

OFFICIAL NAME: Kingdom of Thailand

CAPITAL: Bangkok

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Constitutional Monarchy

AREA: 513,115 Sq Km (198,115 Sq Mi)

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION: 62,860,300



LOCATION & GEOGRAPHY: Thailand is located in the center of mainland South East Asia. It is bound by the Andaman Sea to the west, Myanmar to the west and northwest, Laos to the east and northeast, Cambodia to the east as well as Malaysia and the Gulf of Thailand to the south. The country is divided into five topographical regions. (1.) The southeast coast which has a lush and fertile plain. (2.) The northeastern Khorat Plateau region which accounts for around 33% of the land area and is ringed by the Phanom Dongrak Mountain Range and Phetchabun Mountains. (3.) A central lowland which is dominated by the Chao Phraya River and includes the central valley that comprises 22% of the land area. (4.) The northern and western mountain regions which are a series of parallel mountain ranges separated by steep and narrow valleys. (5.) The southern peninsula region which is divided by a series of north to south ridges which form a narrow swampy indented western coastal plain and a broad smooth eastern coastal plain. Major Cities (pop. est.); Bangkok 5,620,600, Nonthaburi 264,200, Nakhon Ratchasima 202,500, Chiang Mai 161,500 (1991). Land Use; forested 26%, pastures 2%, agricultural-cultivated 41%, other 31% (1993).

CLIMATE: Thailand has a tropical climate dominated by the monsoons. The climate is characterized in general by four seasons. (1.) A dry season from January to February. (2.) A hot season from March to May. (3.) A wet season from June to October and (4.) a cool season from November to December, with around 90% of rainfall occurring in the wet season. Average annual precipitation varies from 1,020 mm (40 inches) to 2,030 mm (80 inches) depending on the region. Average temperature ranges in Bangkok are from 20 degrees Celsius (68 degrees Fahrenheit) in December to 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) in April.

PEOPLE: Over 79% of the population are Thai of mostly Siamese and Laotian descent with the largest ethnic minority the Chinese who account for 14% of the population. Other ethnic minorities include Malay and Cambodians or Khmer.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 111 persons per sq km (288 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 18.7% urban, 81.3% rural (1990). Sex Distribution; 49.6% male, 50.4% female (1990). Life Expectancy at Birth; 66.0 years male, 71.0 years female (1993). Age Breakdown; 44% under 20, 34% 20 to 39, 16% 40 to 59, 4% 60 to 69, 2% 70 and over (1990).

Birth Rate; 20.0 per 1,000 (1993). Death Rate; 6.0 per 1,000 (1993). Increase Rate; 14.0 per 1,000 (1993). Infant Mortality Rate; 25.0 per 1,000 live births (1991).

RELIGIONS: Over 94% of the population follow Buddhism in its Theravada or Hinayana form. The remainder are Muslims with a small number of Christians.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Thai which has four dialects. English is also widely understood and used for commerce purposes.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: no formal schooling 20.5%, primary 67.3%, secondary 9.3%, higher 2.9% (1980). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over 28,451,390 or 88.8% (1985).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1990: In 1946 King Rama VIII died and was succeeded by King Bhumibol Adulyadej or Rama IX. In 1947 the military led by Field Marshal Pibun Songkhran seized control of the government. In 1957 Field Marshal Sarit Thanarat ousted Pibun and took control of the government until his death in 1963. In 1967 Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore formed the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). In 1969 an elected National Assembly was established and in 1971 was suspended along with the constitution by the King. In 1973 university students led a civilian revolt against the government and for three years Thailand had a series of democratically elected governments. In Oct. 1976 the military again took control of the government until 1979 when general elections were held. In Mar. 1981 Gen. Prem Tinsulanond, a retired military officer, was inaugurated as Prime Minister and was succeeded by Maj.-Gen. Chatichai Choonhavan in Aug. 1988. In Feb. 1991 a truck laden with dynamite exploded in a village in the southern killing some 180 people. On Feb. 23, 1991 the military ousted Prime Minister Chatichai after allegations of corruption, imposed martial law, suspended the constitution and appointed Anand Panyarachun as interim Prime Minister pending elections. Following which the Junta charged 26 politicians, including Chatichai, with corruption. On May 26, 1991 an Austrian Boeing 767 crashed after engine trouble killing 223 passengers. In Nov. 1991 protesters demonstrated against a new draft constitutional charter and on Dec. 7, 1991 the appointed legislature ratified the charter following intense debate. On March 22, 1992 elections resulted in the Unification Virtue (Samakkhi Tham) party winning 79 of the 360 seats in the National Assembly and forming a coalition government. On April 7, 1992 former army commander, General Suchinda Kraprayoon, was inaugurated as Prime Minister. Following his inauguration pro-democracy demonstrators protested against his appointment in the streets, demanding his resignation. On May 4, 1992 leader of the Palang Dharma party, Chamalong Srimuang, commenced a public hunger strike vowing to die unless Suchinda resigned. On May 18 and 19, 1992 confrontations between troops and demonstrations resulted in the death of a number of protesters while Chamalong was

arrested along with thousands of demonstrators. On May 20, 1992 King Bhumibol Adulyadej appealed to Suchinda and Chamalong to find a peaceful solution to their dispute and within one week Suchinda had resigned and the National Assembly was dissolved. On June 10, 1992 Anand Panyarachun was reinstated as interim Prime Minister and immediately replaced the army and air force commanders. On Sept. 13, 1992 elections resulted in the Democratic Party winning 78 seats and forming a five-party coalition government with their leader, Chuan Leekpai as Prime Minister. In 1993 Bangkok's severe traffic problems became a major issue for the government with a dispute over toll revenues occurring over a privately funded expressway while disputes over funding and revenues on another expressway and three privately owned rapid transport systems also exacerbated the problem. In May 1993 a doll factory near Bangkok burnt to the ground killing 187 workers. In Aug. 1993 some 35 government schools in southern Thailand were burnt to the ground, allegedly by ethnic Malay Muslims. In the same month some 100 people died when a hotel in Korat collapsed. In Sept. 1993 the Social Action Party (SAP) a coalition partner announced plans to merge with four opposition parties that led to political unrest. In response Prime Minister Chuan persuaded the Seritham opposition party to replace the SAP a coalition partner, thereby overcoming the crisis. Also in 1993 the government abandoned its position of not taking sides in the Cambodian conflict following elections there and agreed to not tolerate border crossings by the Khmer Rouge which it had tacitly supported.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Baht (B) divided into 100 Satangs.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$120,235,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$14,562,000,000 (1993). Imports; B 1,170,848,000,000 (1993). Exports; B 951,360,000,000 (1993). Tourism Receipts; USD \$5,014,000,000 (1993). Balance of Trade; B -111,602,000,000 (1993). Economically Active Population; 32,845,400 or 56.0% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 2.1% (1993).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Japan, the USA, the Netherlands, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore, the UK, Germany and Saudi Arabia.

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Bananas, Cassava, Fish, Iron Ore, Maize, Manganese, Pineapples, Rice, Rubber, Sugar Cane, Timber, Tin, Tungsten.

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Food Processing, Forestry, Mining, Paper, Textiles and Clothing.

MAIN EXPORTS: Maize, Rice, Rubber, Sugar, Tapioca, Textiles, Tin.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 3,924 km (2,438 mi) (1989), passenger-km 10,934,660,000 (6,794,481,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 3,064,598,000 (2,098,943,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 77,609 km (48,224 mi) (1988). Vehicles; cars 816,693 (1988), trucks and buses 1,851,139 (1988). Merchant Marine; vessels 296 (1990), deadweight tonnage 911,868 (1990). Air Transport; passenger-km 18,876,972,000 (11,729,603,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 626,497,000 (429,088,000 short ton-mi) (1989).

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 35 with a total circulation of 4,150,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 10,000,000 (1994). Television; receivers 3,300,000 (1994). Telephones; units 2,184,900 (1993).

MILITARY: 256,000 (1994) total active duty personnel with 58.6% army, 24.6% navy and 16.8% air force while military expenditure accounts for 2.9% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP).