



Establishment of the Action Coalition for Thailand: Is this the Future Ruling Party?

OE Watch Commentary: Many political parties in Thailand have sprouted up over the years, but one, the Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT), known as “Ruamphalang Prachachartthai,” has been drawing a lot of attention lately. As highlighted in the three accompanying excerpted articles, written in Thailand’s *The Nation Online* and *Bangkok Post*, the formation of ACT is noteworthy because of the involved players, who were leaders of the now defunct People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC). It was the PDRC that sparked the 2013-2014 street protests that resulted in the 2014 coup, which ousted Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra from power.

One of ACT’s co-founders, Suthep Thaugsuban, who was once the secretary-general of the Democrat Party, headed the PDRC until its demise in 2014. According to the articles, Suthep will not hold any executive position in the party. Instead, some claim he will only be an ordinary party member, but some feel he will still be an important representation of the party. ACT is a political party that, according to Suthep, stands for “upholding the monarchy, transforming the country into a democracy at every level, respecting people’s will, and accepting people’s power in directing politics...” The big push, according to the articles, is for national reform.

Also noteworthy are comments made by Prasarn Marukapitak, one of the co-founders of the party. Prasarn would neither confirm nor deny that the party would support General Prayut Chan-o-cha as a prime ministerial candidate for the upcoming February elections, should he be proposed; General Prayut Chan-o-cha had assumed the role of prime minister following the coup. However, Prasarn did say that Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years would be a foundation for the future. **End OE Watch Commentary (Hurst)**

“Gen Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years since he took power in a coup would be the foundation for the future.”

Source: “Former Protesters to Form Political Party,” *The Nation Online*, 1 June 2018. <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/politics/30346812>

In addition to Anek, those attending the meeting will be former Democrat Party secretary-general Suthep Thaugsuban, who headed the PDRC until its demise following the 2014 coup, Rangsit University deputy dean Suriyasai Katsila and former National Reform Assembly member Prasan Marukapitak, according to Thani Thaugsuban, a former Democrat MP and Suthep’s younger brother.

Suthep (Thaugsuban) will be just an ordinary party member, with no executive position in the party and no political positions in the future, according to Anek (Laothamatas). He also said that having Suthep as a member, the ACT could be viewed as “Suthep’s party”.

Suriyasai (Katsila), Prasan (Marukapitak) and Thani (Thaugsuban) are formerly key figures in the PDRC, which led massive street protests between November 2013 and May 2014 against the government led by the Pheu Thai Party. The rally culminated in a military coup in May 2014 that overthrew the administration.

Source: ACT Appeals to Former PDRC Members,” *Bangkok Post*, 2 June 2018. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1477593/new-party-appeals-to-pdrc-fans>

Mr Prasarn (Marukapitak, a former member of the Group of 40 senators) declined to say whether his party would support Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha if he is proposed as a prime ministerial candidate following elections expected in February next year.

He said only that Gen Prayut’s work on reform over the past four years since he took power in a coup would be the foundation for the future.

“It’s too early to tell and we need to respect our members’ wishes. So let’s not tie us to Gen Prayut. Tie us to national reform instead,” he said.

Source: “Suthep to Co-Found ACT Party,” *Bangkok Post*, 3 June 2018. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/news/politics/1477641/suthep-to-co-found-act-party>

SuthepThaugsuban, former secretary-general of the now-defunct People’s Democratic Reform Committee (PDRC) street protest, announced yesterday he would join as a co-founder of the Ruamphalang Prachachartthai Party, or the Action Coalition for Thailand (ACT).

Political observers believe the ACT Party is likely to be a reincarnation of the PDRC as the involvement of Mr Suthep has largely given the impression that it is “Suthep’s Party”. However, the former protest firebrand denies it.



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