

## **Thai court overturns Thaksin ex-wife's conviction**

**Reuters**

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BANGKOK (Aug 24, 2011): Thailand's criminal court on Wednesday overturned the 2008 conviction of the ex-wife of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra on charges of tax evasion, a decision that comes two weeks after Thaksin's sister took power as premier.

The court said there was insufficient evidence against Potjaman Na Pombejra and her secretary, who along with her brother were found guilty in August 2008 of evading 546 million baht (RM54.3 million) in taxes in a case the billionaire former prime minister has said was politically motivated.

The decision is one of several that suggests a possible change in the attitude of the courts since Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, was sworn in two weeks ago. Since then, at least 22 detained Thaksin supporters, who wore red shirts at demonstrations, have been released on bail.

Potjaman and her brother had been sentenced to three years in prison, while her secretary was given a two-year term. All had been released on bail.

The case was one of many against Thaksin and his family in the two years after he was ousted in a military coup in 2006. He now lives in self-imposed exile to avoid jail for graft but he remains wildly popular with the rural masses.

Critics accused him of abusing his position to enhance his family's wealth and of misrule and corruption, particularly over the US\$2.2 billion (RM6.6 billion) tax-free sale of his family's telecommunications company Shin Corp to a Singaporean company in 2006.

The court on Wednesday found Potjaman's brother, Bhanapot Damapong, guilty of tax evasion, but reduced his sentence to two years and a 100,000 baht fine.

Potjaman had transferred 4.5 million shares of the now-defunct Shinawatra Computer & Communications PCL worth 738 million baht to her brother.

"Her actions have been honest," said Tirapat Srichaiya, her lawyer.

The couple were divorced in 2008, a few months after Potjaman's conviction. – Reuters

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