Situation in Bangkok secure despite attacks, FDI and TDA say

On 17 August, a pipe bomb exploded at the Ratchaprasong intersection in central Bangkok close to the Erawan Shrine, killing at least 20 people and leaving more than 120 injured. In view of the upcoming FDI Annual World Dental Congress, which will be held in the Thai capital from 22 to 25 September, the FDI World Dental Federation has reacted immediately and sent a team to the Thai capital in order to assess the situation.

“We are happy to announce that the Thai government has taken swift and effective action and the situation has returned to normal,” the federation stated. The Dental Association of Thailand, the local partner of this year’s FDI AWDC, commented on the bombings as well: “Following recent events in Bangkok, the Dental Association of Thailand has been in contact with the Government of Thailand. We have received assurances that special security measures are now in place and will remain so throughout the period leading up to the FDI Annual World Dental Congress and beyond.”

“For the Dental Association of Thailand, the security and comfort of congress participants are an absolute priority. We are convinced that the measures now in place will ensure that your stay in Bangkok will be both safe and enjoyable,” the organisation added.

The Erawan Shrine, dedicated to the Hindu god Brahm, is a popular destination for both tourists and locals. Close to the intersection where the bomb detonated are top hotels, shopping malls and offices. Thus, several tourists were among the victims, mostly from South and East Asia, although not all of the victims have been identified yet.

The bombing was one of the worst attacks in the Thai capital in years. Authorities are still searching for a suspect identified as the potential bomber through surveillance footage and to date, it is still unclear who might be responsible for it and what the possible motives are, according to the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, Thai authorities currently believe that the goal of the attack was to affect Thailand’s tourism industry, as Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan told Reuters. The news agency reported that authorities have stepped up security checks at some major city intersections and in tourist areas.

Following the attack, the Bangkok police reported a further small explosion. A bomb was thrown into the Chao Phraya river beneath the Taksin bridge, under which passenger ferries pass. However, nobody was hurt. The police suspect that the two attacks might be linked.

Currently, they are looking for a young man wearing a yellow shirt who was captured on a surveillance camera leaving his backpack inside the fence of the Erawan Shrine. The explosion occurred minutes after the man left the shrine, making him the police’s prime suspect.

Two days after the bombing, the Erawan Shrine was reopened to visitors, as the surroundings and the shrine itself have already been largely restored.

Several foreign offices, including in the UK and Germany, have updated their safety information for travellers going to Thailand. They urge visitors to take extra care and monitor travel alerts and news reports. According to them, further attacks—especially in tourist regions—cannot be ruled out.