

JUNE 2021

ScandAsia



BUSINESS:

Danish couple sells organic food in Vietnam

COMMUNITY:

Trine Sophie Hveen Nielsen is reinventing MDBC

COVID-19:

Danes offered vaccinations in Denmark

The traveling psychologist
Anja Lang's
unconventional
journey through Asia

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY



Jimmy Chiu's 12 years at Bangkok Patana led him to Aeronautics and Astronautics Engineering at Purdue University, then to prototype projects for Honda Research Institute, USA and AI. For fun he still races cars and works on pit crews. From the Design+Technology rooms at Bangkok Patana to the excitement of the race track, Jimmy embodies our definition of a life long learner.

Read Jimmy's full story:



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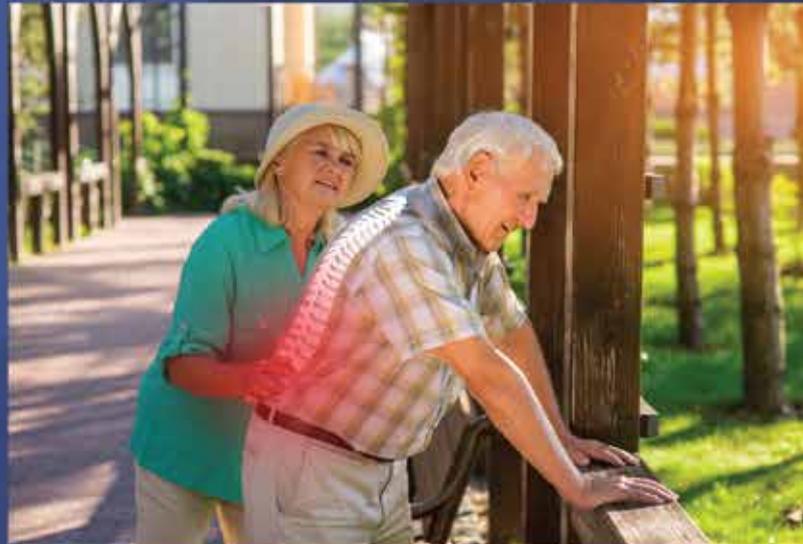
Microscopic Discectomy: A minimally invasive surgery to treat lumbar disc herniation (herniated disc)

Disc herniation, also called herniated disc or slipped disc develops when some of the nucleus pushes out through a tear in the annulus. This condition is often the result of an aging-related wear and tear, known as disc degeneration. As we age, these disks become less flexible and are at greater risk of tearing or rupturing with even a minor strain. Although herniated disc can occur in any part of the spine, it is more common in the lower back (lumbar spine) than in the neck (cervical spine). If it is left untreated, herniated disc can irritate a nearby nerve, resulting in pain and weakness in an arm or leg. Pain and tingling sensation often radiate from the back to the buttock and leg.

To diagnose for herniated disc in most cases, medical history, comprehensive physical examination and neurological examination are required. In some cases, imaging tests might be further required, including X-ray, CT scan and MRI scan.

To identify source of pain caused by herniated disc, fluoroscopic guided epidural steroid injections are intended to identify the exact location of slipped disc and provide pain relief, allowing the patients to improve their low back pain and radiating pain to the legs. Besides identification of source of pain, epidural steroid injections also help to reduce inflammation in the nerve root. If conservative treatments fail to improve symptoms, a minimally invasive spine surgery might be considered, if appropriate.

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Standard open spine surgery usually involves large incisions, more pain and more postoperative complications as well as longer recovery periods. Due to surgical advances, a minimally invasive surgical procedure, known as microscopic discectomy has been considered "gold standard" and widely conducted to overcome those surgical limitations. During a minimally invasive microscopic discectomy procedure, small incisions will be made over the affected part of the spine. A lighted surgical microscope is used to assist spine surgeon in visualizing the affected disc and surrounding tissues, enabling the herniated portion of the disc under the nerve root to be precisely removed. By giving the nerve root more space, pressure is relieved and the nerve root can begin to heal. Since microscopic discectomy is performed through small incisions, patients often experience less pain, lower postoperative complications, less traumatic injuries to surrounding nerves and tissues which can lead to substantially faster recovery and quick return to daily life and activity. In addition, microscopic discectomy poses less chance of disc herniation recurrence.

Advantages of microscopic discectomy

- + Reduced damages to surrounding nerves and muscles
- + Smaller incision with a better cosmetic outcome
- + Less pain
- + Less operative time consumption
- + Faster recovery and quick return to daily life

Reference:

Dr. Sarij Srisuparp

Spine Surgeon, Spine Center, Bangkok International Hospital.



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The Arctic is ours

Beijing talks little about its polar activities and is deliberately ambiguous when it does and therefore these moves have drawn little attention outside specialized professional communities.

ScandAsia's readers represent such a specialized community. Our readers come from the Nordic nations and we have a keen interest in the Arctic. ScandAsia readers will recall several articles over the past few years calling our readers attention to China's ambitions in our arctic sphere.

Not a single square meter of China is located inside the polar circle. Still, China increasingly portrays itself as one of the polar states. A polar state in Beijing's understanding is a global giant, strong in military, scientific, and economic terms.

China's focus on becoming a polar great power represents a fundamental re-orientation - a completely new way of imagining the world. China's push into these regions encompasses maritime and nuclear security, the frontlines of climate change research, and the possibility of a resources bonanza.

Beijing regards our polar region as vital domains for fishing and shipping and hopes to exploit their rich reserves of energy and minerals. They regard Antarctica much the same. It plans to use its activities there to grow China's global influence encouraged by the way the US has largely ignored their movements into these regions.

ScandAsia is proud to be at the forefront of this awareness among the Nordic countries. If we do not demand a rule based presence of China in the Articles our countries are likely to wake up too late.

Recommended reading:

China as a Polar Great Power

By Anne-Marie Brady

Cambridge University Press, 2017, 290 pages

Happy reading,



z

Gregers Moller
Editor in Chief

ScandAsia

ScandAsia is a printed magazine and online media covering the people and businesses of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland living and working in China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

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Singapore and Sweden can help each other post-Covid

By Mette Larsen

Speaking at the Sweden-Southeast Asia Business Summit 2021 on 25 May, Singapore's Trade and Industry Minister Gan Kim Yong said that Singapore and Sweden can help each other in sustainable-related businesses.

"Swedish companies can use Singapore as a launchpad to trial and commercialize green technology solutions for the region," the Minister said.

The Sweden-Southeast Asia Business Summit focused this year on the Reset that is needed post-

Covid, concerning sustainability and digitalization, and what challenges and opportunities lie ahead to make this happen.

Companies in Southeast Asia and Sweden need to be prepared for the new business landscape as global markets begin their recovery and according to the Minister, there are opportunities for Singapore, Sweden, and Swedish companies in sustainability-related businesses, in line with the Singapore Green Plan 2030 that was unveiled in February.

Source: The Straits Times



Thai Airways tests demands with direct Phuket flight from Copenhagen

By Mette Larsen



The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is working with Thai Airways in preparation for Phuket's planned quarantine-free reopening with Thailand's flag carrier airline selling flights from Copenhagen and three other European cities directly to Phuket to test the demand, local media Bangkok Post reports.

Thai Airways' flights from Copenhagen, Paris, Frankfurt, and London will fly direct to Phuket airport

before flying onwards to Suvarnabhumi airport.

Hundreds of tour agents are invited to take experimental trips during the third quarter to test Phuket's Sandbox scheme but the tourist demand is expected to be on the softer side in the initial stages due to tight travel restrictions in Thailand and some European countries.

In addition, Thailand has also extended its state of emergency until 31 July which means all services

to Phuket have to be conducted as semi-commercial flights and all passengers are required to present a certificate of entry before arrival as part of Covid-19 containment measures.

The plan is that vaccinated tourists will be exempt from quarantine in Phuket from 1 July onwards but according to Siripakorn Cheawsamoot, tourists may be reluctant to travel to Thailand if it means isolation for many days when they return home.

Islands such as Phuket and Samui have limited entry points, allowing them to better control the flow of tourists and administer health screening measures more efficiently, Siripakorn Cheawsamoot said.



Danes abroad can get vaccinated in Denmark

By Mette Larsen

After fighting for months for Danes abroad to be included in the Danish corona vaccination program, Danes Worldwide has succeeded in its case, Danes Worldwide reports in a recently published article that read:

The National Board of Health now states that “If you stay temporarily in Denmark, you are entitled to free vaccination against COVID-19, even if you are not covered by health insurance in Denmark.”

To receive free vaccination against COVID-19 in Denmark, your temporary stay must meet two criteria:

1. The stay must have an expected duration of at least 30 days.
2. The purpose of your stay must not be to get vaccinated.

If you want to be vaccinated, contact your region when they start vaccinating your age group. The region will book your time for vaccination. Please note that you can only be vaccinated when your vaccination age group is offered vaccination.

Children under the age of 16 as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women do not have access to the vaccination. You can find the vaccination calendar here.

You can read more here on the Danish Health and Medicines Authority’s website, under point 14 in the FAQ. Danes Worldwide also refers to the provision on expatriate Danes in FAQ 15.

As Danes abroad by nature live in another country, stays in Denmark will be of the temporary nature

referred to in FAQ 14. We point out that the main purpose of the trip must be something other than accessing the corona vaccine.

The Secretary-General of Denmark Worldwide, Anne Marie Dalgaard, states:

“We are pleased that this opportunity is now opening up for our fellow citizens abroad, and we would like to commend the Danish government for taking on co-responsibility for resolving the corona pandemic. Fortunately, many of our members have access to vaccines in their countries of residence, but for those who do not, the problem is very serious. This group will now be able to be vaccinated in connection with temporary stays in Denmark.”

Swedish Greta Thunberg's response to China's fat-shaming

By Mette Larsen

Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg was recently called an “environmental princess” and mocked by her weight in an article published in the Chinese state-owned newspaper China Daily. According to Woman's Health, Greta Thunberg's response, “Being fat-shamed by Chinese state Owned media is a pretty weird experience even by my standards. But it's definitely going on my resume,” is all class.

The statements in China Daily came from journalist Tang Ge after Greta Thunberg urged China to do more to reduce its emissions and address climate change. “Although she claims to be vegetarian, judging from the results of her growth, her carbon emissions are actually not low,” Tang Ge wrote.

In addition, the article stated that “the lifestyle that pollutes the earth the most is European and American life” and accused Greta Thunberg of “double standards” because she called out China.



Greta Thunberg @GretaThunberg · May 22

Being fat-shamed by Chinese state owned media is a pretty weird experience even by my standards. But it's definitely going on my resume.



Chinese State Media Just Fat-Shamed Greta Thunberg

“Although she claims to be vegetarian, judging from the results of her growth, her carbon emissions are actually not low.”

apple.news

The article continued by stating that the climate activist “suddenly woke up on May 7 and began to criticize China for polluting the environment” after she Tweeted a report that found China's annual emissions were greater than those of all developed nations combined in 2019.

In her Tweet, Greta Thunberg acknowledged China was a developing nation under World Trade Organization terms but she said it was “no excuse for ruining future and present living conditions.” She added, “We can't solve the climate crisis unless China drastically changes course.”

Thailand aims to host more virtual trade fairs

Thailand's International Trade Promotion Department is set on hosting more virtual trade fairs and online business activities in order to boost the country's exports in the second half of the year.

According to Somdet Susomboon, the department's Director-General, the agency is preparing a

schedule of more than 30 virtual trade fairs and online business activities this year mainly in the second half to boost exports by more than 4%.

Source: Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce.

University of Oslo opening controversial China center



Fudan University in Shanghai. Photo: ALY SONG / REUTERS.

By Mette Larsen

Last year, the FUDAN-European Centre for China Studies at the University of Copenhagen closed but now a new center is set to open at the University of Oslo. The center will be called the 'Fudan European Center for Chinese Studies'.

China researcher Harald Bøckman believes it is wrong to enter such collaboration now but Rector at UiO believes that boycotts of individual countries are wrong, local media NRK reports.

Fudan University in Shanghai is one of China's leading universities. They have their own international department that takes care of the centers in other continents. According to China researcher Harald Bøckman, the Fudan European Center for Chinese Studies is to an even greater extent a lectern for China's official view of current

issues in the world and he believes it is wrong to enter such collaboration now. Harald Bøckman has previously worked at the Center for Development and the Environment at UiO. Ever since the Olympics in 2008, he has been denied entry to China.

According to NRK, Rector of UiO, Svein Stølen completely disagrees with Harald Bøckman and says, "I think we will become a political player if we start boycotting individual countries". Svein Stølen says that he is aware of all the challenges that cooperation with China entails. But it also provides a better understanding of China and Chinese research, he says.

The Fudan European Center for Chinese Studies will be run by a general manager who is paid by Fudan University in China and a Norwegian coordinator who is paid by UiO. Only one similar center ex-

ists in Africa. The general manager, Chunrong Liu, is a political scientist and has written about governance and politics. The center will conduct network building within three main areas; social sciences and humanities, health and medicine, and climate and environment through seminars for researchers, students, and people outside the university.

According to the Fudan European Center's website, the center is "a strategic initiative to meet the growing need for a more nuanced and balanced understanding of China's development and global influence". Professor of Chinese studies, Mette Halskov Hansen explains that wording is linked to Fudan's old agreement with the University of Copenhagen and it will be changed soon.

Maersk delivered empty containers to help Thai exports

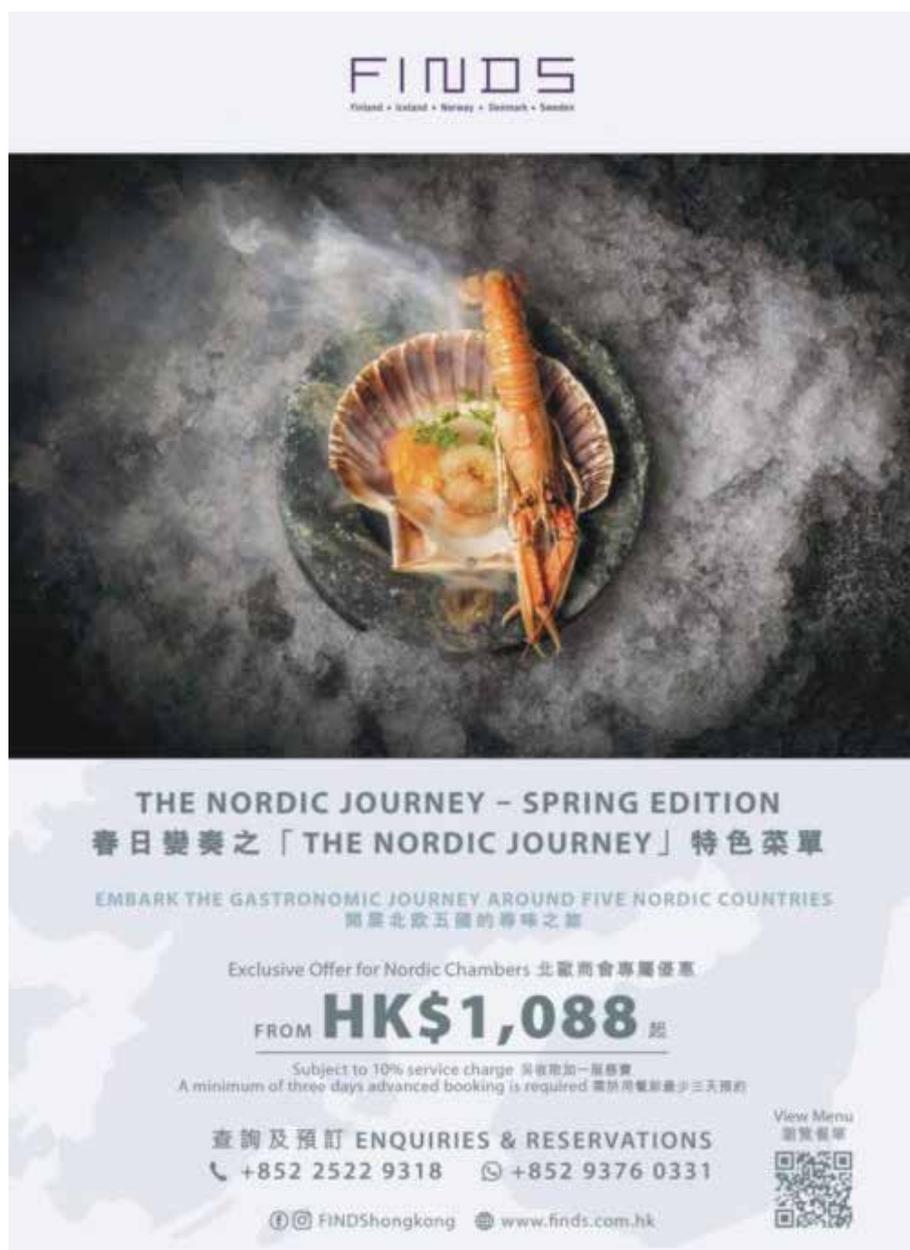
By Zazithorn Ruengchinda

Recently, the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand announced a demand for empty containers in order to boost exports from the country. One of Maersk Line's

largest vessels, the Manila Maersk, stepped up to the call. The Triple E-class vessel (2M) called up at the Leam Chabang deep-sea port and successfully delivered a full load of

empty containers with an aim to increase volumes for exporters in the region.

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If you are a FinnCham member in Hong Kong, you are currently in for a treat. FINDS takes you on a gastronomic journey around the five Nordic countries in Tsim Sha Tsui, Hong Kong.

FINDS symbolizes the Nordic countries of Finland, Iceland, Norway, Denmark, and Sweden and imports the majority of their seasonal ingredients directly from the Nordic Region.

As a corporate member of the Finnish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, FINDS is currently offering two exclusive offers for FinnCham Members for their 'Spring Summer Lunch Menu' and 'FINDS' Signature Menu "The Nordic Journey" Spring Edition.

The menu showcases the Nordic spirit in every detail, including signature dishes from Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden, complemented with handpicked Nordic spirit and wines and exquisite Nordic tableware.

Finnwatch human rights researcher cleared of all charges

By Mette Larsen

Thailand's Supreme Court has cleared Andy Hall, Finnwatch human rights researcher of all charges, bringing an end to a years-long lawsuit against him, media YLE reports.

Andy Hall - a researcher and a migrant worker and labor rights activist - was formerly based in South East Asia. In early 2013 he was sued by Natural Fruit Company following the publication of the Finnish civil organization Finnwatch's report "Cheap Has a High Price".

Natural Fruit supplied in 2012 pineapple juice raw materials to Finnish retail chains and the report

from 2013 revealed serious human rights violations at the company's plant in Thailand.

In 2016, Andy Hall was found guilty of criminal defamation and computer crimes and faced a EUR 4300 fine along with a four-year prison sentence. But last year Thailand's Supreme Court dismissed the four-year suspended sentence. The final case against Andy Hall was a separate defamation charge over an interview he did with media Al Jazeera in 2013. The Supreme court however overturned a lower court's ruling that Andy Hall should pay 10 million baht in compensation charges and dismissed the case. The



Andy Hall at his trial in Bangkok in 2016.

Supreme court ruled that his interview was justified.

In a statement, Finnwatch Executive Director Sonja Finér said, "We are pleased that all charges against Hall have now been dropped and we can leave this eight-year legal harassment behind us."

"Thailand should ensure that its legislation is amended so that similar harassment through the courts is no longer possible," Sonja Finér added.

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Ambassador Gröndahl: 'Thai-Swedish relations shall remain strong'

By *Zazithorn Ruengchinda*

In May, the Swedish Ambassador H.E. Jon Åström Gröndahl paid an online visit to Mrs. Chulamane Chartsuwan, Chief of Department of European Affairs. They discussed sustainability, environmental awareness, and collaborations between the two countries.

Ambassador Gröndahl and Chief of Department Chulamane mentioned feeling glad that there are many Swedish people relocated to Thailand, and likewise there are

Thais moving to Sweden permanently. A recent post by the Swedish embassy touched on the fact that many Thai teens are thinking and talking about moving abroad on various social media platforms. That the post just skyrocketed, with 64,000 likes and 43,000 re-posts on one day, was also in the conversation.

Ambassador Gröndahl said. "It was the embassy's duty to share and promote Sweden's value. I am glad that many people are interested and

researching on how to live, study and work in Sweden through various Swedish websites."

The ambassador also added that Swedish visa regulations remain the same.

Close diplomatic relations between Thailand and Sweden have been going on since 1883 and will certainly carry on into the foreseeable future.

Memories of Swedish King's visit to Indonesia

By *Mette Larsen*



The Embassy of Sweden in Jakarta took a trip down memory lane with its latest update, which shares moments from 2017, when King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden last visited Indonesia. The update reads:

"In Sweden, the last day of April is known as Valborgsmässoafton or Walpurgis Eve and marks the beginning of spring. But April 30th is also the birthday of the Swedish King who turns 75 this year.

This photo is a photo taken during the visit of Swedish King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia to Indonesia in 2017. On that visit, the King of Sweden planted ironwood trees in the Bogor palace area with Indonesian President Joko Widodo.

According to Mr. Joko Widodo, ironwood is the strongest wood compared to others, so that it becomes a symbol of the relationship between the two countries.



Photo: Embassy of Sweden in Phnom Penh.

Sweden and EU fund Parliamentary Centre of Asia in Cambodia

By Zazithorn Ruengchinda

Embassy of Sweden in Cambodia signed on 11 May 2021 an agreement to fund the Parliamentary Centre of Asia's (PCAsia) Cambodian activities. The Parliamentary centre does not currently have any activities in Cambodia.

The two-year project 2021-2022 with the amount of 11.9 million Swedish Kronor (around USD 1.5 million) is funded jointly by Sweden and the EU.

"The project aims to support the Public Financial Management (PFM) reform by providing technical assistance to government institutions in order to create an enabling environment for the PFM reform to be implemented in. This should allow authorities to deliver better on services to the public," Mr. Björn Häggmark, Sweden's Ambassador to the Kingdom of Cambodia, said after signing the agreement.

PCAsia's long-term goal is to contribute to an improvement in the performance of the Parliaments in the region by helping to strength-

en the capacity of parliamentary staff, and by increasing technical exchanges and experience-sharing among their regional and international peers.

The support is part of the Partnership for Accountability and Transparency programme, PAT, which is co-funded by Sweden and the EU. It is designed to complement EU's sector budget support to the PFM reform.

Established in 2011, the Parliamentary Institute of Cambodia (PIC) has built up a favourable reputation through its research papers and training and outreach activities, initially with the Cambodian Parliament, and in 2016 they signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA). PIC transitioned to the Parliamentary Centre of Asia (PCAsia) in 2021.

PCAsia's Executive Director, Mr. Dararith Kim-Yeat, stated that "Sweden has been a strategic partner for PIC and will continue to be

so for PCAsia at both the national and regional levels, supporting both core activities and also the Fiscal Analysis Capacity Training (FACT) activities -funded within the framework of the PAT program- that led to the creation by the Cambodian Senate of the Budget Research Department (BRD) in 2020. BRD has as main duties to provide research and budget analysis to members of the parliament.

Sweden's strategy consisting of actively involving the duty bearers, and trusting PIC/PCAsia as a local actor in managing and delivering complex projects according to internationally recognized standards, has paid off. In signing the agreement with PCAsia, we have faith that Sweden will choose to continue pursuing this successful strategy."

Danish GPV expands in Asia

By Mette Larsen



Inside GPV's Bangkok plant.

The Danish company GPV, is expanding its capacity as an EMS-partner (Electronics Manufacturing Services) and investing in new production lines in Thailand, media Evertiq reports.

GPV has production facilities in Denmark, Switzerland, Germany,

Austria, Slovakia, Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Mexico but the company plans to consolidate the production facilities in Asia into its two large sites in Thailand and Sri Lanka. With this initiative, GPV will close down its manufacturing activities in China and move them to the groups' other

sites and the Chinese activities will instead focus on material sourcing for the other GPV sites.

Moreover, GPV also plans to resume the projects of making large capacity expansions in Sri Lanka and Thailand. Originally GPV planned the two factory extensions, but the project was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. The full effect, however, won't be realized until the beginning of 2023.

The company's quarterly report shows that GPV has recorded record results during the first quarter of 2021.

"Our ambitious growth plans for GPV are intact," CEO Bo Lybæk says in the report.

Embassy of Denmark in Malaysia on DANCED – DANIDA

By Mette Larsen

Environmental cooperation between Denmark and Malaysia has come a long way since 1994. The Embassy of Denmark in Kuala Lumpur shares interesting facts and updates regarding the DANCED – DANIDA cooperation in a recent update:

"The Danish bilateral environmental assistance to Malaysia was initiated to promote the transfer of environmental technology and know-how, enabling Malaysia to find local solutions to environmental problems.

Under DANCED-DANIDA, 127 projects, with total funding of DKK 600 million (around RM 375 million) focusing on various areas of cooperation, were implemented. Between 1994 to 2001, DANCED mainly focused on urban development and industrialization,

sustainable use of energy, agriculture, forests, and wood resources, biological diversity, coastal zones, water resources, and industrial pollution. When DANIDA took over in 2001, the final phase of the cooperation focused on five areas, namely, environmental planning and strategy, renewable energy and energy efficiency (and CDM), solid waste management, environmentally hazardous substances, and biodiversity conservation.

The 16 years of partnership between the two countries had indeed strengthened the capacities of Malaysia in addressing the impact of climate change through mitigation and adaptation efforts, with the financial provision and technology transfer from Denmark. Even Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, the former Minister in the Prime Min-



Photo courtesy: The Embassy of Denmark in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

ister's Department applauded the cooperation, commenting that Malaysia could not have done it alone and effectively without the support of Denmark in combating climate change.

Although DANIDA is now a closed chapter in the Malaysia-Denmark story, many of these relationships are continuing at a commercial or academic level. In some cases, the Danish companies involved still have a permanent representation in Malaysia to this day."



New study: Danes dream of traveling to Thailand

By Mette Larsen

A new study from the Danish travel provider Spies shows that 5 out of 10 Danes have saved more than usual during the corona pandemic. And when the world opens up again, it's primarily a trip abroad that 70 percent of the respondents intend to spend their savings on, the company says in a recent press release. Thailand remains a top destination and bookings for July to September have increased sharply within the last few weeks.

Spies' Travel Panel study from April had a total of 3,135 respondents. More than half of them (53%) of the participants are now beginning to see an end to the pandemic and are more likely to book a trip now than a month ago.

The survey also showed that 15 percent intend to travel more

often than before. Only 1 percent expect to travel less frequently, and for 79 percent, the travel frequency will remain unchanged in the future.

"The desire to travel among Danes is enormous right now," says Jan Vendelbo, CEO of Spies.

"Many have saved up a little extra to soon be able to set off on a long-awaited journey. People are also looking to pamper themselves with more luxury, and therefore many have booked a room with direct pool access, a better hotel, or want to treat themselves to extra good food and drink during the holidays. We can also see that many want to go on that "Once in a lifetime journey". Destinations such as the Maldives, Thailand, and Mauritius are selling really well right now," Jan Vendelbo says.

The survey shows that about 8 out of 10 plan to spend roughly as much money as usual on their trip, while one in 10 responds say they intend to spend more money on their next trip abroad. 57 percent of the respondents opt for a better and more luxurious hotel with nice rooms and facilities while 35 percent are looking to spend more money on food, beverages, and restaurant visits. In addition, 27 percent plan to use more money on upgrades on the plane.

Luksusbaby hopes to open in China

By Mette Larsen



Ann-Louise Christine Aasted and Morten Grabowski Kjær.

The Danish kids clothing company Luksusbaby can, despite the pandemic, for the first time report a double-digit DKK million profit which makes the company eager to invest in the future. More stores in Denmark are in the plans and the dream is to end up in China.

The company was founded by Ann-Louise Christine Aasted and Morten Grabowski Kjær in 2014 and Luksusbaby has stores in the Danish cities of Aalborg and Aarhus. During the pandemic, however, the stores have been closed down, which is why Morten Grabowski openly states that the profit is “more than expected”.

The couple has decided to invest the profit in future plans. This includes several stores in Denmark, including in the city of Odense and Copenhagen. In the long run, establishing stores abroad are also part of the plan.

“We have plans to open stores in Norway and Sweden. The dream is to end up in China. It is a wild country, and the Chinese are happy with Danish design and Danish products,” Morten Grabowski Kjær says.

Mediq Finland to market Chinese home test kits

By Mette Larsen



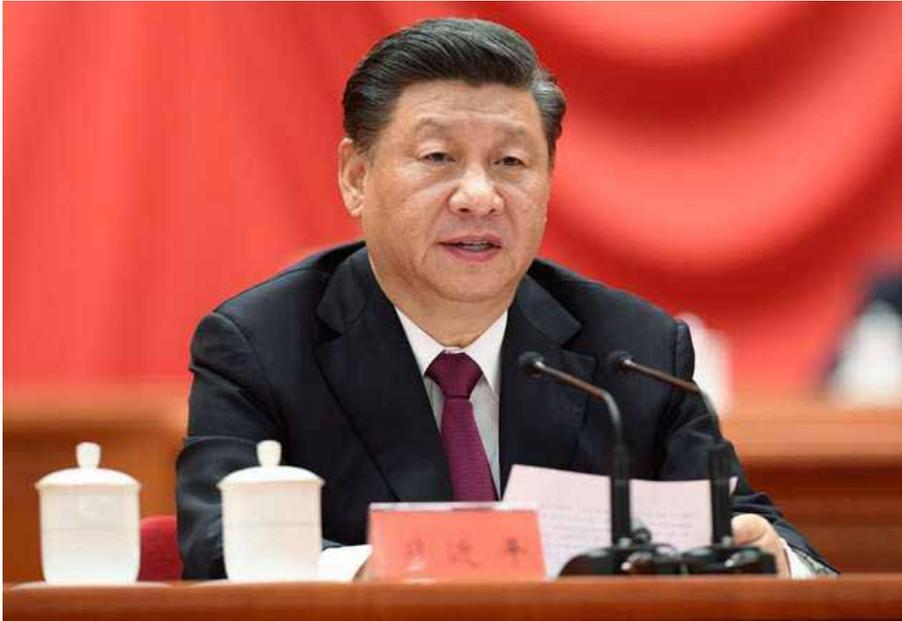
Covid-19 home test kits. Image: Tanja Huutonen.

Mediq Finland, which provides equipment, supplies, and related services for healthcare and laboratory professionals, is planning to market a Chinese-made home test kit for Covid-19, media YLE reports.

The self-administered tests give users results in 15 to 20 minutes. They are antigen tests that are most accurate if taken five to seven days after the onset of symptoms, so they may not show positive results if taken before the virus has had a chance to incubate.

Heidi Liikkanen, CEO of Mediq Suomi said that she thinks Finnish consumers are excited about the new test kits and the company has ordered hundreds of thousands of the kits as a start.

“We have prepared for reasonably high demand,” the CEO explained but said she could not directly comment on the consumer price of the tests. However, she said the cost would be in the same class as home pregnancy tests, which are about 10 euros apiece.



Chinese President Xi Jinping and his regime are increasing the pressure on foreign journalists in China. Photo: CHINE NOUVELLE / SIPA / SHUTTERSTOCK.

China keeps a closer eye on Swedish journalists

By Mette Larsen

It is becoming increasingly difficult for foreign journalists to work in China and more and more people are being forced to leave the country. Swedish reporters say that they are constantly monitored at work, both electronically and by plainclothes police who shadow them, Swedish media Expressen reports.

According to Björn Djurberg, SR's correspondent in Beijing, "The technical monitoring has hardened, in addition, you risk getting shadowed when you are not at work."

The Foreign Correspondents' Club in China (FCCC) writes in its latest report that at least 18 foreign journalists have been expelled from or forced to leave China in the past year. It is an expression of an increasingly harsh climate where the authorities monitor and intimidate journalists and use revoked visas as a threat, the report says.

Expressen writes that Swedish correspondents on site describe how the authorities constantly monitor them at work. They are using

an increasingly advanced system, which is getting tougher every year, with electronic control, cameras, and police and security men, both in uniform and in civilian clothes, who follow the journalists.

"It was immense control from the time we set foot in China. A policeman met us at the airport. Then we had people following us all the time, Björn Djurberg says in a radio interview with Swedish PI about a recent visit to the Xinjiang region

"It became very clear that people were shadowing us. They stopped when we stopped, they made exactly the same turns. If you turned around, the person turned around and looked at the wall or their phone, he said.

Björn Djurberg was in the city of Kashgar in Xinjiang, the province where China, according to human rights groups, commits severe abuses against the Muslim ethnic group the Uighurs. He said that he and his colleagues were also shadowed by cars on the roads, a car in front of

their car, and a car following them. He also said he had been subjected to surveillance in other places in China as well.

According to China expert Jojje Olsson, the authorities are increasingly using journalists' accreditation and visas as a means of pressure. More and more correspondents receive visas that are valid for less than a year. "It is easy for a journalist to have their visa taken if the reporting is questioned. It is important that reporters on site do not engage in self-censorship to safeguard accreditation," he says. Jojje Olsson lives in Taiwan after previously reporting for many years from China.



The traveling psychologist **Anja Lang's unconventional journey through Asia**

Danish Anja Lang has the vision to inspire people to affectionate fearlessness, mental health, and growth of freedom in thought and action. With 'Open Path Clinic' she is on a mission to lift one million people out of anxiety, stress, depression, and trauma within the next 40 years and to support companies and organizations in becoming sustainable human workplaces that fully benefit employees and society. Ambitious perhaps, but Anja Lang not only talks the talk, she has also walked the walk – quite literally in fact.

By Mette Larsen

Anja is a firm believer that the only way she can really help others is by practicing what she preaches. From studying alongside nuns at a Buddhist monastery in Nepal, submerging herself amongst the Naga Babas at the Ganges River in India, to working closely with trauma patients in Chiang Rai, Thailand, Anja has taken the journey herself to gain an in-depth knowledge of the techniques she practices as a mental health entrepreneur, psychologist, coach, meditation teacher, business consultant, and traveling psychologist.

Through her travels, Anja has discovered and allocated how we through insight, different perspectives, and realizations can learn to cope with the challenges that are, according to herself, fundamental parts of being human.

"What makes people sick is not the stress in itself but the thoughts surrounding the stress. The pressure we put upon ourselves for being stressed when we should have been able to cope. Stress is not a problem we can rid ourselves of but it is something we can learn to be friends with while the storm passes," Anja explains.

The road less traveled

Virtually over our morning coffee in two different parts of Asia, I recently talked with Anja about how her career-driven life in the fast lane with a fancy but demanding job title and solid paychecks let her take the road less traveled and embark on her own unconventional expedition.

"Is there more to life than success, status, and money, who am I really without it all – and do I, myself actually lead by the examples I am teaching others? Can you help others cope with stress when you live a stressful life yourself? And can you really know that your teachings and techniques work if you haven't tested them yourself?"

To find out the answers, Anja took a leave of work about six years ago and has since been diving straight into practices of Buddhism, mindfulness, and holistic scripts all over Asia. A most indifferent but ever so fascinating and inspiring approach. After listening to Anja's story I can confirm that just like the saying goes, there are truly things you will only experience on the roads less traveled.





Outside the Iyengar Yoga Centre in Rishikesh, the world capital of yoga.

Life is a journey

It was never the traveling in itself that inspired Anja to seek abroad, but the realization of needing answers, knowledge, and practices that she could not get back home.

"I want to inspire people to step out of their comfort zones. It is such a giving experience. It is not always comfortable but the uncomfortable let us be aware of our own reaction patterns. You will meet so many different people who can teach you so much and I am much better at my job because of it" Anja says.

Before the pandemic paralyzed the world, Anja was working at a holistic recovery center in Chaing Rai, Thailand but got stuck in Tainan, Taiwan during a study she attended when borders closed. I will get back to this a little later though because first I wanted to know how it all started.

Back to the beginning

Anja who is originally a trained organizational psychologist and clinical psychologist always thought that she was meant to live a career-driven life with everything it entails including success, money, and status. Born and raised in the Danish city of Randers, Anja studied for her Bachelor's degree in Aarhus before taking her Master's in Copenha-

gen. She did an internship at The Embassy of Denmark in Poland and has always been more of a nomad than a typical homebound individual.

She started her career working with psychological principles and research methods to solve problems in the workplace and improve the quality of life at Lego in Denmark. As the adventurous soul she is, Anja was thrilled when Lego stationed her abroad in London, England, and excited to be working on international projects.

Pulling the plug

With a very big interest in the human mind and psyche, why our jobs tend to make us so stressed, and how do we improve life quality, Anja started practicing Buddhism alongside the nuns at a Monastery in England while also adding meditation to her principles and practices as an organizational psychologist at Lego. But Anja kept asking herself the same questions and she witnessed close hand how stressed we as people get from our demanding jobs, the pressure there is from society to succeed and how so many people suffer under those demands that we put upon ourselves.

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Through her travels, Anja has discovered and allocated how we through insight, different perspectives, and realizations can learn to cope with the challenges that are, according to herself, fundamental parts of being human.

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Anja in Bylakuppe, the largest Tibetan settlement in South India.

“I don’t want to teach anything shallow, I wanted to know the origin of these practices and if they actually work. I led a fast life with many work hours and if I wanted to truly dig deep into the problems I knew I had to take the journey and do the work myself. So basically I told my leader that I needed to take a year off and stare into a wall,” Anja says and laughs.

And so the journey began

Anja started working at a so-called ‘Folk High School’ in Zanzibar in Tanzania where she taught Self-insight which generally implies the level of understanding that exists relative to the nature of one’s self-system. After about six months, Lego was forced to make organizational cuts and with that, Anja’s old department was closed. That made her consider if she actually wanted to return to her old life or continue in the new path she was on. She had planned to escape a stressful job and dig deep within herself but in reality, her job in Zanzibar working alongside young people was just as stressful as her job in Lego, which then prompted her to proceed to a yoga training course in India.





Anja took dance classes at the Attakkalari Centre for Movement Arts in Bengaluru, India.

“This must give me what I need, I thought, just a month or two months in India and then I’ll be ready and know what I want to do,” Anja says.

Life amongst the Naga Babas

Anja found a so-called Indian Ashram which origin is a fascinating story that inspired her to meet the woman behind the tale. The Ashram was founded by a German actress who in the ‘60s sought out help with her mental health issues in India where she came across a Yogi living under a tree next to the Ganges River. After meeting the Yogi, the actress seemingly threw her passport away and completely submerged herself into the same lifestyle the Yogi practiced and she lived with him under the tree for 12 years until they were expecting a baby. They ended up having three children together and her sister sponsored a piece of land for them to build a so-called Ashram. When Anja arrived years later the German lady had passed away but now her three children were running the Ashram and Anja ended up staying there for six months practicing Yoga, Meditation, and other spiritual practices to evolve and grow spiritually.

The Naga Babas or Naga Sadhus, literally meaning ‘Naked Yogis’, are a part of the Shaivite sadhus at the Ashram next to the Ganges River. They take vows of celibacy,

renounce societal norms, and take control of their basic instincts by stripping down to their flesh, with the ability to stay in frigid temperatures without cover. Through conversation and observation, Anja learned about their practices, how the psychical mind works and how people can truly work with themselves. Anja explains the experience as one of the most powerful she has had in all her years of studying psychology. “I believe that there are so many methods other than speaking that psychologists in the West do not really recognize, it’s all done more on a surface level and this experience taught me so incredibly much”.

Slow down.... Just breathe

Anja continued her journey over the next many months by moving from one retreat to another, isolated in practices with different teachers. After six months in India, she traveled to live in a Monastery in Nepal for a month and returned to Dharamsala in Himachal, India to study Buddhism on a higher level. There she spent another six months living at a Nunnery with the nuns while also following studies by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala.

Anja came back to Denmark in late 2017 to attend a wedding. Although she was quickly offered several jobs and in reality had all the elements with her to start her life back in Denmark, she had a continuing desire to really unite her new learnings with psychology. She wasn’t finished with her journey and ended up going back to India where she continued her learnings.

Dance to your own rhythm

“Back in India I just really wanted to do something fun,” Anja says and she joined a month-long Indian Dance recency program with other dance artists interested in creating works in a rural context. She loved it and her dance teacher suggested she applied for a Dance school in Bangalore which she got accepted into. There Anja took an education in modern dance, traditional Indian dance, and martial arts that also involved art therapy and somatic teachings and was very intense with practices running long hours every day.

“It was a fun and very interesting experience to witness what I was able to do with my body and how the body and mind work together. How much capacity we as people have” Anja says.

“After that experience, I also work very somatically in my practices with clients. The study of the mind/body interface, the relationship between our physical matter and our energy, the interaction of our body structures with our thoughts and actions”

Back to the present

After that year Anja had an immense desire to get back into working with clients which is why she applied for the job at the holistic recovery center in Chaing Rai, Thailand.

"I worked with trauma and as a somatic psychologist but also with a focus on mindfulness. I was also the meditation teacher onsite. I felt that with all my previous education within psychology I was now able to give so much more and it was such a great experience."

Until the pandemic hit.

As mentioned briefly at the start, Anja got stuck in Tainan, Taiwan when Covid-19 paralyzed the world last year and she has been there ever since. During her year in Taiwan, Anja has gotten back into her works as an organizational psychologist. The holistic recovery center she worked for in Thailand is relocating to Portugal with help from the EU and Anja has been offered to work as HR responsible for the startup. The plan is for Anja to relocate there at the end of this year which is something she is very excited about.

"In Taiwan, I was working online but also doing retreats and conducting support groups for women to help them deal with the uncertainty of the pandemic", Anja says. She is passionate about women's work and the role women are placed in according to the traditional cultural view of women's roles in society.

How to cope with stress, depression, and anxiety

After listening to Anja's journey, I had to ask, "Do you ever get stressed?"

"Yes naturally! I actually believe that depression, anxiety, and stress are important parts of being human. Those feelings are stages though and not feelings and they come and go throughout our lives. We have the idea that if we practice mindfulness or speak to a psychologist we can rid ourselves of these problems and be happy. But in reality, what I've learned after years of practice and studying is that we can not rid ourselves of these elements. It is a fundamental part of our heritage as humans and how we have established ourselves in life with high expectations. A lot of our actions and thought activities lead us away from our body and that is what makes us stressed. It is not about not being stressed but all about how we deal with the stress."

"When I experience stress myself I try not to work myself up about it. I define the reason as to why I feel stressed and how I can cope with it. So I can stay human through it. Knowing it's human to be stressed and knowing that it will pass if I accept and cope with it," Anja says.



We are all the same people

"What I've realized on my journey is that we are all basically the same people. Regardless of location, people generally talk about the same subjects, worry about the same issues, and cherish the same values all across cultures. To be human is the same globally and that insight has for me personally made traveling abroad much less daunting. The world is not so different and estranged. I lead the same life regardless of location so if you have a desire or passion to seek a life abroad you will most likely find yourself enriched with new perspectives and discover yourself a little better – which I believe is important. I also believe that this journey has made me a better psychologist and I am now able to work with severe trauma cases, cultural victims and that is simply because I have broadened my world."

Anja is offering psychotherapy and coaching, meditation training and workshops, and group and team development through her Open Path Clinic. Find more information about Open path Clinic here. You can also follow Anja's inspirational journey through her Instagram page and Facebook page.



Fresh From Farm with ByNature's 'The Box' concept.

Danish couple sells organic food in Vietnam

During the first half of 2020, Vietnam imported more pesticide than gasoline. A Danish couple is part of a movement in Vietnam to reverse this trend.

With the establishment of ByNature and MedPack Plus Vietnam, they work passionately to ensure that people have access to all-natural wholefoods and premium health and dietary supplements while at the same time improving the wellbeing of the local farmers.

By Mette Larsen

A lot of farming in Vietnam is done not only with the use of pesticides, but pesticides that have been banned for a good reason. Vietnam is also a country with lacking control measures and with no official 'organic certificate', the word organic is being used by different definitions and it does not ensure that the product is in fact organic or all-natural at all. In addition, farmers in Vietnam have poor knowledge regarding the health risks consuming and producing food containing hazardous chemicals have not only on the consumer's health but also on the wellbeing of the farmers themselves working with pesticides day in and day out, year after year.

There is a light

Although they are few and far between, small local organic farmers still exist in Vietnam and through passion, hard work, determination, and an effective testing system, Christian and Signe are bridging the way. As first-movers on the concept in Vietnam, with ByNature they are bringing all-natural whole foods and carefully selected pantry items to consumers in Vietnam, and in cooperation with their partner, MedPack Plus Vietnam supplies a range of premium health and dietary supplements, functional and medicinal foods, as well as personal care products.

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*Signe and I left
 Denmark in 1997
 and haven't looked
 back since.*
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Meet the founders

I was fortunate enough to meet Christian and Signe, albeit remotely in these pandemic times, where they shared their story, dedication, and mission for change with me. I quickly sensed an immense passion which I found contaminating and very inspiring. ByNature and MedPack Plus is not just a business for Christian and Signe but in fact a desire for a better way of living.

Christian and Signe are dedicated and have spent years establishing connections with local organic farmers and suppliers in Vietnam and built a trusted community where sustainable and clean products are available and sustainability and stability for the farmers and their livelihood is key. Not only are they perfervid about sourcing clean and natural products but also dynamic and enthusiastic about educating and helping the farmers continue on their greener journey of farming without the use of pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

The couple has been on quite the journey around the world since Christian first was stationed abroad well over two decades ago. What for him started as an international career in accounting, led to several jobs as Chief of Finance, working 20 years as a Senior Executive and finally becoming CEO of his own establishments in Vietnam. Signe, who is originally a trained lawyer, has adjusted along the way from the US to Asia with Switzerland and Zurich in between and today she is not only in charge of ByNature but also a mother of two teenage boys and a very ambitious entrepreneur.

Danish roots

Christian and Signe are both from Denmark, though different parts of the country. Christian was born and raised in Birkerød and graduated from Copenhagen Business

School with a degree in accounting and finance. Signe is a Viborg native and grew up in the west Jutland town before moving to the Copenhagen suburb of Hvidovre at the age of 14. During her teen years, Signe spent a year in France and a year in the US.

In 1997, while working as an accountant for the Danish company Nilfisk, Christian was stationed in Westchester outside Philadelphia in the US.

“Christian might have been one of the first people stationed abroad with Nilfisk and it was a super exciting experience and not at all the norm back then,” Signe tells me. At the time she was studying law at the University of Copenhagen, something she continued long-distance, and the couple packed up their belongings in Denmark and left on what they at first assumed was going to be a two-year contract abroad. But in reality, “Signe and I left Denmark in 1997 and haven't looked back since” Christian says.

Growing up abroad

“We were not married and never thought about that being an issue in regards to being able to live together in the US. That just goes to show how young we were when we arrived and we just went with the flow,” Signe says. The latter turned out to be problematic as Signe arrived on a tourist visa and after three months in the States, the couple realized that if Signe wanted to stay they had to get married. Which they did. Without it being a lavish affair, a Justice of Peace performed the ceremony, and Christian and Signe saved the celebrations for a traditional wedding in Denmark to a later date.



Christian and Signe.





Signe at their 100% natural and free-roaming egg farm.

“Did you ever get your Danish wedding?” I ask to which Signe replies, “Four years later we were in Switzerland and thought that now is the time, if ever at all, so yes we had a ceremony in Denmark and spent a fantastic Danish summer night surrounded by family and friends from all over the world.”

The first year in the States while finishing her BA in Law, Signe worked as a volunteer with the Red Cross where she wore many hats, so to speak. Besides giving lectures and working with HIV/AIDS, her job also entailed being a first responder to people in sudden need at all hours of the day.

“Typically I would jump in my tiny Geo Metro [an American Suzuki car, ed.] in the middle of the night or early hours of the morning and drive out to help people,” Signe recalls and she also worked at the main office twice a week where she assisted with communication amongst the service personnel stationed around the country.

In the second year in the States, Signe advanced her BA with a Master of Law while Christian applied for an MBA at IMD in Lausanne where he got accepted. So from Westchester, US, Christian, and Signe departed for Switzerland where Signe the first three months finished her studies before returning to Denmark to finish her exams while working an internship at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. After receiving her diploma Signe was lucky to get an internship with the UN in Geneva just a short train ride from Lausanne.

Working life

With Christian's MBA in hand a year later, Christian and Signe moved to Zurich where Christian worked for Holderbank, later Holcim and Signe worked for Swiss Air and later at the insurance company XL Winterthur.

While living in Zurich, the couple's first son was born at a top-notch hospital resembling a five-star hotel. The exact opposite of the little local hospital in Shanghai where Christian and Signe welcomed their second son into the world.

“Our youngest son was born at a local Shanghai hospital before International hospitals existed there and that was a unique experience in a league of its own involving everything that defines cultural differences”.

Entering Asia

In 2003, the family moved to Shanghai via Christian's job back at Nilfisk and although they lived in a nice little expat bobble as they called it, Christian and Signe experienced the hardship of limited access to basic necessities such as diapers and baby food. In China, Signe was actively involved in the international non-profit, non-political, and non-religious charity organization Morning Tears, and in the last years, she worked hard on establishing a Danish on-site Church. The project ended with a Danish priest and not a Danish Church Abroad as is seen in other parts of the world.

“When we arrived, Chinese farmers did not use pesticides on a large scale in their agriculture. That came a little later. The air pollution was also not as bad as it is today but when we moved to Singapore a good 10 years later, we were happy to have access to clean air and quality food. Singapore became a refreshing change and it felt good to arrive in a country with a more “normal” approach to rules and regulations”, the couple recalls.

Part of the change

Five years ago the family uprooted again and moved to Vietnam, to Ho Chi Minh City to be more exact. Christian

has always had the dream of establishing his own company and three years ago he took the plunge and became an entrepreneur and business owner.

"It's just amazing and I regret that I didn't do it sooner as it has always been a dream of mine" Christian says.

"When we came to China, fresh vegetables without pesticides were widely available, but when the farmers realized how much more they could harvest with pesticides, it became a hit and sadly not done to quite the same standards we know from Europe."

After experiencing the increasing amounts of pesticides used in Chinese agriculture happening in Vietnam as well, Christian sought out developing a network of organic farmers and ByNature was built on the idea of offering a clean and healthy alternative for consumers and local farmers alike.

ByNature Vietnam

"Here in Vietnam we see an overuse of pesticides and that is what we want to change. We are very open about the fact that we are not farmers and we do not have the knowledge it requires to produce. We have however succeeded in finding the right people who can."

Christian spent the first two years finding natural agriculture to work with and more importantly trust.

"Our concept is innovative and it has been and still is very difficult to find clean products here in Vietnam. There are small natural farmers but locating them is not an easy task, let alone convincing them to continue farming without the use of pesticides."

Invested in the dream

Besides sourcing local organic and all-natural products, Signe and Christian have invested in a couple of local farmers and helped them build a 100% natural and free-roaming egg farm.

The farm is located close to the Cambodian border and here the eggs (and hens) are completely free of antibiotics, growth hormone, and other nasty additives. The same goes for the chicken feed which is all-natural and clean. What started with 'The Box' concept full of fresh fruit and vegetables have now expanded into more



Christian and Signe with their two sons in Vietnam.

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*Here in Vietnam
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”

complete value boxes as though the connection to more suppliers, they now have a wide variety of products available all through the different seasons.

People can buy discounted boxes and programs with delivery three times a week or simply order exactly what they need. ByNature's 'From Farm to Fork' concept is direct deliveries from their partner farms with same-day delivery to customers. Besides the boxes, ByNature also supplies a large selection of other all-natural products including their own raw honey directly from natural beehives and raw bites imported from Denmark.

Education is key

Christian and Signe work closely with a small co-up of local experts in organic farming who work with local farmers to change their farming process to an organic one. It is a difficult process, but the couple has seen that it works.

Lastly, ByNature has joined a collaboration with a group of nut farmers on a "fair trade" concept. Consisting of ethnic minorities who have been taught how to grow a variety of different nuts without the use of pesticides, the farmers are guaranteed a specific income and the purchase of all their harvest.

"It is one of the projects we are most happy about being involved in – it is a win-win in reality – for the farmers, nature, for us, and our customers," Signe proudly shares.

Testing, testing, and more testing

Another important part of ByNature is their immense quality assurance and Christian and Signe regularly test the products themselves. This is how they genuinely keep





Fresh From Farm with ByNature's 'The Box' concept.

their promise and guarantee of all-natural foods. Signe and Christian conduct tests in a variety of labs as not all tests can be done in one lab. The couple always uses independent labs and changes between different providers and ByNature's partners do not always know when they test and certainly not where they test.

It's all a family affair

In the beginning, Christian ran ByNature with Signe helping on the side while also working another job. Later when Christian was offered another job opportunity, their roles reversed and today Signe is officially in charge of the daily management of ByNature but Christian remains very much involved.

ByNature is still a small establishment with just a few employees who all do a bit of everything and with a customer range of primary expats for the time being. Reaching the local Vietnamese population is a goal ByNature is passionate about but it does require understanding their buying habits as Vietnamese traditionally buy their daily necessities at the local market instead of ordering ahead. The younger Vietnamese generation, thus with a smaller buying power, are becoming more aware and appreciative regarding organic and all-natural products and Christian and Signe see a positive development in regards to wanting sustainability and clean products.

ByNature is extremely aware of reusing as much as possible and eliminating all use of plastic in their products. Besides supplying a large range of all-natural and clean products, Signe also works hard on inspiring people to see the benefits of a greener approach to life through By Nature's blog. It's a fantastic read full of easy-to-do recipes, tales of their partners and their stories, and very interesting facts about ByNature's different products.

MedPack Plus

Eating clean and fresh food is not always enough however and some people need to add a little extra into their diet to ensure they are getting a measurable amount of essential nutrients and make up for the poor nutrient content of the many foods we eat. With that in mind, MedPack

Plus came to life over lunch between Christian and their business partner about three years ago.

With the idea written down on a napkin, Christian, Signe, and their partner secured the rights to sell Swiss Energy in Vietnam and today it's become one of the country's leading brands of vitamins and minerals. Swiss Energy is a range of science-based nutritional supplement products, primarily made from branded and thoroughly researched ingredients, manufactured according to the international quality standards, and thoroughly tested at every stage of the production cycle – from raw materials to finished product.

MedPack Plus acts as a trusted partner for dietary supplements, functional foods, and personal care products that are authentic, safe, and with high efficacy. MedPack Plus only works with valuable brands that represent products of high quality, efficacy, and safety. MedPack Plus vitamins and minerals are today available in over 2000 stores in Vietnam and Christian and Signe only works with valuable brands that represent products of high quality, efficacy, and safety.

With Signe busy managing ByNature, Christian oversees MedPack at an overall managing level and their business partner is in charge of the daily running together with a small local team. Signe is however a very enthusiastic test person for all new potential products.

"Our products actually work and you always get what you pay for," Signe says. Currently MedPack Plus is expanding by investing in more products and brands for the Vietnamese market.

According to The World's Health Organization, access to sufficient amounts of safe and nutritious food is key to sustaining life and promoting good health which is what most people strive for.

If you live in Vietnam, Signe and Christian invite you to join ByNature's better way to live through their website www.bynature.vn and make sure to browse MedPack Vietnam's wide range of products such as vitamins, minerals, sports nutrition, kids nutrition, weight management, beauty, and gastrointestinal health at www.medpackplus.vn.

First sustainable pig farm in Taiwan

By *Zazithorn Ruengchinda*

On 16 April 2021, Skiold, the Danish livestock smart farming solution company, signed a contract with KH-Lin Farm for two full-line turnkey projects in Taiwan. The signing was witnessed by Director Bo Mønsted at The Trade Council of Denmark, Taipei.

Skiold will be working with Danish ventilation company Munters and agro-house system United Ivory (UI) as strategic partners for the project. With the power of digitalization those present were Skiold CEO Søren Overgaard, John Kongsgaard, Skiold Export Manager, Alexandry Ivanov, Skiold Constructing Architect and Munters Global Manager, Hans Henrik Pedersen.

Intelligent solutions and circular agriculture concept will be incorporated into the design thus KH-Lin Farm a Danish model pig farm will contribute to green and sustainable pig production in Taiwan.



“With Skiold innovative full-line solutions, transparency and full traceability of all processes of production, we believe that our cooperation with Mr KH-Lin will unveil a new chapter for Taiwan’s pig industry,” said Dr Sussie Ketit, Regional Director Skiold A/S.



Finnish businesses seek more opportunities in Vietnam

By *Mette Larsen*



Finnish businesses are eyeing more opportunities in South-east Asia and Vietnam in particular, media Vietnam Net reports.

During last month’s meeting between Nguyen Thanh Truc, Deputy Chairman of Binh Duong

People’s Committee, Finnish Ambassador to Vietnam Kari Kahiluoto, and a delegation of enterprises from Finland, Ambassador Kahiluoto was very positive about future business relations between the two nations. The Ambassador stated that he and

the embassy would strengthen ties between Finnish businesses and Binh Duong and also organize seminars on sharing experience in smart city creation.

Vietnam has accelerated in sustainable development and digital transformation and with the EU-Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, Finnish businesses and European businesses, in general, are gearing to benefit from it. Businesses are showing strong confidence in the improvement of the local business climate, despite serious regional developments of the pandemic in Cambodia, Thailand, and the increasing humanitarian disaster currently unfolding in India.

“We are stronger together”

Trine Sofie Tveen Nielsen is strengthening the Malaysian Danish Business Council



The closure in 2021 of the Embassy of Denmark in Kuala Lumpur will change the way the Danish business community in Malaysia has been operating for decades. The Malaysian Danish Business Council (MDBC) has taken several steps to shape this new situation. In 2020, the MDBC hired for the first time an Executive Director, Ms. Trine Sofie Tveen Nielsen who has since then become the main coordinator between the various Danish business associations in Asia known as Denmark Asia Business Alliance (DABA).



The Danish embassy in Malaysia will close down in the summer of 2021 ... which makes it even more important to define and prepare the future role of MDBC.



By Joakim Persson

It was a stroke of luck for the Danes in Malaysia when Trine Sofie Tveen Nielsen and her business partner Nima in 2016 decided to move their business from Qatar to Malaysia. Two years later, she was first elected as a board member of the Malaysian Danish Business Council (MDBC). And in 2020, MDBC employed her as the first Executive Director ever of the business association.

"I've been on the board of the MDBC since 2018 and only a few days after I informed the board about the closure of my company LinkFacility, I was offered the position of director of MDBC. The business council has existed since 1992 in Malaysia, and yet the organisation until today never had an executive director so, the position had to be created first before I could be appointed," explains Trine about her appointment.

"It was a wise move, as in 2020 there has been a greater need than ever for MDBC and its Danish corporate community. The need for sparring, advice and special reception of important information in relation to the frequently changed conditions for business operations and not least that the members can speak with one strong voice to influence their conditions, has seriously proved the need and necessity of the organization."

"The Danish embassy in Malaysia will close down in the summer of 2021, and there have been some concerns among our members as to how this will impact the business and trade relations with Malaysia, which makes it even more important to define and prepare for the future role of MDBC," she adds.

One of Trine's first tasks was to ensure continued good cooperation with the Danish embassy in Jakarta, which will be the mission serving Danish companies and individuals in Malaysia into the future.

"I am happy to say that after a few motivating and relationship-building meetings with Ambassador Lars Bo Larsen, Head of Trade Jacob Kahl Jepsen, and MDBC's Chairman Allan Jensen there is no doubt that both Danes and Danish businesses are in good hands and we look forward to a continued good collaboration with the Danish Embassy."



October 12th, 2020 at the Ambassador Residence in Kuala Lumpur. Lunch meeting where the Board of Directors were welcoming H.E. Ambassador Kirsten Rosenvold Geelan to Malaysia. In front from the left: Datin Dr. Norrizan Razali, H.E. Ambassador Kirsten Rosenvold Geelan, Allan Jensen, Chairman and Trine Tveen Nielsen, Executive Director. Back from the left: Kennet Paulsen, Treasurer, Lone Friis Larsen, Sangeeta Matu, Jesper Stig Andersen, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of the Commercial Section, Henrik Eidval Björkqvist.

Trine's reason for coming to Malaysia in the first place was also a business decision.

"Malaysia opened up for foreign investors having 100% ownership and that made my business partner Nima and I considered relocating our LinkFacility headquarter from Qatar to Malaysia, explains Trine.

Said and done; Nima went first, in 2016, to research the Malaysia market and explore opportunities. Trine joined in the summer of 2017 to incorporate LinkFacility Global Sdn Bhd.





11 Danish chambers and business organisations in Southeast and East Asia joined an Alliance in 2019. Today the alliance is counting 13 organisations.

“We celebrated the grand opening on 15 November in the same year.”

With high expectations of their new life in Malaysia Trine brought with her a family of two sons aged 8 and 13 and her husband, who alternates working offshore with longer home periods. For him it was not crucial to live near his workplace.

The today defunct business, was as a consulting firm, functioning as an international incubation platform for careers and companies.

“We helped our clients establish global portable business and career solutions, organised by a unique and innovative international entrepreneurship program and provided by a large network of consultants and business partners spread all over the world.”

Trine explains that in 2019 they launched with great success a unique program for employers of global mobile talents, e.g. expats. This helped the accompanying spouse to build a career or a business that they can bring with them in the suitcase for future international relocations.

The program itself saw immediate success attracting the large international companies as customers - as it had great sustainability and high ROI. But then Covid-19 arrived onto the scene, changing everything.

“We were just about to finalise our first two-year contracts with international companies when COVID-19 emerged by end of 2019 and when fast developing into a pandemic it quickly became clear to us that the forecasts for the market were not good for several years to come. It came at an extremely critical time and the impending business expansion crackled when the contracts were not executed. To limit the financial losses, we decided to close the company in March 2020.”

So, instead Trine moved on to work with the Danish business community full time, including to become the Co-Project Manager for the new DABA alliance.

The first ever Asian-wide Danish partnership between national business associations is now reality, with its first joint activity held as a webinar in December 2020. DABA's initial formation is as an alliance between 12 Danish chambers of commerce and councils across Asia with the aim of building a bridge across countries and chambers in the region for knowledge sharing and strengthening of Danish business operations in Asia.

“The collaboration idea between the Danish chambers of commerce and business organisations in Southeast- and East Asia has been discussed for many years. Then, only a few years ago Leon Ota Stokholm, ED of the Danish Chamber of Commerce in Japan took the initiative to contact Asia House in Copenhagen.,” explains Trine.

A workshop was arranged, which was also preceded by a comprehensive survey among the Danish organisations in the region.

Asia House, DanCham Japan and the Danish-Thai Chamber of Commerce facilitated the gathering, while EAC Foundation and Thai Airways International supported financially.

“The alliance and cooperation have been concluded in the best diplomatic way to ensure we all pull in the same direction. Now we must first define our objectives, activities and mission,” says Trine.

DABA has started off as a contact, communication and a knowledge sharing portal. “How the structure for this will be, there is still no definitive strategy for. But the point is to create a bi-layer system where one layer connects the Danish chambers in the region and another



The first ever Asia-wide partnership between Danish business associations is now a reality.



With a Danish sustainability mindset Trine is though both pleased and honoured to see Danish clean tech companies making a great effort for information, education and implementation of green technological solutions in the region.

layer connects stakeholders with key contacts and organisations. Once this is established, it can form a strong foundation for other layers of activities that are adapted to needs and demand."

"There is no doubt that DABA has enormous potential and the alliance is likely to become more formally established as a legal entity over time," believes Trine. "But like all member-based organisations, the strength and potential, as well as the risk, lies in the collaboration, which has the first priority and highest focus to get established and strengthened here at the early stage."

Members of the respective alliance organisations naturally sit on highly valuable experience and knowledge when it comes to operating and setting up in the respective countries.

"Hundreds of Danish companies in the region will be able to benefit greatly from the fact that the chamber of which they are a member gets access to knowledge and insights in the surrounding markets. There are more than a few Danish companies in the region that look across borders for opportunities, whether it is production, logistics, trade, innovation or something completely different. Not to relocate but to expand.

The chambers can do business matchmaking, introduce key partners, acquire knowledge and over time also play a greater advocacy role for members regionally,"

comments Trine.

She points out that this is still early days, where the alliance must be given the chance to grow organically. DABA will also look into opportunities for collaborating with trade and industry organisations in Denmark.

"We see DABA as what you could call the future 'Gate to Asia'; a platform of key-contacts and knowledge sharing based on the Danish Chambers' many decades of experience and network in the region. DABA constitutes a landing platform in Asia – a key point for local and regional knowledge, networking and influence."

Within MDABC, one of the latest initiatives of Trine Nielsen has been to conduct a series of member interviews.

"We meet one-on-one with our corporate and SME members to gain insight into the state of the companies. We define barriers, achievements and initiatives. It's a real eye-opener and gives us the opportunity to adapt our membership benefits so that they meet the real needs of the companies."

"We now know that more than 70% of our members represent the manufacturing sector; that Food & Beverage, Green Tech and Healthcare are the most prominent industries among Danish businesses operating in Malaysia. Also, these members and including Medical Tech, are among those managing very well despite the pandemic crisis."

Commenting on the impact from Covid-19 Trine says:

"Despite all good intentions it's not easy for foreign investors to navigate the frequently changed SOP's [standard operating procedures], lockdown and the state of emergency as well as what follows in the form of travel restrictions, tightening of the rules for hiring foreign talent as well as changing protocols for business operations."

"I must add how impressed I am with the resilience and adaptability of many of our members in these times of adversity and change."

"I cannot help but draw parallels between the ancient instincts when the storm comes, we move closer together and find strength in the community and collaboration."

NBAS collaborates with promising Norwegian artist



By Mette Larsen

The Norwegian Business Association Singapore is collaborating with the 23-year-old Norwegian freelance artist, designer, and illustrator Sosialantenne (Johanna Warberg). Sosialantenne has given NABS the right to use her artwork in their communication material.

“Her artworks are fun, colorful, and diverse, but they often have a deeper meaning,” says NBAS.

“Johanna thinks it’s important to use her platform and artworks to convey important social and political messages. Learn more about Sosialantenne and stay tuned for seeing more of her works in our digital material in the months to come!”



Johanna in her studio.

Norwegian wealth fund to keep flexible working hours

By Mette Larsen

The Norwegian wealth fund rethinks employees’ working week in the wake of the pandemic that for the past year has forced employees to work from home the majority of the time, Reuters reports.

According to CEO Nicolai Tangen, once the pandemic is over, Norges Bank Investment Management, the central bank division that manages Norway’s wealth fund, would offer flexible working to its 520 employees in Oslo, London, Singapore, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Luxembourg. Nicolai Tangen told a parliamentary hearing that employees at the \$1.3 trillion sovereign wealth fund will only be required to come into the office twice a week.



Nicolai Tangen.

As a way of attracting and retaining talented staff, “We are thinking that after the pandemic we will allow up to two days a week of home office and we have two fixed days in the office for everyone for meetings,” Nicolai Tangen said.

“You need to offer flexibility differently than before. It is just not acceptable to require people to be in the office all the time. I think it shows that you don’t trust people,” he said.

Norway’s wealth fund, the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund, is not the only organization to rethink employees’ way of working as they adapt to Covid-19 restrictions. Commercial banks and other organizations are moving to continue working from home to cut costs while investment banks are keen on getting traders and advisers back into the office.



The first tramway route between the Grand Palace and Bangkok Port.

Danish businessmen established Thai tramway line

By *Zazithorn Ruengchinda*

The Royal Danish Embassy released on 5 March 2021, a day after H.M. King Vajiralongkorn's coronation day on 4 May, the latest historical photo album, as part of Denmark's celebration of its 400 years relationship with Thailand. The memo reads:

"It was on this exact day in 1887, that King Chulalongkorn from his own hand gave the Dane Andreas du Plessis de Richelieu the concession to establish and run the first ever tramway line in Bangkok.

This is one of the earliest examples of close infrastructure collaboration between Denmark and Thailand.

For the 50-year deal to operate the tram service on seven routes, a limited company was es-

tablished, in which The King bought shares and for a period of time he held 50%. Richelieu himself also held substantial portions of the shares.

Richelieu functioned as the Chairman of the Board. He appointed a Dane, Aage Westenholz, as an engineer and soon thereafter as the managing director of the line.

In 1894 the tramway was electrified (instead of using ponies) and the tramcars started driving much faster. Unfortunately, due to the narrow streets of Bangkok and the Siamese' belief that it was a blessing if their shadows were run over by a tramcar, more and more accidents occurred.

In 1895, after a dispute about the speed of the tramway, Westenholz left the company, but he later

returned as Richelieu would leave Siam in 1902 and Westenholz was the only Dane in Siam with the knowledge and capacity to run the fast growing business.

The tramway was a great success and grew very fast. Over time wealthy and influential people in and around the Westenholz family took over more and more of the shares and before Westenholz left Siam in 1910, a family group controlled the highly profitable company.

Despite its popularity the trams fell out of favour as more cars arrived on Bangkok roads and Bangkok's urban tramway system was fully closed down in October 1968."

New IKEA store opens in Taipei



By Zazithorn Ruengchinda

The grand opening of the new IKEA store in Neihu, Taipei, on the 28th of April started with a Swedish breakfast followed by inspiring speeches by Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je and Group Director, DF IKEA Mr. Martin Lindström.

Mr. Martin Lindström said he was delighted that IKEA has found a new home in Neihu after staying in the Dunbei commercial zone for 23 years.

"The Greater Taipei area is a very important location for IKEA. 25 years ago, the first store that IKEA opened in Taiwan was in Taipei City. Today we welcome the opening of the Neihu store, which is an exciting new challenge for all of our staff!

Congratulations to IKEA Taiwan and all the people in Greater Taipei!"



Suez blockage boosted China-Europe rail freight service

By Mette Larsen

The recent problems in the Suez Canal have boosted transport of rail freight from China into Europe. The Chinese-owned U-Freight Group is experiencing increasing volumes of cargo being sent via rail freight services from China to Europe and Scandinavia, media Ajot writes.

Simon Wong, CEO of the U-Freight Group, says:

"Clearly supply chain planners are reappraising what was once a completely dominant Suez Canal route from China into Europe, with intermodal rail continuing a sharp upward trajectory in 2021, following on from a strong 2020."



Wong adds that U-Freight handles significant consol shipments from China to Sweden, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, and the Netherlands in particular, together with smaller volumes to other European countries.

"Although the first China-Europe container freight train was in 2011, it has taken a decade and considerable investment by China's government to see the route become an established part of logistics networks," Simon Wong said.

"The COVID pandemic and the capacity problems in the air and ocean sectors have pushed the route to much heavier usage, with the recent blockage of the Suez Canal leading to additional traffic," he added.



Thai Chef and Danish husband add Thai food to legendary Hot Dog stand



Pinda Frost and her Danish husband Niels Frost have bought the legendary hot dog stand at Vejgaard Torv in the Northern Danish city of Aalborg and renamed it 'Bangkok Kitchen'.

The 49-year-old Pinda Frost is originally from Thailand and had a restaurant in Bangkok for 18 years. After moving to Denmark in 2016, she worked at the Danish restau-

rant, The Green Kitchen, but from 1 April the couple took over the Hot Dog stand.

To Danish media Nordjyske, the couple explains that Pinda will not only be selling famous Danish sausages and Hot Dogs at her stand but will also be adding traditional Thai dishes to the menu.

"It will be more than a Hot Dog stall, there will also be Thai food. My wife is known for her Thai food," Niels Frost says.

Pinda has wanted to open her own place for a long time and to be able to make the decisions herself.

"The small Hot Dog stand fits me well," Pinda says. Several buyers had shown their interest when the Hot Dog stand went up for sale but the couple acted fast.

It is not only the menu that the couple is hoping to change, they also already have expansion plans.

"We would like to have room to make more Thai food, and we would also like to be allowed to have an outdoor seating area," Niels Frost says.

According to him, the trade association of Vejgaard is also very interested in Thai food being sold at the Hot Dog stand as no one else is offering it in the area.

Niels Frost grew up in the area and is very much looking forward to taking over the Hot Dog stand. "I'm an old Vejgaard boy. It feels like coming home," he says.

Bangkok Kitchen Hot Dog stand reopened on Tuesday 6 April.

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”

We recently asked several of our students: What do you want to do when you leave ISB? Some talk about their plans for college, some of their career dreams, others of their passions or their purpose. They spoke of goals that were aspirational: “I want to get good education overseas”, or altruistic: “I want to reach out to others through music and education”, and imaginative: “I want to have the power to control the weather”. They also discussed feeling supported in their learning, academically and personally.

Students at ISB are able to be their authentic selves. They are encouraged to follow their own unique paths and journeys. They are able to see and achieve their potential, they are supported, they thrive.

We are exceptionally proud of all our inspiring students at ISB.

Follow our #isbstudentspotlight series.



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