 September approved a list of cabinet members submitted by Paetongtarn.²⁴ And indeed Chada's daughter has now become the new deputy minister of interior.

Paetongtarn was lucky to get a quick opportunity to bring her new cabinet members for an audience with the King on 6 September evening. And she was able to deliver her new government policy statement to the parliament for a debate on 12 and 13 September.

Only after delivering the policy statement did her Cabinet meet formally for the first time on 17 September. One of the top priority decisions to take was to approve the disbursement of 145 billion baht for cash hand-out to 14.5 million poor Thais (who are in vulnerable groups, or poor people with disabilities) before the end of the current fiscal year, on 30 September. If the money is not spent in time, the cash hand-out will have to be cancelled.²⁵

One new question has emerged: Since the first 14.5 million poor are going to receive 10,000 baht in cash, how and when will the others who have registered, estimated at over 30 million, receive their 10,000 baht. If there is no money to give, then Paetongtarn and Pheu Thai could be faulted for failing to keep the party's campaign promise – yet another potential violation of the constitutional rules of “*evident integrity*” and “*ethical standards*”.

RESTLESS THAKSIN IN HOT WATER

Paetongtarn's options are few and limited. The fate of her premiership is not in her own hands. Srettha encountered a similar ordeal, and could not survive.

Likewise, Paetongtarn's political future also depends chiefly on what her father, Thaksin, will do next. Thaksin himself, however, is running out of room for manoeuvre.

Before his return from 17 years of overseas exile, Thaksin admitted that he did “speak briefly” on the phone with General Prawit about forming a new government.²⁶

On the day of his return on 22 August, the House of Representatives voted to endorse Pheu Thai's premiership candidate Srettha as the new prime minister. MPs of General Prawit's Palang Pracharat as well as MPs of then incumbent PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha's United Thai Nation Party all voted for Srettha. More importantly, 152 Senators also voted for Srettha, who won with 482 votes, a 65% majority in the combined parliamentary session of the House (500 MPs) and the Senate (250 Senators²⁷).

Installing Pheu Thai's Srettha in the premiership was probably what Thaksin had agreed upon with General Prawit. But in exchange for what?

Palang Pracharat did join the Srettha's coalition government. General Prawit's younger brother, Police General Patcharawat Wongsuwan, did get the post of environment minister. And his party secretary-general, Captain Thammanat, did get his much-coveted post of minister of agriculture.

However, Thaksin seems to have the upper hand in his “deal” with General Prawit. Instead of serving eight years of jail from three corruption convictions, Thaksin was allowed to seek

emergency treatment in a premium suite at Police Hospital on the same night of his return. Better still, his jail term was soon commuted by the King to only one year.

Thaksin spent the first 181 days of this one-year jail in the Police Hospital. After that he was released under parole for home detention.²⁸ He eventually became “a free man” on 17 August, just in time for him to attend the ceremony the following day in which his daughter formally received the royal command to become prime minister.

While in the Police Hospital, Thaksin quickly gained the reputation of being “the *Thevada* [angel] on the 14th Floor” with powers to do wonderful things while all CCTV cameras mysteriously went off in unison. Although he reportedly suffered from some life-threatening illness, few of his family members visited him or stayed near him. And he used assistants to arrange appointments for visitors calling on him.

The National Human Rights Commission has, therefore, come to the conclusion that Thaksin enjoyed undue privileges, and asked the NACC to investigate the matter. The NACC has responded by requesting the Police Hospital to provide Thaksin’s medical treatment records, CCTV recordings on the 14th floor, if any, and photographs taken during Thaksin’s six-month stay in the hospital. Under the Corrections Department’s standard operating procedure, two guards must be posted to watch Thaksin at the times, and to take photographs of the VIP detainee regularly in order to report to the Corrections Department.²⁹

As of 30 August, NACC secretary-general Niwatchai Kasemmongkol reported having received none of what his office had requested from the Police Hospital. He added however that a lot of work had been done in the investigation, and a conclusion could soon be made.³⁰

Meanwhile, the Medical Council of Thailand has been conducting its own investigation following a complaint from a former MP of Democrat Party, Watchara Petchthong,³¹ who accused senior doctors of the Police Hospital and the Department of Corrections Hospital of falsely certifying Thaksin’s illness conditions.³² After Thaksin was released under parole and left the hospital on 17 February, he did not seem to have undergone any follow-up treatment. Instead, Thaksin has been up and running around the country. On 22 August, he delivered an hour-long dinner talk on his “Vision for Thailand”.

The most damning testimony about Thaksin’s hospital mystery came from former national police chief Police General Sereepisuth Temeeyaves. On 29 August, he told a press conference³³ his Thai Liberal Party (which has only one MP) would not join Paetongtarn’s new government coalition. More importantly, he disclosed that he had visited Thaksin at his hospital room twice, last November (he went with one assistant!) and last February. He even circulated to media reporters copies of his Line chats with Thaksin’s staff in setting up the two appointments.

In the second meeting (Sereepisuth said he was instructed to go alone), Thaksin asked for Sereepisuth’s favour in withdrawing a petition filed at the NACC against PM Srettha, accusing the PM of violating police good governance rules in recommending the promotion of Police General Torsak Sukvimol to head the national police force last September, bypassing a more senior rival candidate, Police General Surachet Hakpan. Sereepisuth added that former PM

Yingluck had joined in to lobby him to withdraw the petition against PM Srettha. He eventually did as requested.³⁴

Sereepisuth threatened to elaborate soon what he saw during his two visits: Thaksin's physical condition, and the absence of any Corrections guard inside or near Thaksin's hospital room.³⁵ He reiterated this threat on another TV interview on 2 September, in which he also disclosed that he enjoyed during his second visit sticky rice and sweet mango. During their casual conversation, Thaksin vowed to exclude the two Wongsuwan brothers from the future Pheu Thai-led new government.³⁶ And indeed the Paetongtarn's Cabinet does not include either of them.

THAKSIN IS THE WEAKEST LINK

Another immediate concern of Thaksin is a recent petition to the Election Commission to investigate whether he was the one who persuaded Srettha to propose Thaksin's controversial lawyer Pichit for appointment as a minister in the PM's Office. In its ruling of 14 August, the Constitutional Court did allude to a meeting between Srettha and one unnamed "person" before Srettha submitted Pichit's name to the King.

If that "person" turns out to be Thaksin, then he can be faulted for interfering with Pheu Thai's affairs.

Subsequently, the same petitioner has also asked the Election Commission to hold Pheu Thai's executive committee accountable for submitting to interference from Thaksin. Although his true identity has been withheld on request for his own safety, the mysterious petitioner is believed to be an ex-Senator, and an experienced lawyer who knows how to make use of the Constitutional Court's ruling.

Another incident that could lead to Thaksin's downfall is the hush-hush meeting held on the evening of 14 August at Thaksin's residence.³⁷ That was when several government parties' leaders congregated at short notice and quickly agreed to support Pheu Thai's nomination of Chaikasem Nitisiri as the new prime minister.

But with whom did they discuss the need for this meeting? Pheu Thai party leader Paetongtarn was flying home from Shanghai, after cutting short her study tour in China. DPM and Commerce Minister Phumtham Wechayachai was away, on an official visit to Kazakhstan. In all likelihood, those government parties' big wigs were summoned to the meeting by Thaksin. The following morning, an urgent meeting of Pheu Thai MPs heard strong objections to the nomination of Chaikasem, a 75-year-old former justice minister who had been in poor health. The meeting unanimously called for a switch to Paetongtarn – because her family name could help win more votes in the next general election in 2027. The party's executive committee relented. All other government parties also quickly lined up to support Paetongtarn.

Being an ex-convict, Thaksin had lost the right to hold public offices or to join any political party – let alone having anything to do with the nomination of his daughter as a new prime minister, or organising her Cabinet.

If found guilty of interference with Pheu Thai, the offence can land him in jail for up to 10 years, lead to the dissolution of Pheu Thai, as well as disqualification of all of the party's executive committee members – including Paetongtarn, the party leader and the new PM – from holding public offices.

CONCLUSION

The challenges confronting PM Paetongtarn are numerous, and some of them may be insurmountable.

Paetongtarn, who is not an MP and did not hold any cabinet post in the previous Srettha Administration, is without much political experience. Should her father falter, Paetongtarn and Pheu Thai will fall too.

As things look, Thailand's political instability can and most probably will worsen.

ENDNOTES

¹ One famous critic has already predicted that Paetongtarn's premiership will not last beyond the next Lunar New Year, 29 January 2025. See a news report on this grim predication in **Thai Post** on 3 September, at www.thaipost.net/hi-light/649297, accessed 3 September 2024. The prediction came from Jatuporn Prompan, an influential commentator who used to be one of the most prominent Red Shirt leaders. In recent years, Jatuporn has turned a fierce critic of Thaksin Shinawatra. Jatuporn also predicted that Thaksin would be "finished off" in November in order to end a much-publicised possible political comeback.

² See details of the premiership vote in the House of Representatives at the **Thai PBS** news website on 16 August 2024, www.thaipbs-or.th/news/content/343153, accessed 1 September 2024. Those who voted against Ms Paetongtarn were mostly MPs of the People's Party, the chief opposition party. The party, a successor to the dissolved Move Forward Party (MFP), did not have any candidate to vie for the premiership, because the MFP's lone premiership candidate, Pita Limjaroenrat, had already been banned from national politics along with the MFP's dissolution as a result of the ruling of the Constitutional Court on 7 August 2024 faulting it for attempting to undermine the constitutional monarchy. Those who abstained included all 25 MPs of Democrat Party. The two absentees were: Police Captain Chalerm Yoobamroong, a senior Pheu Thai party-list MP, who has been at odds with Paetongtarn's father, Thaksin; and General Prawit Wongsuwan, leader of Palang Pracharat Party, who also has some serious disagreement with Thaksin. Nevertheless, all other 39 MPs of General Prawit's party did vote for Paetongtarn, wishing to join the new government coalition. The party was the third largest in the ruling coalition led by ex-PM Srettha Thavisin.

³ Yingluck Shinawatra is the youngest sister of two-time PM Thaksin Shinawatra. While he was still in exile overseas (mostly in Dubai), Thaksin engineered an impressive victory for Pheu Thai Party in the general election of 3 July 2011 with his catchy slogan: "*Thaksin thinks, Yingluck delivers!*". Pheu Thai won 233 House seats, beating Democrat Party which won only 172 seats. At that time, Yingluck, 44, a single mother of one son, had had no prior political experience; and did not hold any leadership post in Pheu Thai. Yingluck was ousted from the premiership in a ruling of the Constitutional Court on 7 May 2014 (one week before the coup on 14 May 2014 which toppled her Pheu Thai-led coalition government) for her lawful transfer of the head of the National Security Council, Thawil Plien-sri, to an inactive post in the PM's Office on 30 September 2011. The controversial transfer opened the way for a sudden transfer of Police General Vichien Pojposri on 4 October 2011 from the top post of the

national police force to succeed Thawil at the National Security Council. Vichien's departure in turn led to the promotion of Police General Priewpan Damapong to head the national police force. Priewpan is an elder brother of Khunying Potjaman, wife of Thaksin Shinawatra. The Constitutional Court, in a unanimous decision of 9 – 0, faulted Yingluck for the unjustifiable transfer of Thawil.

⁴ Srettha Thavisin, who was neither an MP nor an executive member of Pheu Thai, had to step down from the premiership on 14 August 2024 after the Constitutional Court found him in violation of the constitutional rule of upholding high ethical standards. Srettha was faulted for proposing to the King Thaksin's lawyer Pichit Chuern-barn for an appointment to a ministerial post. Pichit had been jailed six months for contempt of court in 2008 and lost his lawyer's licence for what was known as a failed bribery attempt involving 2 million baht of cash in the Criminal Court.

⁵ Thaksin is already facing trial in the Criminal Court for allegedly violating the *lese-majeste* law as a result of his media interview in Seoul in 2015. Cross examination of witnesses in his case is scheduled to start on 1 July 2025. A guilty verdict can land the 75-year-old political mastermind in jail from 3 to 15 years.

⁶ See **NIDA Poll's** survey released on 25 August: 39.79% said it was impossible, and 15.57 said it would be unlikely that Paetongtarn could do without Thaksin. See the survey outcome at NIDA Poll's website at https://nidapoll.nida.ac.th/survey_detail?survey_id=714, accessed 4 September 2024.

⁷ See Ruangkrai's petition in a news report of **The Standard** on 19 June 2024, at www.thestandard.co/nacc-pae-thongtarn, accessed 2 September 2024. In recent weeks, the following petitions have been added: **On 17 September** : Kana Niti Chon (Legal People Group) filed its second petition with the Election Commission to investigate PM Paetongtarn and her entire cabinet for failing to clarify sources of revenues to fund their new government's programmes as stated in the PM's delivery of her formal government policy statement, and in the ensuing debate on 12 and 13 September in the parliament. See details of the petition in Isra News on 17 September, at <https://www.thaipost.net/hi-light/658079/>, accessed 17 September 2024.

On 14 September: Ruengkrai's petition to the Election Commission to investigate PM Paetongtarn for proposing the appointment of Surapong Piyachote as a deputy transport minister. Surapong in March 2022 was convicted for vote-buying in a provincial administration chief election in Kanchanaburi, and he was sentenced to two years of jail and to pay a fine of 40,000 baht. He confessed to the charge. His jail term was suspended, He was, nevertheless, disqualified from voting for 20 years. See details of the petition in Manager Online on 14 September, at <https://mgronline.com/politics/detail/9670000085805>, accessed 14 September 2024.

On 11 September : one petition filed with the Election Commission accused Thaksin of interfering with Pheu Thai Party, and another petition accused the chief government party of submitting to Thaksin's interference. The petitions were filed by Dr Warong Dechgityvigrom, a royalist and founder of Thai Pakdee Party (the party has no MP). See details of the petitions in a news report of Thai Rath on 11 September, at www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/281788, accessed 12 September 2024.

On 10 September : another petition filed with the National Anti-Corruption Commission by Ruengkrai accused PM Paetongtarn of misbehaviour when she led her cabinet members to do "mini-heart" gesture during a formal photo-taking session at the Government House on 6 September. Ruengkrai pointed out that the prime minister and all other ministers were in full formal white uniform (fully dressed before their audience with the King) and thus they should behave properly, instead of playfully doing the "mini-heart". See details of the petition in a news report of Thai Rath on 10 September, at www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/2813500, accessed 12 September 2024.

On 9 September : a petition by a representative of the former White Pigeon 2006 group filed with the Election Commission accused leaders of six government parties for submitting to Thaksin's interference when they went to see him at his Chan Song Lah residence on 14 August evening to discuss for the nomination of a successor to the sacked PM Srettha. See details in a news report of Matichon Online on 9 September, at https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_4780689, accessed 13 September 2024.

On 6 September: a petition by activist Sonthiya Sawasdee filed with the Attorney-General to investigate PM Paetongtarn for proposing the appointments of two “unsuitable” persons to her cabinet : Democrat party leader Chalermchai Sri-on, and Democrat party secretary-general Dej-it Khaothong. See details of the petition in a news report of Than Settakij Business News at www.thansettakij.com/politics/605997, accessed 12 September 2024.

On 5 September : a petition by a group called “Kana Niti Chon” (Legal People Group) filed with the Election Commission to investigate PM Paetongtarn for proposing Pol Col Tawee Sodsorng as the justice minister. Tawee, leader of Prachachat Party (with 9 MPs), has been accused of giving Thaksin unlawful special treatment to allow Thaksin stay 181 days in a premium ward in the Police Hospital, instead of going to jail. See details of the petition in a news report of Isra News on 5 September, at www.isranews.org/article/isranews-news/131473, accessed 12 September 2024.

⁸ In PM Srettha Thavisin’s order No. 230/2566 issued on 13 September 2023, Paetongtarn was named deputy chairperson of the National Committee on Soft Power Strategy, of which Srettha was the chairman.

⁹ See additional details at the homepage of the Thailand Creative Culture Agency at <https://thacca.go.th/committee/development-committee/>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹⁰ See a news report on this issue in **Post Today** on 22 April at <https://www.posttoday.com/smart-life/708111>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹¹ See details of the petition at **Thai Post** on 25 August, at www.thaipost.net/hi-light/643919, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹² See details in a news report of **Thai Rath** on 28 August at, <https://www.thairath.co.th/news/politic/2811227>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹³ See a news report on this petition in **Thai Post** on 3 September, at www.thaipost.net/x-cite-news/649275, accessed 3 September 2024.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Watch **The Standard**’s podcast of Paiboon Nititawan’s press conference on 29 August at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0z15XSbMB0s>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹⁶ See the English text of the 2017 Thai Constitution as translated by the Committee on the Drafting of Constitution at the homepage of the Thai parliament at www.cdc.parliament.go.th/draftconstitution2/download/article/article_20180829093502.pdf, access 2 September 2024.

¹⁷ The 80-year-old former army chief and former DPM is a party-list MP of Palang Pracharat, but he has seldom attended any House meeting. He is also Palang Pracharat’s sole premiership candidate.

¹⁸ See a news report on **Thai PBS** on 27 August at <https://www.thaipbs.or.th/news/content/343561>, accessed 2 September 2024.

¹⁹ Watch Captain Thammanat’s defiant press conference on 19 August at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SgjSky0I1x4>, access 2 September 2024.

²⁰ Thammanat may have some pending corruption charges under investigation by the National Anti-Corruption Commission. He passed on the agriculture minister post to one of his allies, Dr Naruemon Pinyosinwat, leader of the newly-established Kla Dham Party. Naruemon was a deputy labour minister in the Prayut Cabinet when she, along with Thammanat who was then a deputy agriculture minister, was sacked by General Prayut for conspiring to unseat him in a vote of no confidence in the House in early September 2021. The conspiracy leaked and General Prayut could mobilise enough support to survive the no-confidence vote.

²¹ See a synopsis of the ruling at **Thai PBS** on 14 August, at www.thaipbs.or.th/news/content/343071, accessed 4 September 2024.

²² See the former Senator’s Facebook post at www.facebook.com/swangkarn.somchai, accessed 2 September 2024.

- ²³ See a news report on Matichon Online on 3 September, at https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_4770631, accessed 4 September 2024. Chada is a well-known and influential MP from the upper central province of Uthai Thani, and a senior member of Bhumjaithai Party. His 40-year-old daughter Sabida has a law degree from London. She has been on Chada's staff at the Ministry of Interior.
- ²⁴ See the list on **BBC Thailand** on 4 September at <https://www.bbc.com/thai/articles/c74jy9e9k88o>, accessed 4 September 2024.
- ²⁵ See explanation of the Budget Bureau in a news report in **Prachachat Business News Online** on 27 August at <https://www.prachachat.net/finance/news-1639373>, access on 2 September 2024. The cash hand-out is a last-ditch effort to launch the troubled Digital Wallet programme, involving giving 10,000 baht of purchasing digital credit to poor Thais. The software to execute the Digital Wallet cannot be developed in time; hence the cash hand-out will be used instead. At the first cabinet meeting on 17 September, the Paetongtarn Administration started calling the 10,000 baht cash handout as part of its economic stimulation programme – instead of being the troubled “Digital Wallet”.
- ²⁶ In response to a question during Q & A after his dinner talk about “Vision for Thailand” on 22 August, Thaksin admitted that he did talk to General Prawit on the phone about forming a new government. Watch the Q & A session on **PPTV** at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1478850492759916>, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ²⁷ Most of the Senators who voted for Paetongtarn were allies of then incumbent PM General Prayut Chan-o-cha. Those who were allies of Palang Pracharat party leader General Prawit mostly abstained. That was the last time the 250 Senators took part in selecting a new prime minister. Most of the Senators were handpicked by the two generals when they were still in power. The Senators have left office and been replaced by a new batch of 200 Senators chosen by their own peers from 20 occupational groups. These new Senators however no longer have the privilege of joining the MPs in selecting a new prime minister.
- ²⁸ At first, Thaksin's home detention was to last until the end of August. But he was “freed” on 17 August as a result of an annual general amnesty issued by the King to celebrate his birthday (28 July). Thaksin wore a white uniform with insignia showing him as a former prime minister. However, a police complaint against him has been lodged, accusing him of unlawfully wearing the white uniform; he had lost the right to wear it because of his corruption convictions. How the police follows up on the complaint remains to be seen. The offence is a crime which cannot be settled out of court.
- ²⁹ See the standard operating procedure of the Corrections Department in dealing with convicts who require hospitalisation outside of a prison and outside of the Corrections Department Hospital at **Matichon Online** on 23 August, at https://www.matichon.co.th/local/crime/news_4142996, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ³⁰ See a news report on **Daily News** on 30 August at <https://www.dailynews.co.th/news/3807912>, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ³¹ See a news report on this move on **Thai PBS** on 25 December 2023, at <https://www.thaipbs.or.th/news/content/335287>, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ³² Based on medical records provided by Thaksin's family, Thaksin has had at least four health issues: ischaemic heart disease (not enough blood into the heart); chronic lung infection (due to COVID); high blood pressure; and weakening spine. A senior Corrections official disclosed Thaksin's illness in a press conference on 22 August 2023; see details of the press conference in a news report of **The Standard** on 22 August 2023 at <https://thestandard.co/thaksin-was-a-special-inmate>, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ³³ See a news report of the press conference on Matichon Online on 29 August, at https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_4762292, accessed 2 September 2024.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ See a news report of the press conference on **Matichon Online** on 29 August, at https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_4762292, accessed 2 September 2024.

³⁶ Watch the interview on **Thai Channel 8 TV** on 2 September hosted by media influencer Yingsak Chonglertjetsadawong at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O1SSg4p9Izs>, accessed 2 September 2024. The Paetongtarn Cabinet does not include any Wongsuwan family members.

³⁷ See a new report on this development in **Thai Post** on 28 August at <https://www.thaipost.net/highlight/646082>, accessed 2 September 2024.

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