

FRIENDLY RIVALRY

THAI and Bangkok Airways, seen as rivals for decades, upgrade their commercial ties by signing a code-share deal. **B4**

Traditional rivals enter code-share deal

THAI, Bangkok Air agree on 14 routes

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Thai Airways International (THAI) has upgraded its commercial ties with Bangkok Airways, seen as rivals for decades.

The two airlines yesterday signed a code-share deal to build upon a relationship that was restricted to the interline agreement, which came into force back in 2003.

The interline arrangement made it possible for passengers to purchase air tickets and travel on connecting flights between the two airlines.

Bangkok Airways president Puttipong Prasarttong-Osoth told the *Bangkok Post* that THAI's view of Bangkok Airways as an arch rival, upheld particularly by former employees, has lapsed.

"There is a new spirit of cooperation at THAI. Both airlines can create together win-win propositions to benefit the country as a whole," he said.

Bangkok Airways had always considered itself a "sister airline", and never intended to challenge THAI. The airline would rather keep to its status as a regional player, he added.

The only code-share arrangement



Thai Airways acting president Usanee Sangsingkeo (left) and Bangkok Airways president Puttipong Prasarttong-Osoth celebrate the new relationship.

between THAI and Bangkok Airways before yesterday was for the Bangkok-Samui route, which is operated by the latter but was left inactive by the flag carrier.

Yesterday's code-share accord, concluded at THAI's head office, will pave the way for strengthening route networks to help commercial sales and improve passenger convenience for flight connections

between the two carriers.

There is a significant imbalance on the numbers of routes operated by the two airlines under the code-share accord.

Covered in the agreement are 14 routes operated by Bangkok Airways and one by THAI, meaning Bangkok Airways will get significantly more passenger feed from THAI's global network, which covers 61 destinations.