

Mongolian leader barred from selling £11m London flat

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The High Court has ordered that an £11 million London flat believed to be owned by the former prime minister of Mongolia cannot be sold or transferred during an international £185 million corruption and money-laundering investigation.

Sukhbaatar Batbold, the prime minister of Mongolia between 2009 and 2012, has been accused of receiving hundreds of millions of dollars from kickbacks in illegal deals involving the nation's two largest mines.

Judge Mark Pelling, QC, granted the freezing injunction on the flat within the **Knightsbridge Apartments** block on November 18.

Located between Harrods and Hyde Park, the Knightsbridge is a 201-flat complex developed by Henry Cheng, the Hong Kong property tycoon, in 2005.

Ashley Tabor, **the media entrepreneur**, owns two flats in the block, including a £90 million penthouse which he unsuccessfully tried to convert into a ten-bedroom, £200 million mega-flat.

The frozen flat is owned by a company in the British Virgin Islands (BVI), allegedly controlled by Mr Batbold. A second flat in the block previously owned by another BVI company, also allegedly controlled by Mr Batbold, was sold to the Cypriot-Israeli billionaire Teddy Sagi in 2017.

Land Registry documents show that Mr Sagi owns another £31 million apartment in the complex. There is no suggestion he was involved in any wrongdoing.

Judge Pelling ordered Mr Batbold not to sell or transfer the property and agreed with lawyers acting on behalf of the Mongolian government that there was a risk the assets would be broken up and sold.

"[There is] very strong evidence that Mr Batbold and those in his immediate family have used [the two flats] extensively over the years," Judge Pelling wrote in his ruling.

The former prime minister has allegedly amassed a \$57 million (£42 million) international property portfolio, which includes properties in New York, Hong Kong, Russia and Thailand as well as London, using misappropriated funds.

Mr Batbold and other associates would have allegedly diverted such funds by establishing a "labyrinthine system" of offshore companies, "for the purposes of shielding the ill-gotten assets from discovery by the Mongolian authorities", according to court documents filed in the US.

The court case in England is part of a larger international investigation in which Mr Batbold is accused of having received kickbacks from companies operating the Erdenet copper mine and the Oyu Tolgoi copper and gold mine, both in Mongolia.

By Emanuele Midolo and George Greenwood, The Times, 23 December 2020