

THAILAND

Date of Elections: 27 July 1986

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the House of Representatives following premature dissolution of this body on 1 May 1986. General elections had previously been held in April 1983.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Thailand, the National Assembly, consists 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 260 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 347 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. Disenfranchized 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.

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. Like 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 Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

King Bhumibol dissolved the House of Representatives on 1 May 1986 and called for fresh elections on 27 July after the four-party coalition Government (comprising the Social Action Party (SAP), Democrat Party (DP), *Prachakorn 77ia*; and National Democracy Party (NDP)) of Prime Minister Prem Tinsulanonda lost a key vote on economic policy. The SAP, the largest faction in the coalition, had teamed with opposition forces to defeat the finance bill.

The premature dissolution was being effected, it was announced, because Parliament had reversed legislation already being implemented as royal decrees. Under the Thai political system, a defeat of a bill is considered a virtual no-confidence vote and the Prime Minister must either resign or dissolve the legislature and hold general elections within 90 days.

The two-month campaign was occasionally violent and marked by personal rivalry as much as debate on policy. Economic issues, particularly the fall in the price of rice and other commodities, were the major topics in the latter category. Sixteen (mostly moderate) parties and 3,814 candidates were in the running for the enlarged House's 347 seats.

On polling day, the moderate DP, led by Mr. Bichai Rattakul, supplanted the SAP as the largest party in the House, gaining an additional 44 seats to arrive at an overall total of 100, while the former leader dropped 41. The Senate was appointed a day later.

The new coalition, formed on 31 July, comprised the Democrats, the conservative *Chart Thai* (Thai Nation), SAP and the recently-formed *Rassadorn* (Citizens') Party. On 5 August, the King reappointed Prime Minister Prem to this post for a third term although he was not an elected House member. His new Cabinet was sworn in on 11 August.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	24,600,000	(approx.)
Voters.	61.4%	(approx.)

Political Group	Number of Seats
Democrat Party (DP).	100
<i>Chart Thai</i> (Thai Nation Party).	63
Social Action Party (SAP).	51
United Democratic Party.	38
<i>Prachakorn Thai</i> (Thai Citizens Party)	24
<i>Ruam Thai</i> (Thai Unity Party).	19
<i>Rassadorn</i> (Citizens' Party).	18
Community Action Party.	15
Progress Party.	9
Mass Party (<i>Maunchon</i>).	3
National Democratic Party (NDP).	3
Other parties.	4
	347

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

	Senate	House of Representatives
Men	255	335
Women	<u>5</u>	<u>12</u>
	260	347