

## **Yingluck Removed, Election Process Not Settled, Supporters and Opponents Plan Rallies**

**Bernama**

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BANGKOK, May 7 (Bernama) -- The removal of caretaker Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra by Thailand's Constitutional Court today has left the kingdom with continued political uncertainties.

The decree for the general election has yet to be issued while the pro-government and anti-government groups have planned major rallies in days ahead that will gauge the strength of their support.

Yingluck was found guilty by the Constitutional Court on a charge of abusing her power in transferring out National Security Council (NSC) chief Thawil Pliensri in 2011, and therefore would have to step down.

Yingluck could no longer stay in her position as caretaker prime minister, said the court.

It stated that the transfer decision was hasty, not transparent, unethical, not in the national interest and unconstitutional.

The court also ruled that nine other cabinet members who were involved in making the decision would lose their positions as well, including caretaker Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Kittirat Na Ranong, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Surapong Tovichakchaikul.

The majority of the cabinet members, however, still retain their posts as Thailand's cabinet has 25 members.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Pongthep Thepkarnchana said the cabinet approved the nomination of Niwatthamrong Boonsongpaisan, the caretaker Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce, to replace Yingluck.

Hundreds of Yingluck's supporters have gathered in front of her temporary office to give her support and encouragement after she was ousted by the court.

In her first reaction to the court's decision, Yingluck said she would stand by the people and serve them no matter what her position.

"I am very proud to have become prime minister. Every minute, every day of the two years, nine months and two days were my proudest moments working as prime minister elected by the people," said Yingluck at a press conference which was broadcast live on the government television channel.

She declined to comment on the Constitutional Court's decision directly, saying that she was waiting for the official verdict from the court.

However, she still faces another legal battle ahead as the National Anti-Corruption Commission has charged her with dereliction of duty with regard to the problem-plagued rice subsidy scheme that owes rice farmers billions of bahts and accused by critics of being riddled with corruption.

The latest development is bound to galvanise the Red Shirts, the more popular name for the pro-government supporters.

The Red Shirts are scheduled to hold rallies from today until May 9 at the Asia Update TV station in Latprao, Bangkok, in a dress rehearsal for a major rally that is scheduled to take place on May 10 at Aksa Road in the Phuthamonthon area, not far from here.

The anti-government supporters under the banner of the People's Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) also plan to hold a major rally in the capital on May 14.

It is still not a total victory for the anti-government group as the majority of the cabinet members still keep their positions, and not replaced totally as the group demanded earlier.

Meanwhile, the issue of the general election which the Election Commission wants to hold on July 20 is still outstanding as the Royal Decree to order the election has yet to be issued.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education Pongthep Thepkarnchana said he was now waiting for confirmation from the Election Commission on a meeting to be held this Friday to discuss the election.

The draft of the Election Decree was supposed to be proposed at the weekly cabinet

meeting yesterday.

The ruling Pheu Thai is eager to have an early general election as it still enjoys strong support in areas to the north of the country while the opposition's strength is in areas in Bangkok and south of Bangkok.

Pheu Thai is favourite to retain power in a general election.

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