

[REDACTED]

## THAI POLITICAL RIVALRIES SURFACE

Factional maneuvering is increasing within the Thai regime as it prepares for next year's national legislative elections.

Several government figures claim there has been little progress in organizing a government political party because key government leaders are "hopelessly divided." Party organizers are particularly discouraged over what they believe is a lack of leadership by Prime Minister Thanom. They fear that with party planning at a virtual standstill, potential supporters will have no choice but to back nongovernment parties.

The regime's failure to support a common slate of candidates in next month's important municipal elections in Bangkok is a clear sign that personal rivalries are still more important than hardheaded political calculations. A victory by the Bangkok-based Democratic Party, the leading opposition party, could make it more difficult for the government to control the legislative elections.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Praphat is apparently building a personal power base in the countryside. He recently assumed control of the government-affiliated political group, the Free People's League of Thailand, and has given it the go-ahead to organize nationally. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] he intends to use the league to dominate the government political party.

[REDACTED] Praphat's group may become the only viable government political organization. Other factions centered on Police Director General Prasert and Minister of Economic Development Pote are also lining up support but are not as far along as Praphat.

Although internal politicking will continue, some accommodation almost certainly will be worked out to enable the regime to weather the transitional period largely intact. In addition, the regime has diluted potential opposition by delaying legislation allowing open political activity and by making timely concessions over contentious public issues. [REDACTED]

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