



Guide to Parliament

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives

Guide to Parliament





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Foreword

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives, by Information Division, Bureau of Public Relations launches the book titled, **“Guide to Parliament”** with the objective to be a guidebook for visiting parliament “Sappaya Saphasathan”. This book comprises history, functions and powers of parliament and information of significant places in the parliament which support students and people who visit parliament to have a greater understanding of the place.

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives truly hopes the book **“Guide to Parliament”** will be of considerable benefits to visitors.

On this occasion, the Secretariat of the House of Representatives is pleased to welcome all visitors and thank you for visiting parliament.

The Secretariat of the House of Representatives

July 2020

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The Thai Parliament

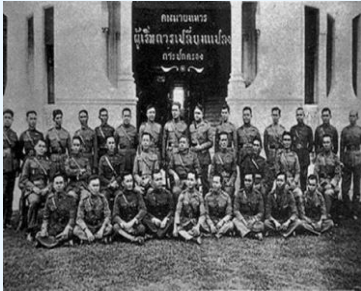
Thailand adopts a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State and the Constitution is the supreme law of the State since 1932. The constitution prescribes the administration of State affairs in a parliamentary system by adhering to the principle of, “**sovereign power belongs to the Thai people**”.



The sovereign power can be divided into 3 branches as follows: the Legislative, Executive and Judiciary Branches. The King shall exercise such power through the Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the Court.



On 28 June 1932, the House of Representatives comprised 70 members nominated by the Military Guardian Corps. The first parliamentary sitting took place at the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall which was the first parliament building of Thailand.



A group of military, navy and civilians, known as “Khana Ratsadorn” who initiated to transform an absolute monarchy to a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State.



The first period of the parliamentary sitting held at Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall.



The Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall

Afterwards, when the number of members of parliament was increased as the population proportion grew, it caused the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall to become more tightly occupied for further parliamentary sittings. Therefore, there was a request of the royal grant for the land located behind the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in the area of U-Thong Nai Road, Dusit, Bangkok to be used for building the new parliament in 1970 and the construction was completed in 1974. The parliament located at U-thong Nai Road had more workspaces than Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall, and it was called “Sapha Hin-On” or Marbles Parliament because the building was constructed by marbles and the first parliamentary sitting took place on 19 September 1974.



The Parliament at U-Thong Nai Road

In 2008, the roles and missions of parliament and the number of parliamentary officials and staffs had been increasing. In order to accommodate the parliament's support offices, the Council of Ministers of Mr. Samak Sundaravej, Prime Minister had a resolution to allocate the budget for construction of the new parliament building to use approximately 48.6-acre (123 rai) land area located alongside the Chao Phraya River, which was state land on Tahan Road (Kiakkai), Dusit District. The new parliament model was selected at the end of the year 2009.



Sappaya Saphasathan

The new parliament building called, “**Sappaya Saphasathan**”, the term “Sappaya” means “comfortable”, in Dharma sense refers to “the place for doing good deeds”. The architecture was designed to reflect an ideal of Thai culture which based on the ideal of Triphum or the Three worlds of the Buddhist Ideology to inspire the design. In this regard, at the top of the building is the Thai architectural style at the middle of the main building to express the Thainess and to show the elegance of the Chao Phraya River. There are Democracy Museum, Glass Wall, and Thai Nation Museum for Thai people to study, the lobby for reception of Members of the House of Representatives and Senators, Public Square, a large of Democracy Square for people to exercise their rights according to the democratic principle. This design concept refers to an opportunity to enhance the leading role of the Thai parliament at the international level for peace and recognition of spiritual values of human beings. The buildings are designed to be modern, flexible, spacing and comfortable.



Meaning of “Sappaya Saphasathan”

The word “Sappaya” means “comfortable” but Sappaya in Dharma sense means “the place for doing good deeds”, so it means “peaceful parliament”. In the past, when the nation encountered the crisis, the King would construct the place for promoting people morale in accordance with the belief that worldly life should go along with Dharma. It can be said that Dharma should be applied in worldly life. At present, if the nation is in a crisis of moral degeneration, spirit of people in the nation must be recovered such as the establishment of a “Phra Sumeru Mountain” in the reign of Rattanakosin to be a symbol of the highest wisdom.



Sappaya Saphasathan design was inspired by Triphum model (the belief of heaven, earth and hell) in Buddhism. The finial situated at the middle of the building expressing an opportunity to enhance the leading role of the Thai parliament at the international



level for peace and recognition of spiritual values of human beings. Since the utility space is larger than three hundred thousand square meters, diverse and universal applications must be taken into account in drafting the master plan, the floor plan, and the landscape of the buildings. In addition, short and uncomplicated traffic system should be set up for the disabled and elderly.



The objectives of design of “Sappaya Saphasathan”

The objectives of the new parliament building design put an emphasis on two aspects : ideals and efficiency and quality of life which can be considered as follows.

Ideals :

1. Nation

Parliament building must be elegant, showing dignity and value of Thainess. It is a modern architecture developed from the roots of Thai arts and culture.

The emerging architecture must connect arts, culture, beliefs and wisdom from the past to the present. The objectives of the design make the new parliament to be the center of spirits of people in the nation. The architecture reflects the beautiful arts and culture to the world. It can express identity of Thailand distinctly; similarly to other parliaments all over the world.

2. Morality

The problem of social and political conflicts among people in present due to moral degeneration. People in our country do not only have different opinions in society and different views of politics but also face moral problems and decay. Therefore, the parliament is the center of hope to all Thais and communities. The New Parliament Building would be “Sappaya of the nation or the place for doing good deeds” which is the realm of wisdom,

the center of all spirits of the nation, the sacred place, and the epitome of morality, ethics and good governance.

3. Wisdom

The New Parliament will be a place to increase knowledge and wisdom of people in the nation. It will be an important learning source of the nation in order to express identity of Thailand to the global society and guide Thai people to balance between internal and external knowledge with the main objective to elevate their minds.

4. The Monarchy

Thailand has the most important soul of the country which is unique and makes it different from the other countries in the world; that is, the monarchy. The King maintains the ten virtues of the king to reign over the country. In this regard, the new parliament was designed by consideration of the space for State Ceremony as a priority.

5. People

The Parliament Building is a symbol of democracy. Therefore, the design concept of buildings and surrounding area gives importance to people of all levels. People are important in all sectors and definitely able to benefit from the building and have dignity under its roof.

Efficiency and Quality of Life :

1. Facilities

The architectural concepts were created with an emphasis on Members of the House of Representatives and Senators equally. Facility management of the area is taken into consideration, so every space for Members of the House of Representatives and Senators is connected and surrounded by places for other uses.

2. Eco-Friendly and Energy-Saving Buildings

It is a meticulous design of a large building to be an important model of the nation created by all related experts.



3. Universal and Inclusive Design

The parliament was also designed for disabled, children and elderly to be able to access.

4. Security System and Fire Safety

The model was designed to provide absolute safety from any circumstances and all damage. The master planning system and all other systems are based on high technology following the protocol standards of the United States of America under the supervision of professional and experienced experts.



In summary, concept of model planning of “Sappaya Saphasathan” focuses on the spectacular, simplistic and elegant of the building. The design aims to reflect harmony and balance between workplaces of Members of the House of Representatives and Senators who have significant roles in national politics and

governance which are the most important for democracy and parliamentary system of Thailand.

Interior design and decoration of the building are modern which show Thai wisdom and the identity of Thainess in Thai architectural style which emphasizes on working system within parliament to coordinate both Houses under the constitution. The chamber is the oval crescent shape and the symbol of “Khwan” or spirit of parliament is used as the main feature of the chamber. The chamber interior design uses gold and silver color to represent pureness and intelligence in making good deeds.

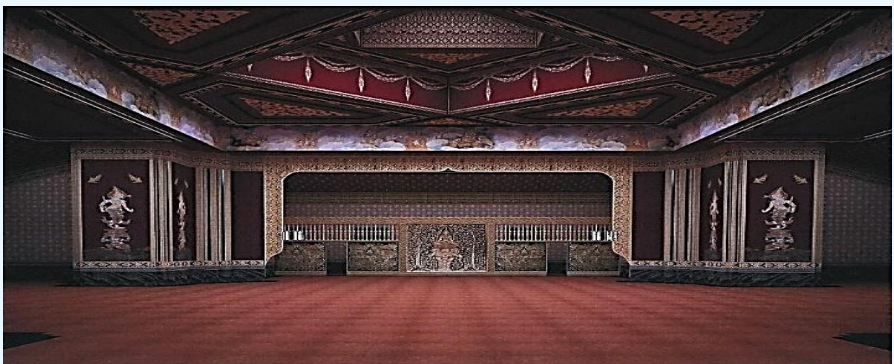


The Significant Places in the Parliament “Sappaya Saphasathan”



State Ceremonial Hall

State Ceremonial Hall is a symbol of the core of Phra Sumeru Mountain which is used for opening ceremony of parliamentary sitting and reception for the leaders from around the world in some occasions.



Chambers

The Parliament “**Sappaya Saphasathan**” comprises two main chambers as follows:

House of Representatives Chamber

(Suriyan Chamber)

Suriyan or the sun is the source of all life and myriad things on earth. Just like the sun giving light and warmth to preserve life and sustain mankind through eons of time Parliament has the sacred task to perform in order to bring well-being and peace to the people and nation.





The “Khwan” symbol gives the room artistic self-expression, thereby having varied meaning. It could be the powerful path of the sun and it could also mean *svasti* (well-being) and wisdom, which implies prosperity and wisdom for the success of all missions of Members of the House of Representatives.

The walls and roof are in the shape of a vaulted chamber give a rarefied sensation of meeting under the sky above. The celestial ambience aids vision, imagination and relaxation during meetings that demand sustained and prolonged exercise of intellectual power. This chamber is provided for the sitting of Members of the House of Representatives and the joint sitting.

Senate Chamber

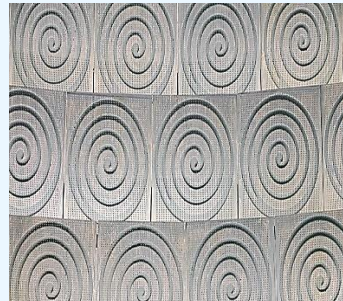
(Chandra Chamber)

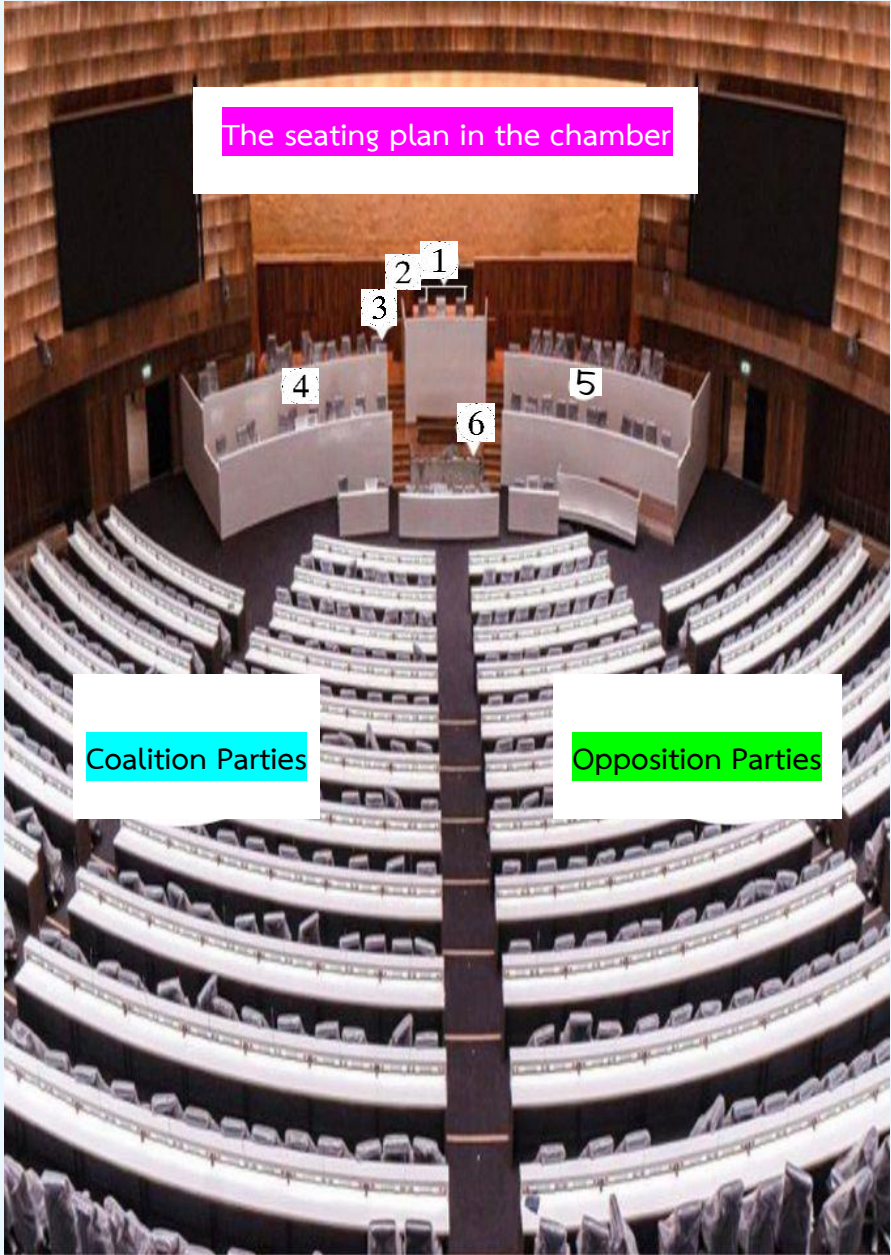


Chandra is the twin force with Suriyan. Chandra illuminates the world for life during nightfall as the moonlight shines upon humankind for all eternity. Likewise, the sacred duty of parliament to bring peace and well-being to the people and nation.



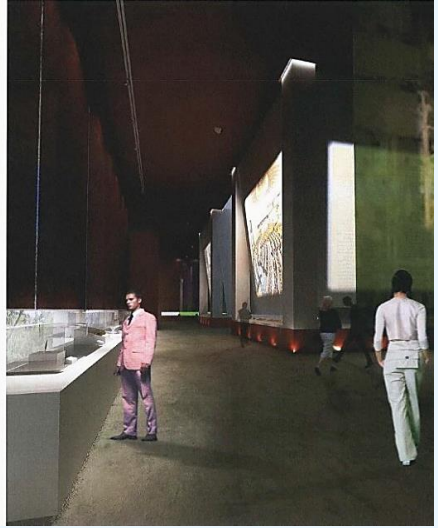
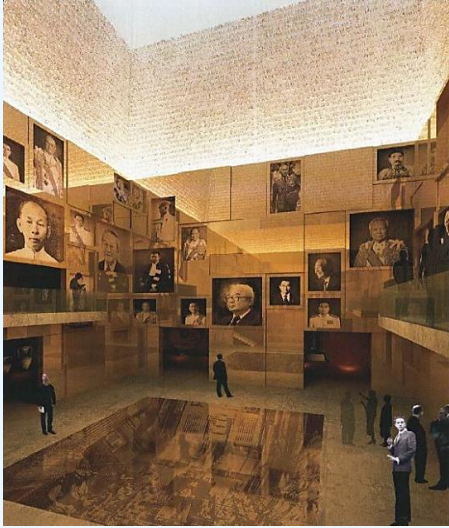
“ Khwan” symbol, just like that in Suriyan Chamber, signifies many things. In this room, “ khwan” also refers to water, or cold energy which opposites to the hot energy of the sun. These two energies create the equilibrium between of the House of Representatives and the Senate for the betterment of the whole nation.





1. The seat in the middle is for the Speaker of the House of Representatives who presides over the sitting.
2. The seat on the right of the Speaker is for the First Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the seat on the left of the Speaker is for the Second Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives.
3. The first upper seat on the right of the Speaker of the House of Representatives is for the Prime Minister.
4. Two rows next to the Prime Minister's seat are for the Council of Ministers.
5. Two rows on the left of the Speaker's seat are for the Standing Committees who present information on relevant matters to the sitting.
6. The seat below the Speaker's seat on the left is for Secretary-General of the House of Representatives and on the right is for Deputy Secretary-General. Both of them act as the secretary to the sitting.
7. The seating plan of the House of Representatives, members sit in their respective parties, the coalition parties sit on the right of the speaker and the opposition parties sit on the left of the Speaker.
 - The seating plan of the Chamber of the Senate, are arranged by Thai alphabetical order.
 - During the joint sitting, senators sit on the right and Members of the House of Representatives sit on the left of the President of the Parliament.

Democracy Museum



VIP Reception Rooms



Reception Hall for Members of Parliament



The Square alongside the Chao Phraya River



Democracy Square



Duties and Powers of Thai Parliament

Thailand adopts a democratic regime of government with the King as Head of State and the Constitution as the supreme law of the state since 1932.



The constitution prescribes that the administration of the state in the parliamentary system by the sovereign power belongs to Thai people. The sovereign power can be divided into 3 branches as follows: the Legislative, the Executive and the Judiciary Branches. The King exercises such power through the Parliament, the Council of Ministers and the Court.

Parliament is the national legislative institution of Thailand, this institution exercises the legislative power as one of sovereign power of Thai people. The Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand B.E. 2560 (2017) prescribes that parliament comprises the House of Representatives and the Senate, or it is a bicameral system. The sitting of both Houses is the Joint Sitting. The Speaker of the House of Representatives serves ex officio as President of the Parliament and the President of the Senate serves ex officio as the Vice-President of the Parliament.



The House of Representatives Under the 2017 Constitution, it stipulates that the House of Representatives comprises 500 Members, of which 350 members are constituency members from each province and 150 members from party-list of political parties. The criteria and the methods for the election of members of the House of Representatives are in accordance with the 2017 Constitution, and the term of members of the House of Representatives is four years from the date of the election.

The Senate Under the 2017 Constitution, it stipulates that the Senate comprises 200 senators who are selected by and among persons having the knowledge, expertise, experience, profession, characteristics or common interests or working or having worked in various areas of the society. The distribution of groups shall be made in a way which enables every person having the right to apply for selection to belong to any one group. The applicants for each group will be selected by and among themselves. Each group should consist of 10 persons from the district level to the national level. Each member can be in office for one term.

However, during the initial period according to the Transitory Provisions of the 2017 Constitution, The Senate comprises 250 senators appointed by the King upon the advice of the National Council for Peace and Order. The selection and appointment shall conform to the rules and procedures of the Constitution. The term of the Senate during this period is five years from the date of the Royal Command.

The Thai Parliament, a legislative body representing the people, has the following roles and functions:

1. Proposing and considering bills
 - 1.1 Organic law bills and bills
 - 1.2 Consideration of Annual Appropriation Bill
 - 1.3 Approval of Royal Decree
 - 1.4 Amendment to the Constitution



2. Overseeing the State Administration Affairs

2.1 Acknowledgement of policy statement of the Council of Ministers

2.2 Interpellation

2.3 Holding of general debate

2.4 Setting up committees for fact-finding or study of certain matters within parliament's mandate



3. Approval of significant matters

3.1 Approval of the appointment of the Regent

3.2 Acknowledgement or approval of the succession

3.3 Approval of the nomination of the Prime Minister

3.4 Approval of the declaration of war

3.5 Approval of a treaty

4. Right to file a complaint with the Speaker of the House of Representatives or President of the Senate to seek the Constitutional Court's ruling concerning the termination of membership of certain members.

5. At least one-tenths of the existing members of the House of Representatives or of the Senate may lodge with their respective Speaker or President a complaint asserting that the membership of any member of such House has terminated. Then, the Speaker/President shall refer such complaint to the Constitutional Court to decide. Once the Court has reached its verdict, it shall then notify the Speaker/President of its decision. In case, the Court finds that the membership of the member is terminated, he/she shall vacate office as from the date when he/she ceases to perform duties, but this will not affect any act done by the person before vacating the office.



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