Mr. Tschapke,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the Prussian Society for the invitation and the opportunity to make a presentation about the unique relations between Thailand and Germany. I will seize the opportunity and start at the beginnings of the official relations between our countries 150 years ago. The second part of the presentation will be made up of the cornerstones of the current relations and a small glimpse into the future.

But let’s start with history:

1. **Trade Relations Siam and German States**
   
   Trade relations between Siamese and German merchants have long since existed. With the trade treaty between the Hanseatic Cities of Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen of 25 October 1858 they have been institutionalized for the first time.

2. **Count Eulenburg’s Delegation**
   
   After they had travelled to Japan and China, the Prussian delegation under the leadership of the renowned Prussian envoy Count Eulenburg arrived in Bangkok in 1861. They were received by King Mongkut with rich presents and had been provided for richly during their stay.

3. **Letters by Count Eulenburg from Siam**
   
   His impressions are noted in his letters to Germany in rich detail and have been translated and published last year by Thai-German Culture Foundation. I have some copies here if you are interested.

4. **Signing the Treaty**
   
   On 7 February 1862 the “Treaty of Amity, Navigation and Commerce between the Kingdom of Siam on one part and the states of the German customs and commercial union, and the Grand Duchies of Mecklenburg Strelitz on the other part” had been signed by Count Eulenburg and Siamese Plenipotentiaries. In this treaty, both sides promised each other lasting peace and steadfast friendship, protection for person and property as well as complete liberty of commerce and navigation.

   Because of this contract, Germany and Thailand celebrated 150 years of diplomatic ties last year. The treaty facilitated the fast expansion of trade relations between Siam and Germany. The number of Hanseatic ships anchoring before Bangkok quickly rose. The first Prussian consulate was inaugurated in the 1860s.

5. **King Chulalongkorn**
   
   After the ascension to the throne of the sixteen year old King Chulalongkorn – or King Rama V – in 1868, the relations between Germany and Siam took a leap forward. The German consulate general was raised to the rank of ministerial residence in 1888.
6. King Chulalongkorn’s 1897 Visit

On His visit to Germany in 1897, King Chulalongkorn meets Kaiser Wilhelm II and former Chancellor Bismarck. Everywhere of His visits, King Chulalongkorn was welcomed with all honours and the German newspapers extensively reported about His travels, especially to the German factories, where He pointed out to his entourage those things he intended to introduce to Siam.

King Chulalongkorn and Kaiser Wilhelm II had become friends and they continued to exchange friendly letter correspondence. And also with Duke Johann Albrecht of Mecklenburg Schwerin, King Chulalongkorn became close friends. They exchanged visits and during His travels in Germany, King Chulalongkorn stopped by in Braunschweig in order to visit His old friend.

7. German Contributions to Siamese Modernization

Above all, Germany, unlike Great Britain and France, had no colonial interests in South East Asia, became a trusted and close partner during Siam’s modernization process.

The most significant German contributions to Siam’s modernization lied in the fields of the postal and telegraph system, including Siam’s first telegraph connection to Europe in 1927 by Telefunken.

Until World War I, large parts of Siam’s railway system were built almost entirely by German engineers.

German medicals were close advisors to the King and His army, and Dr. Friedrich Schäfer layed the foundation of the Chulalongkorn Hospital.

Notable is also the German contribution to music in Siam and Thailand. The German Jacob Feit composed Siam’s national anthem at the behest of King Chulalongkorn. His son Peter Feit, not only composed the current Thai national anthem, but also invented a notation system which allowed traditional Thai music to be written down for the first time.

8. Economical Ties

German businesses like Krupp and B. Grimm increasingly invested in Siam and trade flourished. Germany was one of Siam’s most important trading partners. At the turn of the century, almost half of the ships coming to Siam were under German flag. Shortly before WWI, Siam concluded roughly two third of its foreign trade with Germany.

9. Siamese Princes in Germany

King Chulalongkorn sent many of His sons to study in Germany. Among them were:

- Prince Paribatra, who studied at German military academies and later served as Supreme Commander of Siam’s navy;
- Prince Rangsit, who studied medicine in Heidelberg and married the German Elisabeth Scharrenberg;
- Prince Dilok, who became King Chulalongkorn’s first son to receive a doctor’s title with a thesis about “Agriculture in Siam” at the University of Tübingen;
- And perhaps most notably, Prince Mahidol, who studied at military and naval academies in Berlin and Flensburg. His son, Ananda Mahidol, the later King Rama VIII, was born in Heidelberg. His other son, Bhumibol Adulyadej, is our revered King Rama IX.

Also, four out of five military planners of the 1932 revolution which changed the absolute monarchy into the present day constitutional monarchy were trained in Germany. Their actions were so well planned that there is no blood shed during the revolution.

10. King Chulalongkorn’s Second Visit

King Chulalongkorn came to Germany again in 1907. This time, His visit was of rather private nature, but He was received just as warmly. In Bad Homburg He went to cure for some weeks. Here,
He celebrated His 54th birthday and donated a Sala Thai which now stands over the Chulalongkorn Spring.

During this journey King Chulalongkorn regularly wrote letters to His wife and children in Siam, in order to enable them to take part in what He lived and saw in far away Germany. He described in details the contemporary art which He gazed upon in the galleries, the acquaintances He made – but also such negligible things as the operating mode of a window blind in a hotel in Kiel. The letters have been compiled in a book *Glai Baan* – Far from Home. I have some Glai Baan books in German translation here if you are interested.

In hindsight, some historians say that the time of King Chulalongkorn marks the “Golden Age” of Thai-German relations.

11. After First World War

WWI saw Siam and Germany on opposing sides. Relations between the two countries suffered deeply during this time and only in 1925, diplomatic representations were opened in each other’s countries again. In 1937, a new treaty of amity, trade and navigation, resembling the Eulenburg Contract was concluded.

12. Relations between Federal Republic of Germany and the Kingdom of Thailand

In 1953, the treaty of 1937 between Thailand and Germany was reinstated. Since then, numerous agreements on economic, cultural and financial cooperation were added. The deep and friendly relations are also expressed through the large number of mutual visits of elected representatives, ministers and heads of states during the past sixty years.

King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit visited the Federal Republic of Germany. The Federal Presidents Lübke, Carstens and Rau as well as Chancellor Kohl visited Thailand.

**Relations Now and in the Future**

Now I am coming to the second part of the presentation: the relations today and tomorrow.

13. New Chapter of Relations

150 years after the treaty was signed, Thai-German relations are entering into a new chapter of bilateralism.

Not only have our ties been intensified in the conventional areas of bilateral trade and investments, they also become multi-dimensional while remaining ever strong and close at all levels.

The relationship at the very high level has been reinforced and that helps to move forward our cooperation. Our Prime Minister visited Germany for the first time after 17 years in 2012. The same year German Vice Chancellor, Foreign Minister, Minister of Finance and State Secretaries visited Thailand, in addition to several visits of members of the German Parliament.

14. Thailand: Gateway to Asia

From a European point of view, Thailand stands for a strategic gateway to Southeast Asia. If you look at the map, Thailand is located at the heart of the East-West, North-South Economic Corridors that provide access to ASEAN and other East Asian countries, particularly China and India, which is a market of billions of people.

A senior official at DIHK mentioned that Thailand is ‘an easy start’ for doing business in Asia. Apart from solid economic fundamentals such as sound macroeconomic management and strong domestic market, Thailand also has well-developed infrastructure, a service-oriented culture, a skilled and reliable workforce and forward-looking policies that promote growth and sustainability.
15. Trade Relations and New Markets

It is not surprising that our trade in goods and services with Germany has already exceeded 7 billion euros, while German investment in Thailand stands around 70 million euros.

If you ask, I am rather optimistic about the euro crisis, as far as the Thai-German relations are concerned. I may join your Chancellor and Foreign Minister in considering it an opportunity to explore new potential markets. Indeed, we currently observe an increased interest of German businesses in the emerging ASEAN market, in addition to the obvious choices of China, Japan, South Korea or India.

16. Cooperation in Education

Moving from traditional trade and investment relations, we now focus on forging the cooperation in the fields of sharing best practices, knowledge and technology with Germany.

Minister of State Pieper and our Deputy Minister of Education Sakda signed a new MOU on Education Cooperation in October last year. One of the key areas of mutual interest is the German dual system. While we would like to improve the system in our vocational schools, German companies - especially those investing in Thailand - have a shared interest in developing the skills of local workforce that meet their demand.

17. Cooperation in Renewables

We also work on deepening the cooperation in the areas of German expertise such as renewable energy, green construction, agro-industry, medical science and education in the aspects related to industry.

Our nuclear projects have been put under moratorium after Fukushima while the industrial expansion will increase the demand for electricity. In this regard, Germany can be one of our models to explore alternative energy sources that are not only efficient but also reliable and environment-friendly. Some German companies have established their business in the field of renewables such as wind, solar and biomass.

18. Food Security

Agro-industry is one of the key sectors in the Thai economy. Thai companies are interested in seeking partners in Germany, in order that they can share technologies in green packaging, logistics etc., along with the knowledge on promoting food security.

19. People to People Relations

It is also our two peoples who have made our relations so alive and special. About half a million Germans visit Thailand each year and about 30,000 Germans have chosen to stay on as long-term residents in the Kingdom. More than 55,000 Thais call Germany their second home and are integrating in German society remarkably well. At least 1,000 Thai students are currently enrolled in German universities, who once graduated can enter into the German labor market as qualified skilled workforce.

20. Characteristics of the Tourism Sector

Some of you might expect me to say a few words on the well known aspects of Thailand – being the ‘Land of Smiles’ offering an exquisite cuisine of great variety, with white sandy beaches and amazing cultural heritage sites.

Apart from an incredible value-for-money ratio and well-developed infrastructure with extensive connection to neighboring countries and beyond, I would like to take this opportunity to underscore some new trends in our tourism sector like eco-tourism, creative tourism and medical tourism that have increasingly attracted tourists from Germany and all over the world.

21. Thailand and Germany – Today and Tomorrow
Finally, I would like to make a short overview about current developments in Thailand:

- after the heavy floods of 2011, Thailand will be more prepared for the future flood crisis: several billion dollars will be put into protection measures and water management during the next couple of years. Corresponding international bidding has been opened. This is to ensure that German investments are protected in Thailand and large and medium scale businesses can continue to produce reliably.
- Furthermore, Thailand has installed a 70 billion dollar heavy infrastructure project. During the next couple of years, our railway system will be expanded by several high speed connections, the famous Sky Train in Bangkok will be expanded, highway connections and deep sea ports are created, the Suvarnabhumi Airport will be expanded just 7 years after its inauguration.
- With the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community, a common market of 10 countries and 600 million inhabitants is coming into place. Thailand as gateway and hub surely will offer German businesses ample opportunity.

Whatever happens in Thailand, we will always endeavor to balance the interests of our countries. German know-how can surely help Thailand in further developing.

As Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Germany I will closely work with my counterparts in strengthening the cooperation of our countries in areas of common interest, so that our long and fruitful relations remain mutually beneficial.

Thank you for your attention.

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