

JUL-AUG 2023

Scania



BUSINESS:

Global Competitive Index

COMMUNITY:

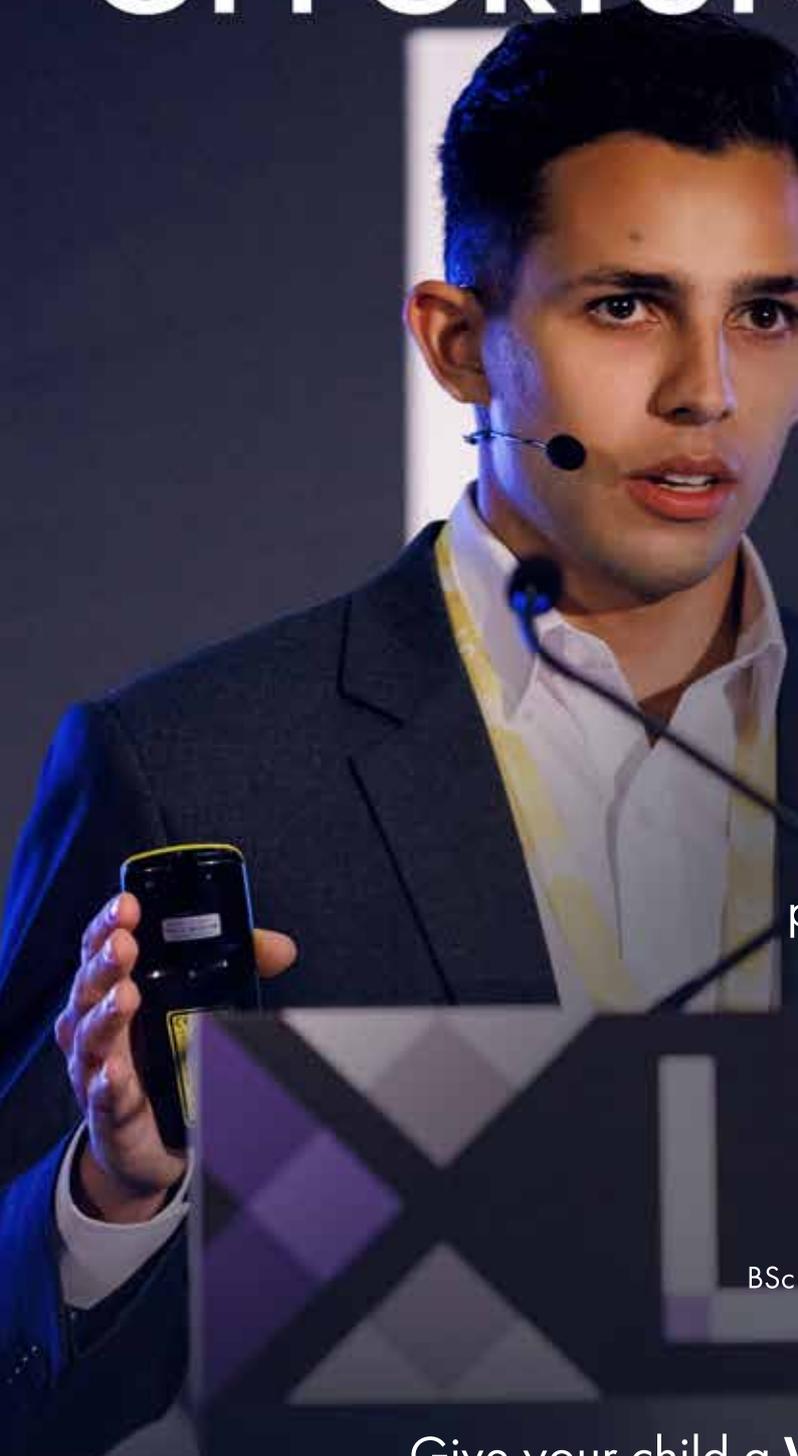
Crayfish and Viking parties coming

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Why do we allow burning of books?

Swedish flower concept:
“Make Someone Happy”

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY



“Imagine ME presenting my research to world-renowned doctors and geneticists!”

At London Calling 2023, a DNA sequencing conference, Jonathan Broadbent presented his research easing the identification of cells, a precursor to diagnosing cancer with a blood test.



Jonathan Broadbent Grad '17

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BSc Biology and Computer Science, McGill University 2021

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PAY MORE ATTENTION TO 3 WARNING SIGNS OF HEART ATTACK

Heart attack develops when the supply of the blood to the heart is disrupted or blocked. The blockage is often caused by a buildup of fat, cholesterol and other substances, which form a plaque in the coronary arteries that feed the heart. The severity widely ranges and it might be present as either acute episode or chronic condition. In fact, heart attack symptoms vary, not all people who have heart attacks experience the same symptoms. Nevertheless, it remains important to seek immediate medical attention when any warning sign, regardless of severity, of heart attack exhibits, allowing a timely diagnosis and effective treatment that significantly saves lives.

Warning signs and symptoms of heart attack

These 3 signs and symptoms strongly indicate heart attack. If any of them exhibits, medical assistance must be sought right away.

- 1** Feeling weak, light-headed, or faint. Feeling weak can be an indicative symptom of impaired heart function. The severity is associated with the intensity of activities. The condition is most likely serious if the patients experience weakness while resting without any physical exertion.
- 2** Chest pain, discomfort or tightness in the chest. Chest pain or discomfort signifying heart attack is often characterized by sudden pain in the center of the chest which might radiate from the neck to the jaw. Pain or tightness described as crushing pain with pressure might spread to one or both arms or shoulders. If the symptom persists and lasts longer than 20 minutes without timely treatment, it can potentially lead to myocardial infarction which deteriorates the heart function.
- 3** Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing when lying down (orthopnea). If shortness of breath or trouble breathing develops when lying flat, it is often a serious sign of heart attack when there is a buildup of excess fluid that creates pressure around the lungs that increases more workload to the heart. The severity of this symptom usually depends on how flat the patients are lying —the flatter they lie, the more they feel short of breath.

Cardiac screening is essential

People aged over 35 who pose certain risk factors might be prone to develop coronary artery disease which substantially affects their health in the future. To catch heart diseases at earliest stages, cardiac screening is highly recommended, enabling lifestyle modification and proactive healthcare intervention to promote a better and healthier heart.



Coronary Artery Calcium Scan (CAC)

Coronary Artery Calcium Scan (CAC) is an imaging test used to detect the atherosclerotic plaque that forms on the artery walls of the heart. This plaque is made up of calcium, fats, cholesterol and other substances. Over time, plaque buildup hardens and narrows the arteries, resulting in limited blood flow to the heart and other parts of the body. This plaque can burst, triggering a blood clot and causing life-threatening events such as heart attack. Coronary Artery Calcium Scan by using computerized tomography (CT) has been used to detect an atherosclerotic plaque, especially in chronic cases. Nevertheless, this imaging test might not be applicable to identify plaque in acute cases in which lesions might be afresh developed. The measurement of calcified plaque derived from the test is firmly correlated to the risk of developing coronary artery disease in the future. As the amount of calcium detected increases, the risk of heart attack relatively increases. Using 10-15 minutes, the interpretation of calcium scoring is principally made by using Agatston Score, a semi-automated tool to calculate a score based on the extent of coronary artery calcification detected by CT scan. Grading of coronary artery disease (based on total calcium score) ranges from calcium score 0 to over 400 which an extensive plaque burden is found and atherosclerosis might be strongly indicated with extremely high risk of developing heart attack or myocardial infarction and coronary artery disease with high degree of occlusion. With or without symptoms, additional tests, interventions and treatments are further required under close supervision of expert cardiologists.

Adhering to the international standard of care and safety precaution, at Bangkok Heart Hospital, treatments and services are provided 24/7 by highly specialized multidisciplinary team in cardiology supported by cutting-edge technology, ensuring the highest degree of effectiveness and safety. For emergencies, cardiac operations and interventions can be conducted without delay.

More importantly, to maintain your heart's health, eating healthy food and refraining from risk factors contributing to heart diseases are the key. For patients with heart diseases, please be advised to strictly take your medications as prescribed while completing all follow-up appointments.

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Email : heart@bangkokhospital.com

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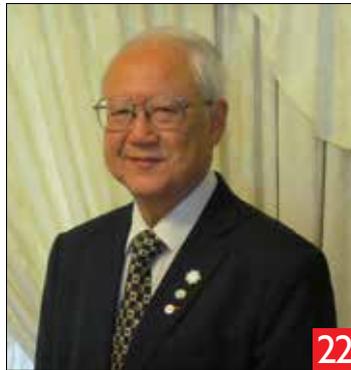
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Free Speech or Hate Speech?

Our Nordic countries have in recent times found ourselves grappling with a delicate dilemma concerning the clash between our cherished value of free speech and our need to protect citizens from discrimination based on religion, race, gender, and other characteristics. The Nordic nations, known for their strong advocacy of individual rights, are facing a complex challenge, with incidents of burning holy books raising profound questions about the limits of free expression.

Central to this issue is the fundamental belief in free speech, which has long been a cornerstone of Nordic societies. The right to express one's opinions, even if they are offensive or provocative, has been considered vital for fostering open dialogue and robust democratic discourse. However, this cherished value has faced scrutiny and raised concerns when it comes into conflict with protecting vulnerable communities from hate speech.

One controversial aspect of this debate revolves around demonstrations wherein some individuals have sought permission from the police to burn pages from the holy book of the Quran. For some, these acts are seen as exercising their right to free expression, even if the act is hateful towards a particular religion. These actions, however, raise a moral and legal quandary: how can a society uphold freedom of speech while simultaneously safeguarding individuals from targeted discrimination and hate?

The Nordic countries' commitment to zero-tolerance for discrimination based on religion, race, gender, and other factors is clear. Yet, the courts have been faced with the challenging task of determining whether these demonstrations are genuine expressions of free speech or acts of hate speech that violate anti-discrimination laws.

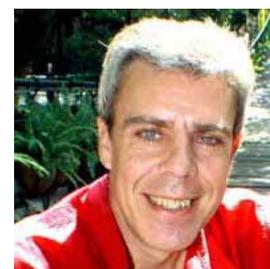
In such cases, the Swedish police have played a pivotal role in assessing the legitimacy of these demonstrations. Twice, they have denied permission for such acts, deeming them as hateful and harmful. Nevertheless, the courts have intervened, citing the principle of freedom of expression as a basis for overturning the decisions.

This ongoing legal battle has sparked a broader conversation about striking the right balance between freedom of expression and protecting citizens from hate speech. The contention lies in whether certain expressions of free speech can be so inherently harmful and discriminatory that they should be curtailed, even in a society that champions the right to voice one's opinions.

Critics of the court's decisions argue that these burnings are not merely expressions of ideas but explicit acts of hatred targeted at individuals based on their religion, color, sexual orientation, or other characteristics. They assert that the courts must recognize the fine line between free speech and hate speech, as allowing the latter to masquerade as the former undermines the very principles that Nordic societies hold dear.

On the other hand, proponents of free speech argue that restricting any form of expression sets a dangerous precedent, potentially leading to censorship and the suppression of differing opinions. They maintain that the remedy for hateful ideas should be countered through dialogue, education, and the promotion of inclusivity rather than through limiting speech.

There is no room for an "I don't care"-attitude. We all need to make up our minds how we should balance the delicate tightrope between free speech and protecting our citizens from discrimination. We, who live here in Asia, also need to explain why this is so difficult for us - and hope for our host countries' understanding.



Gregers Moller
Editor in Chief

ScandAsia

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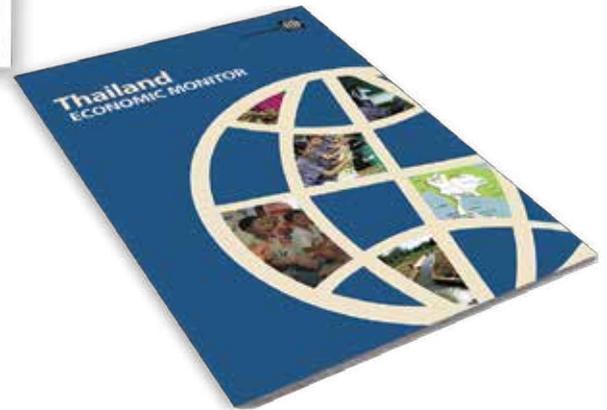
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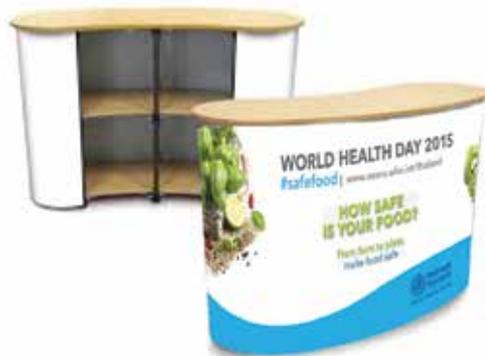
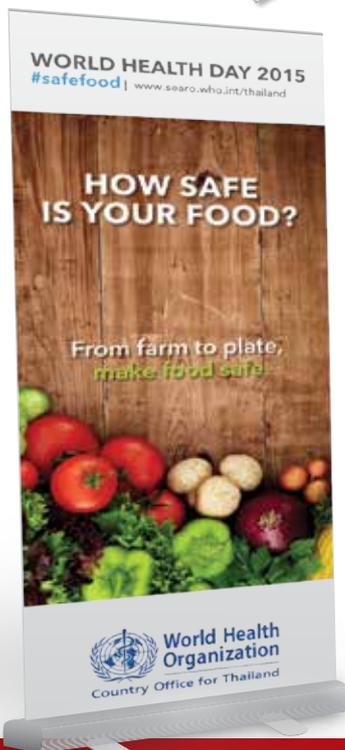
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The Danish government condemns burning of the Quran

The Danish government condemns the burning of the Quran. Burning of holy texts and other religious symbols is a shameful act that disrespects the religion of others, it said in a statement.

The statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

says these acts are provocative and hurt many people and creates division between different religions and cultures. Denmark has freedom of religion and many Danish citizens are Muslims. They are a valued part of the Danish population.

Denmark underlines that free-

dom of expression and freedom of assembly must be respected. Denmark supports the right to protest but emphasizes it must remain peaceful.

The Danish statement came as hundreds of protesters in Baghdad, the capital of Iraq, on Saturday 22 July, 2023, attempted to burn down the Danish Embassy similar to what the protesters earlier succeeded in doing with the Swedish Embassy in Baghdad.

It has become popular among attention seeking ultra rightwing people in Denmark and Sweden to burn pages of the Quran and enjoy the publicity it gives them when Islamic people in other countries get angry at their respective countries.

Currently, the Swedish police is waiting for a court decision if burning of religious texts qualifies as hate speech. Hate speech is forbidden in Sweden, and that would be the end of the permissions. Another approach would be to deem burning of any text a violation of the right to freedom of expression.

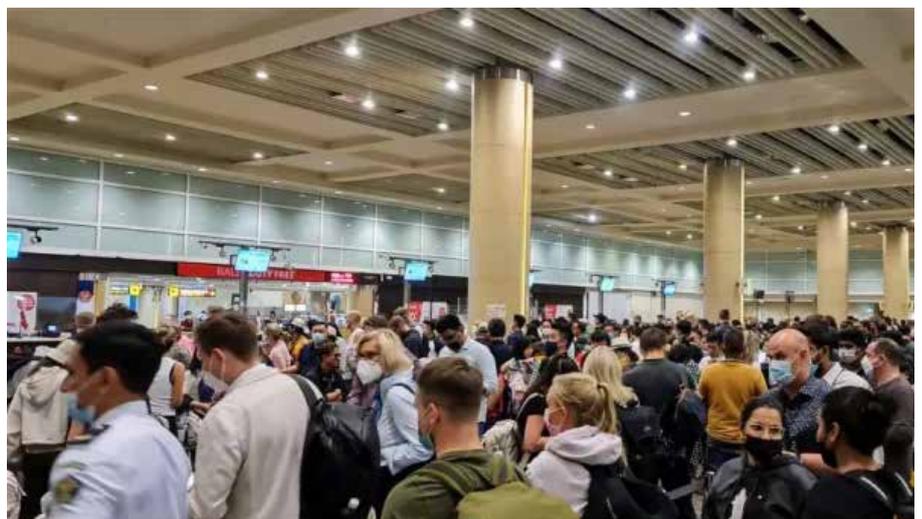


In this photo provided by the Iraqi News Agency, followers of the influential Iraqi Shiite cleric and political leader Muqtada Sadr storm the Swedish embassy in Baghdad, Iraq, Thursday, June 29, 2023, in protest of the burning of a Quran in Sweden. An Iraqi security official has said the Swedish embassy was evacuated by security forces after the protesters breached the building. (Iraqi News Agency via AP)

Must have visa to enter Indonesia

Indonesia has ending visa-free entry from 159 nationals effective immediately, including all Scandinavian nationals. Nordic visitors coming to Indonesia on holidays must apply for visa-on-arrival or e-VOA in advance.

Only travelers from neighboring countries Brunei Darussalam, the Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Vietnam. Various types of tourist visas are also available for those wishing to stay longer than 30 days.



Scandinavian tourists face problems exchanging money

Several countries will no longer exchange Norwegian kroners for the local currency. This has made Norges Bank warn Norwegians to take action before their trip.

Swedes and Danes experience the same with their currency. The national banks in Sweden and Denmark tell their citizens not to bring back currency from their holiday.

Norges Bank says that the bank doesn't have the full overview of which countries do not accept Norwegian kroner. So far tourists in both Thailand and Bulgaria report that they have been rejected when trying to exchange Norwegian kroners for local currency.

The advice from Norges Bank is to contact your own bank if you



are in doubt as to whether you can exchange kroner for local currency.

The reason why Nordic currencies cannot be exchanged is because the private banks in the three

countries have become more restrictive in buying these back due to the Money Laundering Act. It seems exchanging Euro or US dollars is not affected.

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Nokia has big plans in China



Finnish telecom company Nokia Corp will focus on further the company's enterprise business opportunities in China. The aim is to help local companies accelerate industrial digitalization, a senior executive said.

This comes after Nokia's global

net sales for its enterprise business grew 62% year-on-year in the first quarter. This was by leveraging digital technologies to help a wide range of sectors boost efficiency.

"We've come to the end of the 5G spending cycle. To grow the business, the enterprise is the answer,"

Chris Johnson, senior vice-president and global head of enterprise at Nokia, said.

"The partnership in China is super important. We've got a very historic business here, going back 10 years or more. China has really big growth potential for us," Johnson added.

He said Nokia installed a data center in China in the second half of last year. This is the center of the company's new product "Nokia Digital Automated Cloud."

"This is a big opportunity for us in China, and we have a big target for the China market," Johnson said, without disclosing details.

The executive added that Nokia will focus on international customers that have industrial facilities in China.

Source: China Daily

Sweden abandons 100% renewable energy goal

The Swedish parliament officially abandoned its 100% renewable energy target to meet net-zero by 2045 this week. Instead, the country is now looking to build more nuclear reactors.

"We need more electricity production. We need clean electricity and we need a stable energy system," Finance Minister Elisabeth Svantesson said in parliament.

Observers said the decision implicitly acknowledges the low quality of unstable wind and solar. It shows a general collapse of confidence in the renewable energy agenda pioneered in the Nordic countries.

British lobby group Net Zero Watch, which describes the net



zero roadmaps of Western nations as 'utopian and unsustainable,' welcomed the move.

"The net zero plans envisioned by the International Energy Agency (IEA) are dangerously expensive and will result in painful reductions in

living standards for all but the richest," Net Zero Watch stated. In that regard, Sweden came to the only logical conclusion, it said.

Around 98% of electricity in Sweden is already generated from hydro, nuclear and wind.

Thai architects win Danish award

Thai architects from Arsomsilp Institute of the Arts won Danish award for designing Benjakitti Forest Park at the 28th UIA World Congress of Architects. The congress was organized by the International Union of Architects (Union Internationale des Architectes : UIA) and held in Copenhagen, Denmark between 2-6 July 2023.

Ms. Chatchanin Sung, a landscape architect from Arsomsilp Institute of the Arts and designer of Benjakitti Forest Park presented her work at the congress and received the award from Mr. José Luis Cortés Delgado, President of UIA, according to the Royal Thai Embassy in Copenhagen.

On this occasion, Mrs. Sirilak Niyom, Ambassador of Thailand to Denmark, hosted a dinner for twenty-five Thai architects and Danish architects who attended the award ceremony.

Besides celebrating the success of Thai architects, the dinner was

aimed to be another opportunity for Thai and Danish architects to network.

The Thai architects consisted of Mr. Chana Sumpalung, President of the Association of Siamese Architects under Royal Patronage, Mr. Chutayaves Sinthuphan and Associate Professor Dr. Rattapong Angkath, Vice Presidents of the Association, Mr. Prayong Posriprasert, Dean of Architecture, Arsomsilp Institute of the Arts, including Thai architecture students and Thai architects who study and work in Copenhagen.

Also attended the dinner were Danish architects including Mr. Lars Autrup, President of the Danish Association of Architects, Mr. Jakob Brandtberg Knudsen, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, the Royal Danish Academy, Ms. Eva Seo-Andersen, architect from BIG – Bjarke Ingels Group, Ms. Lisbeth Philipsen, architect from Gehl Architects and Mr. Lorenz von Seidlein, Lecturer from Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medi-



Chatchanin Sung from Arsomsilp Institute of the Arts received her award. Photo by the Royal Thai Embassy in Copenhagen.

cine Research Unit (MORU) who started the project of architecture for health in the Makong region.

Source: <https://copenhagen.thaiembassy.org/en/content/uiia2023?cate=5d81e20015e39c161400214e>

Danish trader InCommodities eyes Asia expansion



Danish energy trading house InCommodities on Friday, June 23, posted a record pre-tax profit for 2022 of 1.37 billion euros. Benefiting from gas and power market volatility the company is now planning its expansion to Asia from its new office opened recently in Singapore.

“We are setting up an office in Singapore as we speak, and we are also looking into the Japanese market,” CEO Jesper Johanson told Reuters.

The Aarhus-based company's turnover was up tenfold from 144

million euros in 2021.

InCommodities is a pure trading house with no end-user customers, operating in 20 power and 13 gas markets and plans for further expansion.

The company may later expand into trading liquefied natural gas (LNG), Johanson added.

Looking ahead, InCommodities expected earnings in 2023 to fall sharply to 100 million-250 million euros as markets normalize.

Source: nasdaq.com

Survey: Stockholm is the least expensive city in the Nordics



Mercer has launched its 2023 cost of living survey, which ranks 226 of the world's most expensive cities for expatriate workers.

Stockholm, Sweden is ranked 95 out of 226 countries. This is eight places lower compared to 2022. This makes Stockholm the least expensive of all the Nordic countries.

Copenhagen, Denmark remains the most expensive city in the Nordic region, coming in at number 9.

Helsinki, Finland comes in at number 34 and Oslo, Norway falls 33 places from 2022, coming in at number 60.

Hong Kong has preserved its top position from the 2022 Mercer index.

Source: <https://www.mynewsdesk.com/se/mercer-sweden-ab/>

Chinese Tesla rival launches EVs in Scandinavian countries

Xpeng, the Chinese electric vehicle startup, launched its P7 sedan and its G9 SUV in Denmark, Norway and Sweden on Friday, February 3, 2023.

The Chinese company has priced its P7 model below the market price of Tesla in the Scandinavian countries, despite the fact, that the American brand has been cutting prices globally to advance sales.

Brian Gu, the president of Xpeng, said in a press release, that the launch represents a significant milestone, as the company is trying to strengthen its presence at the European market.



Xpeng has accelerated its international expansion in the last year after opening its first physical

store outside China, in Stockholm, Sweden.

Copenhagen Atomics to test nuclear ammonia plant in Indonesia

A Danish start-up has entered a \$4 billion agreement to build a nuclear-powered ammonia plant in Indonesia.

Copenhagen Atomics is leading a four-party group from Denmark that has signed a MoU with two Indonesian state-owned enterprises, to develop an ammonia facility in the city of Bontang. The plant is set to be powered by next-generation nuclear reactors and have a million-ton capacity per year. This will make it one of the biggest low-carbon ammonia projects proposed to-date.

Copenhagen Atomics's co-founder, Thomas Jam Pedersen, expects the plant to be able to produce the world's cheapest low-carbon ammonia.

"I believe that with this plant



in Indonesia we can get the price of ammonia down to \$500 per ton," he says.

That compares to \$720–1400 per ton for wind or solar-generated ammonia in 2020, according to the International Renewable Energy Agency.

While nuclear power's environmental risk-profile is different to traditional 'green' power sources, it is a low-carbon alternative to fossil fuels.

Source: fdiintelligence.com

Maersk Tankers moves to new Singapore office



Maersk Tankers has moved its Singapore office from Harbour Front to OUE Downtown in the Central Business District. The move supports the company in providing its service to

partners in the Asia Pacific region. With a significant amount of the energy trade for the Asia Pacific region flowing through Singapore, the city is an important energy hub for the world.

"Our Singapore activities play an important role in enabling trade and ensuring that the vessels in our fleet trade as efficiently as possible and generate the greatest returns for our partners," says Kristian Jasper, Managing Director and Head of Chartering of Maersk Tankers Singapore.

Maersk Tankers manages a large share of its activities from Singapore with around 40% of the 150 ships trading in the Asia Pacific region.

"The new office will support us in providing the best service by moving us closer to customers, pool partners and brokers and it will offer employees a new and modern work environment in a central location," Jasper added.

Finnish liqueur wins Double Gold at Singapore World Spirits



The recently launched Arctic Blue Laku wins the prestigious Double Gold Medal in its first competition at the esteemed Singapore World Spirits Competition (SWSC) 2023.

SWSC belongs to the Tasting Alliance, widely recognized for hosting the most influential spirits competitions in the world.

Arctic Blue Laku is the latest addition to Finnish Arctic Blue Beverage product portfolio. It was introduced to the market in April 2023. The premium liquorice liqueur is developed by two award-winning craft producers from Finland.

The product has had a successful start on the Finnish market.

“We have experienced great success on the Finnish market with Arctic Blue Laku, receiving highly positive feedback. Winning a double gold medal serves as an important marketing asset. This will boost Arctic Blue Laku’s visibility on the international market, especially in Asia which is one of our most important focus areas. The assumption that only Nordic people take a liking to liquorice taste can now be disproven. I am genuinely delighted to witness the fruitful outcome of our innovative approach,” says Valtteri Eroma, CEO of Arctic Blue Beverages.

Source: Arctic Blue Beverages

Maersk moves deeper on methanol with six newbuilds in China

Danish Maersk has added to its growing numbers of methanol dual-fuel container ships. The company has signed a deal for six new 9,000 TEU vessels at Yangzijiang Shipbuilding in China. TEU stands for “twenty-foot equivalent unit” so these vessels are designed to carry 9,000 20 foot containers.

Maersk started adding methanol-fueled newbuilds in 2021 with a series of 16,000 TEU units, as part of the company’s goal to achieve net zero in 2040. Today it has 25 methanol-enabled vessels on order.

The units will replace existing capacity in the Maersk fleet. It’s expected to reduce annual greenhouse gas emissions by about 450,000 tons CO2 per year.



“With this order, we take another step in the green transformation of our fleet and towards

our target of becoming net-zero in 2040,” said Rabab Boulos, chief infrastructure officer at Maersk.



Denmark in top three while Singapore falls one spot in 2023 global competitiveness index

Singapore shed a spot in the latest world competitiveness ranking published by the International Institute for Management Development (IMD). The IMD's World Competitiveness Centre revealed that the city-state was placed fourth out of 64 economies in its annual report. This is after it had climbed to third place last year. The republic ranked 5th in 2021 after coming in first in 2019 and 2020.

Denmark, Ireland and Switzerland took the top three places. The rest of the top 10 are the Netherlands, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Sweden, USA, and UAE.

IMD World Competitiveness Yearbook, is an annual report and worldwide reference point on the competitiveness of countries. The report uses a combination of surveys, statistical data and trends to benchmark the competitiveness of 64 countries around the world. It

analyses and ranks countries according to how they manage their competencies to achieve long-term value creation. In addition to GDP and productivity, it looks into how enterprises cope with political, social and cultural factors. <https://www.imd.org/centers/wcc/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-competitiveness-ranking/>

"A country's ability to generate prosperity for its people is a key determiner of success. It's not what China does yet and it's not what the US even does fully yet," said Professor Arturo Bris, Director of the WCC. (<https://www.imd.org/centers/wcc/world-competitiveness-center/rankings/world-competitiveness-ranking/>)

Denmark's top position is based on its continuous achievements across all competitiveness factors measured, Economic Performance, Government Efficiency,

Business Efficiency, Infrastructure. It remains first in business efficiency and second in infrastructure, while showing slightly improved results in government efficiency, going to fifth from sixth.

Singapore's decline was due to components within the government efficiency factors, such as competition legislation and adaptability of government policy. Singapore performs well in other indicators including employment, international investment and productivity and efficiency.

Sweden praises companies in Philippines for pioneering in green transition



Swedish Ambassador to the Philippines, Annika Thunborg.

Team Sweden has applauded some major firms in the Philippines for pioneering the green energy and industrial transition.

Swedish Ambassador to the Philippines, Annika Thunborg, made

this remark at the recent business forum at the Shangri-la The Fort in Taguig City.

"In rapidly growing economies, a green and sustainable transition can assist in socio-economic development. Sustainability in all aspects will lead to inclusion and better health and quality of life for all," she said.

Sweden ranks 3rd in the 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report and 5th in the Climate Change Performance Index. Swedish companies in the Philippines move the green transition forward by implementing sustainable business processes in their operations.

Thunborg explained that this is made possible through the "quadruple helix model." This involves collaboration with the Philippine Government, Swedish and Filipino

private sector, international development institutions and other expert communities.

"This is instrumental in Sweden's journey from one of the poorest countries in Europe to a prosperous welfare state with globally recognized companies and innovative startups," she added.

In a separate speech at the Swedish National Day, she also mentioned the longstanding friendship between Sweden and the Philippines. She acknowledged the remarkable similarities and shared interests between the two nations despite their significant geographical distance.

Thunborg expressed her optimism for the future of Sweden-Philippines relations and the positive impact that joint efforts can bring to both nations.

Singapore buys record amount of used cooking oil from China due to Finnish factory

Chinese exports of used cooking oil (UCO) to Singapore jumped to a record in May. This is most likely due to more demand from Finnish Neste's renewable fuel factory.

Shipments of UCO rose to 48,832 tons in May. This is 18% more than April and almost double the amount from 2022, according to data from Chinese customs.

The rise was mainly due to the Finnish company's plant, which completed an expansion this year. The facility is the world's biggest re-

newable diesel refinery and largest producer of sustainable aviation fuel, according to Neste.

Demand for green diesel and jet fuel is increasing as governments and industries seek to de-carbonize. China exported a record 1.58 million tons of UCO in 2022, while shipments from Malaysia and Indonesia also climbed.

China's total exports of used cooking oil rose 9% in May from a month earlier to 151,428 tons, the customs data show, where shipments to the US climbed 46%. Sales



to Singapore and the US accounted for over 70% of Chinese exports, while most of the rest went to Europe.

Source: Yahoo.com

No Thai will pick berries in Finland



Not a single Thai worker has applied to come to Finland for the upcoming picking season, following changes in visa procedures. The new rules mean that Thai workers must have both a Schengen visa and a so-called exit visa that enables them to leave Thailand, according to Helsinki Times.

"We have to re-examine our procedures," Katja Luopajarvi, the deputy head of the visa unit at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, said to YLE.

"The latest information indicates that not a single visa has been

granted yet. This is absolutely incomprehensible. At one point, it was looking like things would start rolling, but in reality there's hardly any movement," Birgitta Partanen, the executive director of Arctic Flavours, told YLE.

"It could mean that quite a few companies will go bankrupt. I'm hoping until the last minute that won't happen," she said.

Last summer, there were police investigations and criminal prosecutions for human trafficking and this is the first picking season since that.

Finland announces the world's first phone-free tourist island

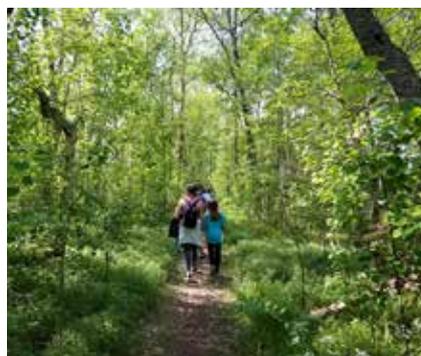
Travelers visiting the island of Ulko-Tammio in Finland will be asked to keep their phones in their pockets this summer. The aim is to encourage holiday-makers to take a break from social media and enjoy nature.

Located in the Eastern Gulf of Finland National Park, Ulko-Tammio is believed to be the world's first phone-free tourist island. The campaign is hoped to encourage people to take a break from social media outside the island, too.

"We encourage visitors to put their phones away voluntarily and to focus their senses on nature instead," said Joel Heino, manager at Parks & Wildlife Finland.

"This is a great initiative that could be implemented in other nature and recreational destinations, too," he added.

Technology is part of our everyday lives. Many people find it difficult to put their phone down



Visitors on a hike through the woods on Ulko-Tammio .

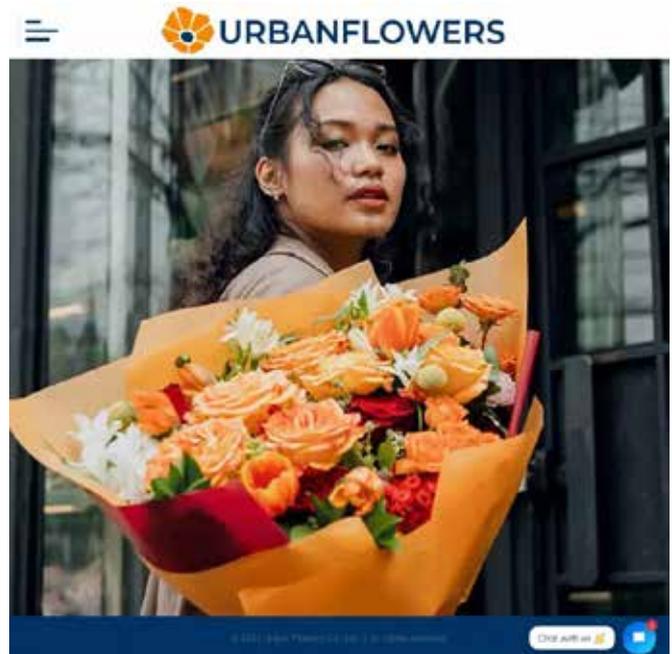
Photo Annika Ruohonen (<https://www.redbubble.com/people/annikasphotos/>)

even on holiday. Sharing your holiday activities on social media might feel more important than simply enjoying the moment.

"Switching off your phone, exploring nature and meeting people face to face are bound to boost your mood and well-being," said Sari Castrén, psychologist and Research Manager at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

"We spend countless hours scrolling our social media feeds. Taking a short break from them means you have more time for new experiences. I'd like to see more initiatives like this that promote digital fasting."





Swedish innovator with blooming new concept in Bangkok

Flowers is all about the customer experience - what will make both the buyer and the receiver of the flowers happy? As Swedish innovator Johannes Bergstrom puts it, “buying flowers for someone is all about building relations..”

By Miabell Mallikka Smedegaard

It all started when Johannes Bergstrom was ordering flowers online. The expensive bouquet he had bought arrived in a plain, white box that looked like it had been bought in Tesco or Lotus. The flowers had just been thrown into the boring box and he felt like something was lost. The whole experience felt very impersonal and he couldn't quite understand why the price was so high when the experience was so inadequate.

“How could 8 roses be 1400 baht plus delivery?” Johannes asked himself. Then he started looking into other online flower stores and found even more expensive bouquets. One place charged 3500 baht for 8 Gerberas. Gerberas cost 10 baht per flower at the flower market, Johannes explains. A markup of the price by 35 times.

“I thought, that we must have missed something,” Johannes explains. His wife then enrolled in a florist course for a month to gain some more knowledge on the field.

“I couldn't let go of this experience and when I looked into it, I thought that there had to be a better way, where customers would get more value for their money,” he added.



“

In Europe we really like the vases. Here in Southeast Asia, most people prefer to receive their flowers wrapped, but we have had some orders with vases already.

”



Only few months later...

That was only in September last year. By December Johannes signed the lease of the spacious loft in Taka Town, that is now home for UrbanFlowers.

“When we first moved in, there was no ceiling. The place used to be a yoga studio, which is why, there’s a stage in the corner. We kept that as the place for the flowers to be arranged.” Elevating the work of the experienced florists working at UrbanFlowers, into celebrated art.

“We set out to make a more affordable and superior gifting experience with more personalized options for our customers. This resulted in UrbanFlowers,” Johannes shares.

Personalized e-gifting

With Johannes previous experience within e-commerce, he started drawing up the website and cutting out cardboard box models from his home. Trying to create the perfect experience.

What started as a flower delivery, turned in to more of an e-gifting commerce, and the newly launched website, is only the beginning.

“We have so many ideas we are working on. This is only 50 percent of it,” Johannes shares.

The main focus is for now the fresh bouquets, but the online boutique already offers a small range of dry arrangement as well as plants.

“We just made a small selection,” Johannes explains while adding “you have to nail it before you scale it,” with a warm and welcoming grin.

Vase vs. wrapped?

Opposite the “flower-arrangement-stage” is a corner with plants. Next to that is an area dedicated to various vases, which is one of the many more personalized options at the site. Whether you wish to receive the bouquet wrapped or in one of the Scandinavian-styled vases.

“In Europe we really like the vases. Here in Southeast Asia, most people prefer to receive their flowers wrapped, but we have had some orders with vases already,” Johannes tells.

Once again, it is all about the customer experience and what will make both the buyer and the receiver of the flowers happy. As Johannes put it, buying someone flowers is all about building relations.

“This is why our label of packaging is “Someone is thinking of you,” Johannes explains, while the company slogan is “Make Someone Happy.”



Straight from the stage in Saga

Johannes hasn't always been working in e-commerce. Before moving to Thailand 15 years ago, he worked as a stage actor back in Sweden.

"When I first came here 15 years back, I wanted to do something else. That made me think about what else I liked doing, and the choice randomly landed on website design."

He then enrolled in a course called Web Courses Bangkok, where one of the assignments was to build a real estate site.

"I fell in love with the site we were building. Then I opened a real estate company called Bangkok Condo Finder" Johannes shares. The first real estate site to use videos as a selling point.

He later sold the company to American Asian Tiger and has since been involved with numerous projects, including "Dinner in the sky" back in 2016.

The sad bouquet changed everything

When UrbanFlowers first moved in to the loft in Taka Town, he had a foldable mattress stored underneath the desk, that he would often sleep on.

"There is no risk in having an idea, but it has been

some long days from the day I signed the lease."

Besides the many fresh flowers stored in the cooled flower fridge in the back, UrbanFlowers makes use of daily deliveries. This is to make sure, that the bouquets they send out, are as fresh as possible. Bouquets inspired by pop-culture and named after songs, movies and old Hollywood stars like Audrey Hepburn or Marilyn Monroe.

"Often we will do the flowers and then think, this could be Marilyn Monroe," Johannes says, even though, he is not the creator of the pop-inspired creations available at the site. Creations made to make someone happy by showing the person, that someone is thinking about them.



Amos Wong: More than 30 years of connecting Denmark and Malaysia

By Miabell Mallikka

For 33 years, the now 75-year-old Amos Wong, has dedicated his career to fostering Danish-Malaysian business relations. As the Executive Director of DanCham Malaysia (formerly known as the Malaysian Danish Business Council) since 2021, he is at the forefront of promoting trade, investment, and collaboration between the two countries.

“At the webinar where the Danish Embassy announced the closure of their mission in Malaysia in June 2021, the chairman of MDBC, Alan Jensen mentioned briefly, that they were looking for an executive director, and I thought that sounded interesting,” Amos shares, from the small table, at the busy, local restaurant in Kuala Lumpur:

The Danish connection

Amos' journey with Danish connections started with the Danish Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 1971. His role as a marketing officer exposed him to the intricacies of Danish industries and laid the foundation for his career.

After retiring in 2004, his thirst for new challenges led him back to the job market. He got offered a position at another Nordic association, the Norwegian Trade Council, where he worked for two years before joining his brother's company, organizing international conferences.

“I had only been retired for about a year, when the Norwegian trade council contacted me - they call themselves Innovation Norway. This woman I knew contacted me and said, they were looking for a commercial advisor, so I jumped on it,” he says, with a sweet and almost shy smile.

Through these experiences, Amos demonstrated his ability to adapt and excel in various roles. And with a long background in marketing and extensive experience

working with Danish companies, Amos has become a fundamental link at DanCham in connecting businesses and driving growth.

Family business

After two years at Innovation Norway, Amos then embarked on a new adventure by joining his younger brother's company AOS Conventions & Events. Specializing in inbound travel tours within Malaysia, the company also dabbled in outbound tours, particularly to popular destinations like Thailand.

Amos made the transition to his brother's company, primarily focusing on organizing international conferences and congresses. His brother sought his assistance in managing a large-scale medical congress (FIGO World Congress of Gynecology 2006) that required extensive marketing and coordination experience.

“After about 7 years at my brother's company, I retired once again. In that connection I told him about my observations on the dynamics of the international meetings industry, which showed declining numbers due to more awareness of the “negative CO2 travel impact” of delegates attending such events, shorter duration and dwindling profits. So, I advised him to exit this business,” Amos shares, while looking down the table to grab his coffee.

His brother took his advice and closed AOS Conventions & Events, but kept the inbound travel and hotel business. This was until the pandemic struck, where the travel industry was among those taking the hardest hit. But at this point, Amos was living the life of a retired man for the third time.



“

As most chambers, retaining and growing the number of members has its challenges. There are quite a few Danish companies in Malaysia, but not all of them are our members. Some of them have been members, but has since relinquished their membership. That is some of the challenges that I'm faced with at DanCham.

”



Amos Wong. Photo: Miabell Mallikka

Revitalizing memberships

In July 2021, Amos embarked on his current role as the Executive Director of DanCham. His primary objective has been to expand the membership base and foster greater interaction among members. Stepping into this position during the pandemic posed unique challenges. Including those of restrictions on physical gatherings. However, Amos and his team quickly adapted by organizing virtual events to ensure continuity. As restrictions eased, they gradually reintroduced physical gatherings, facilitating meaningful connections among businesses.

“As most chambers, retaining and growing the number of members has its challenges. There are quite a few Danish companies in Malaysia, but not all of them are our members. Some of them have been members, but has since relinquished their membership. That is some of the challenges that I'm faced with at DanCham.”

To re-engage Danish companies and retain membership, a new approach has been adopted in collaboration with EuroCham. Existing EuroCham members from Denmark will retain their membership, while new members must first join DanCham before applying for EuroCham membership. This strategic collaboration ensures a stronger connection between the two chambers and facilitates seamless integration into the European business community.



DanCham Malaysia's 30th AGM held on 30.05.2023

Challenges and opportunities in Malaysia

Amos highlights the under appreciation of Malaysia as a business destination among Danish companies. The focus often falls on neighboring countries such as Singapore and Thailand, while Malaysia's potential remains overlooked. Factors such as infrastructure, political stability, language and cost considerations play vital roles in companies' decision-making processes.

Acknowledging the complexities of coordinating efforts across countries within the ASEAN region. Each nation possesses unique business niches, making it challenging to create streamlined collaborations. Danish companies often face the dilemma of choosing which countries to explore within the region, based on various factors such as incentives, infrastructure, language and political stability. Coordinating cross-border activities requires careful navigation and an understanding of each country's distinct business and cultural environment. Something that Amos and DanCham focus on assisting with.

"We try to work together cross borders but it's not that easy. Each Southeast Asian country has its own little niche and its own way of doing things, so it's not easy to coordinate. Just the fact that we no longer have a Danish embassy here in Kuala Lumpur can be difficult sometimes. We then work with the Danish embassy in Jakarta, but Malaysian and Indonesian culture is very different, so miscommunication can happen," Amos shares about the challenges of his position.

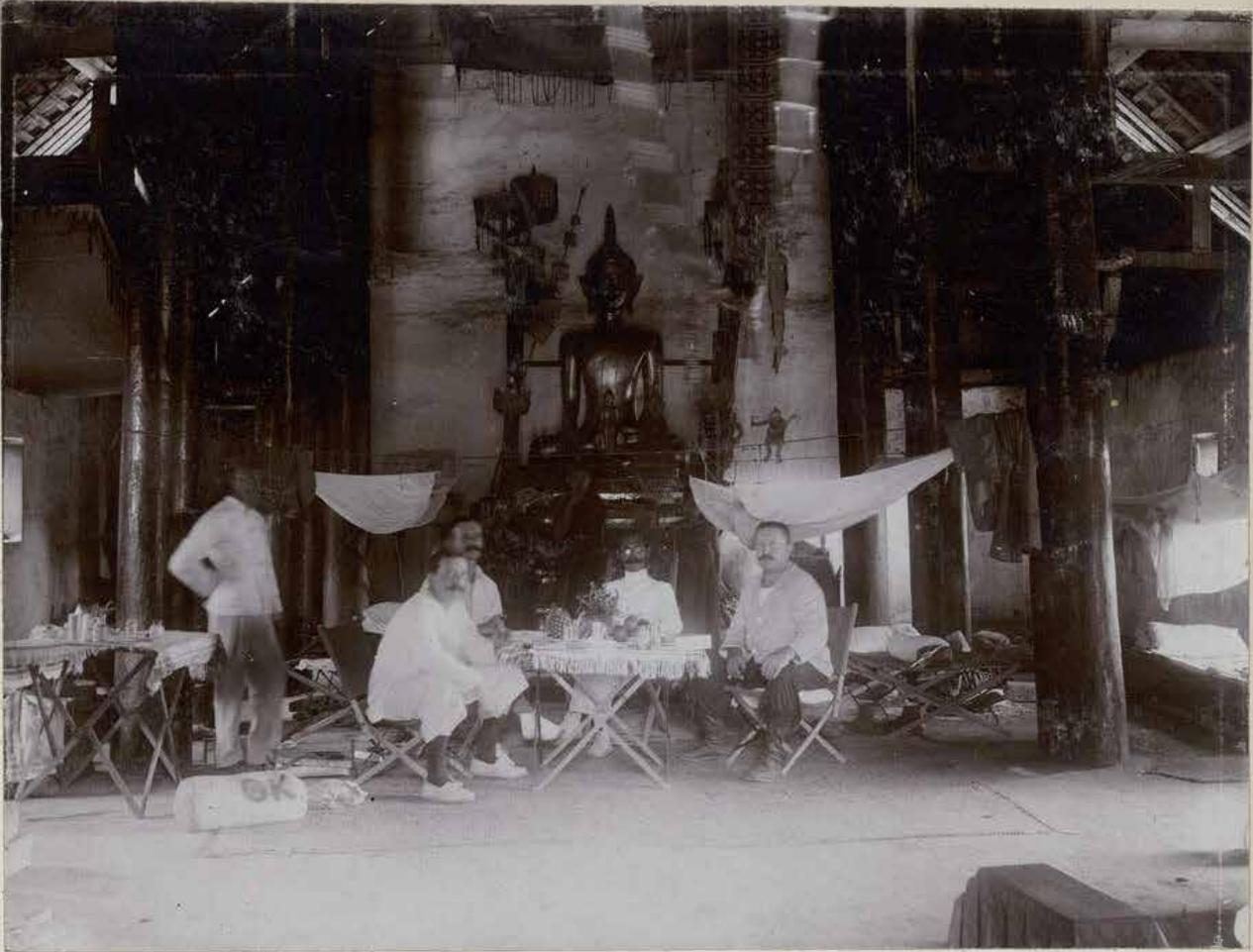
Looking back at the Danish adventures

Over the years, Amos has had the opportunity to explore Denmark extensively, visiting major cities and smaller towns alike. As part of his role, he promoted Danish environmental technologies in Malaysia under the DANCED/DANIDA partnership program, fostering sustainable practices and partnerships. He cherishes the memories of experiencing Denmark's four distinct seasons, particularly the awe-inspiring beauty of autumn.

"I like Denmark. It's very pleasant. Of course, I normally went during the best time of the year. I don't go there during winter," he laughs.

"I still remember when I went there the first time in spring and I saw the branches starting to bloom and leaves starting to grow. It is very different from here, where it's around 30 degrees all year round," he adds with a blissful smile and sparkling eyes.

Remarkably, he still possesses clothing items from his Danish adventures, serving as reminders of the memories created.



Camp in a temple. Jan 100.

*Photo is entitled "Camp in a temple"
The author has identified some of the people.*

Travels in Siam: Teak Exploration and Photography

It is not often that ScandAsia publishes research into the historical past of Scandinavia in Asia. But we did on a few occasions. A few years ago, we published an article by Anne C. Tan about a photo album following EAC (East Asiatic Company) executives on an inspection of the Mekong river on a survey for alternative transportation routes to the market. The album ended up in a French library, which is a mystery by itself.

This article identifies the most likely Photographer and adds other details to her research.



By Anne C. Tan

My recent research centered around the Danish East Asiatic Company, a photograph album documenting their activities with teak in Siam and a familial connection with my late father in law who was employed by the company in Penang, Malaysia in the first half of the twentieth century.

For the interested reader, an account was published in ScandAsia in November, 2021, **'Travels in Siam and Laos: a lost photo album'**, in which I made the familial connection to the East Asiatic Company, and their teak forest concessions acquired from the Siamese government in Phrae province. (<https://scandasia.com/travels-in-siam-and-laos-a-lost-photo-album/>)

In that article I drew upon an interesting photo album held by the Universite Cote d'Azur Bibliothèques which provides a photographic record of the company's operations in Thailand in the early twentieth century. The album chronicles a trip to Siam and Laos with personnel linked to both East Asiatic company (EAC) and L'Est Asiatic Francaise (EAF) an affiliated company founded in 1902.

The bound photo album, Siam and Laos consists of 54 numbered plates which contain 350 photographs/albumen prints. The albumen process was the main positive printing photographic process of the nineteenth century. The trip starts in Bangkok and travels via Uttaradit

north to Phrae, the teak forests of northern Thailand and thence to Laos. Journeying then by boat, the travellers descend the Mekong using small wooden boats bearing the flag of EAF.

Questions answered

Many questions arise when examining this photo album not the least of which is its provenance, the photographer's name, travel details and companions, dating the expedition and so on. Presently, I believe I have been able to discern the answers to many of these questions and pay tribute to the many respondents who have assisted me with relevant ideas and references.

The academic institution which holds this photo album and their archivist who has written an excellent summary of the journey, has shed some light on the album's provenance.

According to the archivist, on the album's first page is mentioned: "ACHAT CNRS" which means 'Bought by CNRS'. CNRS (French National Centre for Scientific Research) was created in 1939 and is the largest fundamental science agency in Europe. In the 1980's, the archivist's institution, ASEMI (South East Asia and Insulin World) was dependent upon CNRS. Like me, their archivist hotly pursues each likely lead.





In my earlier article I commented on the outstanding quality of the photos, that the composition and framing of the images suggested that a professional was engaged to record this expedition.

Details resurfacing

This quest has seen many twists and turns. A book *Lao Roots: Fragments of a Nordic-Lao Family Saga* by Fleur Brofos Asmussen promised to unlock some unknowns. In this book, the author recounts the story of her Norwegian grandfather, Peter Hauff, born in 1873. Hauff landed a job in 1894 with a large commercial firm in Saigon, where he immersed himself in the culture and language, which gained the respect of locals.

In his records, Hauff states that two East Asiatic Company personnel, Guldberg and Fenger, visited him in 1903, interested in floating teak on the Mekong. He was so skilled at this, having traded up the river from Saigon...so EAC personnel went to the right person. Hauff had invaluable knowledge of the Mekong both up and downstream, and its challenges especially the rapids of Khemmarat.

The account of Peter Hauff's shipment of teak logs down the Mekong is contained in *Lao Roots*.

Hauff also states that EAC personnel had with them a Sinhalese servant and a French photographer, Mr Agassiz with much photographic apparatus whom Hauff had met previously in Singapore. Might he be the elusive photographer?

The East Asiatic personnel wanted to see the Mekong's large waterfalls. Hauff makes arrangements for the trip with 150 men and plenty of boats. Subsequent research has identified Felix Agassiz as an assistant to G.R.Lambert, the longest surviving firm of Singapore photographers. John Falconer (*A Vision of the Past: Photography in Singapore and Malaya*) argues that Lambert and Co., could be seen as the nurturer of the talent of numerous other photographers, including Stafhell and Kleingrothe.

Felix Agassiz, after a period as assistant with Lam-

bert and Co., in the 1890's, then went on to found his own business in town as proprietor of The Photo Store, 56 Hill Street, Singapore, ca. 1898-ca.1905. Along with another researcher, Jean-Michel Strobino, I believe that Felix Agassiz is the elusive photographer.

Virtual traveling Anno 1903 - 1909

The colonial album as a story has been described by Dirk Janse (1999) as a story told in meaningful coherence. The meaningful visual narrative could bridge the thousands of kilometres between far flung places and motherland. Images showed the 'Westerner' in the East. He explored unknown and dangerous areas, traversed treacherous rapids, faced obstacles.

Nowhere is this narrative exemplified so accurately as with the photo album *Siam and Laos*. Investors were given the opportunity to take a paper inspection tour of far flung companies through the photos in the album, to travel vicariously. This album documents riverscapes, company offices/factory/residences, group portraits, village views, company personnel and local employees. Such albums were used as a kind of visual annual report.

Guldberg camping in a temple

In my earlier research I was intrigued by a photo bearing the caption "Camp in a temple" which show East Asiatic Company personnel in a Buddhist temple and sojourning overnight as referenced with camping arrangements. Further study has revealed that camping in temples was common practice for imperial European travellers in the late 19th and early 20th century. The temple compound provided safety and sanctuary.

Travelling in Northern Siam, Reginald Le May, Acting Adviser to the Siamese Government wrote of the practice during his journey from Bangkok to Chiang Mai (1913). "[Spending a night in a temple]...which is not so strange a proceeding as it may seem, for most temples in Siam, at any rate in the provinces, are open to travellers as rest-houses, and you may spread your camp bed on the cement floor with the certain knowledge that no one will



disturb you or question your honesty of purpose. Only you must put your head beneath the Buddha's care, and not turn your feet towards the altar'. (An Asian Arcady. The Land and Peoples of Northern Siam, 1926).

I have also been able to identify the figure on the right as Captain V. Guldberg, brother-in-law of H.N Andersen the founder of the East Asiatic Company. Guldberg was the managing director of EAC in Bangkok. The temple itself has also been located and is the Wat Saen Muang Ma in Chiang Mai here imaged in both the EAC album and contemporary images.

Floating of logs on Mekong

On a website: <https://entreprises-coloniales.fr> I found an EST-ASIATIQUE FRANÇAIS company report dated 11 February, 1911 which commented on 'a second floating of logs down the Mekong following a 1909 campaign (which showed favorable prospects)'. 1909...small number:

Mention is also made in the report to the French company's connections/associations with EAC and to a French manager's name, Monsieur Lesterre.

[The report further mentions: "The general assembly appoints as directors of the Company under the terms of article 16 of the articles of association: MM.

Baron Hely d'Oissel, K. A. Wallenberg, Henri Estier; H. N. Andersen, Ernest Carnot, Paul Lecat, Alphonse Mayer, Count de Moltke-Huitfeldt, Admiral du Plessis de Richelieu, André Rickmers, Jean Trystram." The presence of the EAC is evident. Ed.]

It seems likely that the second part of the photo album records joint early floating operations down the Mekong taken with EAC personnel, perhaps with their oversight/advice/possible scoping of future trade opportunities. It also is possible to then date the activities recorded in the album as likely occurring between 1903 and 1909.

Comments

As with all research some roads flow smoothly and some which appear promising yield scant reward. This researcher feels confident of making some small inroads into answering some of the questions raised by this photograph album.

The Universite Cote d'Azur Bibliothèques in Nice is very close to the small village where Peter Hauff died and the university's archivist wonders if someone who inherited the album sold it to their institution in the 1980's.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anne C. Tan is a retired academic with teaching experience across university, primary and secondary levels. She currently resides in Melbourne, Australia. Researching aspects of her late husband's history in Penang, Malaysia, she found that his father was a comprador with the Danish East Asiatic Company from 1930 -1953, which operated at No 3 Weld Quay, Georgetown. Anne C. Tan has always been fascinated with the connection and history which tied

Europe to this Peranakan family in Malaysia but what triggered this and the previous article in ScandAsia was her discovery of a photo album, currently in the possession of a library in France, showing EAC personnel on an expedition with an affiliated company, EAF (l'Est Asiatique Francais) between 1903 and 1909.

Previous article: <https://scandasia.com/travels-in-siam-and-laos-a-lost-photo-album/>

Economic cooperation and religious exchange is on the agenda of Vietnamese President Vo Van Thuong's Europe visit



“
Vietnam is Italy’s largest trading partner in ASEAN and Italy is Vietnam’s fourth largest EU partner.
”

President of Vietnam Vo Van Thuong visited the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Italy and the Vatican from July 23-28 on the invitation of Austrian President Alexander Van Der Bellen, Italian President Sergio Mattarella and Pope Francis. This is the first visit of the President of Vietnam in the past 15 years and is the first national head-level exchange activity between Vietnam and Italy and the Vatican for the past seven years.

Austria is one of the top 10 export partners of Vietnam in Europe. Vietnam is the largest trading partner of Australia in ASEAN. Bilateral trade exchange in 2022 reached US \$ 2.79 billion. Austria’s investment in Vietnam reached about 148 million USD (ranked 44/143 countries and territories investing in Vietnam) and about 60 Austrian enterprises operating in Vietnam.

Vietnam wants the Austrian Government to have a voice support and promote the Austrian Congress to soon complete the approval of Vietnam-EU investment protection agreement (EVIPA); support the European Commission (EC) to remove the IUU yellow card soon for Vietnamese aquatic products; and create favorable conditions for Vietnam’s strong products such as electronics, textiles, footwear, agricultural and fishery products to access the Austrian and EU market.

For Italy, Vietnam is the country’s largest trading partner in ASEAN and Italy is the fourth largest EU partner of Vietnam. In 2022, although there were

many fluctuations and difficulties, the bilateral trade turnover reached the highest level ever of US \$ 6.2 billion, an increase of 11% compared to 2021. The Italian government put Vietnam on the list of 20 countries to continue prioritizing trade and investment to 2030. Many Italian investors in the manufacturing industry operate effectively and successfully in Vietnam, including Bonfiglioli, Piaggio, Danieli, Datalogic, Ariston. The two sides are making efforts to effectively implement EVFTA.

Vietnam wants Italy to soon approve EVIPA, support the EC soon removing the IUU yellow card for Vietnamese seafood goods.

For the Vatican, over the past time, Vietnam - Vatican relations have made positive changes. The two sides maintain high level contact and the mechanism of the Vietnam - Vatican mixed working group. Since 1990, every year, the Vatican appoints the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to visit Vietnam, exchange pastoral issues of the Church. In November 2008, the two sides agreed to establish a mixed working group of Vietnam - Vatican relations, annual and alternate meetings in Vietnam and Vatican. Up to now, the two sides have held 10 such meetings. Since January 2011, the Holy See has appointed a non - dedicated envoy in Vietnam. Currently, the Archbishop Marek Zaleski, Vatican Apostolic Nuncio to Singapore is the non - permanent special envoy of the Holy See in Vietnam.

Vietnamese Foreign Deputy Minister Le Thi Thu Hang affirmed that Vietnam consists of policies to respect and ensure the freedom of beliefs and religions of the people; the Vietnamese authorities at all levels are always interested and create favorable conditions for the activities of religions including Catholicism.

Meanwhile, Vatican Foreign Deputy Minister Mirosław Wachowski emphasized that the Holy See always wants the Vietnamese Catholic Church to operate in accordance with Vietnamese law and contribute positively to the country’s development in the spirit of the Church’s teachings: “Good parishioners must be good citizens”.

The visit of the Vietnamese President is to deepen the bilateral cooperation with Austria, Italy and Vatican in particular and with Europe in general.

Source: [https://ttdn.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien/thoi-su-chinh-tri/chu-tich-nuoc-vo-](https://ttdn.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien/thoi-su-chinh-tri/chu-tich-nuoc-vo-van-thuong-tham-ao-italy-va-toa-thanh-vatican-mot-tinh-than-ba-diem-den-82637)

[van-thuong-tham-ao-italy-va-toa-thanh-vatican-mot-tinh-than-ba-diem-den-82637](https://ttdn.vn/tin-tuc-su-kien/thoi-su-chinh-tri/chu-tich-nuoc-vo-van-thuong-tham-ao-italy-va-toa-thanh-vatican-mot-tinh-than-ba-diem-den-82637)

Denmark's Prince Christian turns down royal allowance



Prince Christian is turning down his royal allowance - for the time being.

The second in line to the Danish throne, Prince Christian, the son of Crown Prince

Frederik and Crown Princess Mary, turns 18 this October. This will make him eligible for allowance or “appa-

nage” from the Danish government, but the Danish Royal House has announced that he will not be taking it.

“Prince Christian’s main priority in the coming year will be the completion of the prince’s upper secondary education,” the Royal House said in a statement.

“It has been agreed with the Prime Minister’s Office that support will only be sought when the prince turns 21 or upon a possible change of throne, if it takes place before that.”

The statement implies that Prince Christian will only accept the royal allowance when he begins working as a full-time royal. As of now, when he’s in school, he will forgo the monetary support.

Prince Christian only appears on major events with the Danish royal family. This includes the recent 83rd birthday celebrations of Queen Margrethe.

Singapore passport ranked most powerful passport globally

The British consulting firm Henley & Partners recently released the “Henley Passport Index,” ranking Singapore the most powerful passport globally with visa-exempt status for 192 countries.

The Index ranks 199 passports based on the extent their holders can access 227 travel destinations without a prior visa.

For the second most powerful passport, the countries that made it to the list were Germany, Italy, and Spain.



Tied for the third spot were Austria, Finland, France, Japan, Luxembourg, South Korea, and Sweden; fourth place was shared by

Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, and the U.K.; and tied for fifth place were Belgium, Czech Republic, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, and Switzerland with access to 187 countries.

According to the Taiwan News, Taiwan’s passport was ranked the 31st most powerful passport globally.

In Asia, Taiwan took the ninth place behind Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Hong Kong, Brunei, and Israel.

Meeting with Danes in Pattaya Thailand

The Danish consular team from the Embassy of Denmark in Thailand recently had an informal meeting with Danes living in Pattaya, Thailand.

At the meeting, topics that were discussed included passport renewals, visa applications, marriage, the importance of health insurance, and more aspects, according to the Embassy Facebook page.

“Outreach and dialogue with Danes in Thailand are important aspects for the Danish Embassy in Bangkok,” writes the Embassy.



Singapore suicides highest in over 20 years

Singapore has recorded its highest number of suicides since 2000. The figures indicate a rise in mental distress from factors including social pressure and economic uncertainty. This is according to a report by non-profit Samaritans of Singapore Ltd.

The city-state reported a total of 476 suicides in 2022, with a notable increase among youth and the elderly. Suicide was the leading cause of death for 10 to 29 year-olds in the country for the fourth consecutive year, constituting nearly 39% of the age group.

The rise in deaths highlights the significance of mental-health issues and awareness. WHO has set a target to bring down the global suicide rate by a third by 2030.

An estimated 703,000 people died by suicide in 2019, making it one of the leading causes of death worldwide, according to a WHO report.

The WHO estimates that the current global rate of decline by 36% over the last 20 years, is still too slow to meet the 2030 target.

The choice of suicide methods varies between countries. A twenty year old study found that common methods used in Singapore between 2000 and 2004 were jumping (72.4%), hanging (16.6%), and poisoning (5.9%). Those who jumped were more likely to be young, single, female.



China tells EU to “clarify” its position on strategic partnership with Beijing



Photo of Josep Borrell and Wang Yi by the South China Morning Post.

China's top diplomat Wang Yi had discussions with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on Friday, 14 July 2023, saying the European Union should “clarify” the positioning of the strategic partnership” between China and Europe during an ASEAN meeting recently held in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Citing the South China Morning Post, Borrell says the talks in Jakarta were “constructive” and “in-depth” via his Twitter account.

During his meeting with Borrell, Wang called on both sides to guard against the politicization of economic issues and the use of “de-risking” as another term for “decoupling,” reported the Reuters.

In addition, both parties also talked about Ukraine's ongoing war with Russia and “preserving stability and the status quo in the Taiwan Strait,” he added.

Norway and US provide extra US\$20.8 million for bomb clearance in Laos

Norway and the United States have provided an extra US\$20.8 million budget to Norwegian People's Aid (NPA) for bomb clearance in Laos

“It is my privilege today to announce an additional nearly US\$20 million contribution by the United States government for continued UXO survey and clearance efforts in four southern provinces,” announced US Ambassador to Laos Dr Peter M. Haymond.

According to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the three parties, the NPA will increase its capacity to carry out surveys, clearance, and explosive ordnance risk education activities in four southern provinces of Laos which are Attapeu, Champassak, Saravan, and Xekong provinces.

The Vientiane Times reported that nearly 30,000 people are ex-

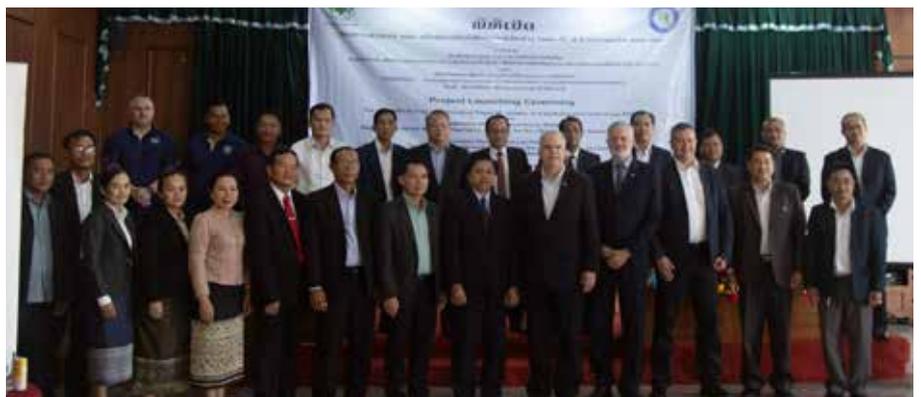


Photo by Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi Facebook page.

pected to directly benefit from the increasing funding because it will allow the NPA to hire over 400 new staff members, providing jobs for over 820 local people in southern Laos.

“When it comes to mine action, Norway takes pride in the solid work of Norwegian People's Aid in Laos and elsewhere,” the Ambassa-

dor of Norway to Vietnam, Ms Hilde Solbakken, who oversees Norwegian diplomatic affairs in Laos said.

“...Clearly, we need to continue international action and coordination to speed up surveying and clearance to make sure villagers can use their land safely and without fear,” she added.

Thailand and Denmark takes first step to collaborate on Bio-Circular-Green Economy

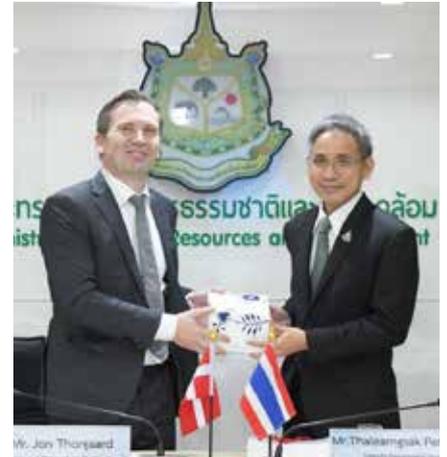
The Danish Ambassador to Thailand, Jon Thorgaard, and his team recently had a meeting with Deputy Permanent Secretary, Thalearnsak Petchsuwan, and the Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) to discuss their steps in collaborating on the bio-circular-green economy and waste management.

The meeting led to a very constructive discussion with an agreement to explore further, how such a cooperation could be set up, ac-

ording to the Embassy of Denmark in Thailand's Facebook post.

Previously, the Danish Embassy team has had a new member in the circular economy, Sector Counsellor Martin Schneekloth.

Thailand aims to meet the APEC Bangkok goals on Bio-Circular-Green Economy and its own BCG targets, Denmark hoped to be a part of helping the Asian country achieve its goals as well as solving some of the environmental issues.



Ice cream based on Finnish Solein launched in Singapore

Consumers in Singapore can now buy ice cream made with Solein, a product developed by Finnish foodtech company Solar Foods. Solein is an animal-free protein grown from a single cell using hydrogen and carbon dioxide.

The chocolate-flavored gelato is the first Solein-based product to be sold to the public. It is available at Fico, an Italian restaurant owned by the Lo & Behold Group in Singapore.

The restaurant's chef team and Fico's Chef-Partner Mirko Febbrile developed the recipe, which replaces dairy with Solein powder.

"It is a remarkable opportunity to be the first chef team to introduce a one-of-a-kind ice cream to the world," Febbrile said in a statement.

"As a chef, I strongly believe in



making food sustainable and responsible. Solein opens up opportunities to reimagine the food chain in a way that benefits our planet," he added.

The news comes following the first tasting of Solein, which took place earlier in May at the same restaurant.

According to Solar Foods, the new ice cream is the first of many

Solein-based products to come. Last month, the company announced a strategic alliance with Japanese food group Ajinomoto. The alliance includes an agreement to develop products with Solein and conduct a marketability study in Singapore starting in the first quarter of 2024.

Both companies also hope to expand their cooperation to countries outside of Singapore. This will depend on whether Solar Foods receives the regulatory approval it needs to sell Solein in other regions.

Solar Foods new facility being built in Finland, is expected to be completed in 2024. This will allow the company to start producing Solein on a commercial scale.

Source: foodmatterslive.com

Norway proposes plans to open its waters to deep-sea mining

Norway proposed plans to open its waters to deep-sea mining on Tuesday, 20 June 2023.

The areas to be opened are in the Greenland Sea, the Norwegian Sea, and the Barents Sea and cover an area of some 280,000 square

kilometers (108,000 square miles), slightly smaller than the United Kingdom and Ireland put together, according to Reuters.

The recently-announced plans are considered to be controversial with many environmentalists' expectations and green campaigns.

"Norway presents itself as green on the global scene but their actions say otherwise," Pleym, head of Greenpeace Norway, told Reuters.

The Norwegian government has said it would open the areas responsibly. Parliament is set to debate the proposal in the autumn.



Business Finland APAC Meeting held in Vietnam

Business Finland APAC Regional Meeting was recently held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to reflect on the success stories of promoting Finnish businesses in the Asia-Pacific region.

Joining the meeting were participants from Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Finland who are working for Business Finland, the Embassy of Finland in Vietnam, Finnpartnership, and private Finnish companies like Operon and Avant Suomi, according to the Finnish Embassy in Vietnam's Facebook post.

Moreover, the meeting also held discussions on how to best support Finnish businesses, especially the SMEs.

The new tools like ChatGPT and AI were explored in order to



optimize daily tasks as well as the best practices of utilizing different funding tools for Finnish businesses to explore APAC's potentialities.

Photo by the Finnish Embassy in Vietnam's Facebook Page.

Vietnam to extend e-visa validity to 90 days

Vietnam's lawmakers recently approved extending the validity of e-visas for tourists to 90 days from the current 30 days.

According to the reports, the new policy will be active from 15 August onwards.

Currently, Vietnam allows e-visa for 80 countries, including India, China (including Hong Kong SAR and Macau SAR passport holders), Greece, Japan, South Korea, the US and Italy.

Citizens of the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, Russia, Finland, Denmark, Japan and South Korea are exempt from visa for Vietnam for 45 days instead of previously 15 days.



Norway-Vietnam Business Forum held in Vietnam



The Norway-Vietnam Business Forum was recently held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Attending the forum were the Norwegian Ambassador Hilde

Solbakken, Regional Director of Innovation Norway for Asia Ole Henaa, Director of Innovation Norway Vietnam Arne Kjetil Lian, and Norwegian Honorary Consul in HCMC

Arild Haugan. The event was also joined by Equinor, VARD, TOMRA, Scale AQ, and the local Norwegian business community. The companies shared many insightful information and good lessons about their mission, cooperation opportunities, and how to cooperate better with the local partners.

According to the Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi, these Norwegian companies have shown their determination to grow better and contribute to the common efforts to build a greener and more sustainable economy in Vietnam.

Over the years, Vietnam has become one of the important destinations for international businesses including Norwegian to invest in the renewable energy, aquaculture and circular economy sectors.

Vietnam and Denmark reviewed child protection project

The Ho Chi Minh City Welfare Association and the Vietnam-Denmark Friendship Association cordially reviewed

and promoted a project to support child protection from child abuses under the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on

Wednesday, 28 June 2023.

The project's purpose was to provide direct support forms for vulnerable children and teenagers to prevent domestic violence, and sexual and labour abuse, among others, said Luong Thi Thuan, Chairwoman of the Ho Chi Minh City Welfare Association.

Moreover, the project was aimed to raise awareness of the social issues related to child care, nutritional support, education, and health care for disadvantaged children, according to the Vietnam Plus.

The funds raised from the supporting projects were used to create clubs, social platforms, events and more to help solving social issues.



The Ho Chi Minh City Welfare Association presents gifts to impoverished children in the locality (Photo:hcwa.org.vn) via Vietnam Plus.

Nordic Viking Party 2023 to be held in Philippines

The Nordic Chamber of Commerce in the Philippines (NordCham Philippines) together with its premium business partners invites you to join the event, "Nordic Viking Party 2023" which will be held on 16 September 2023 at The Enderun Tent in Taguig, Metro Manila, the Philippines.

The event has promised that all attendees would have the opportunity to reunite with your heritage immerse themselves in the rich tapestry of Viking culture and tradition.

Whether it's the food to be

served over the feast and activities such as ax-throwing and hammer-lifting contests, and more with exciting prizes granted, you could find them here with the unwavering bravery and indomitable spirit of your Nordic ancestors.

To save your spot, please visit the website to register and pay for the attending ticket in advance.

If your brands are interested to be a part of the event's sponsorship, please find more detail of the sponsorship packages here.

<https://nordcham.glueup.com/>



Danish Christmas Bazaar in Bangkok



The Danish Church in Thailand and the Danish Women's Network (DWN) have announced that the Danish Christmas Bazaar in Bangkok will take place again this year. The date will be Tuesday 28 November 2023 at Gaysorn Urban Resort - same location as previous years. Bangkokians are advised to mark their calendars!

TNA Crayfish Party 2023

- Book your seats now!

Thai-Nordic Association will host the annual event, "Crayfish Party 2023" on Saturday, 16 September 2023 at The Landmark Ballroom in Bangkok, supported by all the Nordic chambers of commerce in Thailand.

Included in your ticket is the welcome drink, beer, wine, soft drinks and snacks, main meal with significant crayfish, marinated salmon,

on, Scandinavian delicacies, desserts, and midnight snacks. All-in-one.

The ticket information includes:

- Member early bird price (pay at the latest by August 31st) is 3,550 THB, and Table of 10 is 33,000 THB.
- Member normal price (pay at the latest by September 9th) is 3,850 THB, and Table of 10

is 36,000 THB.

- Non-member price is 4,000 THB, and Table of 10 is 38,000 THB.
- To get the member price for a Table of 10, it has to be booked by a Member or co-host Member e.g. one of the Nordic Chambers of Commerce.



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