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PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING WITH 3D BIOPSY TECHNOLOGY

Prostate cancer screening is essential for older men. The higher the age the greater the risk. So, the sooner you are diagnosed, the quicker you are treated – before it has spread and causes problems in your daily life. To this end, there has been perpetual development on prostate cancer diagnosis techniques. One of these is the application of 3-dimensional imaging technology that is used in MRI fusion with trans-rectal and trans-perineal ultrasound for prostate biopsy procedures, enabling accurate and speedy diagnoses.

Biopsy Using Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)

Once the doctor has determined through blood test that the patient's prostatic specific antigen (PSA) is at an elevated level, which indicates a high possibility of prostate cancer, the doctor will recommend a biopsy. For both MRI fusion with trans-rectal and trans-perineal ultrasound for prostate biopsy procedures, the surgeon uses magnetic resonance imaging technology to help guide the process in real-time. During the procedure, the surgeon inserts a small ultrasound probe through the patient's rectum to clearly identify the location of the problem area for biopsy. Then, while being guided by the ultrasound magnetic imaging system, the surgeon passes a needle into the prostate to precisely retrieve tissue for biopsy. This is a huge advantage over the previous technique through which the surgeon could only take random sample tissues from the prostate, and the resulted biopsy might not be sufficiently accurate such that the patient sometimes had to return for additional procedure.

Advantages of the screening

- Prostate cancer screening result is clear and accurate.
- Prostate cancer can be discovered quicker.
- Enables treatment of early prostate cancer conditions.
- The patient's quality of life improves after treatment.
- Urologist can better and more accurately treat the patient.



Disadvantages of the screening

- Time required is relatively long, as there are many steps:
 1. Undergoing magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) process.
 2. Requires a radiologist using a computer to outline location of the prostate and precisely identify the problem area for biopsy.
 3. The patient's health must be evaluated.
- General anesthetic is required for the procedure.
- Patients in some categories cannot be screened using MRI – e.g., patients who have artificial heart valve implants or joint replacements because they can interfere with the magnetic waves, etc.
- If applicable, patients must stop taking blood thinning medication 7 days before the procedure.
- At least 1-night hospitalization.
- May require the use of urinary catheter for at least 1 day after the procedure.

Prostate Cancer Treatment

Prostate cancer treatment should primarily be guided by a specialist. The sooner the treatment commences, the better it will be for the patient. There are numerous methods for the treatment, such as radiotherapy, hormonal therapy, chemotherapy, and laparoscopic radical prostatectomy. It will depend on the symptoms, severity and size of the cancer, as well as the patient's health condition.

When it is quickly identified, prostate cancer will not affect your daily routine very much. However, if it is ignored, the cancer may become so severe that it will be difficult to treat. So, it is essential that you undergo prostate cancer screening as recommended by your doctor.

Information by

Dr. Pisit Tempatarachoke
Urological Surgeon

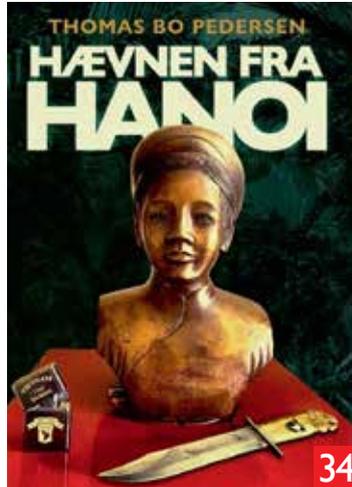
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A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

From her thirteen-year career as a Bangkok Patana gymnast, Evelyn Cannon has established fulfilling relationships with her peers, developed a resilient mindset and grown as an athlete. These will all contribute to her holistic well-being as she pursues a degree in biomedical science. Read about Evelyn's journey of growth:



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Allow Unions in Thailand

My company recently had to appear in the Labour Court in a case where a former employee claimed wrongful dismissal.

In short, the person was employed on October 2019 prior to Covid. When the government in April 2020 asked companies to let employees work from home, we complied. When the government later lifted this request, we asked our staff to come back to the workplace. Two of them preferred to continue working from home. We preferred them to work in the office where productivity is usually higher. To work from home, they had to resign and instead sign a freelance contract. Both employees agreed to this.

In the case of the plaintiff, the regular employment was replaced with a freelance contract for the duration of one year that specified that the freelancer should invoice the company every end of the month for days worked in that month.

When there were 45 days left of that contract, the freelancer complained about not being able to log into that she could not log into the website and added that "It's about time I look for another job." Two days later, we received an invoice for the days worked up to the day. We were annoyed but quickly found a temporary replacement, paid the invoice and considered the case closed.

A few months later, the employee went to the labour court and filed a complaint free of charge. Some days later, the company received a letter from the court demanding us to pay compensation for wrongful dismissal. The court inspector had deemed our freelance contract unlawful since we compensated the freelancer per day and not per piece.

Our company had to hire a labour law firm to fight the case - which we eventually won albeit on a technicality.

The whole case was a blatant waste of everybody's time and money and I cannot help thinking that if Thailand had unions like in the Nordic countries, this would have been settled long before the whole apparatus was involved.

While forming unions is not illegal in Thailand, Thailand has one of the lowest unionization rates in all of South East Asia. The main reason is a paternalistic government which supports anti-union discrimination and instead offers the Labour Court as a state mechanism to protect the rights of employees.

In my opinion, allowing unions to be formed like in the Nordic countries would ultimately benefit economic development in Thailand, as more foreign countries and investors would see Thailand as a modern state that adheres to international labour standards.



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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Publisher :

Scandinavian Publishing Co., Ltd.
211 Soi Prasert Manukitch 29
Prasert Manukitch Road
Bangkok 10230, Thailand
Tel. +66 2 943 7166-8
Fax: +66 2 943 7169
E-mail: news@scandasia.com

Editor-in-Chief :

Gregers A.W. Møller
gregers@scandmedia.com

Advertising :

Finn Balslev
finn@scandmedia.com
MB: +66 81 866 2577

Graphic Designer :

Peerapol Meesuwan
Peerapol@scandmedia.com

Production Manager:

Sopida Yatprom

Printing :

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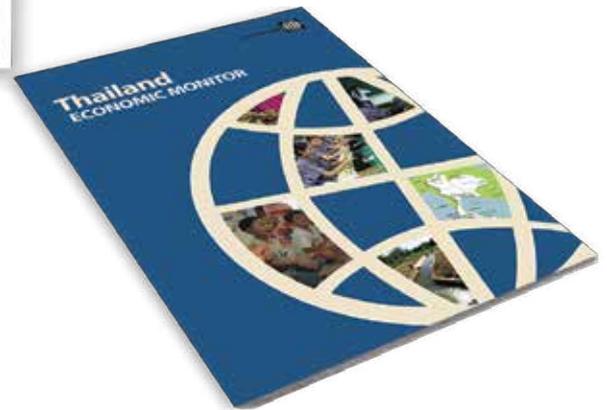
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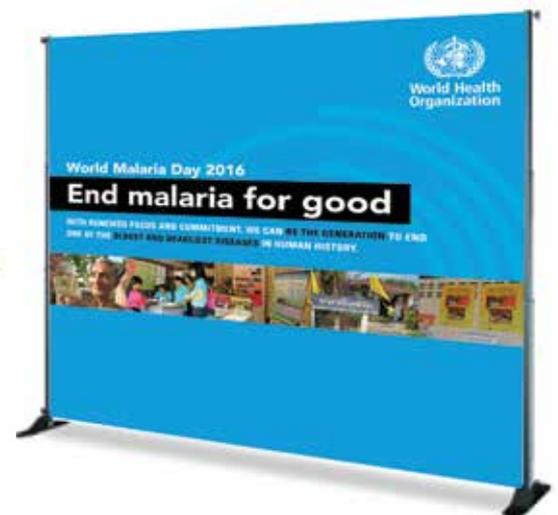
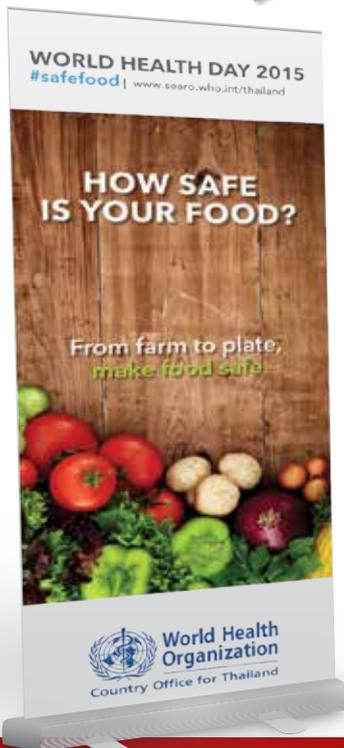
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Please contact

211 Soi Prasert - Manukitch 29, Chorakaebua, Ladprao, Bangkok 10230, Thailand
Tel: +66 2943 7166-8 Fax: +66 2943 7169 website: www.scandmedia.com
patcharee.scandmedia@gmail.com
suchaya.scandmedia@gmail.com

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Finns vote to leave Sweden behind regarding NATO membership

A majority of 53 percent of Finns has voted, not to wait for Sweden in the quest of NATO membership. Only 28 percent voted to wait.

The two Nordic countries sought NATO membership shortly after Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year. While most member-states have backed the applications, Turkey has yet to give its approval.

"Our position on Finland is positive, but it is not positive on Sweden," Turkish President Erdogan has said.

Turkey's different view on Finnish and Swedish membership is putting pressure on Finnish leaders to leave Sweden behind. An option the Finnish political leadership has so far declined.

Still, the Finnish parliamentary groups are expected to discuss, whether the country shall proceed ahead of Sweden, due to the growing support among the Finnish public to go alone.

If the Finnish parliament votes in favor of approving the treaties, as it is expected to do, the president must proceed with the application within three months. This could well lead to proceeding with the NATO membership without Sweden.

For that to happen, Turkey and Hungary need to endorse the Finnish membership and NATO needs to officially invite Finland as a member.

Finland's Chancellor of Justice Tuomas Poysti has said, that the process provides Finland with some

room to wait for Sweden, but not endlessly.

Officially, Finland has reaffirmed several times, that it wants to join NATO with Sweden.

Sweden is Finland's closest defense ally. In case of a conflict with Russia, NATO will need Swedish territory to help Finland defend itself.

Stoltenberg fears China will supply Russia with weapons



NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg says Putin has made it clear that he wants more war.

He also stated, that he senses that China may have plans to step in and support Russia with weapons in the war in Ukraine.

Stoltenberg held a press conference in Brussels together with Ukraine's foreign minister and the EU's foreign affairs chief after Russian President Vladimir Putin gave a speech Tuesday, February 21.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will end his term in October as planned.

Diplomats from NATO allies

have speculated, that Stoltenberg's mandate could be extended until a summit next year, to mark 75 years of the alliance. But, after a visit to Washington last week, his office announced he would not seek another extension.

It is not yet clear who could take over from Stoltenberg. Former Italian prime minister Mario Draghi and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis have been named as possible candidates.

The 30 alliance members are expected to decide at their July summit in Vilnius at the latest.

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Denmark's Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, speaks with Poland's Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau, during a meeting in Brussels on Monday, Feb. 20, 2023.

EU slaps sanctions on nine Myanmar officials

The European Union announced Monday, February 20, that the ministers were to impose sanctions on nine officials in Myanmar. All officials are linked to rising violence, human rights abuses and security threats.

The Foreign ministers, including Denmark's Foreign Minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen (picture), imposed a travel ban and froze the officials' assets. Among them was the energy minister of Myanmar, the defense ministry departments and several companies.

Myanmar has been under strict military rule for five decades. The military loosened its grip during the 2015 elections, where Aung San Suu

Kyi became leader. This ended with a military coup on February 1, 2021, after the military rejected the results of the election.

The takeover was met with massive public obstruction, which has since turned into armed resistance.

The new sanctions, endorsed by EU foreign ministers, mean that a total of 93 people and 18 agencies, companies or organizations have now been targeted.

Myanmar army said to have killed 17 people in latest rampage

Soldiers in Myanmar has rampaged through several villages, raping, beheading and killing at least 17 people, residents says.

This is the latest accusations towards the ruling military, accusing the army of a series of war crimes since they seized power two years ago.

The bodies of 17 people were recovered last week in the villages of Nyaung Yin and Tar Taing in central Myanmar.

According to members of the anti-government resistance and a resident who lost his wife, the victims had been detained by the military and some appeared to have been tortured before being killed.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military's seized the power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021.

The violence triggered wide-

spread armed resistance, which has since turned into what experts have characterized as a civil war.

Raped, killed and beheaded

The army has been conducting major offensives in the countryside, including burning villages and driving hundreds of thousands of people from their homes.

The soldiers involved in last week's attacks were in a group of more than 90 soldiers who were brought to the area by five helicopters. This is according to the pro-democracy People's Defense Forces and independent Myanmar media.

They said that the bodies of 14 people, including three women, were found Thursday on a small island in a river in Nyaung Yin. Another three male victims were found in Tar Taing, including two members

of the local resistance. One of them was, according to witnesses, dismembered and had his head cut off.

Moe Kyaw, a Tar Taing resident who survived the attack says, that his 39-year-old wife, Pan Thwal, and 18-year-old nephew, were among those killed.

The military government has not responded to the allegations.

In the past, the military has denied documented abuse and stated that casualties will occur in the course of fighting against armed anti-government guerrillas.

Online media supporting the military government have made the same assertion about the recent incidents in Sagaing. Some have suggested that the allegations are the result of factional fighting within the resistance.





Malaysia to send 20,000 translated Qurans to Sweden

Malaysia has set aside more than \$2 million American dollars to fight Islamophobia. The money goes to translating and printing the Quran in several languages and distributing copies internationally.

Out of the 2 million copies, 20,000 will be shipped to Sweden. This is where a far-right politician, publicly burned the Quran last month during a protest.

The plan is meant to create a better understanding of Islam, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim told reporters after the International Forum on Islamophobia. An event held on Monday, Feb. 27, in the capital Putrajaya.

“We will print 20,000 in Swedish – and other languages too – for the purpose of better understanding,” he told reporters.

Anwar said the translations, publication and distribution will show wisdom and maturity in the face of unnecessary attacks on Islam.

Joachim Bergström, Swedish ambassador to Malaysia, welcomed Anwar’s announcement.

“I am personally delighted that this important text will be more accessible in my native country and in Europe,” Bergström told *BearNews*.

Joachim Bergström has spent many years living and working in the Muslim world. Between 2016 and

2021 he worked as Sweden’s special envoy to combat Islamophobia.

“I am convinced that knowledge and dialogue are the way to promote understanding and peace,” Bergström added.

Greenland feels tremors from deadly Turkey earthquake

The 7.8-magnitude devastating earthquake in southern Turkey and Syria on Monday, 6 February 2023, were felt as far away as in Greenland, the arctic and independent part of the Kingdom of Denmark, said the Geological Survey of Denmark and Greenland.

"The large earthquakes in Turkey were clearly registered on the seismographs in Denmark and Greenland," seismologist Tine Larsen told AFP.

According to The Local dk, the tremores from the first earthquake - the 7.8-magnitude quake -reached the Danish island of Bornholm approximately five minutes after it started.

The second one - 7.5-magnitude quake - reached the east coast of Greenland after about eight minutes.

"We have registered both earthquakes — and a lot of aftershocks — in Denmark and Greenland," Larsen added.

The earthquakes cost the lives of at least 41,020 Turkish people while 5,800 people died in Syria. After a few weeks of rescue work, no more people were found alive.

In Syria, as many as 5.3 million people may have been left homeless by the earthquake, the Syria representative of the UN high commissioner for refugees, Sivanka Dhana-pala, told a news briefing.

Photo of the damage caused by the recent earthquake in Turkey. By CNBC.



Taiwan reports 19 Chinese air force planes in its air defense zone

Taiwan's defense ministry recently reported that it had spotted nineteen Chinese air force planes, 19 J-10 fighters, in its

air defense zone, ADIZ, on the first of March 2023.

According to Reuters, Taiwan's forces sent up its own air force

planes as a response to "such Chinese incursion."

However, the aircraft did not cross the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait, which previously served as an unofficial barrier between the two sides.

This kind of action from the Chinese military is what Taipei calls "regular harassment by Beijing" because China still views Taiwan as its own territory.

The democratically elected Taiwanese government has repeatedly offered talks with China about the issue, but sticks to its own ground warning that it will defend itself if attacked and that only the Taiwanese people can decide their own future.



China reacts to EU ban on TikTok

China now reacts to the European Union's ban on the popular social media platform TikTok.

Wednesday, China urged the EU to provide a "non-discriminatory" business environment for companies of all countries.

"EU's ban on TikTok from staff devices undermines international community's confidence in the EU's business environment," said Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning, at a conference in Beijing on Wednesday.

The European Commission last week asked its officials to remove the Chinese social media app from their devices due to "security concerns."

"The EU should respect market rules and stop generalizing the



concept of national security. They should provide an environment of fair play for foreign companies," Mao added.

Several Western nations have raised alleged security concerns over the use of the Chinese so-

cial media app. Only this week, lawmakers in Denmark were "strongly urged" to uninstall the TikTok app from their work devices, due to security concerns.



Chinese tech giants face scrutiny due to spy concerns

China-based tech giants are raising international concerns on national security. Beijing has continuously denied any link to cyber attacks or espionage through tech companies, but the western world keeps feeling threatened.

Huawei is facing accusations, that Beijing could use its 5G infrastructure for espionage, which has led to several countries banning Huawei from constructing their 5G networks.

Other countries, including Denmark and Sweden, have restricted the use of Huawei equipment in the building of their 5G infrastructure.

There are concerns, that Huawei's 5G equipment could contain backdoors that provides the Chinese government with data that gives them access to communication networks and public utilities.

Huawei has denied the allega-

tions, and has tried to distance itself from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The company has repeatedly stated, that the equipment has never been used to spy.

Not the only one

Huawei is not the only Chinese tech company under scrutiny. In November 2022, the Biden administration banned all sale and import from five Chinese companies. Among them was Huawei and Hikvision – a company that makes video surveillance equipment.

The use of Hikvision's surveillance gear at government buildings has coursed worry, since the company is owned and controlled by the Chinese state.

An investigation found, that the devices may be reporting back to locations in China. This raised concerns, that the cameras may be used to spy on behalf of China.

Scandinavian ban

Denmark, the UK and the US have banned the use of Hikvision cameras. Meanwhile, the European Parliament removed Hikvision cameras from their buildings back in 2021.

The company, in which the Chinese Communist Party is a controlling shareholder, is contracted to operate Chinese state surveillance of Uyghur Muslims.

Norway's state wealth fund have called for Hikvision to be excluded from its investment due to "an unacceptable risk that the company contribute to serious human rights violations."

Experts warn, that the rising tension between the Western World and Beijing, could influence the technical landscape worldwide for years to come.

Swedish family upset about boat capsizing report

A long-tail tour boat carrying nine Swedish passengers and a Thai boat driver, Manit Saroj, capsized in the sea outside Hong Island, Krabi province, Thailand on 5 February 2023.

Thai media, MGR Online, who had the details from the police, reported that the driver had explained that the accident happened because the tourists went to stand on the

same side of the boat to get their pictures taken.

One of the Swedish victims, Idige Rantanen, got very upset when she learned how Thai media had reported about her family and the incident.

She explained in a comment to the story on ScandAsia, that all passengers were seated properly and nobody were taking any photos

as described in the news. She said the reason the boat overturned was because the boat driver took a “too small, fast, and sharp turn” before he lost control of the steering stick.

“The boat fell over completely. We all get trapped inside under the upside down boat. We are a family of nine. We all managed to save ourselves, luckily no one passed out. My husband also saved the driver’s little boy who could not swim,” Idige Rantanen added.

After everyone was up in the open air, a nearby boat came to hand them lifejackets and took them to the shore.

Idige Rantanen added that that police did not discuss what happened with her group at all, they only asked about their lost belongings.

ScandAsia offered Idige Rantanen to publish more details of the event as experienced by the Swedish family, but she said her family would rather be left alone.



The Swedish passengers and the boat driver after being brought back to shore.

Dane and his wife gunned down in the Philippines



The 45 year old Dane (right) shortly before being released after being interrogated about the murder of the younger brother of Mayor Edgar Teves Jr. of Valencia, Philippines.

A Special Investigation Task Group (SITG) has been established to investigate the murder of a 45-year-old Danish man, Tim Moerch and his Filipino wife, Karen Kate Cadiente, who were killed in Valencia, Negros Orienta, the Philippines on 8 February 2023.

According to Col. Reynaldo, police provincial director, the special team will be composed of officers from the Police Regional Office 7 and the Negros Oriental Police Provincial Office (NOPPO) as well as coordinating with the Embassy of Denmark in the country, reported Manilla Bulletin.

Tim Moerch and Karen Kate

Cadiente were shot while riding a motorcycle near Barangay Balugo on Wednesday evening, shortly after both were released from being questioned in the case of the murder of Don Paulo Teves, the younger brother of Mayor Edgar Teves Jr. of Valencia and the son of the town's former Mayor Edgar Teves Sr.

The couple were, along with a third, suspected of having played undetermined roles in connection with the murder.

In a local media interview, Major Roger Quijano, Valencia town police chief, said the couple was linked to the killing as they were reportedly last seen with the victim

before the incident happened, based on the statement of a witness.

The following day, another person was also arrested as he had visited the couple at their house in Valencia town on the day of the incident.

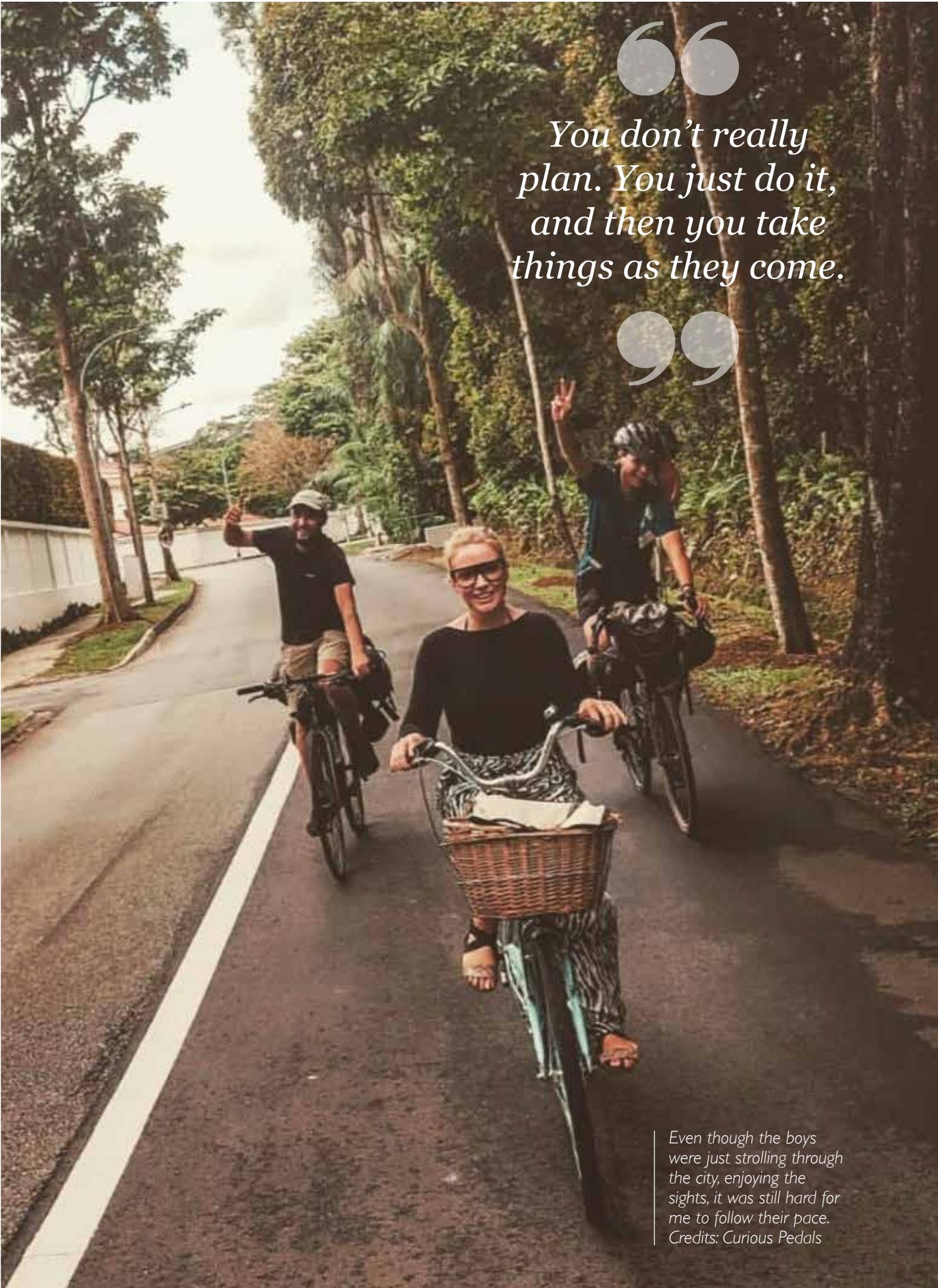
A 5.56mm caliber firearm buried in soil was also recovered.

In the interview, Quijano said that a case for murder is being prepared against the three suspects, who were under police custody. On February 8, the Dane and his wife were released only to be gunned down on the way home.

“

You don't really plan. You just do it, and then you take things as they come.

”



Even though the boys were just strolling through the city, enjoying the sights, it was still hard for me to follow their pace. Credits: Curious Pedals

Biked 15.400 kilometers from Helsinki to Singapore

Finally, they came. Biking up the hill to the Finnish residence. Three guys wearing big smiles, despite the heat. Their eyes beaming with a mixture of joy, pride and relief. They stopped just before the banner placed in their honour, and they hugged.

By Miabell Mallikka

Alvari Poikola, 25, and Valtteri Heinila, 26, are two Finnish friends, who have been bicycling from Helsinki to Singapore over the past 8 months. They took off June 18, 2022 and landed in Singapore Friday, February 17, 2023. Roughly 15.400 kilometers later.

The two friends arrived in Southeast Asia December 15, cycling through Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Malaysia, before arriving in Singapore.

In Bangkok they were joined by Greg, a Frenchman, who had been following the two on Instagram, through their account "Curious Pedals."

The duo who became a trio are clearly an inspiration to others, so when they offered me to join them on their last biking-trip through Singapore, I could hardly say no.

Just like riding a bike

Alvis and Vallu (as they are called by friends), along with their new companion Greg, was set to arrive at the residence of the Finnish Ambassador of Singapore, Antti Vänskä, at 2pm. local time.

I therefore went to rent a bike, around 10am. knowing, that I hadn't been on a bike for approximately 8 years, so I might be facing some challenges.

When I first came to the bike-rent store, I was offered to rent some sort of sports bike. The kind that will make you all hunched trying to reach the steer.

"I was hoping for something more like that one, without the kids' seat," I said, pointing towards a turquoise-colored lady-bike, with a straw basket in front. The guy went out in the back, and quickly returned with a bike just like the one I eyed in the store. But this one was without the kid's seat.

"That will be 20 dollars for one hour or 30 dollars for two hours," the guy said, like those were the only options. Knowing that there was more than two hours before I was even set to meet the guys, I got a little nervous.

"How much for the day?" I asked.

A few minutes later, I tried to get up on the bike, wearing a long skirt, which made the quest more difficult, than it had to have been.

"Just like riding a bike," I kept telling myself, trying to get the thing to move.

Besides the fact, that the bike was kind of old, a little rusty and it felt pretty unstable, one of the first challenges was, how to navigate through an unfamiliar city, where I didn't really know the rules. This made me think of all the unknown places Vallu and Alvis had been cycling through. 21 countries have they passed on their journey towards Singapore, as well of countless cities.

Reaching the Finnish Ambassador's residence

After almost crashing into a pole, passing by a guy who looked at me and said "that's interesting" and suddenly finding myself in the middle of a trafficked road, cause the sidewalk had just abruptly stopped, just so Google maps could lead me into a blind alley, due to construction work, I finally made it to the Ambassador's residence. 10 minutes before the guys were set to arrive.

A trip that according to the map should have taken me 38 minutes ended up taking me 2 hours.

Drenched in sweat, burned by the sun and short of breath, I introduced myself to the Finns who had come to greet the guys as they arrived by the "Finnish-line."





When we reach the Marina, the boys starts to glow. This was the goal. They finally reached their destination. After 8 months and 15.400 kilometers later they were finally here.
Credits: Curious Pedals

Finally, they came. Biking up the hill to the residence. Three guys wearing big smiles, despite the heat. Their eyes beaming with a mixture of joy, pride and relief. They stopped just before the banner, placed in their honour, and they hugged.

"It is with some mixed feelings," Vallu said.

"You've grown accustomed to getting up every day, having to plan every step of the day to get to Singapore, and suddenly you don't have to do that anymore."

At the same time, he tells about, how they at the border between Malaysia and Singapore were asked, how they've managed to achieve this. How a person is supposed to plan for a trip like this.

"You don't really plan," his answer was. You just do it, and then you take things as they come."

Making a documentary

The next step will be to create a documentary from all the videoclips they have collected through the last months.

"It will be more of an artistic piece, than a guide on how to do it," they both state, at the table in the ambassador's residence.

"We hope to have it published on Netflix," Alvis

adds, when Vallu interrupts him "we are reaching for the stars," he says and they both laugh.

"At first we will try to submit it to some film festivals," Alvis continues, downplaying the ambition.

They both agree, that one of the main things they take with them from the journey is, that they can accomplish whatever they set their minds to. But it does take a lot of work, Greg, their French companion tells.

"They work really hard. Most nights, they write in their journals or record themselves. It is really very impressive," he tells me.

Newfound trust in humanity

As we join the rest around the table, Alvis shares another thing he will take with him from the experience, and that is the kindness they have received from many strangers on their journey. Many of them were less fortunate than themselves, but still they offered them shelter and dinner and refused to take any payment in return.

"I trust people a lot more," Alvis says and explains how at the beginning of the trip, they thought they should make their gear look less valuable, to prevent being robbed.

"That was never a question," he then adds.



Honestly, I feel like we have met many people who have seemed happier than we are back in Finland.



“Another thing we have learned is, how lucky and privileged we are in Finland,” Vallu adds.

Many people have asked them, how Finnish people manage to be the world’s happiest, as they have been named by the latest polls, but the guys agree, that it depends on how you define happiness.

“We may be called the worlds happiest nation, but we also have the highest suicide rate,” Vallu says.

“Honestly, I feel like we have met many people who have seemed happier than we are back in Finland,” he continues.

“Many less fortunate people,” he adds, and they both nod.

Curious Pedals now consist of four people

After a short talk, we hit the road.

“Curious pedals are now four people,” Vallu says as we leave the residence and sends me a sweet smile, making me feel included and not just like a clumsy sidekick.

Even though, the boys are just strolling through the city, enjoying the sights, it is still hard for me follow their pace.

Greg joined them in Thailand around the beginning

of January. But even though he is new to the team, it is clear, that the two friends, who used to be college room-mates, has taken him in as an integrated part of the team.

Vallu is the human compass. Always in front, leading the way. Even though he is once again in a new city, he manages to guide the troops effortlessly and confident through the city traffic.

The symbiosis between them is undeniable. As they ride side by side, in and out of traffic, changing positions so one is always in the back making sure, that I can keep up. Looking at them is like observing a well-orchestrated symphony.

“Are you going to miss it?” I ask Alvis, as I notice him lighting up by the sight of the city. All consumed by what is in front of him, but without losing any speed.

“There are definitely things I will miss,” he replies, while adding, that they always get like this when they reach one of the bigger cities.

“How many cities have you passed?” I ask.

“Vallu, how many cities have we passed through,” Alvis shouts.

Stopping by a red light, in the middle of a highly traf-ficked road in the midst of Singapore, Vally turns around and replies “21.”

21 big cities, but still they manage to be as exited by the sight, as was it the first.

An excitement that likewise shows as we pass through a tunnel, that makes the boys howl, as though it is an internal joke.

Recording as they go

All three guys are equipped with some sort of record-ing device, and are often shooting pictures or videos as they go.

“Go ahead,” Alvis suddenly says. “I’m just going to take some pictures here. I’ll catch up,” he adds. Vallu nods from his spot in the front, and continues in the same pace as before. Soon Alvis is out of sight, but before I get to think much about it, he reappears next to me.

“Let’s stop here for a sec.” Vallu stops by the river side. He sets up his camera at the right position.

“Now we just have to drive in a row along the riv-erside,” he says.

“That includes you,” he then adds and looks at me.

Soon after, the rain starts and we take shelter. Vallu reaches down one of his many bags, and pulls out a t-shirt.

“Here. You can borrow this, so your bag won’t get wet,” he adds and hands me a black t-shirt for me to cover my Louboutin handbag, placed in the front basket of my bike.

“Are you okay with a little drizzle?” He then asks, before we set off towards Marina Bay Sand.

Only a few minutes later we reach the Marina, and the boys starts to glow, like this was it. This was the goal. They finally reached their destination.

8 months later. 15.400 kilometers, and they were finally here.



Southeast Asia stories from the back of a bike

“The best days were actually the most exhausting ones. Those days you just appreciate everything more. The food would taste better. You are simply too exhausted to think about anything.”

Text: Miabell Mallikka Photos: Curious Pedals

Vallu and Alvis, the two Finnish friends who cycled from Helsinki to Singapore, has shared their stories going through Southeast Asia on a bike with ScandAsia.

The two have spent a lot of time reflecting on their journey, writing in their diaries and studying the places they've been cycling through. They both agree, that the region in many ways were very easy and approachable as a cyclist.

“The food is good. The roads are good. People are nice and there are hospitals everywhere as well as Wi-Fi,” Vallu says.

The biggest challenge going through the Southeast Asian region, was according to the boys, the heat.

“There were different challenges in every region,

but in Southeast Asia the constant challenge was definitely the heat,” Alvis says.

But besides the mutual challenge of the heat, the different countries had the two boys face different encounters.

Vietnam

In Southeast Asia they started out in Vietnam, where the first week was none stop rain.

“It was still pretty hot, but it was constantly raining. We had planned on camping a lot, but we couldn't,” Vallu shares.

All of their things were constantly wet and quickly started to get moldy. The two had to spend a lot of time and energy trying to keep their gear in a decent condi-

tion. They would have to stop up every time there was a pause in the rain to find a sunny spot and lay out their stuff to dry.

“Even though our bags are mostly waterproof, they would still get moist on the inside. We would have to empty everything out quite often to wash it and try to make it dry, but it would never get to dry properly, cause the sun would never be there for long,” Alvis then adds.

The missing visa

“One crazy story was, I never got my Vietnamese visa. I then had to do a visa run in the rain,” Vally suddenly remembers.

That day, the boys had biked a hundred kilometers. The place where Vallu had to turn in his visa application, was in the opposite direction of the border. He therefore had to rent a motorbike to get there.

His visa went through, but before he managed to reach the border it was around 10pm. He ended up spending almost seven hours on a motorbike, after a long day of cycling.

“It was raining the whole time, so I could either put my visor down, and then I couldn’t see anything, or I could take the visor off, but then all the rain was coming in my eyes. I had no choice but to drive really slowly,” he shares.



“

When you bike, you have the opportunity to find some of those places close to where the tourists go, where you’ll end up having the whole place to yourself.

”

Somewhere along the way, Vallu's passport got wet in the rain. Knowing that Thailand is super strict about passport policy, he contacted the Finnish embassy in Hanoi to see, if he would have to return to Hanoi to retain a new passport.

Eventually, he decided to order a new passport in Finland, and have it delivered to his parents' home. Then one of his friends back in Finland send it to a Vietnamese guy the boys knew in Ho Chi Minh city. Here Vallu managed to pick it up, before they went to cross the border to Cambodia.

"When we entered Cambodia, I had to do a "secret passport swap." I exited Vietnam with my old passport, but then at the next counter, I took out my new passport and they stamped me in. The whole time I was just begging "please don't check for my Vietnamese stamps," but thankfully they didn't," he tells with relief in his voice.

Cambodia

"Of all the countries in Southeast Asia, I think, Cambodia was the most distinct," Alvis resonates as we talk.

"The infrastructure was terrible. The roads were in a really bad condition compared to what we had gotten used to. But at the same time, the place has such a rich culture," He adds.

One of the first things the boys noticed was, that there wasn't a lot of old people in the country. A fact they believe has to do with the horror of Khmer Rouge regime.

"We've both tried to read books about the coun-





tries we've gone through. One of those I've read was "first they killed my farther." It's a pretty heavy book to read, but that way you get the insides into the places. It also changes your perception of the countries. This one made us aware of just how recent this genocide was," Vallu says.

"We have probably read about six books each on the places we've been. But during our time in Southeast Asia, we didn't do as much reading, since we were joined by Greg. We then spend more time socializing and getting to know each other than we did in the beginning."

Greg joined the two friends in Bangkok in January and started helping the boys documenting their achievement.

Thailand

"For me my favorite country was probably Thailand. Except for the super touristy places, like some of the islands we went to," Alvis says with a lot of enthusiasm.

The three spent a day in Koh Phi Phi. An island the two characterize as just one big tourist trap and party place.

In the hope of escaping the many tourists, they went to the other side of the island. Here they managed to get



the entire beach to themselves.

"When you bike, you have the opportunity to find some of those places close to where the tourists go, where you'll end up having the whole place to yourself," they share.

In Phuket, they went to a park by a big lake, just north of the touristy place.

"It was just such a beautiful national park. They did these boat tours around the lake. The boats were a bit too expensive for us though, so we decided to go and have our own adventure," Vallu says.



“

When it comes to the different places, a lot is made up by the people we meet and communicate with and the communities we got to experience.

”



The boys left their bikes and found a remote place with some small abandoned huts by the crystal-clear lake.

“We ended up having this amazing, remote experience, all by ourselves. We got some take-away food from the hardware store and just listened to music. Then we went swimming and made up our own games. It was just one of the best experiences,” both of them agrees.

“I think it’s a really good story to sum up our experience. These quiet places, where not much is happening. At these places we got to create our own fun. It’s amazing how much fun you can have with just the smallest things,” Vallu shares while reflecting on their journey.

Malaysia

“When it comes to the different places, a lot is made up by the people we meet and communicate with and the community’s we got to experience,” Vallu states.

In Malaysia they got to experience this small surfer community, which according to Vallu, blew him away.

“It was very unique to experience a place like this, in such a conservative country. It had such a vibrant vibe and communal atmosphere. There was the most amazing hospitality. People greet you like they know you and they treat you like a friend instead of just a tourist or a stranger,” he tells. His eyes beaming by the memory.

The locals would let them put up their tent in their bag yards and offered them to use their showers for free.

“They don’t want anything from you. They just want you to feel welcome. Even just by these small gestures,”

he adds and makes it clear, that Malaysia was very special to him.

“On the road, we were cycling by the highway, when this car passed us. We didn’t notice it at first. It was just another pickup truck. Then a few hundred meters ahead of us, the driver parks his car and gets out with three cans of soda, which he hands us as we pass by,” Alvis adds.

“Exactly,” Vallu says. “These small gestures makes a massive different on your perception of a country,” he then adds.

“It may have been a small deed, but it made our week,” Alvis notes.

But biking through Malaysia had its challenges

With only 300 kilometers left, Alvis’ bike broke down and he ended up having serious problems with the back wheel of his bike.

“One day, I had to get off and try to fix it seven times,” he adds.

On that day, they had planned to drive 200 kilometers, but they only managed to bike for about 40 kilometers before Alvis’ wheel popped.

“I fixed, but soon it would pop again. That happened four times in a row,” he shares with a hint of frustration in his voice.

The boys had just left the city when the wheel popped. It quickly became clear, that he would have to take it to a bike store.



"I had to hitchhike back to town to have it fixed. Since we had planned to go 200 kilometers that day, we agreed that Vallu and Greg would continue to the next city, while I would go fix the bike. I would then meet up with them later on," Alvis tells.

He did get the bike fixed and he did manage to catch up with the rest of the small group, but soon after, his bike would break down again.

At that point it was clear, that they would not be able to do the 200 kilometers that day.

Lost in the dark

It was starting to get dark, and the boys were stranded in a remote area in the Malaysian countryside.

"We were 10-15 kilometers away from this campsite we had our eyes on. We then agreed that Vallu and Greg, once again, would go ahead and set up the camp, while I would stay behind and fix my bike."

Without thinking much about it, Vallu and Greg took off to set up the camp, while Alvis stayed back to fix his bike, yet again.

"The only problem was, that the tiny screw on the vent of my only good tire fell off, and I couldn't find it," Alvis shares.

The sun went down. It got all dark and moist and Alvis had no way of fixing his bike without the screw. He then had to call Vallu and tell them, that he was unable to fix the bike.

"And he had our dinner," Vallu adds.

Alvis was then forced to start walking towards the closest houses which was three kilometers away. After dragging his bike for several kilometers in the dark, he managed to reach a house, where he was able to get a ride to the campsite.

Don't fall into routines and comfort

It was clear, that the stories would quickly make the boys reflect on what they've gained from the last 8 months. Spending almost every day on their bikes in the effort to reach their goal of biking from Helsinki to Singapore.

"The best days were actually the most fatiguing ones," Vallu says.

"Those days you just appreciate everything more. The food taste better. You are simply too exhausted to think about anything. As soon as we would stay in a city for too long, we would start falling into the trap of overthinking things," he adds. Then he shares a note he made to himself during the trip:

"Finland is such a special country where everything works extremely well and the quality of life is extremely high. A person have to be careful, cause it's easy to fall into routines and comfort. You have to remember to continue challenging yourself and don't fall into the traps of comfort and pleasure."

Johan Davidsson sets out to create new nightlife experiences, as Bangkok bounces back

Who can better share insights and an update on how Bangkok's famous bar and nightlife sector is bouncing back than club maestro Johan Davidsson!? Following Covid – a period of several years of closures that all but erased the entire scene! – Johan is himself also back full time in Bangkok along with his family, already gaining significant results with a series of re-openings.

Text: Joakim Persson Photos: Dennis Thern

Johan Davidsson has returned to Thailand as Group General Manager of bars and restaurants for Fico, his previous employer during over 15 years. He has successfully restarted three of their previously popular "waterholes", plus a rejuvenated Opera Italian Restaurant (where Fico took over ownership and relaunched it post Covid). And there's a lot more in store for 2023, including a total refurbishment awaiting Le Fenix hotel and its rooftop bar Nest.

We reunite there, some 14 years later since his previous feature in ScandAsia. Back then one of the hottest nightlife experiences was Johan's very own 'Club Crawl' event, which was a bar tour gathering that every fortnight visited the then super trio of venues along Sukhumvit soi 11; Nest, Bed Supperclub and Qbar. Today this famous side street has transformed into something quite different, while Johan holds something in store though for its future.

Johan has also recently reunited both with Bangkok and also – for the second time - with his wife and two kids. For those glad to have Johan back in action within Bangkok's entertainment scene this is surely good news, while he is himself somewhat disappointed about the outcome of their attempt to build a life in Sweden.

Soon after the arrival of Covid-19 Johan saw the perfect opportunity to try out moving to Sweden – something they had contemplated many times.

"We took the chance – as we felt we could kill two birds with one stone – there were no longer any suitable jobs in Thailand, and after 18 years here I felt like it was time to try out living in Sweden - and to really compare with how much one really loves Thailand," says Johan.

As a consequence the family had to be separated for six months - since that was the time it took to arrange the Swedish visa for his wife. Meanwhile, Johan went back to his hometown Halmstad and immediately got a job at 'Larrys', the city's biggest restaurant and entertainment venue, and where he quickly excelled and contributed to beating the sales records three times during four months, by becoming a nightclub etc. – until Covid once more forced the venue to close down.

“
The school was a big disappointment; my son went from being best in class when he started to being in the bottom - within a year. From loving school, to hating it. So this is one of the biggest reasons why we decided to move back to Thailand.
”

Johan Davidsson at Nest rooftop bar.

“At Larrys they were happy just doing well with their luncheons and satisfied with just having guests coming for drinks in the evenings. But there were many things that I felt could be done so we managed to increase the sales after 10 pm with 80 percent.”

However, on the personal front things did not work out that well – concerning Swedish school, where the two children got zero extra support to be able to learn in the Swedish language.

“The school was a big disappointment; my son went from being best in class when he started to being in the bottom - within a year. From loving school, to hating it. So this is one of the biggest reasons why we decided to move back to Thailand.”

Johan says that the children were super happy when they returned: ‘Now we’re moving back home!’

“**T**he response has been great among guests,” he comments on the re-openings since in 2022. In the Opera complex our other well-known brand Iron Fairies will also start ‘12 Chairs Chef Table’, where we will offer fantastic menus and have guest Michelin chefs throughout the year.”



Ladies at Maggie Choo's nightclub.





“Competition is fierce now. We can easily name ten bars with superb bartenders. We have for instance Tropic City, which is a favourite bar for me, operated by Swedish guys, and ranked 24 on the World’s 50 Best Bars list!”

Johan Davidsson in action during one of his former ‘Club Crawl’ events.

He also wants to follow in the footsteps of the arrival to Bangkok of the Swedish fine dining brand Frantzén. “I think it will open up for more Swedish chefs here and we have in fact invited some Swedish chefs already to our chefs table, and where I would prefer to work with Michelin star chefs. So we are hoping to bring in some large names.”

As for additional projects it sounds like 2023 is going to be a busy year for the Swede. “Fico owns many buildings in Thailand, so we will mostly open up new places in those and avoid rentals. And they are buildings you would only dream of being available twenty years ago but right now they are! So there is a real opportunity within real estate at the moment and setting up one’s own bars - even if it’s still a bit early,” he adds.

“**B**ut I think the whole city of Bangkok will be booming during this year concerning bars and nightlife – there are lots of opportunities now.”

Overall, Johans likens the scene to a race to market. “All places that have survived Covid are incredibly strong now. And then you have many people who have been working on their ideas, so one can see activity all over the city.”

Johan is also seeing that the scene is being helped by more music festivals: “Such events bring lots of artists that perform at many places. So the volume of international guest artists is increasing. So I can foresee that the nightlife will become better than ever before!”

This is also helped by the fact that the audience as well as the scene keeps raising the bar – a development that Johan has been part of setting the stage for.

“With Club Crawl we started out before people really took notice here in Thailand and it was perhaps in a way also easier back then. Competition is fierce now. We can easily name ten bars with superb bartenders. We have for instance Tropic City, which is a favourite bar for me, operated by Swedish guys, and ranked 24 on the World’s 50 Best Bars list!”

“The Swedes at Tropic City also worked with bartenders Ben and Daniel Sorum from Flow, Rocket Coffeebar etc. and these bars are now taking things to the next level, bringing in the next generation. So I feel we have played our part there and it will only continue.”

“But to best in the region or in the city, it’s no longer O.K to be good just on Bangkok terms, but one must do benchmarking with Kuala Lumpur, Singapore etc. Seriously, you won’t reach far with a Kamikaze drink anymore!”



Lady in Chinese dress at Maggie Choo's nightclub.

Now it has to really be good! And talking of F&B; in the old days it was about having good food, good drinks, good service and entertainment. But now one sells an experience, as it's no longer about having a DJ in a bar – people couldn't care less – but now they come because you offer them an experience."

I think this fits me perfectly as we have always worked on having bars that are more experience-focused, with the likes of Maggie Choo's and The Iron Fairies - venues that are a bit like walking into another world. But one must really offer something experience-based and one must think ten steps further now. Thankfully our company is unique and we have always been forerunners."

"With Gaggan as another forerunner, Bangkok has also really shown that people from Bangkok travel to all parts of the world, and people from around the whole of Asia travel here. If you have a chef coming that has a reputation you can count on people from Hong Kong and Singapore. People travel throughout the region, and they could even travel from Europe for such a chef experience! And Thais are now getting their own known chefs. There's a gigantic market for food travel," Johan continues.

Another ingredient within Bangkok's entertainment scene is pool parties – mainly hosted by some of downtown's five star hotels. And here Johan predicts that Bangkok will also get beach clubs going forward.

"We started with outdoor parties some ten years ago. Then the pool parties arrived - a market that has been doing well now again with Westin, W Hotel and So Bangkok that also has had a kind of monopoly on this so far. But there are many new hotels planning that they too should be able to host parties. So now you are seeing parties in all kinds of hotels that you thought would never have it. I think it will continue and think more and more tourists coming to Thailand want to have a tropical palm experience in the middle of the city, so I think there is a large market for that."

It is not really for Thais though; who will never be out in the sun, he adds. "It would be too much to ask for, but perhaps, sometime into the future!"

Sophisticated Thais heading for Ekkamai Sukhumvit soi 11 has also changed dramatically when it comes to Thais as guests. "Today, as things look, many of my Thai friends would not come here. Even if we were to open the most luxurious venue in the entire country it's always going to be for tourists, expats and middle class Thais here. It will never become upper class Thai as I can see it."

And yet, Johan aims to build up the "upper soi 11" as a premium version. "We want to stake on Nest and the other places up here that will continue to be world class. We have lived well on our good reputation, nice guests, our staff and our drinks. But in today's Bangkok that's not enough so even being very satisfied about the results the venue still deserves a facelift. We hope to keep the name and the values. But it will become much more design-driven. The whole building will undergo a transformation and we'll come back strong!"

Meanwhile, Johan is seeing signs that Soi Thonglor is turning into what soi 11 used to be ten years ago. "I think tourists are finding their way there, and when they do Thais will move towards Ekkamai and Phra Khanong - which will then become the 'new Thonglor'. There is also a spread happening so that the monopoly on international clubs that soi 11 used to have is now widening, with openings along the main Sukhumvit road from soi 11 and all the way to Thonglor. Along it, the Queen Sirikit Convention Centre will be one of the sub-centres."

The 'Club Crawl' landscape is very different in 2023 in many ways. For instance, back then the quality clubs on soi 11 charged a door fee that party-goers could avoid by paying a low fee to attend the frequently held club crawl events instead.

"I think it's probably not possible to do the same thing again – it's too spread out now. But we might do something similar in the future, in one way or the other."



HEMLIG

Scandinavian Drinking and Dining in Singapore

By Miabell Mallikka

Walking into Hemlig, at 57 Neil Road in Singapore, is just like taking a step into Scandinavia. The minimalistic design, the clean lines and the scent of wood that fills the room, will remind any Scandinavian of their origin.

Hemlig is a Nordic word for secretly but the place is not deliberately hidden. It is simply the result of having to come up with a Scandinavian name that foreigners can pronounce.

"It also symbolizes how we strive to disclose all the secrets to Scandinavian cooking," says Knut Randhem, the Swedish owner of the restaurant.

Scandinavian dining underrepresented

Knut may be Swedish, but he is fluent in Danish after spending 10 years in Copenhagen before moving to Southeast Asia. Though Knut is a trained chef, he has spent most of his time behind the bar, which is how he prefers it.

He first moved to Bangkok in 2013, but later moved to Singapore, where he started his own hotdog-concept. Hemlig was a dream of his that came true in the spring of 2022, after working on the concept for nearly three years.

"When I decided to open a restaurant, I looked at what else was available in Singapore. The Scandinavian cuisine is not very well represented here," Knut tells from behind the long wooden bar.

Not just for Scandinavians

There is approximately 6000 Scandinavians living in Singapore, but they are not the only ones to indulge in the Scandinavian dishes.

"I would say that our clientele is around 50% Expats and 50% locals," Knut adds.

"Singaporeans are very curious when it comes to food, and many of them know about Scandinavia. Some have even studied there, so they like to explore the Scandinavian kitchen."

In the beginning, Knut himself developed the menu and was in charge of the kitchen, but for the last four months, the Swedish chef Daniel, has been taken over the kitchen, and has put his personal touch to the courses.

Grandmother's food served by the Grandson

"The DNA of the menu is still the same. Daniel has adjusted the dishes a bit to his taste, so I would say, that it is mainly Daniel who is behind the current menu," Knut says.

This is consistent with the restaurant's slogan "Grandmother's food served by the grandson."

"I wanted to create a more modern take on the traditional Scandinavian dishes," Knut explains. "You know, make it less brown and more colorful," he adds.

A quest he seems to have succeed as I'm being served a starter consisting of a shrimp salad and freshly made sourdough bread. A dish that taste as fresh and delicious as it looks.



"We actually get all the seafood flown in from Norway every day," Knut adds. A fact that only makes the experience feel even more authentic.

Not just a restaurant but a community

As the evening progresses and people start to appear, it doesn't take long before a couple of Swedes enters and greets Knut. They seem very familiar with the place and quickly get settled by a table close to the open kitchen in the back.

Even though, the main idea was to open a Scandinavian restaurant, the concept has quickly developed and become more than just a restaurant.

"We strive to gather people for the main Scandinavian holidays," Knut says.

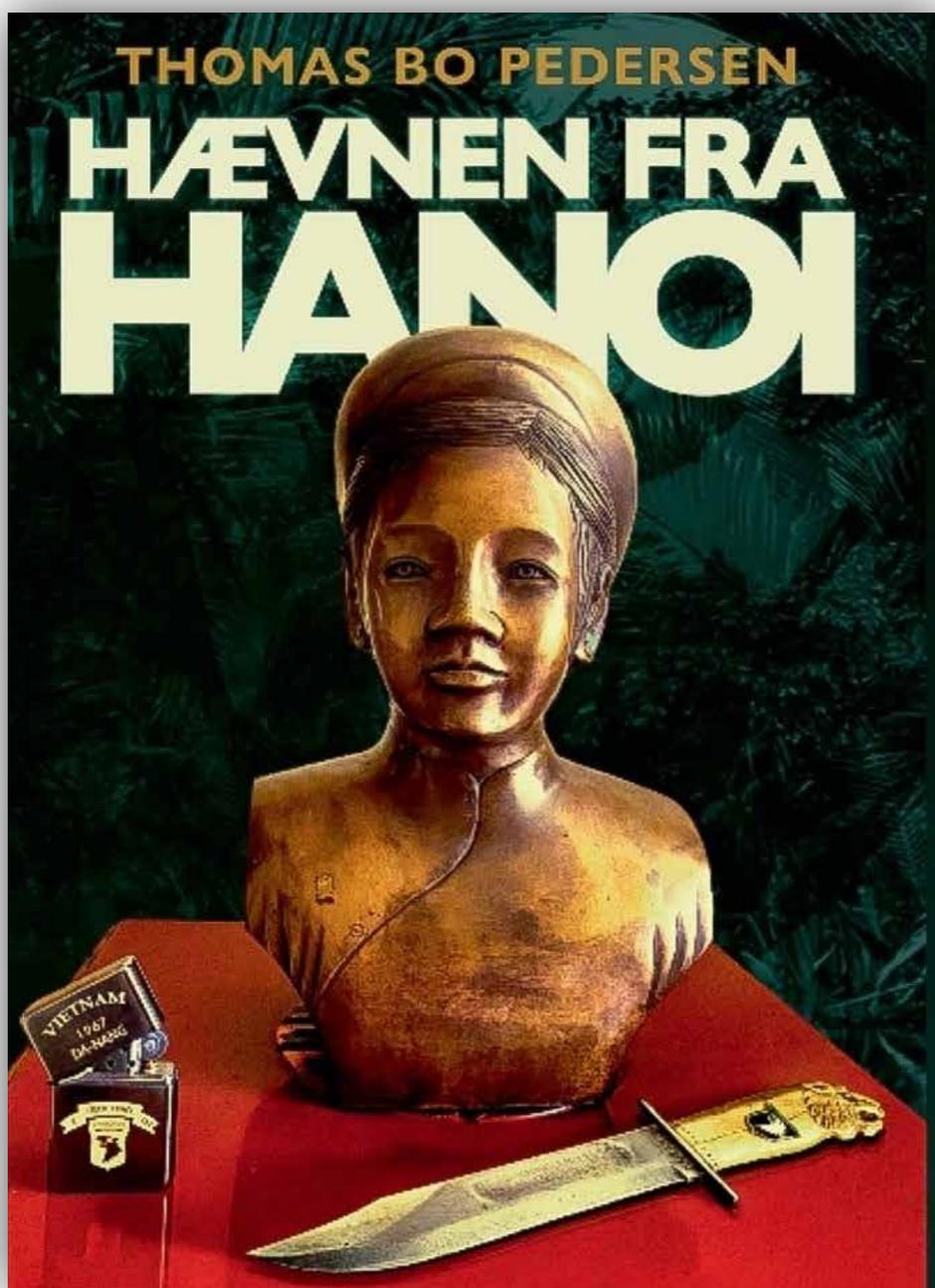
At Christmas eve the place was filled with Scandinavians who enjoyed a traditional Scandinavian Christmas dinner. Soon comes easter, where it will be possible to be served a special easter lunch. Knut even has plans to throw something special for the first of May.

"I know it is mostly about sitting in the park, drinking beer, but it doesn't necessarily have to be an event in the restaurant. Maybe we will be throwing some get-together in a park," he adds, making it clear: Hemlig is not just a restaurant. It's a community.



Danish long time resident of Vietnam writes thriller

Thomas Bo Pedersen, Danish businessman in Vietnam for many years and former Danish diplomat, has written a thriller “The Hanoi Revenge” which will be particularly exciting reading for any Nordic person having stayed in South East Asia.



The Hanoi Revenge by Thomas Bo Pedersen, Danish businessman in Vietnam for many years and former Danish diplomat, starts with the brutal murder of the Danish ambassador in Thailand, Franz Heimann - the Danish tabloid Ekstra Bladets adds “DURING SEX ORGY”.

The ambassador was indeed found murdered in a dubious side street hotel in Bangkok. The Thai police

quickly dismissed the murder as a jealousy murder, committed by Heimann’s Thai mistress. The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs hastily sweeps the embarrassing case under the carpet.

However, the reality turns out to be far more sensitive and with far-reaching international political consequences.

A Danish alcoholic journalist in Bangkok discovers

that the death of the Danish ambassador is a central piece in a terrorist plot that implicates both the Danish royal family and the President of the United States. An act of revenge that has its real cause in the atrocities of the Vietnam War.

The book contains several fascinating narrative sequences that magically interweave fiction, concrete events and real people into a stinging suspense novel.

“No one will recognize themselves in my novel, but some may think they recognize others,” Thomas Bo Pedersen warns his readers.

With the author’s many years of work as a diplomat for Denmark, “The Hanoi Revenge” is not only a breathtakingly exciting novel, but also an unmerciful revelation of the culture of the Danish Foreign Service itself.

Before reading the whole book, I read the excerpt from Chapter 5 which the publisher offers for free. Then I just had to read the whole book from the top. It took me to the early hours of this morning to finish it, but I just couldn’t put it down.

“Revenge from Hanoi” was released on March 7, 2023.

Price: DKK 249.

More details; <http://www.mondogrande.dk/>

Before leaving Vietnam, Thomas Bo Pedersen’s friend Phan brought him a photo of Thomas’ first encounter with Phan’s legendary father Nguyen Co Thach, 2 June 1984.

Phan had enhanced the Danish photographer Ole Johnny Sørensen’s original black & white photo in color and added a personal note to Thomas Bo.



About Thomas Bo Pedersen

Thomas Bo Pedersen, born in 1955, started his career as a journalist, working among others at the since closed down Danish newspaper Det Fri Aktuelt. For a major part of his life he worked, however, in diplomacy and with international business management.

He was employed in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a press officer in 1994, and the following year moved to the diplomatic service. Since then, in 1996, he was seconded to the Danish embassy in Bangladesh with responsibility for several sector programs under Danida auspices.

In 1999, he was called home to the job as ministerial secretary for three development ministers - first Poul Nielson, then Jan Trøjborg and then Anita Bay Bundegaard.

After a period in Denmark’s Export Council, in 2002 Thomas Bo Pedersen was posted as head of the trade department at the Danish embassy in Hanoi.

In 2006 he joined as CEO of Mascot Int. Vietnam, with the task of establishing and developing the production of workwear for the Danish parent company.

In Thomas Bo Pedersen’s own words:

“I faithfully pedaled in hamster wheel of the Foreign Service for a full 12 years and then took a leave of absence for 7 years - until a student assistant from the Personnel Office informed me of my resignation ‘due to lack of interest in rejoining the Foreign Service’ with a helpful reminder that ‘confidentiality remains in force after the end of the service’.

Under his leadership, the Mascot company in Vietnam grew and a new Mascot company in Laos was added. The Mascot empire had by the end of 2022 around 3,500 employees.

In 2011, Thomas Bo Pedersen was awarded Prince Henrik’s Medal of Honor for “his outstanding efforts in the development of relations between Denmark and Vietnam”.

In 2018, Thomas Bo Pedersen was also awarded a medal of honor from the Vietnamese government as a “role model for foreign investors in Vietnam.”

He is now retired, living in Copenhagen, hopefully working on his next surprises.

Consul General of Denmark in Shanghai joins signing ceremony



Mikael Hemniti Winther, the Consul General of Denmark in Shanghai, went to Nantong in East China to attend the signing ceremony between the Danish Company Nim Tech and Shanghai-based Zhongxun Tech.

Nim Tech and Zhongxun Tech are expected to build a welding robot and manufacturing base in Nantong. The project is expected to generate 600 million yuan in sales revenue per year.

Nordic countries support Cambodia in improving labor rights and freedom

The Minister of Labour and Vocational Training, Ith Samheng, recently met with Ambassadors from four Nordic countries; Sweden's Jon Astrom Grondahl, Norway's Astrid Emilie Helle, Denmark's Jon Thorgaard and Finland's Jyri Jarviaho in Cambodia.

At the conference, Samheng made remarks about Cambodia's success in updating its labor legal framework and labor rights.

He also brought up future plans to optimize implementation of the Law on Trade Unions, establish clear tripartite mechanisms to resolve issues in an independent and transparent manner, and improve many other areas as well.

The four ambassadors expressed appreciation for the ministry's increased attention to improving several aspects of the country.

According to the Phnom Penh Post, the Nordic countries are eager to cooperate with Cambodia to improve labor market services as well as professionalism and skills development, promote rights and free-

doms, and combat human trafficking in order to increase the quality of its citizens as well as building trust and confidence among investors in Cambodia.



Labour minister Ith Samheng met with ambassadors from four Nordic countries – Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland. Photo by the Cambodian Labour Ministry via The Phnom Penh Post.

A.P. Møller plans \$750 million infrastructure deals in Southeast Asia

A .P. Møller Capital, the asset management unit of Danish transportation and logistics giant A.P. Møller Group, said on Monday, February 20, that it aims to invest more than \$750 million in the high-growth markets of South and Southeast Asia.

The firm confirmed in a statement, that it has set up an office in Singapore and plans to invest in various infrastructure platforms in the Southeast Asian market.

"This is the next step in the growth of A.P. Møller Capital and our investment business in Asia, where we see significant opportunity," said Dhruv Narain, partner at A.P. Møller



Capital and head of its Asia team.

A.P. Møller Capital manages more than \$1.5 billion and has invested in 16 projects worldwide.

Maersk sues Evergreen over blockage

Danish shipping group Maersk has filed a lawsuit against Taiwanese Evergreen. Evergreen is the owner and operator of the container ship Ever Given, which blocked the Suez Canal for six days in 2021. The company is claiming compensation for delays caused by the incident.

"Maersk has raised a claim against Evergreen, at the Danish Maritime and Commercial High Court, due to financial losses in connection with Ever Given blocking the Suez Canal," a spokesperson told Reuters.

Maersk has not yet disclosed the size of the claim or when it was

filed. The news was first reported by ShippingWatch.dk on Monday, February 13.

Ever Given, one of the world's largest container ships, got jammed across the canal for six days in March 2021. The episode halted traffic in both directions and disrupted the global trade.





Researcher Brendan Foley holds up a jar containing saffron preserved in water. Photo via Tuoitre News.

Swedish archeologists discover well-preserved spices on Baltic shipwreck

An excavation led by Brendan Foley, an archaeological scientist at Lund University in Sweden has discovered a “unique” cache of well-preserved spices, from strands of saffron to peppercorns and ginger on the royal wreck, Gribshund, owned by King Hans of Denmark and Norway which sank off Sweden’s Baltic coast more than 500 years ago.

“The Baltic is strange – it’s low oxygen, low temperature, low salinity, so many organic things are well preserved in the Baltic where they wouldn’t be well preserved elsewhere in the world ocean system,”

said Foley. “But to find spices like this is quite extraordinary.”

The spices would have been a symbol of high status, as only the wealthy could afford goods such as saffron or cloves that were imported from outside Europe, citing Tuoitre News.

Lund University researcher Mikael Larsson, who has been studying the finds, said: “This is the only archaeological context where we’ve found saffron. So it’s very unique and it’s very special.”



Vietnamese people in Sweden commemorated International Mother Language Day

By Viet Nguyen

Vietnamese Association in Eskilstuna, Sweden held an event to celebrate International Mother Language Day at the Eskilstuna City Cultural Centre on 2nd March.

Attending the celebration were a number of the Association's leaders, representatives from the Embassy of Vietnam in Sweden and hundreds of Vietnamese students in Sweden and local people.

At the event, the attendees were reminded of the significance of preserving and promoting the mother languages of each nation in general, and of the Vietnamese community in Sweden in particular. Besides, hundreds of Swedish and Vietnamese traditional books, newspapers, magazines and pictures were also displayed in the programme.

A class was also held at this event to help Vietnamese-Swedish students learn about their homeland's national culture, history and



geography, as well as knowledge related to Vietnamese seas, islands and international law of the sea, including the United Nations Charter on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS 1982), which was adopted more than 40 years ago.

More than 21 thousand Vietnamese people are living in Sweden. Most of them still maintain their

cultural identity and mother language while integrating into Swedish society. The protection and maintenance of cultures and languages of ethnic groups are also supported by the Swedish authority through a variety of activities, including the International Mother Language Day Celebration as above.



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