

# PERSPECTIVE

RESEARCHERS AT ISEAS – YUSOF ISHAK INSTITUTE ANALYSE CURRENT EVENTS

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## Thailand's First Provincial Elections since the 2014 Military Coup: What Has Changed and Not Changed

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*Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, founder of the now-dissolved Future Forward Party, attends a press conference in Bangkok on January 21, 2021, after he was accused of contravening Thailand's strict royal defamation lese majeste laws. In December 2020, the Progressive Movement competed for the post of provincial administrative organisations (PAO) chairman in 42 provinces and ran more than 1,000 candidates for PAO councils in 52 of Thailand's 76 provinces. Although Thanathorn was banned from politics for 10 years, he involved himself in the campaign through the Progressive Movement. Photo: Lillian SUWANRUMPHA, AFP.*

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- On 20 December 2020, voters across Thailand, except in Bangkok, elected representatives to provincial administrative organisations (PAO), in the first twinkle of hope for decentralisation in the past six years.
- In previous sub-national elections, political parties chose to separate themselves from PAO candidates in order to balance their power among party allies who might want to contest for the same local positions.
- In 2020, however, several political parties, including the Phuea Thai Party, the Democrat Party and the Progressive Movement (the successor of the Future Forward Party) officially supported PAO candidates. This suggests that parties now may prefer to have a closer connection with local politicians.
- The Progressive Movement won only 17 per cent of PAO council races in the provinces in which it contested. Each of the group's candidates for PAO chairman lost.
- The Phuea Thai Party faced a challenge in the strategic province of Chiang Mai, the home turf of the Shinawatra family. The party won only 9 of the 25 races for PAO chairman it contested nationwide, including in Chiang Mai.
- Candidates from local political dynasties and families continued to secure seats both on PAO councils and as PAO chairmen.

## INTRODUCTION

On 20 December 2020, Thais went to the polls to vote for Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO) councils and chairmen, in the country's first sub-national electoral exercise since the 2014 coup. PAOs are responsible for public services such as roads, bridges, sewage systems and electricity at the provincial level. While they do not enjoy police powers, they issue local regulations, approve development and budget plans, and scrutinise local administrators, in addition to promoting tourism, preserving natural resources and supporting education and culture. In 76 provinces outside Bangkok, voters were required to cast two ballots in local elections: one to vote for the chairman of the PAO and the other to vote for a member of the PAO's legislative council. The number of PAO council members varies by province, with between 24 and 48 seats depending upon a province's population.<sup>1</sup> In the December 2020 elections, more than 300 candidates competed for PAO chairman in 76 provinces, and 8,000 ran for seats on PAO councils. Buriram saw the most candidates, eight for PAO chief and 344 for the council, and Phetchaburi province had the fewest candidates, one and 33 respectively.

The results were not surprising, in that many provincial strongmen, especially candidates representing political dynasties or so-called "Big Houses" (*ban yai*), were able to secure their seats. Nevertheless, these elections mark a new chapter for local politics in Thailand, featuring a number of losses for Phuea Thai Party members who had controlled politics in their respective provinces for years, the increasing role of national parties in PAO elections and the disappointment of the Progressive Movement—a political vehicle that emerged from the now dissolved Future Forward Party elections. The victories of that party in the 2019 national elections did not translate into success for the Progressive Movement's 42 candidates for PAO chairman.

## THE 2020 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS IN THAILAND

Provincial strongmen and political families, many without clear loyalties to national parties have dominated "local" electoral politics in Thailand.<sup>2</sup> Candidates from these backgrounds often depend on their capacity to distribute resources and favours, and thus to improve the lives of voters, for electoral success. The law does not require candidates in sub-national elections to affiliate with national parties. Candidates can run individually or set up ad hoc political teams to compete in the elections. Before the 2020 PAO elections, candidates often unofficially affiliated with national parties. The unofficial nature of these connections notwithstanding, links among parties, parliamentarians and local politicians are nevertheless often strong. Many politicians active at the sub-national level share a surname with MPs or ministers.<sup>3</sup> Many national parties avoid direct participation in sub-national politics, because several groups of party members may choose to run for the same local posts. Rather than sponsor one group and risk alienating other party allies, parties often opt not to support any group directly in sub-national elections.

The 2020 provincial polls were the first time that many parties officially fielded candidates who campaigned under their party banners.<sup>4</sup> The Progressive Movement competed in 42 provinces, Phuea Thai in 25 provinces, and the Democrats in two provinces. Phalang Pracharat and Bhumjaithai preferred to eschew formal campaigns with party branding, even as several closely affiliated candidates ran in the PAO elections. For example, in Chainat Province, Anusorn Nakasai, the brother of Phalang Pracharat secretary-general Anucha Nakasai, won a PAO chairmanship. In Phayao, the brother of Deputy Agriculture Minister Thammanat

Promphao contested for PAO chairman and triumphed. In Samut Prakan, veteran songstress Nantida Kaewbuasai, backed by her ex-husband former municipal mayor and Phalang Pracharat supporter Chonsawat Asavahame, defeated other candidates for PAO chief. The Asavahame family supported seven candidates to contest in the 2019 general election under the Phalang Pracharat banner, including Akarawut Asavahame and Krung Sivirai. Six of those candidates won seats. And in Sa Kaew Province, a member of the long locally influential Tientong family defeated another family member for PAO chief.

PAO elections are very competitive, as the organisations have access to large budgets and considerable additional resources. Table 1 shows the budgets allocated by the central government to major PAOs in 2019 and 2020.

**Table 1: Budgetary Allocations to Major PAOs in 2019 and 2020**  
(figures in millions of Thai baht).<sup>5</sup>

<b>Provinces</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Nakhon Ratchasima	2,303.4*	2,255.3
Sisaket	1,342.1	1,336.3
Khon Kaen	1,044.6	1,021.1
Ubon Ratchathani	1,016.6	977.2
Chaiyaphum	995.6	962.6
<b>Total Budget for all 76 PAOs</b>	<b>28,797.8</b>	<b>27,727.3</b>

After decentralisation initiatives launched in 1997, there were many reports of assassinations targeting local politicians and their family members in daily newspapers. According to Nuttakorn Vittanon, between 2000 and 2009 alone, there were 481 assassination attempts on sub-national politicians.<sup>6</sup> Before last December's provincial polls, local electoral competition had resulted in the murder of several politicians.<sup>7</sup> These developments have led to the perception that sub-national politics in Thailand are 'bloody' politics and simply competitions between local mafias.

In the 2020 provincial elections, the local political situation was no different from the past, as local "persons of influence" (*phu mi itthiphon*) or members of local elites played a strong role nationwide. The use of vote canvassers was prevalent, and canvassers or *hua kanaen* were arrested for alleged vote-buying in several provinces.<sup>8</sup> Even though Thailand has moved towards more policy-driven politics at the national level, the patronage system and vote-canvassers continue to drive sub-national elections.

## **PHUEA THAI AND THAKSIN IN THE 2020 PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS**

In the recent PAO elections, Phuea Thai fielded candidates for PAO chairman in 25 provinces. Only nine of these candidates secured their seats. In the Northeastern region, where Phuea Thai controlled a large number of parliamentary seats, its candidates for the PAO chairman won in only four provinces: Udonthani, Yasothon, Ubon Ratchathani and Mukdahan. In the North, Phuea Thai candidates won in five provinces: Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Phrae, Lamphun and Nan. The party lost all races for PAO chairman which it contested in the Central region.<sup>9</sup>

While Phuea Thai may have lost some of its previous influence in local elections, former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra asserted his influence in a tight race for the PAO chairmanship in Chiang Mai. From exile, Thaksin threw his support behind Pichai Lertpongadsiron, the

candidate that Phuea Thai endorsed. Chiang Mai, as Thaksin's home province and a Phuea Thai stronghold, is an important strategic area for the party. This factor probably played into Thaksin's decision to publicly back Pichai, a former senator. Pichai's principal opponent was Boonlert Booranupakorn, a two-time Chiang Mai PAO chairman running independently but with the support of Red Shirt leader Jatuporn Promphan.<sup>10</sup> Boonlert was suspended from the post of Chiang Mai PAO chairman by order of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) junta in 2016 after he was linked to a campaign against the junta's draft constitution. He was reappointed PAO chairman in June 2018. Jatuporn claimed that Boonlert was a real democratic fighter and that Phuea Thai should not abandon him by supporting another candidate in the PAO election.

To support Pichai, Thaksin wrote an open letter in Northern Thai on 3 December, stating that if his home province's voters were to abandon him, he would "feel very upset"<sup>11</sup>. Later, he also tweeted messages and gave a rare public statement in video clips to urge voters to support Pichai. Thaksin's support apparently played a role; Pichai defeated his rival Boonlert. Thaksin also wrote a letter to encourage people to vote for Visaradee Techathirawat in her race for the PAO chairmanship in the neighbouring province of Chiang Rai. His messages appeared in Visaradee's election campaign materials, including in her leaflets.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to what happened in Chiang Mai, however, Visaradee lost her race to a long-time Chiang Rai PAO council member, Athitathorn Wanchaithanawong.

Thaksin's intervention showed his continued popularity among Chiang Mai voters, though his support could not secure Visaradee's seat in Chiang Rai. Phuea Thai itself won only nine of the PAO chairman seats it contested. Its losses may be the consequence of its weakening at the local level after a long suspension of sub-national elections and the lack of interest among Phuea Thai top leaders in joining rallies organized by its candidates in other regions, especially in the Northeast or *Isan*. Many Phuea Thai PAO candidates in Isan turned to Sudarat Keyuraphan, a former chairwoman of Phuea Thai Party's strategic committee, who resigned from the party in November 2020, to back their campaigns.<sup>13</sup> The Thaksin brand may still be a marketing tool to attract voters both in local and national elections. The question is whether the Phuea Thai brand can remain successful in both local and national elections in the future if the party distances itself further from Thaksin.

## **NEW CHALLENGES FOR THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT**

The Progressive Movement, a successor organisation to the Future Forward Party, competed in provincial elections.<sup>14</sup> Under the leadership of Future Forward founder Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, the movement competed for the post of PAO chairman in 42 provinces and ran more than 1,000 candidates for PAO councils in 52 of Thailand's 76 provinces. Although Thanathorn was banned from politics for 10 years, he involved himself in the campaign through the Progressive Movement. The movement managed to win only 55 seats in 18 provinces and lost all its contests for PAO chairman. Since its inception, one of the Progressive Movement's major goals has been to act as a platform in order to compete in sub-national elections across the country. Thanathorn said before the December elections that the Progressive Movement "must win in a landslide".<sup>15</sup> The results of the polls for PAO chairmen showed, however, that the Progressive Movement could garner only 17 per cent or 2.67 million votes in the 42 provinces in which it fielded candidates. This total was only slightly different from the number of votes that the Future Forward Party won in the 2019 general election in the same 42 provinces—3,183,163 votes or 16.2 per cent of votes cast.<sup>16</sup> The group thus claimed

that, since advance voting and the use of absentee ballots were not possible in sub-national elections, it had nevertheless done quite well in maintaining its support in those provinces.<sup>17</sup>

Although the Progressive Movement failed to win any PAO chairmanship, it did secure 55 seats on PAO councils in 18 provinces. (See Table 2)

**Table 2: Numbers of successful Progressive Movement candidates for PAO councils, December 2020<sup>18</sup>**

Province	Progressive Movement Members Elected	Total Members of Councils	Province	Progressive Movement Members Elected	Total Members Of Councils
Phayao	1	24	Yasothon	1	30
Uttaradit	3	24	Roi Et	3	36
Chachoengsao	10	30	Mukdahan	1	24
Chonburi	1	42	Udonthani	10	42
Samut Prakan	1	36	Bueng Kan	1	24
Samut Sakon	1	30	Nong Khai	5	30
Nonthaburi	3	36	Sakon Nakhon	2	36
Ang Thong	1	24	Nong Bua	2	30
Phuket	1	24	Lamphu		
			Lamphun	2	24

*Source: Election Commission of Thailand 2020.*

Thanathorn admitted that his speeches before the provincial elections on the reform of the monarchy had been a particularly sensitive issue with Thai voters. This issue may have negatively affected voters' decisions on whether to support the Progressive Movement. Voters in sub-national election have a keen interest in policies relating to the improvement of the quality of their lives rather than concerns such as constitutional amendment or the reform of the monarchy. The December elections thus suggest the maintenance of the status quo in Thai politics, in which sub-national elections have a different emphasis from national ones.

## THE UPCOMING GUBERNATORIAL ELECTION IN BANGKOK

Gubernatorial elections in Bangkok are expected this year. Incumbent Governor Police General Aswin Kwanmuang, a former deputy national police chief, was installed by the NCPO in 2016, after the military regime ousted Sukhumbhand Paribatra from the position. Sukhumbhand was suspended from office by NCPO which cited him as being involved in corruption relating to projects managed by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. Under the unelected governor's leadership, however, Bangkok's problems have remained unresolved. PM 2.5 pollution<sup>19</sup> returns to many areas every year. Bangkok continues to experience flooding after heavy rains, and road construction causing heavy traffic jams is seen in every part of the city. A democratic election for the post of Bangkok governor may be what is needed to restore accountability.

Three candidates, one independent candidate and two linked to the ruling Phalang Pracharat Party, are reportedly preparing to contest the Bangkok gubernatorial elections in 2021. Former Transport Minister Chadchart Sittipunt was approached earlier by Phuea Thai leadership to run

for the position. However, he declined to join Phuea Thai and will run independently, not under any party's banner. Chadchart did not wish to protract political conflicts, and running as an independent would also allow him to attract more allies.<sup>20</sup> Chadchart is quite popular among younger Bangkokians and is viewed by Phalang Pracharat as a competitive candidate.<sup>21</sup>

Another two potential candidates, each of whom may run under the Phalang Pracharat Party banner, are former national police chief Police General Chakthip Chaijinda, and incumbent Bangkok Governor Aswin.

Former national police chief Chakthip, who is close to the government of current Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha, has not officially announced yet whether he will run independently or under the Phalang Pracharat banner. He has reportedly received strong support from party leader Deputy Prime Minister Prawit Wongsuwan and from another influential party actor, Deputy Agriculture Minister Thammanat Prompao.<sup>22</sup>

The second candidate is Aswin Kwanmuang. He also has close connections with Prawit Wongsuwan and Prayut, and previously served as a Bangkok deputy governor.

Between these two candidates, Chakthip Chaijinda has the better chance of winning Phalang Pracharat's support. Aswin's ineffectiveness during his time as governor of the Thai capital means that his prospects for winning the party's endorsement are slim. As Phalang Pracharat is seeking a suitable candidate to compete against Chadchart, Chakthip is a better choice since his former role as national police chief has made him well known to Bangkok voters.

Should either of these two candidates run as independents, they may split the pro-government vote—a major consideration in Bangkok elections. If the pro-democracy camp, including Phuea Thai, the Move Forward Party<sup>23</sup> and the Progressive Movement work collectively to contest this election, individual pro-government candidates will face a high risk of losing. On the other hand, should several pro-democracy candidates register to run in the election separately, the Phalang Pracharat candidate would benefit from the split vote. The party is holding a meeting on the Bangkok election sometime in March 2021, and party leader Prawit will make the final decision on whom to field. He will have to exercise great caution in this selection.

## CONCLUSION

After the long suspension of local democracy, the results of the 2020 PAO elections show no difference in outcome; local bosses continued to make a strong showing across the country. The same old political families retain their control over the budget of 91 billion baht allocated to the PAOs for fiscal 2021. The losses suffered by the Progressive Movement have highlighted further that local politics is very different from national politics. The patronage system is deeply rooted in local politics. The older generation continues to dominate local politics, and ideology is not significant at the local level.

The Progressive Movement's campaign on a platform of decentralisation, with the slogan "Changing Thailand Begins at Home", failed to motivate young voters to return to their home provinces to vote for its candidates. Aside from the failure of its policy platform to attract votes, the Progressive Movement also lacks a deep-rooted 'canvassing' network at the provincial level. A member of the Progressive Movement campaign team said that "PAO elections gave us big lessons. The local elections are not easy, but rather complicated".<sup>24</sup> Unlike incumbent

local leaders who have an advantage in that they can better respond to voters' needs, the Progressive Movement may need more time to expand its local base.

The PAO elections were only the starting point in the restoration of sub-national electoral politics after years of military rule. Municipal elections will occur in March, and that will be the next battle to test the Progressive Movement. The group has already revealed its candidate for mayor in Hat Yai, Songkhla Province. Winning municipal elections will not be an easy task, as it will require defeating incumbent leaders. Although the prospect of winning seats is slim, the Progressive Movement has at least attempted to change Thailand's sub-national elections, and even if the party did not triumph, its campaign was nevertheless a step in the right direction.

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<sup>1</sup> Election Commission of Thailand, "Provincial Administration Organization Election", 2 November 2020 ([https://www.ect.go.th/ect\\_th/news\\_page.php?nid=8689](https://www.ect.go.th/ect_th/news_page.php?nid=8689), downloaded 22 January 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Thailand's decentralisation structure has four levels: 76 provincial administrative organizations (PAOs), 2,441 municipalities, 5,365 *tambon* or sub-district administrative organisations (TAOs), and two special forms of local administrative organisations, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the City of Pattaya. See also Michael

J. Montesano, "Thailand's 20 December 2020 Provincial Elections: A Contest among National Political Parties and a Quasi-Party? Evidence from the Andaman Coast" *ISEAS Perspective* 145/2020, 18 December 2020 ([https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2020\\_145.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/ISEAS_Perspective_2020_145.pdf), downloaded 6 February 2021).

<sup>3</sup> James Ockey, "Team Work: Shifting Patterns and Relationships in Local and National Politics in Thailand", *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* XXXII, 3 (November 2017): 562-600.

<sup>4</sup> "เลือกตั้งท้องถิ่น: ปรากฏการณ์ใหม่-ข้อมูล-สถิติที่น่าสนใจในศึกเลือกตั้ง อบจ. 63" [Local Election: New Phenomenon-Interesting Data-Statistics during Provincial Administration Organization Election 2020], *BBC News (Thai)*, 6 December 2020 (<https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-55186329>), downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>5</sup> "เลือกตั้งท้องถิ่น: ปรากฏการณ์ใหม่-ข้อมูล-สถิติที่น่าสนใจในศึกเลือกตั้ง อบจ. 63" [Local Election: New Phenomenon-Interesting Data-Statistics during Provincial Administration Organization Election 2020], *BBC News (Thai)*, 6 December 2020 (<https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-55186329>), downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Nuttakorn Vititanon, "Assassination in Thai Local Politics: A Decade of Decentralization (2000-2009)", *Kyoto Review of Southeast Asia*, issue 21 (<https://kyotoreview.org/issue-21/assassination-thai-local-politics/>, 22 January 2021).

<sup>7</sup> "บุกจับมือปืน ร่วมทีมฆ่าสองพ่อลูก อดีตประธานสภาอบต. เพชรปมสังหาร" [Assassins Caught, Disclosure of the Murder Case of Father and Son, Former Sub-District Administrative Organization Presidents], *Khaosod Online*, 23 June 2020 ([https://www.khaosod.co.th/crime/news\\_4369109](https://www.khaosod.co.th/crime/news_4369109), downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>8</sup> "กต.จับหัวคะแนน3จังหวัดซื้อเสียงเลือกตั้ง" [ECT Caught Three Provincial Election Canvasser Buying Votes], *Nation TV*, 20 December 2020 (<https://www.nationtv.tv/main/content/378810612>, downloaded 21 January 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Hathaikarn Trisuwan, "เลือกตั้งท้องถิ่น : ว่าที่นายก อบจ. 76 จังหวัด ใครอยู่ใต้เงา "บ้านใหญ่" ใครคือหน้าใหม่ล้มแชมป์" [Local Election: 76 PAO Presidents-to-be, Who's under the "Main House", Who's the New Champion], *BBC News (Thai)*, 21 December 2020 (<https://www.bbc.com/thai/thailand-55394623>, downloaded 21 January 2020).

<sup>10</sup> “ชาวลีกปมลับ: เปิดลับ "ทักษิณ-บุญเลิศ" ใครทิ้งใครแน!" [Disclosed News, ‘Thaksin-Boonlert’ Who Dumped Whom!], *MGR Online*, 8 December 2020

(<https://mgronline.com/crime/detail/9630000125801>, downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>11</sup> “ ‘ทักษิณ’ ลุยเอง เขียนจม.ด้วยลายมือถึงชาวเชียงใหม่ อ้อนเลือกฝ่ายปชต.นั่งนายก อบจ.” [‘Thaksin’ Stepped Forward, Sending a Handwritten Letter to Chiang Mai People, Asking for Choosing a Democratic PAO President Candidate], *Matichon*, 3 December 2020

([https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news\\_2470275](https://www.matichon.co.th/politics/news_2470275), downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>12</sup> “ทักษิณสู้ เชียงราย-เชียงใหม่ แพ้ปัด” [Thaksin Fights, Chiang Mai-Chiang Rai Can’t be Defeated], *Komchadluek*, 8 December 2020 (<https://www.komchadluek.net/news/scoop/451217>, downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>13</sup> “ สดาร์ตน์ หาเสียง อบจ. อีสาน ชูเคราะห์กรรมตัวเอง สั่งเวยเพื่อไทย” [Sudarat campaigned in Isan PAO, raised her karma to quite Phuea Thai], *Prachachat*, 19 December 2020 (

<https://www.prachachat.net/politics/news-577106>, downloaded 7 February 2021).

<sup>14</sup> The party was established in 2018 and, buoyed by strong support among young Thais, came in third place in national elections held in March 2019. In February 2020, the party was dissolved by the Constitutional Court on charges that Thanathorn lent his own money to the party in violation of the law. The dissolution of the party catalysed a public protest movement in 2019, which has since expanded its demands to include the highly sensitive question on reforms of the monarchy. For an early book-length study of the Future Forward Party, see Duncan McCargo and Anyarat Chattharakul, *Future Forward: The Rise and Fall of a Thai Political Party* (Copenhagen: NIAS Press, 2020).

<sup>15</sup> “เจียบเป็นเป่าซาก! เพงตั้งวิจารณ์ “ธนาธร” แพ้ศึกเลือกตั้ง

อบจ.แลนด์สไลด์น้อยมากแทบจะไม่มีเลย” [A Deadly Silence! Famous Page Insulted ‘Thanathorn’ for his PAO Election Loss, A Big Landslide], *MGR Online*, 22 December 2020

(<https://mgronline.com/online/section/detail/9630000130602>, downloaded 22 January 2020).

<sup>16</sup> “คณะก้าวหน้ายอมรับผลเลือกตั้งนายก อบจ.แม่ไร่เก้าอี้แต่คะแนนนิยมเพิ่มขึ้น” [Progressive Movement Accepted the PAO Election Results, Popularity Increased Despite Zero Seats], *InfoQuest*, 21 December 2020 (<https://www.infoquest.co.th/2020/54452>, downloaded 22 January 2020).

<sup>17</sup> “Thanathorn concedes defeat in local elections”, *Thai PBS World*, 21 December 2020

(<https://www.thaipbsworld.com/thanathorn-concedes-defeat-in-local-elections/> downloaded 22 January 2021).

<sup>18</sup> Office of the Election Commission of Thailand, “Local Election Announcements”

([https://www.ect.go.th/ect\\_th/news\\_all.php?cid=256](https://www.ect.go.th/ect_th/news_all.php?cid=256), downloaded 20 January 2021).

<sup>19</sup> PM 2.5 refers to a category of particulate pollutant that is 2.5 microns or smaller in size. PM stands for “particulate matter”. At high levels, the PM 2.5 pollutant can be harmful to people’s health. Because of its small size, PM 2.5 can get deep into the respiratory tract and lungs. It can also potentially enter the bloodstream. Bangkok has faced the high level of PM 2.5 almost every day due to vehicle exhaust gas, forest fires, burning of crop stubble and industrial emissions

<sup>20</sup> “Chadchart Announces Bid for Bangkok”, *Bangkok Post*, 30 November 2019

([https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1805639/chadchart-announces-bid-for-bangkok?fbclid=IwAR3qwRCzDEX8B0l63BL6Wv6SjFlxj16j\\_mIn44EyoNCpIKBgPNmFzPeJk7U](https://www.bangkokpost.com/thailand/general/1805639/chadchart-announces-bid-for-bangkok?fbclid=IwAR3qwRCzDEX8B0l63BL6Wv6SjFlxj16j_mIn44EyoNCpIKBgPNmFzPeJk7U), downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>21</sup> “The Chadchart Online Phenomenon”, *Bangkok Post*, 8 February 2014

(<https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/393863/the-chadchart-online-phenomenon>, downloaded 20 January 2020).

<sup>22</sup> “อัศวิน-จักรทิพย์ เปิดศึก เครือข่าย “บ๊องป้อม” ชิงผู้ว่าฯ กทม.” [Asavin-Jakrathip Started a Fight, “Big Pom” Network Fought Over Bangkok Municipal Council Election], *Prachachat*, 21 January 2021 (<https://www.prachachat.net/politics/news-596884>, downloaded 22 January 2021).

<sup>23</sup> Move Forward Party (MFP) led by Pita Limjaroenrat is the successor to the Future Forward Party. After Future Forward Party (FFP) was dissolved by the constitutional court for taking a 191.2-million baht loan from its leader, Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, its party executive members, including Thanathorn, are banned from politics for 10 years. Ten of the FFP’s MPs promptly defected to government parties, while the remaining 55 joined the Move Forward Party in order to maintain their

status as MPs. Aside from the Move Forward Party, Thanathorn and other former FFP executive members also formed the Progressive Movement group to engage in politics outside parliament, working hand in hand with the MFP which focuses on its parliamentary role.

<sup>24</sup> Author's interview with former Future Forward candidate in the 2019 general elections, Bangkok, 24 December 2020.

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