

Updates on Thailand's Political Situation

General Election held in accordance with the timeline

Thailand is right on the path back to a full-fledged parliamentary democracy.

In accordance with the timeline announced by the government under Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont, the election for members of the House of Representatives was held on 23 December 2007. This election was held under the 2007 Constitution, which was approved through the first-ever nation-wide referendum on 19 August 2007 and promulgated on 24 August 2007.

According to the Election Commission, 32,759,009 voters, or 74.45% of all eligible voters, cast the ballots to elect 480 members of the House of Representatives whose four-year terms begin as from the election date. The province with the highest number of voters' turnout is Lampun (88.90%), while that with the lowest number is Sakon Nakhon (66.73%). Compared with all previous elections, including the 2005 election in which 72.56% of eligible voters exercised their voting rights, the 2007 election saw the highest number of voters' turnout.

The total of 39 political parties took part in the election, fielding over 3,800 candidates in all 76 provinces to compete for the 400 seats to be elected through the constituency system. 31 parties contested for the 80 seats to be elected through the proportional representation or party-list system.

In accordance with Section 127 of the Constitution, the inaugural meeting of the House of Representatives is to be held within 30 days as from the election date, i.e. 22 January. Procedurally, the House of Representatives is to vote to select a new prime minister, who must be a member of the House of Representative, within 30 days of its first meeting. After the prime minister's appointment, a new government will be formed. The new government must present its policy before the Parliament within 15 days after taking office.

Election and selection of senators

As proposed by the Election Commission, the Royal Thai Government has set 2 March 2008 as the date for the election for 76 of the 150 members of the Senate. There is to be one elected senator per one province.

The other 74 members are to be selected by a selection committee which comprises the President of the Constitutional Court, Chairman of the Election Commission, Chief Ombudsman, Chairman of the National Counter Corruption Commission, Chairman of the State Auditor Commission, a Supreme Court judge selected by the Supreme Court at its general meeting, and a Supreme Administrative Court judge selected by the Supreme Administrative Court at its general meeting.

The Election Commission has set 3-17 January 2008 as the dates for organizations in academic, government, private, professional and other sectors, which will be able to contribute to the work of the Senate, to register and nominate candidates to undergo the selection process for senators. The organizations which will be qualified to nominate candidates must be juridical persons which have been established in Thailand for no less than three years. They must be non profit in nature and not be involved in conducting political activities. Each organization can nominate one person who is or was its member, or who works or used to work for it.

The Selection Committee is set to select the 74 members of the Senate and submit the list to the Election Commission by 21 February 2008.

Pending the election and selection of members of the Senate, the National Legislative Assembly is to serve as Senate.