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Pemika sentenced in absentia to prison, fined

28 Jun 2016 at 15:47  8,465 viewed  9 comments

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Pemika Veerachatraksit talks to reporters at the Criminal Court on March 3, 2007. (Bangkok Post file photo)

A former psychology student was sentenced in absentia to four and a half years in jail on a fraud charge by the Supreme Court on Tuesday, as the high-profile case came to an end.



Pemika Veerachatraksit, 34, and three other defendants who were her friends, were also ordered to pay back 8.16 million baht to Prakitpao Thomthitchong, owner of the renowned Applied Physics tutorial school.

The court made the final ruling while the former psychology student was not present. Her three friends -- Ruethai Rungsirimethakul, 32, Nattapol Promprapai, 37, and Watanyu Tantheerapong, 36 -- were sentenced to three years, suspended for two years. Ruethai also did not appear in court.

The Supreme Court revised down the value of assets to be returned to 8.16 million baht from 8.39 million approved by the Appeal Court in 2013 to truly reflect the damage faced by Dr Prakitpao.

Pemika's lawyer, Apichart Jorasai, said he could not contact his client since she now lived overseas with her family. Her guarantor was fined 1 million baht in cash after she did not appear in court.

Pemika and Reuthai have been under arrest warrants issued by the court.

The swindle took place between October 2006 and February 2007. During that period, Pemika and her friends duped Dr Prakitpao, then 37, into believing he and Pemika had been a couple in many past lives and he had abused her.

Pemika also managed to convince the famour tutor that he had owed her money in the previous life and had to repay the debt. She told him she was a clairvoyant who could look back into past lives.

Dr Prakitpao gave them a Toyota Camry sedan worth 1.56 million baht, 980,000 baht in cash to buy the rare licence plate number Sor Hor-9999, a Rolex watch and other valuables worth 8.1 million baht.

The doctor’s family claimed he began acting strangely and avoiding them after attending meditation sessions with a group of people including Pemika, who claimed to be his close female friend.

Medical tests revealed that Dr Prakitpao had elevated levels of pseudo-ephedrine, suggesting he might be drugged by the gang. Pseudo-ephedrine is a common ingredient in cold remedies and rarely produces adverse psychological effects. It was not the cause of his illness.

After noticing Dr Prakitpao’s mental disorder, the family sent him to Srithanya Hospital for mentally ill people. He returned to normality after a three-month treatment.

The case was brought to court by state prosecutors. They and Dr Prakitpao's mother, Mrs Ploenjrit, made the accusations against the four.

Mrs Ploenjrit sent her representative to listen to the ruling.

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