

Singapore company director charged over Wirecard scandal

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The headquarters of scandal-hit German payments provider Wirecard in Aschheim, near Munich

A company director has been charged in Singapore with falsifying letters linked to scandal-hit German payments giant Wirecard, according to court documents, as the fallout from the firm's collapse spreads further around the world.

The fintech company filed for insolvency in June after admitting that 1.9 billion euros (\$2.2 billion) missing from its accounts did not exist, revelations that stunned Germany and drew comparisons with the Enron accounting scandal.

R. Shanmugaratnam, director of a business administration firm in Singapore at the centre of investigations into the case, has been charged with falsifying letters showing it held money in escrow for Wirecard.

The 54-year-old of Citadelle Corporate Services claimed in the letters in 2016 and 2017 the firm held amounts ranging from 30 million euros to around 177 million euros in accounts on behalf of Wirecard, according to court documents seen by AFP Friday.

But the accounts did not hold such amounts and the letters were produced with the "intent to defraud", according to the charges, filed last month.

Shanmugaratnam could not immediately be reached for comment.

Authorities in the city state last month launched an investigation into Citadelle and another company over suspicions they falsified accounts, and Shanmugaratnam is the first person to face charges.

Wirecard's woes began in January 2019 with a series of Financial Times articles alleging accounting irregularities in its Asian division, headed by chief operating officer Jan Marsalek.

German and Philippine authorities want to question Marsalek as part of separate investigations into Wirecard, but his whereabouts are unclear.

Last month, the Philippines justice minister said immigration officers falsified records to show he briefly visited the country after being

sacked.

Entries in the Bureau of Immigration database show Marsalek arrived in the Philippines on June 23—the day after he was fired—and left for China on June 24.

But CCTV footage, airline manifests and other records prove Marsalek was not in the country on those dates, minister Menardo Guevarra said in a statement.

The firm's troubles exploded in June when long-time auditors Ernst & Young said they were unable to find the 1.9 billion euros, and that they had been fed false statements.

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