



Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva accompanies Democrat candidates to Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok yesterday. His wife Pimpen and their daughter, Nong Maprang, a Chulalongkorn student, went along to give support.

Rally emboldens Democrats



ANALYSIS: Party leaders believe Ratchaprasong pleas may regain votes from Pheu Thai, write **Post** reporters

The Democrat Party has taken heart from the reception to its campaign rally at Ratchaprasong intersection on Thursday night, where party leaders made emotional pleas to give them another chance.

The gathering drew about 30,000 people to the heart of where armed clashes took place last April and May between the red-shirted United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship and the military.

Party leaders say the reception was warm, giving them confidence the rally could help them claw back rival Pheu Thai Party's lead in the polls.

The rally speeches focused on the bloodshed during the political unrest in Bangkok last year. The Democrats have attempted to draw a link between Pheu Thai and the red shirts, who were involved in the clashes.

Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva and deputy Suthep Thaugsuban fought back tears as they appealed to voters not to throw them out of office. The Democrats believe the rally could pull in undecided

voters, small-party supporters who normally distrust both the Democrats and Pheu Thai, and those who intend to cast a "no vote".

A recent Bangkok Poll conducted by Bangkok University has found the city has about 10 million undecided voters, most of whom are believed to be middle-class people in the capital and major towns.

Almost 24,000 people watched the Ratchaprasong rally via the Democrat Party's live stream internet broadcast.

The number of undecided voters is enough to change the result of the July 3 election, which many polls predict Pheu Thai will win by a wide margin.

"We were given a warm response [following the Ratchaprasong rally] and this boosts our hopes in Bangkok," Mr Suthep said yesterday.

"I'm confident that the Democrats will win 27 seats [out of the total 33] in Bangkok and the number may rise to 30, depending on how well we do in the last week."

The Democrats plan to intensify their campaigning in Bangkok next week.

The party will hold a rally at the Royal Plaza on July 1, on the same day as Pheu Thai plans a rally at Rajamangala National Stadium.

It will also distribute 50,000 copies of pamphlets attacking Pheu Thai and the UDD for their role in the bloody riots last year.

"Some people have forgotten the incidents or do not know the truth of them, so we will remind them what Pheu Thai and its network did at the time," said Mr Suthep.

At least four pollsters — Suan Dusit Poll, Dhurakij Pundit Poll, Bangkok Poll, and Bansomdejchaopraya Poll — have predicted that Pheu Thai could take many Democrat seats in Bangkok.

The most recent Bangkok Poll, conducted between June 16 and Wednesday among 3,338 respondents in Bangkok, suggested Pheu Thai would take 28 seats in the capital and the Democrats would win only five seats.



Ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra's three children, Panthongtae, left, Paethongthan, centre, and Pinthongta visit Rong Poon community in Bangkok's Huai Khwang district yesterday to support Pheu Thai candidate Anuttama Amornvivat. PATTARACHAI KEMGUMNERD

The Democrats took 27 seats out of 36 in the last election. The fate of the capital's 33 constituency seats could decide which party will lead the next government. But Mr Suthep shrugged off the poll.

"Polls do not influence the decision of the people, but campaigns which reach their hearts do," he said.

Mr Suthep claimed yesterday that former prime minister and Pheu Thai de facto leader Thaksin Shinawatra had approached key figures of several smaller parties to take part in forming the next administration.

This showed that Pheu Thai's predictions that it will win 270 House seats was unlikely to become a reality.

"I believe the Pheu Thai Party will win no more than 200 seats, while the Democrats will win around 200 seats as well," said Mr Suthep.

Pheu Thai's top list candidate Yingluck Shinawatra said that the speeches by the Democrats at the Ratchaprasong rally were not new.

"It was the same information which they put up to attack my brother Thaksin during the censure session in parliament recently. But I will exercise patience and not make any counterattack," she said, adding that Thaksin would have nothing to do with the formation of the next government.

But Pheu Thai list candidate and UDD leader Natthawut Saikua said his party's legal team would consider whether to sue the Democrats.

"Every word of what they said was a lie," he said.

Political observers wonder if Pheu Thai is as confident about the election result as its public statements suggest.

Ms Yingluck has spent most of her time campaigning in the northeastern provinces, despite the fact that the area is a Pheu Thai stronghold.

Maharakham University yesterday released a poll which still gives Pheu Thai a clear lead in the region.

The pollster questioned 16,322 voters in 20 northeastern provinces.

The poll found 64.3% of respondents will vote for Pheu Thai on the list, while 12.7% will vote for the Democrats. For the constituency vote, 84.9% said they will vote for Pheu Thai, followed by Bhumjaithai (7.9%), Chart Pattana Puea Pandin (4%) and Democrat (2.4%).

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