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## Ex-Thai PM's wife guilty of tax evasion

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# THE ARTICLE

The wife of former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been sentenced to three years in jail for tax evasion. Thailand's criminal courts found Potjaman Shinawatra guilty of failing to pay \$16.3 million in taxes. Her case relates to a transfer of 4.5 million shares in the family company, Shin Corporation. Mrs Shinawatra told the court that the share transfer was simply a gift and was not taxable. Prosecutors disagreed and said it was a business deal and therefore she should have paid tax on it. Shinawatra told the court she was completely innocent of any wrongdoing. The high-profile case was televised nationwide. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children looked on gloomily as the verdict was read out.

The judge's decision could have serious consequences for Thaksin Shinawatra. He is accused of a series of offences including major fraud, corruption and abuse of political power. Prosecutors will charge the former Prime Minister of redirecting funds from an illegal \$120-million loan to Burma into his own bank account, and of a shady transfer of government land into his wife's name. Thais are split over whether Mr Shinawatra should face trial. He is still seen as a hero by millions of farmers and poor people. A lecturer from a top Bangkok university said the convictions of Mr and Mrs Shinawatra would be the "beginning of transparency, legitimacy and counter-corruption" in Thailand.

# WARM-UPS

**1. TAX:** Walk around the class and talk to other students about taxes. Change partners often. After you finish, sit with your partner(s) and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

*jail / tax evasion / court / shares / family company / gifts / wrongdoing / guilty verdict / judge's decision / major fraud / abuse of political power / shady deals / transparency*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. CELEBRITY JUSTICE:** Do celebrities in your country get the same punishments as ordinary people? With your partner(s), write down the sentences you would give your country's leader for these crimes. Change partners and share your sentences.

Crime	Sentence
Tax evasion	
Pocketing public funds	
Election fraud	
Punching a reporter	
Smoking cannabis	
Selling national secrets	
War crimes	

**4. QUICK DEBATE:** Students A strongly believe that some people in society should receive kinder court sentences; Students B strongly believe no one is above the law and everyone should get the same sentence for a crime. Change partners again and talk about your roles and conversations.

**5. HEADLINE PREDICTION:** With your partner(s), use the words in the "Chat" activity above to predict what the news article will be about. Once you have your story, change partners and share them. Who was closest to the real story?

**6. COURT:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word 'court'. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. The wife of a former Thai prime minister has been sentenced to jail.    | T / F |
| b. The wife stole 4.5 million shares from a government corporation.        | T / F |
| c. She said the shares were a gift and that she was completely innocent.   | T / F |
| d. The court case was televised live throughout Thailand.                  | T / F |
| e. The former prime minister could be joining his wife in prison.          | T / F |
| f. A vast majority of Thais want the former prime minister to go to jail.  | T / F |
| g. Many poor people in Thailand think the former prime minister is a hero. | T / F |
| h. A lecturer said imprisoning the couple would be good for Thailand.      | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. former        | a. present      |
| 2. jail          | b. divided      |
| 3. gift          | c. results      |
| 4. innocent      | d. suspicious   |
| 5. verdict       | e. prison       |
| 6. consequences  | f. in the clear |
| 7. abuse         | g. ex-          |
| 8. shady         | h. openness     |
| 9. split         | i. decision     |
| 10. transparency | j. misuse       |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. sentenced to                          | a. \$16.3 million in taxes |
| 2. failing to pay                        | b. as a hero by millions   |
| 3. the share transfer was                | c. wrongdoing              |
| 4. innocent of any                       | d. for Thaksin Shinawatra  |
| 5. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children | e. of government land      |
| 6. serious consequences                  | f. three years in jail     |
| 7. accused                               | g. simply a gift           |
| 8. a shady transfer                      | h. transparency            |
| 9. He is still seen                      | i. looked on gloomily      |
| 10. the beginning of                     | j. of a series of offences |

# WHILE READING / LISTENING

**GAP FILL:** Put the words into the gaps in the text.

The wife of \_\_\_\_\_ Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been sentenced to three years in jail for tax evasion. Thailand's criminal courts \_\_\_\_\_ Potjaman Shinawatra guilty of failing to pay \$16.3 million in taxes. Her case relates to a \_\_\_\_\_ of 4.5 million shares in the family company, Shin Corporation. Mrs Shinawatra told the court that the share transfer was \_\_\_\_\_ a gift and was not \_\_\_\_\_. Prosecutors disagreed and said it was a business deal and therefore she should have paid tax on it. Shinawatra told the court she was completely \_\_\_\_\_ of any wrongdoing. The high-profile \_\_\_\_\_ was televised nationwide. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children looked on gloomily as the \_\_\_\_\_ was read out.

The judge's decision could have \_\_\_\_\_ consequences for Thaksin Shinawatra. He is accused of a \_\_\_\_\_ of offences including major fraud, corruption and \_\_\_\_\_ of political power. Prosecutors will charge the former Prime Minister of redirecting funds from an illegal \$120-million loan to Burma into his \_\_\_\_\_ bank account, and of a shady transfer of government land into his wife's \_\_\_\_\_. Thais are split over whether Mr Shinawatra should \_\_\_\_\_ trial. He is still seen as a \_\_\_\_\_ by millions of farmers and poor people. A lecturer from a top Bangkok university said the convictions of Mr and Mrs Shinawatra would be the "\_\_\_\_\_ of transparency, legitimacy and counter-corruption" in Thailand.

*simply*  
*case*  
*found*  
*innocent*  
*verdict*  
*former*  
*transfer*  
*taxable*

*face*  
*series*  
*own*  
*beginning*  
*serious*  
*hero*  
*abuse*  
*name*

## **LISTENING:** Listen and fill in the spaces.

The \_\_\_\_\_ Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been sentenced to three years in jail for tax evasion. Thailand's \_\_\_\_\_ found Potjaman Shinawatra guilty of \_\_\_\_\_ \$16.3 million in taxes. Her case relates to a transfer of 4.5 million shares in the family company, Shin Corporation. Mrs Shinawatra told the court that the share transfer was \_\_\_\_\_ and was not taxable. Prosecutors disagreed and said it was a business deal and therefore she should have \_\_\_\_\_. Shinawatra told the court she was completely innocent of any wrongdoing. The high-profile case was televised nationwide. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children looked on gloomily \_\_\_\_\_ was read out.

The judge's decision \_\_\_\_\_ consequences for Thaksin Shinawatra. He is accused of a series of offences including major fraud, corruption \_\_\_\_\_ political power. Prosecutors will charge the former Prime Minister of redirecting funds \_\_\_\_\_ \$120-million loan to Burma into his own bank account, and of \_\_\_\_\_ of government land into his wife's name. Thais \_\_\_\_\_ whether Mr Shinawatra should face trial. He is still seen as a hero by millions of farmers and poor people. A lecturer \_\_\_\_\_ Bangkok university said the convictions of Mr and Mrs Shinawatra would be \_\_\_\_\_ transparency, legitimacy and counter-corruption" in Thailand.

## AFTER READING / LISTENING

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**criminal**' and '**court**'.

<b>criminal</b>	<b>court</b>

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• former</li><li>• guilty</li><li>• transfer</li><li>• simply</li><li>• completely</li><li>• gloomily</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• serious</li><li>• series</li><li>• \$120-million</li><li>• split</li><li>• millions</li><li>• beginning</li></ul>
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# STUDENT TAXES SURVEY

Write five GOOD questions about taxes in the table. Do this in pairs. Each student must write the questions on his / her own paper.

When you have finished, interview other students. Write down their answers.

	STUDENT 1 _____	STUDENT 2 _____	STUDENT 3 _____
Q.1.			
Q.2.			
Q.3.			
Q.4.			
Q.5.			

- Now return to your original partner and share and talk about what you found out. Change partners often.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.



# DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a) What did you think when you read the headline?
- b) What springs to mind when you hear the term 'tax evasion'?
- c) Do you think taxes are a good thing?
- d) What do you think of super-rich people who try to avoid paying tax?
- e) Do you think three years is a fair sentence for Mrs Shinawatra?
- f) Would the spouse of a former leader in your country receive a similar sentence for evading tax?
- g) Do you think it's possible that Mrs Shinawatra is innocent?
- h) Do you follow high profile court cases on the television or Internet?
- i) How would you feel if you watched a close family member being sentenced to three years in jail?
- j) When was the last time you looked gloomily at something?

*Ex-Thai PM's wife guilty of tax evasion - 1st August, 2008*  
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# DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a) Did you like reading this article?
- b) What "serious consequences" could there be for Thaksin Shinawatra?
- c) Do you think courts should be a bit kinder to former prime ministers?
- d) What sentence should Mr Shinawatra receive if he is found guilty of all the offences in the article?
- e) Why do you think many Thais still see Mr Shinawatra as a hero when he is accused of stealing government money?
- f) Do you trust your country's leaders?
- g) Do you think any of your country's leaders have been / are heroes?
- h) How much transparency is there in your government's dealings?
- i) What questions would you like to ask Thaksin Shinawatra?
- j) What questions would you like to ask Mrs Shinawatra?

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# LANGUAGE

The wife of former Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been sentenced to three years (1) \_\_\_\_ jail for tax evasion. Thailand's criminal courts found Potjaman Shinawatra guilty of (2) \_\_\_\_ to pay \$16.3 million in taxes. Her case relates to a transfer of 4.5 million (3) \_\_\_\_ in the family company, Shin Corporation. Mrs Shinawatra told the court that the share transfer was (4) \_\_\_\_ a gift and was not (5) \_\_\_\_\_. Prosecutors disagreed and said it was a business deal and therefore she should have paid tax on it. Shinawatra told the court she was completely innocent of any wrongdoing. The high-profile (6) \_\_\_\_ was televised nationwide. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children looked on gloomily as the verdict was read out.

The judge's decision could have (7) \_\_\_\_ consequences for Thaksin Shinawatra. He is accused of a series (8) \_\_\_\_ offences including major fraud, corruption and abuse of political power. Prosecutors will (9) \_\_\_\_ the former Prime Minister of redirecting funds from an illegal \$120-million loan to Burma into his own bank account, and of a shady transfer of government land into his wife's name. This is (10) \_\_\_\_ over whether Mr Shinawatra should face trial. He is still seen as a hero by millions of farmers and poor people. A lecturer (11) \_\_\_\_ a top Bangkok university said the convictions of Mr and Mrs Shinawatra would be the "beginning of transparency, legitimacy and (12) \_\_\_\_ -corruption" in Thailand.

**Put the correct words from the table below in the above article.**

- |     |               |                |                    |                  |
|-----|---------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| 1.  | (a) in        | (b) on         | (c) at             | (d) for          |
| 2.  | (a) failed    | (b) failing    | (c) fail           | (d) fails        |
| 3.  | (a) share     | (b) shared     | (c) shares         | (d) sharing      |
| 4.  | (a) simplest  | (b) simpleness | (c) simple         | (d) simply       |
| 5.  | (a) tax dodge | (b) taxes      | (c) taxing         | (d) taxable      |
| 6.  | (a) box       | (b) bag        | (c) case           | (d) purse        |
| 7.  | (a) serious   | (b) seriously  | (c) seriousness    | (d) series       |
| 8.  | (a) at        | (b) of         | (c) for            | (d) with         |
| 9.  | (a) chance    | (b) change     | (c) charge         | (d) charm        |
| 10. | (a) split     | (b) splits     | (c) split decision | (d) split second |
| 11. | (a) over      | (b) to         | (c) by             | (d) from         |
| 12. | (a) count     | (b) counter    | (c) counting       | (d) counts       |

## WRITING:

Write about **tax** for 10 minutes. Correct your partner's paper.

[illegible]

# **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find out more about Mr and Mrs Shinawatra. Share what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

**3. HIGH PROFILE:** Make a poster about some high-profile court cases in your country or around the world. Show your work to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar things?

**4. TAX EVASION:** Write a magazine article about a high-profile, filthy rich celebrity going to prison for tax evasion. Include imaginary interviews with the celebrity and a poor person from his/her country.

Read what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Write down any new words and expressions you hear from your partner(s).

**5. LETTER:** Write a letter to Mrs Shinawatra. Ask her three questions about her court case. Give her for three pieces of advice on what she should do in prison. Read your letter to your partner(s) in your next lesson. Your partner(s) will answer your questions.

# ANSWERS

## TRUE / FALSE:

- a. T      b. F      c. T      d. T      e. T      f. T      g. T      h. T

## SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. former        | a. ex-          |
| 2. jail          | b. prison       |
| 3. gift          | c. present      |
| 4. innocent      | d. in the clear |
| 5. verdict       | e. decision     |
| 6. consequences  | f. results      |
| 7. abuse         | g. misuse       |
| 8. shady         | h. suspicious   |
| 9. split         | i. divided      |
| 10. transparency | j. openness     |

## PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. sentenced to                          | a. three years in jail     |
| 2. failing to pay                        | b. \$16.3 million in taxes |
| 3. the share transfer was                | c. simply a gift           |
| 4. innocent of any                       | d. wrongdoing              |
| 5. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children | e. looked on gloomily      |
| 6. serious consequences                  | f. for Thaksin Shinawatra  |
| 7. accused                               | g. of a series of offences |
| 8. a shady transfer                      | h. of government land      |
| 9. He is still seen                      | i. as a hero by millions   |
| 10. the beginning of                     | j. transparency            |

## GAP FILL:

### Ex-Thai PM's wife guilty of tax evasion

The wife of **former** Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has been sentenced to three years in jail for tax evasion. Thailand's criminal courts **found** Potjaman Shinawatra guilty of failing to pay \$16.3 million in taxes. Her case relates to a **transfer** of 4.5 million shares in the family company, Shin Corporation. Mrs Shinawatra told the court that the share transfer was **simply** a gift and was not **taxable**. Prosecutors disagreed and said it was a business deal and therefore she should have paid tax on it. Shinawatra told the court she was completely **innocent** of any wrongdoing. The high-profile **case** was televised nationwide. Mrs Shinawatra's husband and children looked on gloomily as the **verdict** was read out.

The judge's decision could have **serious** consequences for Thaksin Shinawatra. He is accused of a **series** of offences including major fraud, corruption and **abuse** of political power. Prosecutors will charge the former Prime Minister of redirecting funds from an illegal \$120-million loan to Burma into his **own** bank account, and of a shady transfer of government land into his wife's **name**. Thais are split over whether Mr Shinawatra should **face** trial. He is still seen as a **hero** by millions of farmers and poor people. A lecturer from a top Bangkok university said the convictions of Mr and Mrs Shinawatra would be the "**beginning** of transparency, legitimacy and counter-corruption" in Thailand.

## LANGUAGE WORK

- 1 - a      2 - b      3 - c      4 - d      5 - d      6 - c      7 - a      8 - b      9 - c      10 - a      11 - d      12 - b