

COVER STORY**ELECTION MADE EASY**

MAKE AN INFORMED VOTE WITH OUR POLICY SUMMARY

STORY **PORNCHAI SEREEMONGKONPOL**

The general election is this Sunday, baby! Aren't you stoked to be able to exercise your right to vote again after a five-year absence (or eight, if you take into consideration that the 2014 general election was deemed invalid by the Constitutional Court). Anywhoo, it can be overwhelming to digest all the information, campaign videos, memes, pictures of hot candidates and fake news that have flooded your Facebook newsfeed lately. Perhaps, it's best to judge our candidates based on their parties' policies and proposals, and Bangkok Poll on Sunday revealed that 97% of respondents in their latest survey will vote on Mar 24 and more than half said party policies will be the first factor when deciding which candidates to vote for.

To make voting easier, we present you a summary of highlighted plans and policies from major political parties. We divided them into tables according to topics that may be of your interest. Go out and vote, people!

Freebie Fair

Who doesn't like a boost of stability to their lives (or feeling a bit richer)? Check out these welfare measures promised by major parties.

DEMOCRAT PARTY

- Guaranteed minimum income of B120,000 per year. If you make less than that, the government will transfer the rest directly to your account.
- B1,000 monthly living allowance for elders [It's currently B600 and increases as you get older].
- B5,000 in child care support to parents for their new born baby in the first month and B1,000 every month afterwards until the age of eight. This totals to B100,000 per child.

PALANG PRACHARATH PARTY

- B1,000 monthly living allowance for elders.
- Minimum wage B400-425 per day to be increased over three years.
- B20,000 monthly income for new grads with bachelor's degree.
- B18,000 monthly income for new grads with vocational degree.
- Five-year tax exemption for new grads.
- Two-year tax exemption for online sellers.
- 10% reduction on personal income tax.
- Pregnant women will receive B3,000 per month until giving birth. B10,000 for delivery bonus and B2,000 per month in child care afterwards until their child turns six.

FUTURE FORWARD PARTY

- Child care support B1,200 per month from birth to the age of six.
- B2,000 support per month for youth between the ages of 18 and 22 so they can attend universities, vocational schools or use the allowance to help start their own businesses.
- Allowance for elders will be tripled to B1,800.

NEW ECONOMICS PARTY

- Reduce the fuel price by five to 10 baht per litre.
- Reduce the electricity cost by 25-30%.
- Low-income people who aren't elders receive B2,000 support per month.
- Three-tiered elder monthly allowances; B3,000 for those between the ages of 60-69, B4,000 for those between 70-79 and B5,000 for those older than 80.

PHEU THAI PARTY

- Child care allowance B1,200 per month from birth to the age of eight.
- B3,000 monthly living allowance for elders.
- Minimum wage B400 per day.
- B18,000 monthly income for new grads with bachelor's degree.
- Suspend debt repayment for farmers for three years.
- Two-year tax exemption for start-ups.

PRACHANIYOM PARTY

- B360 minimum daily wage.
- 10,000 air-con NGV (natural gas vehicle) buses in Bangkok and adjoining provinces.
- Flat fare of B10 for all air-con buses regardless of distance or B40 per day.
- Students can use air-con public buses for free.
- Get rid of 5% monthly contribution to Social Security Fund that comes out of your paycheck. Let the employers take care of that instead.

Army Reformers

Do you like coups? Do you think the army could use a reform? If your answers are respectively no and yes, then consider these promises.

DEMOCRAT PARTY

- No conscription, except in times of war.
- Support measures to reduce violence in military camps.
- Increase army's role in preventing natural disasters.
- Get rid of unnecessary roles in the military such as the servant soldiers.
- Better welfare for low-ranking soldiers.

PRACHANIYOM PARTY

- No weapon purchase for the army for 10 years. The estimated B400 billion baht saved this way will be spent for the improvement of the country as needed. That's a 12-digit number, in case you're wondering.

FUTURE FORWARD PARTY

- Get rid of conscription, except in times of war.
- Reduce the size of Thai army from 330,000 to 170,000.
- Reduce the number of generals from 1,600 to 400.
- Set the military budget to 1.1% of GDP or B64-B65 billion baht per year. More transparency in its plan to buy weapons.
- Better welfare for low-ranking soldiers.

PHEU THAI PARTY

- No conscription, except in times of war.
- Better welfare for low-ranking soldiers.
- Budget cut for Ministry of Defence by 10%. Especially for weapon purchase. The estimated B20 billion baht saved this way will be spent to create jobs and help entrepreneurs instead.

THAI LIBERAL PARTY

- Stop dictatorship. Reform the soldiers.
- No more conscription, except in times of war.
- Downsize the army. Get rid of unnecessary organisations within the army.
- Relocate all military organisations in Bangkok to other provinces. Use the freed-up space to build hospitals, schools and parks.

Education Advocates

Tired of hearing how our education system sucks? Want to give better future to Thai kids? Let's hear from these parties what they would do to hopefully improve Thai education.

DEMOCRAT PARTY

- Every child should be able to speak English. They will be taught by native speakers.
- Free education until the high vocational certificate level.
- Quality child care centres across Thailand.
- Free breakfast and lunch for students at state-run schools from kindergarten to lower Matayom.
- Less emphasis on rote learning in primary levels. Allow Matayom students to explore their aptitude and interests more. Less burden for students to attend universities.
- Less tasks for teachers so they'll have more time to focus on teaching students.

PHEU THAI PARTY

- 15-year free education to prevent students leaving school because of poverty.
- 20,000 child development centres.
- One laptop per child.
- Thai kids should be able to communicate in three languages; Thai, English

and Chinese.

- A digital platform for online education that all Thais have access to.

- Less tasks for teachers so they'll have more time to focus on teaching students.

FUTURE FORWARD PARTY

- B2,000 monetary support for youth between the age of 18-22 per month for their education or skill-training related pursuits.
- Improve 17,000 schools across the nation with better textbooks and equipment. Free Wi-Fi at libraries.
- Free lunches for students from kindergarten to higher Matayom. One nutritionist per one education district.

- Free teachers from unnecessary tasks so they can focus on teaching.

- Less emphasis on rote learning and more emphasis on life skills for primary students.

- More variety of subjects for Matayom. More emphasis on occupational skill.

- Encourage students from Matayom and higher to do paid internships.

PALANG PRACHARATH PARTY

- Help those struggling to repay student loans.
- Encourage learning through all ages.
- Enlist help from universities in improv-

ing the quality of education at schools.

- Educate children on teenage pregnancy and rape prevention.

The Progressive

In case you're so ahead of your time and wish to see same-sex marriage and more freedom to use marijuana, consider these proposals on progressive (and somewhat controversial) issues, that we know of.

SUPPORTERS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

MARIJUANA GROWING ON HOUSEHOLD LEVEL



- Bhumjaithai Party proposes six pot plants per house.



- Commoners' Party proposes two pot plants per house.