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Saudi king in \$32bn divorce case

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15 June, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Saudi king in \$32bn divorce case

BNE: One of the three wives of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia is seeking what could be the most lucrative payout in divorce alimony history. Janan Harb, 57, who lives in London's ritzy Knightsbridge district, is claiming the 82-year-old ailing monarch has failed to provide reasonable maintenance for her and is demanding a "just settlement". This means she wants a chunk of his \$32bn fortune. A confidante said: "What she is doing is without precedent in the Middle East. But she wants to see justice done." Divorce is frowned upon in Saudi Arabia and these proceedings against the king may just open the floodgates.

Ms. Harb won the first round in her battle on June 14 after a London court decreed the king is not entitled to privacy. King Fahd's legal team says he is entitled to immunity in the courts as the ruler of a sovereign state. The King's aides are desperate to avoid any public showdown in court, which would expose the king's finances, warts and all. They do not want details of the Royal family's opulent lifestyle to be aired in public, which would apparently cause great embarrassment. They reminded Ms. Harb that she was endowed with a substantial payment in 2001 to secure her confidentiality on the royal relationship.

WARM-UPS

1. I'M POOREST: Have you ever been (Are you now) very poor? What must it be like to be very poor? Talk with your partner(s) and try to convince them that you are the poorest person in the class. Be sure to exaggerate and tell the saddest, sorriest story you can. You always have a poorer story than your partner(s).

Talk about these things in your poor life:

- Food
- Clothes and shoes
- Newspapers
- Family
- Studying English
- Transport
- Entertainment
- Other

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

Polygamy / 3 wives (or husbands) / King Fahd / Saudi Arabia / divorce / alimony / \$32 billion / privacy / opulent lifestyles / royal relationships

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. DIVORCE: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with divorce. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

4. DIVORCE OPINIONS: Talk with your partner(s) about how far you agree with these opinions:

- a. Divorce should be made easier.
- b. All alimony and maintenance payments should be scrapped.
- c. Couples should agree on the financial details of divorces before they marry.
- d. Children should always go to the mother in divorce cases.
- e. Divorce cases should never be heard in public courts. It's a private matter.
- f. Hollywood divorces are the most interesting.
- g. I don't understand why people still get married after three or more divorces.
- h. I wouldn't want to marry a divorced man or woman.

5. GROUNDS FOR DIVORCE: Which of these are grounds for divorce?

- Infidelity
- Insanity
- Boredom
- Domestic violence
- Found someone nicer
- Always hogs the TV remote controller
- Never remembers spouse's birthday
- Habitual gambling, drinking or drug use

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

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

- | | |
|---|-------|
| a. Saudi Arabia's King Fahd wants \$32bn from his ex-wife. | T / F |
| b. One of King Fahd's wives may soon become incredibly rich. | T / F |
| c. The 82-year-old monarch is in the best of health. | T / F |
| d. Divorce is widely accepted in Saudi Arabia. | T / F |
| e. A London court decided the divorce could be heard in public. | T / F |
| f. Rulers of sovereign states have immunity in foreign courts. | T / F |
| g. The King is a little embarrassed about his warts showing in court. | T / F |
| h. The king already paid his wife lots of money to keep quiet. | T / F |

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

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| a. lucrative | ill |
| b. alimony | exemption |
| c. ailing | example |
| d. precedent | ruled |
| e. proceedings | profitable |
| f. decreed | secrecy |
| g. immunity | dealings |
| h. opulent | bestowed |
| i. endowed | allowance |
| j. confidentiality | sumptuous |

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. the most lucrative payout | ailing monarch |
| b. the 82-year-old | in divorce alimony history |
| c. she wants a chunk | decreed the king is not entitled... |
| d. frowned | of his \$32bn fortune |
| e. open the | upon |
| f. a London court | in the courts |
| g. entitled to immunity | confidentiality |
| h. opulent | floodgates |
| i. endowed with | lifestyle |
| j. to secure her | a substantial payment |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

SYNONYM FILL: Place the number of the synonym group in the correct gap (It is not important to guess a correct word - any of the synonyms from each group could be put into the relevant gap).

Saudi king in \$32bn divorce case

BNE: One of the three wives of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia is seeking what could be the most _____ payout in divorce alimony history. Janan Harb, 57, who lives in London's _____ Knightsbridge district, is claiming the 82-year-old ailing monarch has failed to provide reasonable _____ for her and is demanding a "just settlement". This means she wants a _____ of his \$32bn fortune. A confidante said: "What she is doing is without precedent in the Middle East. But she wants to see justice done." Divorce is frowned upon in Saudi Arabia and these proceedings against the king may just open the floodgates.

Ms. Harb won the first round in her battle on June 14 after a London court _____ the king is not entitled to privacy. King Fahd's legal team says he is entitled to immunity in the courts as the ruler of a sovereign state. The King's aides are desperate to avoid any public showdown in court, which would expose the king's finances, _____ and all. They do not want details of the Royal family's opulent lifestyle to be aired in public, which would apparently cause great embarrassment. They reminded Ms. Harb that she was _____ with a substantial payment in 2001 to secure her _____ on the royal relationship.

1

chunk
slice
wedge
piece

2

lucrative
profitable
fruitful
remunerative

3

decreed
ruled
judged
declared

4

warts
blemishes
imperfections
shortcomings

5

confidentiality
secrecy
hush-hush
discretion

6

ritzy
fancy
posh
exclusive

7

endowed
bestowed
provided
furnished

8

maintenance
alimony
support
keep

AFTER READING / LISTENING

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

- 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. SYNONYM FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the synonym fill. 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. STUDENT DIVORCE SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about divorce, alimony and the King Fahd case.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- seeking
- failed
- just
- precedent
- frowned upon
- floodgates
- first round
- immunity
- sovereign
- showdown
- warts
- endowed

DISCUSSION

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

- a. What was your initial reaction to this headline?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What kind of person do you think Ms. Harb is?
- d. Do you think she's entitled to a sizeable chunk of the \$32bn?
- e. Is this justice being done?
- f. Do you agree with divorce?
- g. Do think polygamy is OK in certain cultures?
- h. Do you think this case will open the floodgates for more alimony trials in Saudi Arabia?
- i. Is divorce frowned upon in your country?
- j. How would you feel about your finances being aired in public, warts and all?

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

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. Do you think Ms. Harb is a money-grabber?
- c. How much money should she receive as a divorce settlement?
- d. Would you marry for money?
- e. Do you think this divorce case should be heard in a London court?
- f. Do you think leaders of countries should be immune from having their financial affairs aired in foreign courts?
- g. Don't you think King Fahd should just settle in private?
- h. Don't you think the substantial payment paid to Ms Harb in 2001 should be enough to keep her happy?
- i. Do you think Ms. Harb should go for as much as she can possibly get and take the king to the cleaners?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
- b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- c. Was there a question you didn't like?
- d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- e. What did you like talking about?
- f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
- g. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

ALIMONY JUDGE: You are a judge that has to make decisions regarding alimony payments under a new divorce law. The grounds for divorce are listed below. In pairs / groups, rank the grounds in order of seriousness (10 is most serious). Decide the percentage split of wealth that each ground warrants (e.g. "Boredom" might mean a 50-50 split between the two ex-spouses). Explain your logic for this split.

GROUND FOR DIVORCE	RANK	% SPLIT	LOGIC FOR PERCENTAGE SPLIT
Infidelity			
Insanity			
Boredom			
Domestic violence			
One partner found someone nicer			
One partner always hogs the TV remote controller			
One partner never remembers his/her spouse's birthday			
Habitual gambling, drinking or drug use			
The wife was pregnant before marriage			
One partner doesn't want children			

Change partners and explain what you discussed with your previous partner(s). Give each other feedback on your ideas. Are the percentage splits good or bad? Which parts of your logic would be accepted in a real court by a real judge?

Return to your original partners and discuss and agree on any revisions you made.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Saudi king in \$32bn divorce case

BNE: _____ wives of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia is seeking what could be the _____ in divorce alimony history. Janan Harb, 57, who lives in London's ritzy Knightsbridge district, is claiming the 82-year-old _____ has failed to provide reasonable maintenance for her and is demanding a "just settlement". This means she _____ \$32bn fortune. A confidante said: "What she is doing is _____ in the Middle East. But she wants to see justice done." Divorce is _____ in Saudi Arabia and these proceedings against the king may just open the floodgates.

Ms. Harb _____ in her battle on June 14 after a London _____ the king is not entitled to privacy. King Fahd's legal team says he is _____ in the courts as the ruler of a sovereign state. The King's aides are desperate to avoid any public showdown in court, which would expose the king's finances, _____. They do not want details of the Royal family's _____ to be aired in public, which would apparently cause great embarrassment. They reminded Ms. Harb that she was _____ substantial payment in 2001 to secure her confidentiality on the royal relationship.

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 more information on Janan Harb's alimony claim. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. DIVORCE: Write an essay on what you think are reasonable grounds for divorce or why divorce should not be allowed. Explain the main points of your essay to your classmates in your next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

4. A LETTER: Pretend you are Janan Harb. Write a letter to King Fahd explaining why you want alimony. Explain how much you want, why you think that amount is reasonable and what you want it for. Read your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all ask for similar amounts?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

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

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| a. lucrative | profitable |
| b. alimony | allowance |
| c. ailing | ill |
| d. precedent | example |
| e. proceedings | dealings |
| f. decreed | ruled |
| g. immunity | exemption |
| h. opulent | sumptuous |
| i. endowed | bestowed |
| j. confidentiality | secrecy |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| a. the most lucrative payout | in divorce alimony history |
| b. the 82-year-old | ailing monarch |
| c. she wants a chunk | of his \$32bn fortune |
| d. frowned | upon |
| e. open the | floodgates |
| f. a London court | decreed the king is not entitled... |
| g. entitled to immunity | in the courts |
| h. opulent | lifestyle |
| i. endowed with | a substantial payment |
| j. to secure her | confidentiality |

SYNONYM FILL:

Saudi king in \$32bn divorce case

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