

## THAILAND

**Date of Elections:** 22 April 1979

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives in accordance with the terms of the new Constitution adopted in December 1978\*.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

The 1978 Constitution provides for a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives.

The Senate is composed of members appointed by the King from among qualified persons possessing knowledge and experience in various branches of learning or affairs considered useful to the administration of the State. The number of Senators is not to exceed three-fourths of the total number of Representatives. There are currently 225 Senators, all appointed for 6 years.

The number of elected members of the House of Representatives is determined by the population of each of the country's *changwats* (provinces), with one Representative for every 150,000 inhabitants and one for every fraction over 75,000. Each province has at least one Representative. On this basis, there are currently 301 Representatives, all elected for 4 years.

### **Electoral System**

Every person who is of Thai nationality by birth and who is not less than 20 years of age on the 1st of January of the election year is entitled to vote. Disenfranchised are the insane and the mentally infirm; the deaf, dumb and illiterate; Buddhist priests, novices, monks or clergy; and persons detained by a court warrant or a legal order.

Electoral registers are compiled on the provincial level and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Persons of Thai nationality by birth who are at least 25 years old on election day may be candidates for the House of Representatives. This right is nevertheless not extended to undischarged bankrupts, persons addicted to harmful drugs, persons disqualified from voting (except those detained), detained persons under sentence or order of imprisonment, and persons sentenced to at least two years' imprisonment (except for an offence committed through negligence) who were discharged of such sentence less than five years before the election day concerned.

\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 32.

The mandate of Representative is incompatible with the post of national or local Government official (excluding political officials) holding a permanent position or receiving a salary, the post of official of a State agency or enterprise, membership of a local assembly, and the position of receiving a concession or benefit from a government agency or party to a government contract.

Senators must be Thai nationals by birth who are at least 35 years old and not members of any political party. As Representatives, Senators cannot, while sitting as members, hold any position or have any duty in any Government agency or State agency or enterprise, or a position of member of a local assembly, local administrator or local official (except the position of Minister or any other political official); or receive any concession from the State or a government agency, State agency or enterprise, or become party to a Government contract.

For House elections, the area of a *changwat* is generally regarded as one constituency; each constituency "shall have an equal or approximately equal number of members". There are 126 constituencies in all. Representatives therefrom are elected by simple majority, with electors having as many votes as there are Representatives from their constituency. Each candidate must have made a deposit of 5,000 *baht*.

House seats which become vacant between general elections are filled within 90 days through by-elections, unless the remainder of the House's term is less than 180 days. Senate vacancies are filled through appointment by the King.

#### General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Following the promulgation of an interim Constitution and the appointment of a new National Assembly in the latter part of 1977\*, a wholly new Constitution providing for a bicameral National Assembly was adopted in December 1978\*\*. General elections had been foreseen to take place by 30 April 1979 at the latest.

As traditionally happens in Thailand, a multitude of political parties and candidates competed for the elective seats of the House of Representatives. Personalities of the approximately 1,600 candidates—including a number of independents—were regarded as important as campaign issues, such as those dealing with the economy.

Polling day was marked by a high abstention rate. None of the some 36 parties won a House majority, although the middle-of-the-road Social Action Party of former Prime Minister Kukrit Pramoj registered the largest gains and the Democrat Party the heaviest losses; the *Prachakomthai* party won 29 of the 32 Bangkok seats.

Prime Minister General Kriangsak Chamanan continued as Head of Government and named a 44-member Cabinet (which reportedly included military officers, civil servants and members of the House of Representatives) on 25 May. The 225-member Senate had been appointed on the basis of his recommendations.

\* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XII (1977-1978)*, pp. 23-24.

\*\* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 32.

## Statistics

## 1. Result of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives

Number of registered electors. . . . .	21,283,790
Voters. . . . .	9,344,045(43.9%)
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	407,518
Valid votes. . . . .	8,936,527

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Number of Seats obtained	Number of Seats won at 1976 Elections
Social Action Party ( <i>Kij-Sang-Kom</i> ) . . . . .	201	82	45
Independents. . . . .	706	63	
<i>Chart Thai</i> . . . . .	120	38	56
<i>Prachakornthai</i> . . . . .	41	32	
Democratic Party ( <i>Prachathipat</i> ) . . . . .	185	32	114
<i>Saeritham</i> . . . . .	60	21	
<i>Chart Prachachon</i> . . . . .	35	13	
<i>PalangMai</i> . . . . .	58	8	
<i>Kaset Sangkom</i> . . . . .	13	3	
<i>Kit Prachathipatai</i> . . . . .	29	3	
<i>Ruamthai</i> . . . . .	11	2	
<i>Thamma-Sangkom</i> . . . . .	2	1	28
Others. . . . .	37	3	<u>24</u>
		301*	279

\* 22 seats added since last elections.

*1. Distribution of Members of the National Assembly according to Professional Category*

Civil servants. . . . .	211
Businessmen. . . . .	125
Lawyers. . . . .	47
Retired civil servants. . . . .	35
Teachers/lecturers. . . . .	34
Farmers. . . . .	23
Bankers. . . . .	12
Local administrative officers. . . . .	7
Physicians. . . . .	6
State enterprise employees. . . . .	5
Engineers. . . . .	4
Politicians. . . . .	4
Journalists. . . . .	3
Others. . . . .	5
No indication of profession. . . . .	5
	526

*3. Distribution of Members of the National Assembly according to Sex*

Men. . . . .	514
Women. . . . .	12
	526

*4. Distribution of Members of the National Assembly according to Age Group*

25-29 years. . . . .	7
30-39. . . . .	74
40-49. . . . .	177
50-59. . . . .	196
60 and over. . . . .	
	526