

Thailand's right-wing government formally takes power

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Thailand's new government was formally sworn in on April 6, two months after the February 8 general election. The Bhumjaithai Party (BJT) secured a parliamentary majority through a coalition with Pheu Thai (PT) and a number of small conservative and military-aligned parties.

The coalition government led by Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, who is one of Thailand's wealthiest politicians, is no more stable than its predecessors. Years of court rulings, Senate interventions, backroom deals, and military influence have eroded even the semblance of a democratic façade that took shape after the formal end of the most recent military junta in 2019.

Anutin's right-wing BJT, with its close connections to the military and monarchy, leads the coalition with 192 seats, followed by Pheu Thai's 74 seats. Another 14 minor parties are also in the present coalition, including those of the old military junta: Palang Pracharath with 5 seats and United Thai Nation (UTN) with two seats.

Pheu Thai led the previous government from 2023 to 2025 collapsed after the BJT, supported by the military, pulled out of that ruling coalition. Anutin formed a minority caretaker government from last September until the February election.

The new cabinet, in which the BJT holds 31 positions and Pheu Thai holds nine, is unmistakably pro-business and pro-military. It includes Lieutenant General Adul Boonthumjaroen as defence minister and Police Lieutenant General Rutthapol Naowarat as the justice minister. The economic ministries have been handed to an assortment of trusted corporate and bureaucratic figures.

The new government faces the worst economic conditions since the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997.

Global shocks from the US/Israeli war on Iran portend a significant economic contraction with declining investment and tourism, rising inflation and the destruction of jobs.

With total trade equivalent to more than its annual GDP, Thailand is one of the most vulnerable in the region to the ongoing energy crisis, with the World Bank predicting the country's economy will grow by only 1.3 percent this year as a result.

The Strait of Hormuz is a vital source of resources for Thailand including oil, liquified natural gas (LNG), and fertilizer. Diesel has risen from 23 to 52 Thai baht per litre, the Asian spot LNG price has risen from 350-420 baht per MMBtu to about 680 baht, and urea, the main fertilizer used, has risen from 17,500 baht to just under 24,500 baht a tonne.

The government has no solution but to foist the new economic burdens on working people. Household debt, already among the highest in Asia relative to GDP with 86.7 percent, leaves millions highly vulnerable.

In his first policy statement, Anutin pledged: "The government will solve the problems we face, especially by restructuring the economy and society so they can adapt to shifting global dynamics and ensure resilience." It includes the introduction of an omnibus bill within the year designed to slash regulations and cut business costs. Big business will be propped up at the expense of working people.

At the same time, the government is seeking to project growing social tensions outwards against its neighbour Cambodia.

Political tensions and border clashes last year were seized upon by the Thai conservative elites to force out the previous Pheu Thai government and to brand social opposition as "unpatriotic." Anutin was only able to form a minority government with the support of the

People’s Party, which claimed to offer a democratic alternative to the country’s conservative establishment dominated by the military and monarchy.

The appointment of Adul as defence minister is significant. He previously served as deputy defence minister in Anutin’s first cabinet. His military career was spent in the lower Isan border area with Cambodia, where he was made commander of the 2nd Army Area in 2023. Adul retired from the army in 2024 and retains close connections to the military top brass.

In his policy statement, Anutin pledged to increase the number of volunteer soldiers by 100,000 and to cancel or suspend the 2001 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 44 with Cambodia—an agreement tied to negotiations over the shared maritime boundary. The MOU and similar agreements ostensibly established guidelines for resolving the border dispute between the two countries stemming from France’s colonization of Indochina over a century ago.

Last year during the conflict that began in May, more than 640,000 people were displaced near the land border between Thailand and Cambodia, with military clashes resulting in over a hundred soldiers and civilians killed.

Pheu Thai, which has long postured as a party of reform, is completely discredited. Over the past two decades, it has twice been ousted by military coups. In 2010, sustained mass protests Pheu Thai’s “Red Shirt” were violently suppressed by the military which gunned down protesters in the streets, killing nearly 100.

In the wake of the 2023 election, Pheu Thai formed an unstable coalition government that included the BJT and two openly military parties which from the outset colluded to undermine it. In 2024, Pheu Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin was removed on trumped-up ethics violations by the Constitutional Court, which was stacked by the military following its 2014 coup.

Last August, a second Pheu Thai prime minister, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, was removed from office by the Constitutional Court over “ethical violations” based on the claim that she had criticized the military’s handling of the border dispute with Cambodia. Now under conditions of economic crisis, Pheu Thai functions as a junior partner to the right wing BJT in the name of the “national interest.”

Pheu Thai has been appointed the key ministries of agriculture, education and labor. In other words, it has

been charged with suppressing unrest among farmers, students and the working class, under conditions of spiralling costs of living, mounting debt, and deepening social inequality.

All of the capitalist parties, including Pheu Thai and the People’s Party, have proven utterly incapable of meeting the democratic aspirations and pressing social needs of the masses of ordinary working people. The right-wing Anutin government will not hesitate to resort to police state measures in an attempt repress any social opposition.



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