

## **Bhum Jai Thai and the business of protests slightly gone wrong**

The Bhum Jai Thai party announced a movement against the million signature campaign of the Red Shirts. There was a buzz when it was announced that the Blue Shirts were to protest at Royal Plaza today (July 30). Was it the same guys as in Pattaya? Were there soldiers in Blue Shirts? PAD guards in disguise?

At about 8 am there were 30 to 40 taxis parked at Royal Plaza, the same number of red colored subarus – small passenger vehicles, all from Thonburi - one loudspeaker wagon, and at least a dozen intelligence officers. Slowly more taxis arrived, maybe 100 to 200 altogether. No Blue Shirts though. But a few people in Bhum Jai Thai shirts and jackets, and several ministry officials.

Stickers were handed out to put on the cars, “Don’t pull the sky down low – stop the petition!”, and similar slogans.





At about 9 am the show began. First the taxi drivers were called to get breakfast. They lined up, received a stamp on the arm, a coupon, and food. The Bhum Jai Thai party song was played on loudspeakers.

So far so good.

But then several taxi drivers approached me, and complained:

“They said they will give us 300 Baht petrol coupons, but we got nothing, just those food coupons!”

“I can’t even get my taxi out - they blocked our cars with these subarus.”

“They cheated us, they said we should come because of mother’s day, and said nothing of Bhum Jai Thai. Now they put stickers against the petition on our cars, and tomorrow I want to go to the Red Shirt rally – how can I get these stickers off?!”



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Supamas Issarabhakdi, deputy spokesperson for Bhum Jai Thai appeared, handed out stickers, posed for the cameras while applying stickers to a taxi, and gave an interview.





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A not very enthusiastic crowd of taxi drivers formed a line in front of the loudspeaker wagon, a speech was held, an oath to the monarchy was spoken, songs were sung, and after the Royal anthem everybody disappeared quickly.



A few officials still hung around. One man with a plastic bag handed a large wad of cash to a man from a taxi organization, who quickly slipped the money into his pocket when he saw me taking photos. The bagman soon got into the back of a Mercedes and disappeared.









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At about 10.30 the show was over.

Effort: lackluster.

Execution: thank you very much for the amusement