

THAILAND

Date of Elections: February 10, 1969

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the Constitution which was adopted on February 2, 1968, and promulgated on June 20 the same year, the Thai Parliament, or National Assembly, consists of 2 Chambers:

— the Senate, whose members are appointed by the King for 6 years and renewed by halves every 3 years. There are currently 164 senators, whose number must be $\frac{3}{4}$ of that of the House of Representatives.

— the House of Representatives, comprising 219 members elected for 4 years by direct vote on the basis of 1 per province and per fraction of 150,000 inhabitants.

Elections were held in February for the members of the Lower Chamber, set up under the new Constitution drawn up by a Constituent Assembly that had served as a legislative body for the last 10 years.

Electoral System

All Thai-born citizens of both sexes, who are at least 20 years of age on January 1 of the year in which the elections take place, are entitled to vote. A Thai citizen whose father is an alien must also fulfil one of the following conditions: he must have received education up to *Mathayom* 6 or *Mathayomsuksa* 3; have completed his military service; or served as a Government official for at least

4 years. As regards naturalized citizens, these must have lived in Thailand for at least 10 years from the date of their naturalization.

Monks and other members of the clergy, the insane, those held by the courts and those whose voting rights have been withdrawn by court decision cannot register on the electoral rolls, which may be revised up to 15 days before the election.

To be eligible for election to the House of Representatives, a candidate must fulfil the conditions required for voting, be at least 30 years of age and have received an elementary education; he must not be a drug addict, totally blind, recently sentenced to 2 or more years of imprisonment or declared bankrupt.

Only Thai-born citizens at least 40 years of age, of honorable reputation and capable of rendering valuable services to the State, may be appointed to the Senate.

Furthermore, the mandate of parliamentarian is incompatible with the tenure of office in the national or municipal administrations.

For the purposes of the general elections, each of the 71 provinces forms a constituency. In 19 of these, where only 1 seat is to be filled, representatives are elected by majority uninominal vote in a single ballot. In the 52 other constituencies, they are elected by majority plurinominal vote. Voters are required to stick as many stamps as there are seats to be filled on their ballot-papers; each stamp bears a number corresponding to one of the candidates. Those candidates who receive the greatest number of votes are declared elected.

Should a seat fall vacant more than 180 days before the end of a legislature, a by-election is held.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In 1958, all political parties had been dissolved; a certain number were now created or reconstituted in order to take part in the electoral campaign which was generally peaceful.

First of the parties was the United Thai People's Party (UTPP), the official Government formation headed by the Prime Minister, Field Marshal Kittikachorn, which put up candidates in every constituency and won 35 per cent of the seats in the House of Representatives, thereby securing a working majority, since the Constitution stipulates that, on all important questions, the House votes in conjunction with the Senate nominated by the King.

The main opposition party, the Democratic Party, whose leader, Mr. Seni Pramoj, is a member of the Royal family and a former Premier and which supported the introduction of a Western-style liberal regime, together with an elected Senate and a Government responsible to Parliament, was mainly successful in Bangkok and Thonburi where it won all the 21 seats to be filled.

Apart from these parties and various other groups and apart also from independent candidates who, for the most part, supported the Government, three left-wing movements also submitted candidates. The influence of these was felt above all in the less developed north-eastern part of the country. They were the Joint Economic Front, the People's Party and the Democratic Front, and advocated greater economic and social democracy and a neutralist foreign policy.

Despite the efforts of the Government to arouse public interest in the election by circulating publications even in the remotest provinces, participation was relatively low.

The election of the Speaker of the House at the beginning of the legislature was the independent deputies' first opportunity of indicating their position and therefore made it possible to obtain a general idea of the division of forces in the Assembly. The Government candidate, General Siri Siriyodhim, won 128 votes as against 65 for the Democratic, 12 for the Neutralist and 11 for the Socialist candidates.

This redistribution of political forces within the House was formalized in May 1969, when most of the independent deputies joined the ranks of the United Thai People's Party and a fraction of them created a new group called the Liberal Independent Party.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections*

Number of registered electors.	14,820,180
Voters.	7,285,832 (49.2 %)
Void or blank ballot-papers.	428,699
Valid votes.	6,857,133

Political Group	Number of Seats obtained in the House of Representatives
United Thai People's Party.	75
Independents (Non-Party).	72
Democratic Party.	57
Democratic Front.	7
Joint Economic Front (Socialist).	4
People's Party.	2
Farmer Party.	1
Free Moral Party.	1
	219

2. *Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives
at the Beginning of the Legislature*

Political Group	Number of Seats
United Thai People's Party.	105
Democratic Party.	57
Liberal Independent Party.	24
Not Registered.	20
Democratic Front.	7
Joint Economic Front.	4
People's Party.	1
Free Moral Party.	1
	219

3. *Distribution of Deputies according to Professional Category*

Barristers.	44
Farmers.	8
Merchants.	91
Retired persons.	27
Teachers.	9
Workers.	13
Others.	27
	219

4. *Distribution of Deputies according to Sex*

Men.	213
Women.	6
	219