



A TROUBLED DAY FOR TUBA WORKERS

1. Striking garment workers look out from behind the metal bars of a locked collapsible gate of a Tuba Group factory in Badda, Dhaka yesterday. 2. Some supporters of the ruling Awami League are seen outside the factory. 3. A man uses a key to open the lock from outside the gate. 4. An injured Tuba Group worker is being taken to hospital. 5. AL activists beat up a man for speaking in favour of the workers. 6. AL supporters beat a leader of the Tuba Group Sramik Sangram Committee. 7. Tuba workers hold up placards demanding their dues. 8. Police and AL activists haul a female leader of Tuba Group Sramik Sangram Committee to a car. 9. An AL supporter manhandles a female leader of a left-leaning political party.

AMRAN HOSSAIN



Thailand, open for business now

SAKEB SUBHAN, back from Bangkok

THE route from an international airport to the heart of a city often reveals valuable truths about the city or country being visited. To a pair of Bangladeshi eyes, the journey from Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi International Airport to the city centre gives one the vibe of a city that is firing on all cylinders. And, it all becomes all the more impressive when you recall that the city was hostage to political turmoil only a few months ago. Indeed, Thailand is open for business with the rest of the world once again. And, to send out the message the Tourism Authority of Thailand recently invited people from all corners of the globe to visit and see for themselves that the kingdom nation is safe and ready to thrive on tourism again -- and relay the message back home. After all, here is a country that considers tourism its golden goose, with the sector contributing, directly and indirectly, to around 17 percent of the GDP. Bangkok was the most visited capital for four years straight before political violence saw London take the crown in 2014.

Called "Thailand's Best Friends Forever Mega Fam Trip" (Thailand's BFF), the event held on July 25 at the Centara Grand Hotel Convention Centre was attended by more than 900 journalists, bloggers, celebrities and travel industry executives from 47 countries. "This trip will be a critical component of our recovery programme, especially for the second half of this year, when we have to double our efforts to bring visitors back," said the Tourism Authority of Thailand Governor Thawatchai Arunyik. The event also sought to bring smiles back to the faces of the Thai people after several months of uncertainty, as Thailand when roughly translated means 'the land of smiles', according to Arunyik. Indeed, the smiling faces are an integral part of the Thai experience. The governor's briefing was followed by a spectacular "Thailand Happiness Street Festival" at Ratchaprasong, the primary business and shopping district of downtown Bangkok. In an extravaganza never before held in Thailand, the entire area came alive with colourful parades, fashion shows, concerts and culinary delights from 3 in the afternoon



Thawatchai Arunyik, governor of Tourism Authority of Thailand, welcomes a worldwide audience at the Best Friend Forever Convention 2014 on July 25 at Centara Convention Centre in Bangkok.

to midnight on July 25 and 26.

If proof was needed that Thailand meant business when it came to reclaiming their tourism industry, this was it.

To Bangladeshi eyes, Thailand has long been viewed as a premier holiday, business and medical care destination. Such is Bangladesh's presence in the south-

east Asian nation that Bangkok Hospital, a premier medical care facility in Thailand, has a 'Bangladesh Services' department to take care of the needs of Bangladeshi patients and their families -- services that include expediting visa processes along with ensuring the best possible care. As much as Bangladesh's heavy tourism presence in Thailand, this reveals the commitment Thai people have towards simply being good hosts. Bangkok, a city where everyday life with its colourful scenes and vibrant street activities -- not least the lip-smacking street food and the enormous Chatuchak weekend market -- is a tourist attraction in itself, is only the beginning of Thailand's attractions. The country boasts soul-soothing natural beauty like beaches in Phuket, Pattaya and Krabi, the Thi Lo Su Waterfall and the Red Lotus Sea, to name just a few. Back to Bangkok, you have the architectural and historical splendour of the Royal Palace and Temple. With such a tourism-friendly outlook, coupled with endless tourist attractions, it will be no surprise if Thailand finds itself back on top of the tourism tree soon enough.