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JUSTICE

Ex-tourism chief faces indictment

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A joint panel of the Office of the Attorney-General (OAG) and National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) has agreed to indict former Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) governor Juthamas Siriwan in a film festival bribery case.

NACC member Vichai Vivitsevi, the co-chairman of the panel, said yesterday the panel had spent a lengthy period gathering evidence in the case after the commission found in 2011 that Ms Juthamas had committed criminal offences as a former state official in connection with the alleged bribery and the agency later recommended the OAG indict her.

After reviewing the investigation summary presented by the NACC, the OAG concluded the NACC investigation was incomplete and called for the formation of the joint panel of the OAG and NACC to consider the case.

The NACC was also told to find additional evidence to make the case stronger.

Ms Juthamas and her daughter were accused of taking bribes from a Los Angeles film-making couple who were awarded a 60-million-baht contract to host the annual Bangkok International Film Festival between 2003 and 2006.

Gerald and Patricia Green allegedly paid Ms Juthamas about US\$1.8 million (53.7 million baht) to help secure the Bangkok International Film Festival and related TAT deals between 2002 and 2007.

According to the NACC member, Ms Juthamas has allegedly violated Sections 6 and 11 of the law governing offences committed by state organisations or officials.

She is also alleged to have breached Section 12 of the act governing tendering a price to a state agency, he said.

Ms Juthamas and her daughter have also been indicted in the US for allegedly accepting bribes from the couple.

The Greens were sentenced to six months in jail and six months of home detention for their part in paying bribes to secure the rights to run the festival.

The pair were found guilty of money laundering and violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The US Justice Department said there was credible evidence the Greens had paid \$1.8 million in bribes to Ms Juthamas in exchange for contracts to run the film festival and other TAT projects.

Mr Vichai said the NACC is in the process of seeking a return of the bribe money back to Thailand.

This is in line with an accord made by Thailand and the US on assistance in criminal cases and under the United Nations Convention against Corruption.

The bribe money was seized by US authorities.

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