

THAILAND

Date of Elections: 22 March 1992

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the new House of Representatives provided for in the December 1991 Constitution . General elections had previously been held in July 1988.

Characteristics of Parliament

Under the December 1991 Constitution, the bicameral Parliament of Thailand, the National Assembly, consists of the Senate and the 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 number of Representatives. There are currently 270 Senators, all appointed for 6 years.

Initially, one-half of the Senators is to retire by drawing lots after three years in office. Three years later, one-half of the remaining Senators shall similarly retire.

The number of elected members of the House of Representatives is determined by the population of each of the country's provinces. Each province has at least one Representative. There are currently 360 Representatives, all elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

Every person 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. Disfranchised are the insane and the mentally infirm; the deaf, dumb and illiterate; Buddhist priests, novices, monks or clergy; persons detained by a court warrant or a legal order; and those deprived of the right to vote by judgment. Electoral registers are compiled on the provincial level and revised annually. Voting is not compulsory.

Qualified electors 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, 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

* See section *Parliamentary Developments*, p. 27.

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. Candidates for the House of Representatives must be members of political parties. Each party must nominate a minimum of 120 candidates.

Senators must be Thai nationals by birth who are at least 35 years old and not members of any political party. The same incompatibilities apply as for Representatives.

For House elections, the area of a province is generally regarded as one constituency; each constituency is allotted a number determined by the quotient resulting from division of the country's population by 360. There are 142 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 10,000 *bahl*.

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.

Background and Outcome of the Elections

On 23 February, 1991, a military coup d'Etat led to the dissolution of the Parliament elected in July 1988. The next month, an interim Constitution was promulgated and a unicameral National Legislative Assembly was appointed. A new definitive Constitution was then adopted and came into effect in December 1991. The election date was announced on 24 December.

The main contestants in the March 1992 poll were the ruling pro-military coalition of five parties (*Chart Thai* (Thai Nation) Party, Social Action Party, Thai Citizens Party, *Samakkhi Than* (Justice Unity) Party and *Rassadorn* Party), challenged by the opposition New Aspiration Party, *Palang Dharma* (Righteous Force) and the Democrat Party. There were altogether 15 group contenders and more than 2800 individual candidates for the 360 seats at stake.

No single party won an overall majority of seats on polling day, the air force-backed *Samakkhi Thorn*, led by Mr. Narong Wongwan, capturing the largest number (79) at the head of its four allies, who together won 116 more to give the coalition 54% of the total. Led by the newly founded New Aspiration Party, the "pro-democracy" opposition, for its part, did better than expected; *Palang Dharma*, led by Mr. Chamlong Srimvang, took 32 of the 35 seats in Bangkok, the capital, after having campaigned especially against corruption in politics. Of the 270 Senators appointed the same day polling took place, more than half were military and police officers.

On 25 March, Mr. Wongwan was nominated by the outgoing coalition as Prime Minister, after intense negotiations over whether this post should go to an elected parliamentarian or a high-ranking military man. Two weeks later, however, Mr. Wongwan - suspected of having links with the drug trade - was replaced by General Suchinda Kraprayoon, the country's supreme military commander; his coalition Council of Ministers was announced on 17 April. This chain of events sparked widespread anti-military demonstrations and protests, and violent reaction by

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XXV* (1990-1991), p. 22

the police and armed forces. Public disgust at the violence forced General Suchinda to resign on 24 May. On 10 June, after adoption of a constitutional amendment allowing only an elected parliamentarian to become Prime Minister, Mr. Anand Panyaruchun was appointed to this post as head of an interim Government. On 30 June, the House of Representatives was dissolved after support for the pro-military ruling coalition had weakened and new general elections were scheduled for 13 September 1992.

Statistics

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

Number of registered electors.	32,432,087
Voters.	19,224,201 (59.27%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	832,350
Valid votes.	18,391,851

Political Group	% of Votes obtained	Number of Seats
<i>Samakkhi Tham</i> Party*	21.9	79
<i>Chart Thai</i> Party	20.6	74
New Aspiration Party*	20.0	72
Democrat Party	12.2	44
<i>Palang Dharma</i> Party	11.4	41
Social Action Party	8.6	31
Thai Citizens Party	1.9	7
Solidarity Party	1.7	6
<i>Rassadom</i> Party	1.1	4
Mass Party	0.3	1
Thai People's Party	0.3	1
		360
New party.		

2. Distribution of Representatives according to Profession

Businessmen.	121
Political officials.	99
Lawyers.	39
Civil servants.	26
Pensioners.	16
Tradesmen.	12
Farmers.	9
Doctors.	8
Teachers.	5
Engineers.	4
Military officers.	2
State enterprise employees.	2
Employees.	2
Policemen.	2
Others.	13
	360

3. Distribution of Representatives according to Sex

Men.	348
Women.	12
	360

4. Distribution of Representatives according to Age

25-30 years.	6
31-35 "	38
36-40 "	51
41-45 "	53
46-50 "	63
51-55 "	64
56-60 "	42
61-65 "	28
66-70 "	9
71-75 "	3
76-80 "	3
	360