

Yingluck Elected Thailand's First Female PM
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BANGKOK -- Yingluck Shinawatra, sister of former premier Thaksin, was today elected Thailand's 28th and first female prime minister by Parliament.

She was unopposed and won the post at a voting process by the law makers with 296 ayes and three opposing. Most opposition members abstained.

Yingluck, 44, is expected to form her Cabinet by next week.

Her party, Pheu Thai, won the July 3 election with 265 seats secured and formed a coalition with five other parties, bringing the total number of seats controlled by the government to 300 out of 500 in the House of Representatives.

The previous government, led by the Democrat party, had to settle for the opposition after capturing only 159 seats.

Yingluck holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Chiang Mai University and a master's degree in public administration from Kentucky State University.

She is married to a businessman, Anusorn Amornchat, and they have a nine-year-old son.

Yingluck was the president of SC Asset Corporation, a property development company, before contesting the election.

She did not hold any important post in her party and was reported to have been working behind the scenes managing the party's financial aspects as Thaksin is the de facto leader of the party.

Yingluck, the youngest of Thaksin's nine siblings, joined politics shortly before the general election as she was handpicked by Thaksin to be the party's prime ministerial candidate.

Thaksin had even described her as his "clone" in terms of management and the way of thinking.

Thaksin's six-year premiership ended prematurely due to a bloodless coup in September 2006 and now lives in self-imposed exile after the Thai court found him guilty of corruption in 2008 and sentenced him in absentia to two years' imprisonment.

The political situation in the country looked calm after the election with no more street protests.

Among the challenges faced by Yingluck are keeping her party election promises -- increasing minimum wage to 300 baht (about RM30) a day, providing free tablet computers to all students, about one million of them, and slashing corporate tax to 22 per cent from 30 per cent.

She will also need to tackle an immediate economic task of reducing the hardship faced by Thais following the rising cost of living.

On top of that, political observers are concerned that she has to prove that she can lead and make decisions by herself and not be a mere puppet controlled by her brother.

(Bernama)