

## THAILAND

Date of Elections: January 26, 1975

### Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives, whose numbers were set by the Constitution of October 1974 \*.

### Characteristics of Parliament

Pursuant to the 1974 Constitution, the National Assembly of Thailand is bicameral, consisting of a House of Representatives and a Senate.

The House of Representatives is composed of not less than 240 and not more than 300 members elected directly by the people for a period of 4 years. The number of Representatives elected in each of the country's 71 Provinces (*Changwats*) is determined according to population, with one Representative for every 150,000 persons and one for every fraction over 75,000. Each Province has at least one Representative. On this basis, the present number of Representatives is 269.

The Senate is composed of 100 members appointed by the King from among persons who are at least 35 years of age and possess knowledge and experience in various branches of learning and other affairs considered useful to the administration of the State; these appointments are countersigned by the President of the Privy Council. While the Senators' term of office is 6 years, one-half of them are to retire 3 years after their appointment in January 1975; these retirees are to be determined on the basis of drawing lots.

### Electoral System

All citizens (including naturalized citizens domiciled in Thailand for more than 10 consecutive years and meeting other conditions) not less than 20 years of age are entitled to vote. The following persons, however, are disfranchised: the insane; those deaf and dumb and illiterate; those under detention; those deprived of their right to vote by a court; and members of the Buddhist clergy.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 12.

Electoral registers are revised on the village level in October of every year, and made public at least 30 days before the election date. Voting is not compulsory.

Qualified electors who are 25 years of age or more and belong to a political party may be candidates to the House of Representatives. This right is nevertheless not granted to undischarged bankrupts, drug addicts, detained persons under sentence of imprisonment, and persons sentenced to at least 2 years' imprisonment (except for an offence committed through negligence) who were discharged of such sentence less than 5 years before the election day concerned. Government officials and local government officials (excluding political officials) holding a permanent position or receiving a salary, officials of a State agency or State enterprise, certain persons receiving a concession or benefit from a Government agency or party to a Government contract, and members of the armed forces cannot simultaneously be members of the National Assembly.

Any Thai citizen who is over 20 years of age may form a group of not less than 15 persons with the purpose of setting up a political party. These founding members may invite others to join them and, once having 1,000 members, may register with the Ministry of Interior. A registered party is then considered a legal entity.

A party must have a committee composed of a leader, a secretary and 7 other members, all to be elected at a general meeting. It cannot accept any monies or property or other benefits from a person who is not a Thai citizen, or from a foreign organization or organization 15 % of whose shares are in foreign hands.

A candidate for election to the House must make a monetary deposit of US\$500, which is forfeited if he does not obtain 10 % of the total votes cast in his constituency.

As mentioned above, the number of Representatives from each of Thailand's 71 Provinces depends on that Province's population. A Province in which not more than 3 members are to be elected is regarded as itself forming one constituency; a Province returning 4 Representatives is divided into 2 constituencies, each with 2 members; and a Province returning 5 or more Representatives is first divided into constituencies having 3 members.

A total of 114 constituencies were delimited for the 1975 elections. The Province of Bangkok contained the most constituencies (9), which together returned 26 members.

Representatives are elected by simple majority. Electors have as many votes as there are Representatives from their constituency. On the ballot paper, candidates are identified by a number previously assigned to them.

By-elections are held within 90 days to fill Representatives' seats which become vacant between general elections. No by-election is however held for a vacancy which occurs less than 180 days from the end of the House's term. Vacancies in the Senate are filled through appointment.

**General] Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

In view of the constitutional provision forbidding independent candidates from running for the National Assembly, some 42 political groups met the requirements for registering as parties and therefore contested the elections, fielding nearly 2200 candidates.

Among the more powerful groups were those conservative parties supported by either the military or business circles — the Social Justice Party, the Thai Nation (*Chat Thai*) Party, the Social Nationalist Party and the Social Agrarian Party. Other major groups included the moderate Democrats, the traditional opposition party led by former Prime Minister Seni Pramoj; the moderate Social Action Party, headed by former National Assembly Speaker Kukrit Pramoj, brother of the Democrats' leader; and the left-oriented New Force Party.

The polling was generally calm. Less than 60 % of the registered electors cast votes. Over 20 parties won Representatives' seats, with the two blocs of conservative and centrist parties each falling short of a parliamentary majority.

Based on this result, the Democrats, placing first with 72 seats (including 23 of the 26 Bangkok seats), formed a minority Government together with the Social Agrarian Party, which won 19 seats, and Mr. Seni Pramoj was elected as Prime Minister. This Government, however, was soon defeated. Social Action leader Kukrit Pramoj was then elected Prime Minister on March 13; four days later, he succeeded in forming a coalition Government together with the Thai Nation Party and 5 other groups.

**Statistics**

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives*

Number of registered voters . . . . .18,500,000 (approx.)

Democrat Party. . . . .	237	72
Social Justice Party. . . . .	231	45
Thai Nation Party ( <i>Chat Thai</i> ). . . . .	210	28
Social Agrarian Party. . . . .	121	19
Social Action Party. . . . .	230	18
Social Nationalist Party. . . . .	146	16
Socialist Party of Thailand. . . . .	82	15
New Force Party. . . . .	106	12
United Socialist Front . . . . .	74	10
Other parties. . . . .	762	<u>34</u>
		269

2. *Distribution of Representatives according to Professional Category*

Businessmen. . . . .	75
Lawyers. . . . .	49
Retired officials. . . . .	42
Farmers . . . . .	27
Teachers. . . . .	20
Journalists. . . . .	9
Physicians. . . . .	6
Bankers. . . . .	4
Others. . . . .	<u>37</u>
	269

3. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	266
Women. . . . .	3
	269

*4. Distribution of Representatives according to Age Group*

25-29 years. . . . .	16
30-34. . . . .	30
35-39. . . . .	34
40-44. . . . .	43
45-49. . . . .	52
50-54. . . . .	33
55-59. . . . .	33
60-64. . . . .	18
65-69. . . . .	8
70-79. . . . .	2
	269