

JAN 2025

ScandAsia



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Danish Ørsted sells half of its stakes in Taiwanese offshore wind farm

INTERNATIONAL:

Finnish MP advocates educational collaboration in China

COMMUNITY:

Swedish Embassy highlights children's rights at Bangkok Book Festival

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A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY

“The interactions I had with the various teachers and coaches at Bangkok Patana gave me a good foundation on how I approach learning. I benefitted the most from the various activities I could participate in, which translated to ‘real world’ skills.”
Kyle Harrison, Grad '13, Aerodynamics Engineer



Read about how Kyle went from
IBDP to Formula 1



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Annoying humans

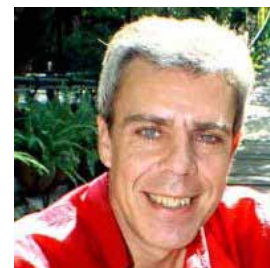
A Spanish marketing agency working with so-called influencers to promote their clients' products and services grew tired of the unpredictable nature of human influencers. To solve this problem, they created their own AI influencer and named her Aitana.

Modeled after the best attributes of human influencers, Aitana has a stunning physique and flaming pink hair that frames her flawless face. Her smooth complexion and radiant smile, complete with perfect white teeth, make her visually captivating. She embodies the ideal influencer, a creation designed to never disappoint.

The agency offers Aitana as a virtual influencer to promote and recommend their clients' products, and her impact has been remarkable. With a following of 350,000—and growing rapidly—Aitana earns an influencer fee of around €3,000 per month. Many of her followers are unaware that she is not a real person. They send her messages and, in some cases, even ask her out on dates. Recognizing that visuals alone were insufficient, the agency made Aitana a citizen of Barcelona and developed a personality for her. They crafted her into a relatable persona with popular habits, such as a dedication to working out, a focus on health and wellness, and a passion for travel. The agency's creative team meticulously plans her weekly activities, curating experiences and preferences to captivate her audience.

While Aitana's creation seems innocent enough when limited to helping sell products, it raises important questions about the future of AI influencers. What happens when Aitana is paid to express opinions? What if she dislikes Asians? Could she promote a political agenda or support the ambitions of someone running for public office? If so, how will society distinguish between genuine advocacy and manufactured influence?

Aitana's rise highlights the increasing sophistication of artificial intelligence in marketing but also underscores the ethical challenges we face as technology blurs the lines between reality and simulation. As Aitana's followers grow and her influence expands, so too does the need for clear guidelines on the responsibilities and limits of AI influencers.



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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Sweden becomes first country to seek trademark for its name

What do a small town in Arkansas, a coastal village in Indonesia, and a Scandinavian country with the Northern Lights have in common? They're all named Sweden.

Now, Sweden is making waves by becoming the first country to seek a trademark for its name, aiming to eliminate travel confusion caused by other places sharing the same moniker. This initiative, led by Visit Sweden, the nation's tourism board, seeks to ensure that travelers can easily distinguish the original Sweden—known for its cinnamon buns, stunning archipelagos, and unique design—from the other Swedens scattered across the globe.

With approximately seven other “Swedens,” including six in the

United States and others in Southeast Asia, the country is taking action to protect its identity. “We’re flattered that others want to be called Sweden, but we’d prefer if there were only one—our Sweden,” stated Susanne Andersson, CEO of Visit Sweden. The trademark application filed with the European Union Intellectual Property Office (EUIPO) aims to clarify and solidify Sweden’s global identity.

Addressing a global identity crisis

This initiative comes in response to a recent survey by Visit Sweden, which found that 11% of Americans have mistakenly traveled to the wrong location because of duplicate names. With 24 million Americans express-

ing interest in visiting Sweden, over 2.6 million risk ending up in a small town that shares the name but lacks the Scandinavian allure.

“This campaign is both playful and practical,” Andersson explained. “In 2024, with ‘dupes’ trending everywhere—from handbags to vacations—we want people to help us discover the authentic Sweden.”

A call to action for travelers

Visit Sweden is asking the public to sign a petition supporting its trademark application. This lighthearted initiative also includes a guide to help travelers spot the real Sweden versus its namesakes, ensuring they identify the genuine article before booking their trips.

Thailand routes boost passenger numbers at Copenhagen Airport

Copenhagen Airport experienced a rise in passenger numbers in November, with routes to Thailand and the United States contributing significantly to the growth.

A total of 2.18 million travelers passed through the airport last month, marking an 11 percent increase compared to November 2023. International routes beyond Europe recorded the highest growth, with a 19 percent rise in passenger numbers.

Routes to Thailand proved



particularly popular, showing a 23 percent increase in passenger traffic to destinations like Bangkok and Phuket.

Despite this growth, fewer flights operated in November compared to 2019. However, airlines are utilizing larger and more fuel-efficient aircraft, such as the Airbus A320neo and Boeing 737 Max, which help meet demand with fewer departures.

The airport attributes the strong recovery to high demand for long-haul travel.

Denmark and Vietnam collaborate to strengthen primary healthcare

The Embassy of Denmark in Vietnam has announced a collaborative effort to enhance the country's primary healthcare system. This initiative aims to provide equal access to health services and tackle the rising concern of non-communicable diseases within Vietnam.

Through this partnership, Denmark and Vietnam focus on supporting the prevention, early detection, and management of diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. The initiative also supports the Vietnamese government in developing and implementing effective health policies to address the challenges posed by a growing and aging population.

On November 28, 2024, local health facilities in Thai Binh province benefited from this cooperation when 30 commune health stations and four district hospitals received essential blood pressure and glucose



monitoring equipment. This diagnostic equipment strengthens healthcare capabilities at the grassroots level and enables local health workers to provide improved healthcare services to the community.

As part of the Strategic Sector Cooperation, this project reflects

the ongoing commitment of both nations to enhance healthcare outcomes for the Vietnamese population. The goal is to ensure that all individuals have access to the healthcare services they need, addressing the increasing prevalence of chronic health issues.

HBSO Celebrated Christmas with The Nutcracker Choreographed by Norwegian Johanne Jakhelln

The HCM City Ballet Symphony Orchestra and Opera (HBSO) delighted audiences with performances of The Nutcracker at the Opera House on December 6, 7, and 8, 2024. Choreographed by Norwegian Johanne Jakhelln Constant, this rendition added a unique cultural touch to the classic holiday ballet.

Premiering at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg in 1892, The Nutcracker has become a global holiday favorite. HBSO first staged its adaptation in 2001 as part of Norway's Transposition program, introducing classical music to Vietnam.

A highlight of this production was Đỗ Hoàng Khang Ninh's por-

trayal of Clara. Following her outstanding performance, she will study with the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet after earning a scholarship.

Based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's 1816 tale, The Nutcracker and the Mouse King, the ballet follows Clara's magical journey after receiving a Nutcracker soldier from her godfather, Drosselmeyer. On Christmas Eve, she dreams of a whimsical world where the Nutcracker becomes a prince and takes her on an adventure through the Kingdom of Sweets.

"The Nutcracker is performed worldwide every December, closely tied to the festive spirit of Christmas," said Lị Thùy Trang from HBSO.



Its family-friendly charm captivated audiences of all ages.

Directed by conductor Lê Ha My, the ballet came to life at the Opera House, No.7 Lam Son Square, District 1. Lê Ha My described it as a "beautiful holiday tradition that highlights the strong cultural ties between Vietnam and Norway."

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Finnish MP advocates educational collaboration in China



Ville Skinnari, chairman of the China Friendship Group in the Finnish Parliament and a prominent Member of Parliament (MP), recently highlighted the im-

portance of educational collaboration during the “Finland Sustainability Education, Research, and Innovation Day,” hosted by the Finnish Embassy in China.

In his speech, Skinnari reflected on his longstanding connection with China, recounting transformative experiences from his time studying in the country during the 1990s. “The knowledge I gained in China and throughout Asia has enriched my life and career,” he shared, emphasizing how these formative years shaped his views on education and cooperation.

Skinnari also addressed the challenges confronting educational development in both China and Fin-

land, as well as globally. He stressed that collaboration is essential to overcoming these challenges, urging policymakers to deeply understand the critical role of education in driving progress and innovation.

The event served as a platform to foster connections and explore potential joint projects focused on sustainability and education.

As Finland and China continue to navigate their shared educational aspirations, Skinnari’s insights underscore the transformative potential of international cooperation. His advocacy for collaborative approaches lays the foundation for initiatives that promise mutual benefits while inspiring global innovation.

Former Danish Official sentenced for years of domestic violence

A former high-ranking Danish official has been sentenced to six months in prison for years of domestic violence against his Chinese wife and children.

The 61-year-old was found guilty of physical and psychological abuse, including spitting, beating, and manipulation. While he admitted to physically assaulting his adoptive daughter and eldest son, he denied other charges, including rape. The abuse reportedly intensified after the family returned to Denmark from India, where they had previously lived.

During the trial at Hillerød District Court, the man acknowledged having temper issues, admitting to striking his children and using derog-

atory language in anger. He attributed some family conflicts to cultural differences and tensions stemming from his wife’s connections with his ex-wife.

The case highlights the critical need for stronger legal protections and support for victims of domestic violence in Denmark. It also underscores the challenges cultural differences can pose in family dynamics.

The sentencing serves as a stark reminder of the serious consequences of domestic abuse and the importance of raising awareness about this issue.



Indonesia and Sweden strengthen healthcare cooperation

Indonesia and Sweden are advancing healthcare collaboration through the Sweden-Indonesia Sustainability Partnership (SISP) Healthcare platform, initiated by Team Sweden in early 2023. The platform focuses on cancer care, critical emergencies, diabetes, maternal and child health, and digitalization.

Swedish Ambassador Daniel Blockert highlighted the partnership's alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, promoting health and well-being for all. Indonesian Health Ministry Secretary-General Kunta Wibawa Dasa Nugraha expressed hope for tangible outcomes, citing initiatives like the Twinning Doctoral Program at the Karolinska Institute, where



three Indonesian doctors are conducting research on maternal and child health.

Indonesia's Quick-Win programs, offering free health check-

ups, support SISP's goals by enhancing healthcare access and climate resilience. Kunta noted the collaboration's role in accelerating Indonesia's sustainable health priorities.

In 2025, Team Sweden and Indonesia will implement a detailed plan featuring high-level dialogues, capacity building, and public health programs like anemia academies. The partnership aims to address challenges and maximize opportunities for sustainable healthcare.

Launched in 2020 to mark 70 years of Sweden-Indonesia ties, the SISP platform fosters collaboration to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals while supporting Swedish exports and investments globally.

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How Thomas House Motivated Us to Action

By Elliott Tooley and Scarlett Sloane, Year 11 Students at Bangkok Patana School

At the end of Year 11, we were fortunate to finish our exams early, leaving us a month before the summer holidays began. We decided to volunteer at Thomas House. This was to be three weeks away from our homes and parents - the longest time for both of us - lodging in a homestay and working with children at Thomas house. We were excited while also a little nervous about our new freedom and responsibility.

Thomas House is a centre for children of all ages with special needs, which provides education and support to ethnic minorities who lack access to government funded centres.

Three days after our last exam, we said goodbye to our families at Suvarnabhumi and embarked on our memorable adventure. Arriving at Chiang Rai Airport, we were greeted and driven to Maekok River Village Resort, two hours northwest of Chiang Rai - next to ThaTon town near the Myanmar border. We met with Rosie who (with her husband Brian) manages donations and volunteers at Thomas House. She introduced us to our host, Khun Aree, and we settled into our new home. The homestay was in a beautiful garden that looked out onto the temple on the hill, home to many chickens and



an antisocial cat. The next day (Sunday) she showed us around the town and neighbouring village. Our room was spacious and comfortable, although we were a little worried about the lack of air conditioning...

The following morning - our first day at Thomas House School - we were introduced to Kru Joy, the Headteacher, Tabi (another British volunteer there), and the children we would be working with for the next three weeks. The pupils are of varying ages and abilities with the youngest being three years old (Doi), and the eldest being 27 (Phai); she also helps out with the children, of whom there are about fifteen in total. The range of disabilities included: down syndrome, severe autism, fine motor issues, speech, vision and hearing impairments as well as children with severe learning needs. There are of course those who just have to be very closely monitored due to medical conditions which could potentially cause serious injury if not supervised, such as epilepsy. The children were on their best behaviour when we first arrived and greeted us with big smiles. However, by the second week, they had become used to us and they started to be a little cheeky.

A typical day consisted of us waking up at 6:30am to get ready and have breakfast before the bus arrived around 7:55am for a 9:00am start. An average daily routine at the school started with free time when the children could either read, dance, or play. We then stood for the national anthem and the raising of the flag which was followed by circle time where we sang our morning songs; the children sang enthusiastically and performed the actions before we presented the weather, days of the week, and the rules via laminated cards containing pic-

tures and words. We would say the words in English and they would dutifully repeat back in English and Thai. After that, it was snack time which was followed by stretching/dancing videos in one of the two classrooms where we would assist anyone struggling or lead as an example. Some of the children were less than enthusiastic about the stretching exercises and made it known they did not wish to be there!

Following this was there more formal lessons: on Mondays and Tuesdays Kru Joy took them for Thai where they would practise reading and writing; Wednesday was sports which we shared leading; and Thursday and Friday was English. The children had lunch while we cleaned and set up the afternoon activities and then we had lunch while they napped or relaxed. This was nice (and much needed) downtime for us as well as getting to know Tabi more. The afternoon activities varied day by day but often included colouring, painting and bracelet making - which helps to improve their motor skills as well as skills needed for everyday life. One of their favourites was rock painting; they enjoyed painting and mixing to create different colours and they especially enjoyed painting their hands! We then had circle time again where we sang our afternoon songs followed by snacks and free time to either read or play. We played with the children until the bus arrived to pick us up at about 3:00 pm every day.

Working with the children was very strenuous and tiring as you must be constantly concentrating and 'performing' while managing their behaviour, interactions and keeping them on task! It is also extremely rewarding and enjoyable. After finishing our (I)GCSEs, this was an incredible experience to have had during our summer holidays.

Our three weeks up north helped us become more confident, resilient and self-sufficient due to the need to be responsible for ourselves. Our interactions with the teachers were lots of fun as we don't speak fluent Thai and they don't speak fluent English. This brought us closer because of us laughing together while using Google translate. The afternoons playing with the children before our bus took us 'home', though hectic, were one of our highlights throughout the experience.

We are both so incredibly lucky to have been able to do this and give back to the country we have both grown up in. Coming from a very privileged school such as Bangkok Patana it was enlightening and humbling to see the contrast between our school facilities and theirs. Because of this amazing experience, we have decided to set up a CAS club which aims to support and raise money for Thomas House to raise funds for supplies and equipment for the children as well as maintain this invaluable opportunity for them. We are keeping in contact with Rosie and Brian who we are most thankful to, for helping us do this and so we can now help Thomas House.

If you would like to donate to Thomas house please contact Rosie@mrveducationservices.com and if you would like to help with the CAS club please contact scls26@patana.ac.th or emto26@patana.ac.th



Philippines and Denmark strengthen healthcare training partnership

The Philippines and Denmark have signed an agreement to enhance healthcare education and training for Filipino nurses and healthcare assistants aiming to work in Denmark.

The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) announced that the Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI), signed on December 9 by Secretary Hans Leo J. Caccdac and Danish Ambassador Franz Michael Skjold Mellbin, sets the stage for a future Memorandum of Understanding

(MOU) to solidify the collaboration.

The JDI prioritizes the welfare and rights of Filipino health-



care workers, ensuring access to social protection, fair recruitment, and legal remedies. It also outlines upskilling programs to align Filipino professionals with Denmark's high standards in medical and elderly care.

"This partnership fosters ethical and sustainable recruitment practices, addressing the global demand for healthcare professionals," the DMW stated, citing international guidelines like the WHO's Global Code of Practice.

Sweden and the Philippines strengthen mining ties at ANMSEC 2024



Sweden recently served as the partner country for the 70th Annual National Mine Safety and Environment Conference (ANMSEC), one of the largest mining conferences in the Philippines, held in Baguio City. Mining serves as a crucial economic driver for both

Sweden and the Philippines, a fact underscored at ANMSEC. As the partner country for this year's event, Sweden showcased its commitment to sustainable mining practices through a prominent pavilion featuring leading companies such as ABB, Atlas Copco, Epiroc, Hexagon AB,

Volvo Construction Equipment, and Sandvik, alongside representatives from Luleå University of Technology.

Ambassador Harald Fries led a delegation of Swedish speakers at ANMSEC, where they delved into Sweden's mining industry and the nation's significant experience in fostering grassroots relationships, especially with indigenous communities. Trade Commissioner Johan Lennefalk highlighted the alignment between Sweden's mining practices and the Philippines' priorities on responsible mining, reinforcing the shared commitment to sustainable development.

Luleå University of Technology emphasized the vital role of academia and research in driving innovation within the mining sector. Baguio City Mayor Benjamin Magalong also addressed attendees, delivering a keynote message that reaffirmed the importance of safe and responsible mining practices that support local communities.

Thai delegation visits Finland to address labor regulations for wild berry harvesting

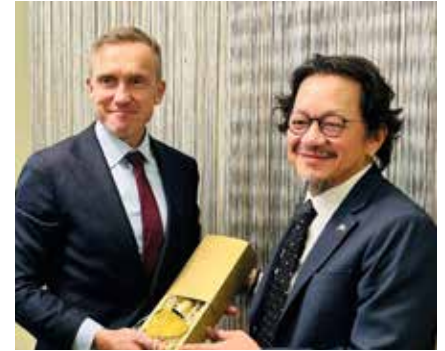
From December 8 to 13, 2024, a Thai delegation led by Mr. Worawut Pongpraphapan, Director-General of the Department of Consular Affairs, and Mr. Somchai Morakotsriwan, Director-General of the Department of Employment, visited Finland. The visit focused on improving regulations for Thai workers involved in wild berry harvesting and enhancing measures to protect workers' rights.

The delegation met with Finland's Director-General of Consular Affairs and officials from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Discussions centered

on revising Finland's seasonal labor laws, creating mechanisms to oversee employment conditions, and streamlining the process for deploying Thai workers for the next berry harvesting season.

The delegation also collaborated with Victim Support Finland, exchanging insights on assisting Thai workers and combating human trafficking. This partnership aims to strengthen support systems and implement preventive measures tailored to the challenges Thai laborers face in Finland.

Both Thailand and Finland emphasized their commitment to fos-



tering fair treatment, safeguarding workers' rights, and tackling issues like human trafficking. The visit highlights ongoing efforts to create safer and more regulated opportunities for Thai citizens working abroad.

Vietnam and Finland collaborate on groundwater management



Vietnam and Finland held a workshop in Hanoi on December 11 to share expertise on managing groundwater resources. Organized by Vietnam's Department of Water Resources Management and the Finnish Embassy, the

event focused on challenges like declining groundwater levels caused by urbanization and overuse.

Deputy Director Ngo Manh Ha highlighted the increasing pressure on groundwater in Vietnam, noting degradation in areas such

as the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City. The workshop also introduced the new 2023 Law on Water Resources, effective from July 2024, which aims to protect and restore groundwater.

Finnish Development Policy Counsellor Maija Seppala shared Finland's advanced groundwater monitoring and recharge methods, emphasizing the importance of early detection of issues like pollution. Finnish experts recommended adopting global best practices to address Vietnam's groundwater challenges.

This event reinforced decades of water-sector collaboration between the two nations.

Norwegian King awards special medals after health incident in Malaysia



King Harald of Norway recently presented the King's Medal of Merit to 15 individuals who assisted him during a serious health

incident in Malaysia earlier this year. This marks the first time in 12 years the medal has been awarded and coincides with the King's birthday celebration this December.

The recipients include King Harald's personal physician, Dr. Bjørn Bendz, along with nurses, aides, chamberlains, and police officers who supported the King during his medical emergency. The King underwent urgent surgery while abroad, and the team's swift action was instrumental in ensuring his recovery.

Royal communication director Guri Varpe highlighted the recipients' roles during the trip to Malay-

sia, stating, "Their contributions were invaluable during this period." While the specific reasons for the awards were not disclosed, the medals are widely viewed as recognition of their dedication and service during a critical time.

Royal expert Tove Taalesen emphasized the significance of the honor, noting, "When 15 people receive it simultaneously, it underscores the importance of the event."

The award ceremony reflects the King's gratitude for the unwavering support he received during his time of need, further strengthening the bond between the monarchy and those who serve it.

Swedish woman gives birth in China as two-thirds of Skåne women lose uterus due to invasive placenta

In Skåne, Sweden, two-thirds of women diagnosed with invasive placenta lost their uterus after surgery between 2018 and 2022, with only one-third retaining it. This has prompted some, like Skåne resident Anna Hammarström, to seek alternatives abroad. Hammarström chose to give birth in China, citing higher success rates in preserving the uterus.

Placenta accreta, a condition where the placenta invades the uterine wall, presents significant risks. Professor Stefan Hansson from Lund University emphasized that removing a uterus is only done when necessary. "The severity of the invasion determines the treatment," he explained.



Hammarström, with a medical background, believed Chinese hospitals had more expertise due to their larger population and higher incidence of cesarean sections. In Sweden, the condition affects about 50 women annually, making it less common.

Hansson acknowledged the value of global collaboration but noted that adopting Chinese practices in Sweden could be challenging. He highlighted that surgeons performing hundreds of cases annually, as in China, develop different expertise. However, he warned against leaving a scarred uterus intact, as it could increase risks in future pregnancies and create a false sense of security.

Hansson also agreed that women's health issues often lack sufficient attention and funding. However, he expressed hope that awareness is growing, leading to better prioritization of women's health in research and healthcare.

Danish Victims of Tsunami Remembered in Memorial in Phang Nga, Thailand



The 20th anniversary of the devastating tsunami that struck countries along the Indian Ocean was marked on December 26, 2024. The disaster claimed over 226,000 lives, including 46 Danish citizens, 44 of whom lost their lives in Thailand.

To commemorate the tragedy, Thai authorities organized a memorial ceremony in Phang Nga Province, one of the hardest-hit areas. The two-day event included notable attendees such as the Thai Minister of Interior and representatives from the Danish Embassy in Bangkok.

“Phang Nga experienced significant destruction,” a spokesperson from the embassy noted. The ceremony honored those who per-

ished and provided support to families affected by the disaster.

Around 2,000 Danes were in the tsunami-stricken areas, experiencing the catastrophe firsthand. Some lost children, parents, or spouses, while others miraculously reunited after being separated by the waters.

Emergency Pastor Reflects on the Anniversary

Emergency pastor Susanne Steensgaard, who traveled to Thailand immediately after the tsunami, noted that the anniversary brought back strong memories for many. “Such a traumatic experience stays with you for life. Many can still describe

what happened minute by minute,” she said.

While past anniversaries were marked by sorrow, Steensgaard observed that this year’s commemoration carried a bittersweet tone. “The memories resurface, but many have reclaimed their lives. Those who were children then are now parents themselves, and some who lost partners have found new relationships and even grandchildren,” she added.

The tsunami claimed over 8,000 lives in Thailand, including around 2,500 foreign tourists. Representatives from the Swedish and Norwegian embassies also attended, highlighting the shared grief and solidarity across nations.

Finnish artist Jaakko Niemelä held first exhibition in Vietnam



Finnish artist Jaakko Niemelä recently showcased his first exhibition in Vietnam, titled “Models of Disintegration”, at the APD Centre for Art Patronage and De-

velopment in Hà Nội. The exhibition featured a compelling installation of video animations and drawings that explored themes of physical and emotional breakdown.

“Models of Disintegration” included works derived from Jaakko Niemelä’s Black Motor installation, delving into concepts of nostalgia and departure. Central to the exhibition was the theme of disintegration, reflecting on both the breakdown of structures and the emotional experiences of longing and loss.

The Models of Disintegration exhibition was open from 11 AM to 5 PM, Tuesday to Sunday, until December 7, 2024, at the APD Centre for Art Patronage and Development, located at 1 Lu’o’ng Yên Street in Hà Nội’s Hai Bà Trưng District.

Celebrating Christmas spirit: Community and charity at the Danish Christmas Bazaar in Bangkok



On December 8, the highly anticipated Danish Christmas Bazaar returned to the Gaysorn Urban Resort in Bangkok, inviting families and friends to partake in a day filled with festive cheer and community spirit. This annual charity event not only celebrated cherished Danish holiday traditions but also provided essential support for meaningful causes, making it a highlight of the season.

By Karoline Rosenkrantz Paasch



If there's one thing that Danes like more than celebrating Christmas, it's sharing Christmas with people of great humor and many smiles.



As attendees made their way to the 19th floor of Gaysorn Urban Resort, they were greeted by the warm glow of festive lights and the joyful strains of Christmas music wafting through the air. Laughter and cheerful chatter bubbled around the venue, creating a lively atmosphere that felt both welcoming and intimate. The enticing aroma of sizzling Danish hotdogs mingled with the sweet scent of freshly made waffles and hot gløgg, crafting a sensory experience that embodied the magic of Christmas.

A Warm Welcome

When the bazaar began, a warm welcome marked the occasion as representatives from the Danish Women's Network, the Danish Church in Thailand, and the Danish ambassador to Bangkok addressed the attendees. Nicolaj Stubbe Hørlyck, the Danish pastor in Bangkok, emphasized, "By shopping for all your Christmas presents here, you are supporting the Danish Women's Network and the Danish Church in Thailand." Kit Daniel, Chairperson of the Danish Women's Network, stated, "Thank you all for being here today. On behalf of the Danish Women's Network, all the proceeds go to Children of the Forest." Their words set the tone for the day, highlighting the event's significance and spirit of community and generosity.

As people wandered from booth to booth, a constant flow of visitors created a lively atmosphere. There was a lovely atmosphere, and people gathered around the stalls. Most attendees remembered what the Danish ambassador had said: "Please take a look around and support this charity event, so it is very important that we are not just shopping with our eyes." The bazaar featured a diverse array of vendors showcasing unique products. Shoppers found everything from handmade Christmas ornaments crafted by the Danish Women's Network to an impressive selection of jewelry, Christmas cards, candles, spa items, clothing, wreaths, home decor, skin-care products, kombucha, and freshly brewed coffee. The



tombola was bustling, allowing attendees to win lovely prizes sponsored by the bazaar's vendors throughout the day. There were samples of both wet and dry goods, with shopping options catering to every taste.

Christmas is the Children's Party

Inside the Kids' Room, the spirit of Christmas came alive. A beautifully decorated Christmas tree sparkled with colorful ornaments, serving as the centerpiece for the joyful chaos surrounding it. Children giggled and chattered as



“

From the joyful atmosphere to the rich array of offerings, the bazaar beautifully captured the heart of Danish Christmas traditions.

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they engaged in making their own Christmas decorations, such as paper Christmas trees and festive crafts to hang on the tree or take home. Their laughter harmonized with the sounds of Christmas carols playing softly in the background, creating a warm and cheerful ambiance.

Adding to the magic of the day was the enchanting Lucia parade. Participants dressed in elegant white dresses paraded through the venue, captivating the audience and illuminating the celebration with their song and grace. This cherished Danish tradition symbolizes light

amidst the darkness, making it a fitting addition to the bazaar's festive spirit.

At 3:00 PM, the much-anticipated visit from Santa Claus finally arrived. He descended the stairs with his jingle bell ringing, joyfully proclaiming his famous “Ho ho ho!” intermixed with holiday wishes for all. The sight of Santa brought delight to the children as they eagerly approached him to receive gifts—each child received Christmas stickers and the opportunity to capture a photo with Santa, creating lasting memories.

Community Spirit

This vibrant celebration of community laid the foundation for meaningful reflections on the event's impact. Reflecting on the community spirit of the event, Nicolaj Stubbe Hørlyck remarked, “The Danish Church in Thailand is providing church services and cultural activities to families and Danes living in Thailand but we are also supporting Danes who get into bad situations in Thailand either in hospitals or prisons or in other ways so we work closely with the Danish embassy, the ambassador and his consular team on this so thank you so much for supporting our work by shopping at this bazaar.” He also took a moment to thank the sponsors who made the event possible, highlighting, “A special thanks to GPV Asia, Linak, Viking Lifesaving Equipment, Thai-Nordic Association, and Lighthouse Navigation for their generous support.”

The presence of prominent figures lent additional significance to the event. Danny Annan, the Danish Ambassador to Thailand, addressed the crowd with heartfelt words. “I would like to thank the Danish Women's Network and the Danish Church in Thailand for organizing this event. They have been able to create a Danish Christmas atmosphere, even though the weather is obviously not what we Danes are used to, as it is a lot colder back home.” His sentiment resonated with many in attendance, as the warmth of community spirit filled the room despite the tropical climate outside.

Ambassador Adnan continued, “For Danes living abroad, events like this are really meaningful. If there's one thing that Danes like more than celebrating Christmas, it's



sharing Christmas with people of great humor and many smiles—so what better place than to be in Thailand, the country of smiles?” His words captured the essence of the event, emphasizing the joy of sharing traditions across cultures.

Beloved Tradition

The Danish Christmas Bazaar has been a beloved tradition since its inception in 2018, established by the Danish Church Thailand and the Danish Women’s Network. This event celebrates Danish customs and community while also raising vital funds for various charitable initiatives in Thailand. This year’s event continued to honor that legacy, creating a warm and inclusive environment where local and expatriate families could come together to mark the holiday season.

From the joyful atmosphere to the rich array of offerings, the bazaar beautifully captured the heart of Danish Christmas traditions—including the love of food, community, and celebration. It provided a rare opportunity for reflection and connection, reminding Danes in Thailand of home while allowing them to embrace their new surroundings.

As the day came to a close, guests left with not only unique treasures, but also fond memories of a day well spent in good company. The Danish Christmas Bazaar once again proved to be a resounding success, uniting the community in celebration and charity while simultaneously brightening the holiday season. By fostering connections and honoring cherished traditions, the event reinforced the spirit of togetherness that defines Christmas.

Looking forward to next year

Many attendees expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to celebrate in such a vibrant and festive environment. Nicolaj Stubbe Hørlyck reflected on the day’s success, stating, “Danish Christmas Bazaar 2024 was a blast. Thank you to all the vendors, sponsors, guests, and volunteers. I’m already looking forward to next year!”

As the holiday season continues, the impact of the bazaar will be felt beyond the event itself, aiding important charitable causes and spreading warmth and kindness throughout the community. With the promise of returning next year, excitement is already brewing for what is sure to be another wonderful celebration of Danish culture and holiday spirit in the heart of Bangkok.

Celebrating Christmas together: A Nordic festivity in Bangkok



As the holiday season approaches, many feel the urgency to reconnect with cherished traditions that celebrate love, joy, and togetherness. This year, my boyfriend and I embraced that spirit, ready to celebrate Christmas in a unique setting—Christ Church Bangkok. While the church holds special significance for me, as I always attend a Christmas service, my boyfriend had never experienced this tradition before. In his eyes, I could see both curiosity and excitement as we prepared for the event.

By Karoline Rosenkrantz Paasch



The spirit of the season transcends geography—cultural ties and shared values unite us regardless of where we find ourselves.



On December 24, under the warm tropical sky of Bangkok, we donned our festive attire and set out for the church. The Christmas spirit filled the air, and I let the anticipation wash over me as we approached. Finally, the day I had been looking forward to had arrived.

Arriving thirty minutes early, we quickly found our seats among the rows of eager attendees. The atmosphere buzzed with energy and joy; it seemed everyone had gathered to infuse a bit of home into this foreign city. The congregation consisted of a vibrant mix of Scandinavians from various backgrounds—Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish—and the friendliness of the community filled every corner of the church. I took a moment to observe the smiling faces and hear the lively chatter, which promised a delightful service ahead.

Opening Prayer

As the clock struck 1:00 PM, the flow of people continued, pierced with the excitement of the evening ahead. In true Thai fashion, the service didn't start promptly. Instead, it began ten minutes later, as the church continued to fill to capacity. Danish Pastor Nicolaj Stubbe Hørlyck welcomed everyone with warmth, setting a tone of unity and shared celebration as he led us in an opening prayer.

The following hour welcomed a heartwarming selection of beloved hymns, such as “Nu tändas tusen juleljus,” “Silent Night,” and “Dejlig er jorden.” I noticed how the congregation embraced the invitation to sing in their mother tongues, with melodies rising in unison to celebrate our shared heritage. Each note brought us closer together, reminding us of the beauty in our diverse backgrounds while honoring the essence of Scandinavian Christmas traditions.

The service was an extraordinary blend of cultural reflection and community spirit, driven by the love and respect for our traditions. The three pastors—Olof Olufsen, Jyrki Markkanen, and Nicolaj Stubbe Hørlyck—spoke thoughtfully, each sharing their insights and reflections.

After the uplifting service, excitement buzzed as Danish musicians Yasmin Kierkegaard and Jakob Dinesen took the stage, filling the church hall with joyful Christmas songs. Their performances perfectly complemented the festivities. The sound of the saxophone mingled with harmonious vocals, creating an enchanting atmosphere that captured the spirit of Christmas.



“

The laughter, the songs, and the smells of traditional festive food enveloped me in a way that made me feel at home even in this bustling city far from my own country.

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Scandinavian juleskål

Another highlight awaited us: a Juleskål hosted by the Thai Nordic Association in the community hall. As we walked towards the hall, the delightful aromas of æbleskiver (Danish pancake puffs), gløgg (spiced mulled wine), sugar, and jul (Christmas) filled the air, tempting our taste buds and drawing us into a festive celebration reminiscent of traditional Scandinavian winters. Inside, the hall teemed with laughter, chatter, and the joyful cheers of cups filled with gløgg. Families and friends exchanged warm wishes, sharing stories and laughter. It felt just like a cozy gathering in Scandinavia, where one would warm themselves with gløgg and æbleskiver after facing the biting winter's chill.

As we indulged in the delicious Danish pancake puffs, I felt a sense of tranquility wash over me. Surrounded by familiar traditions, the worries of the world outside melted away. The joyous conversations and laughter created a bubble of warmth that encapsulated the bonds of community among us.

Throughout the afternoon, I absorbed an abundance of moments—a mix of nostalgia and contentment—as I reminisced about my own childhood Christmases. The sights and sounds of this gathering rekindled memories of snowy evenings spent with family, of carols sung enthusiastically, and the sheer joy of sharing a festive feast. My boyfriend's presence made it even more special; witnessing his delight as he immersed himself in these traditions added a layer of joy to the experience.

As the event drew to a close, I felt grateful for the opportunity we had to connect with our community, celebrate our heritage, and make new memories together. The Scandinavian Christmas service in Bangkok transcended geographical boundaries, creating a sense of belonging that many of us long for, especially during the holiday season.



Made me feel at home

While we eventually prepared to leave the hall, I couldn't help but reflect on the richness of the experience we just shared. The laughter, the songs, and the smells of traditional festive food enveloped me in a way that made me feel at home even in this bustling city far from my own country.

As we exited the community hall, I glanced around, taking in the smiling faces of families and friends. Many exchanged hugs, their hearts warmed not just by the gløgg but by the camaraderie we all felt. It was this sense of togetherness that truly encapsulated the spirit of Christmas—the essence of sharing traditions, stories, and love with one another.

My boyfriend, though he had never participated

in such a Christmas service before, remarked on how special the evening felt. "I can see why you always go to church on Christmas," he said, smiling. His appreciation for the experience warmed my heart even more. It was as if he had tapped into something deeper than just the tradition itself—the sense of connection that comes from celebrating together during this significant time of year.

As we made our way back to our home in Bangkok, the streets sparkled with lights and decorations. The vibrant city felt lively, yet somehow tranquil against the backdrop of the Christmas Eve sunset. I thought about the stories I would share with my family back in Scandinavia—the blend of our cultures and how our community in Thailand came together to celebrate this beloved holiday.

Grateful Christmas dinner

The evening continued to resonate within me as we returned home. It had been more than just a Christmas service; it served as a reminder of why traditions matter so deeply. They take on new life in unexpected places, creating bonds among people from different walks of life, enabling them to forge a sense of belonging in a world that can often feel vast and isolating.

Reflecting on the events of the day, I realized that many might think the essence of Christmas is lost when celebrated outside of one's homeland. However, this gathering at Christ Church Bangkok proved otherwise. It reaffirmed that the spirit of the season transcends geography—cultural ties and shared values unite us regardless of where we find ourselves.

As we settled into our cozy apartment, and ate our Christmas dinner, I allowed the warmth and happiness of the evening to wash over me once more. I felt grateful for having spent this Christmas Eve with my boyfriend while reaffirming the importance of community, even in a faraway land.



From Sweden to Bangkok's world of luxury hospitality as Four Season's new food and beverage manager

By Joakim Persson

From Sweden to Copenhagen, Doha, Puerto Rico, Maldives, then on to Athens and now to Bangkok. A career within hospitality can take you around the world - which is what the Swedish food and beverage specialist Michel Gunnar Eberhardt had wanted. Such a path is however not given; but requires taking necessary steps - and determination. Michel - since April 2024 the Director of Food & Beverage at Four Seasons Hotel Bangkok at Chao Phraya River - is living proof of this and here he shares his own path to an international career that already entails impressive five-star hotel postings.

From clearcut chef ambitions in early days, to a bachelor degree and a broader focus on food and beverage, Michel has arrived to Bangkok to further his experience and career, which is typically also the "right" path to eventually become a hotel- or general manager - an ambition that the Swede also has long-term. But, for now, his focus lies on this new challenge with the riverside luxury hotel which also enjoys the impressive 14th position on the list of The World's 50 Best Hotels 2024!

But this journey started back in Sweden, where he grew up and early on become fond of cooking food.

"Since I was very young, I always wanted to become a chef, and always loved food and drinks. Then, when I studied at upper secondary school, I began to realise

that it was perhaps not as romantic as I had hoped for; it was rougher than I had thought. But I discovered a talent for table service, talking to guests and giving recommendations on wine and food. So, I focused more on that and have worked as waitress, sommelier and bartender - which has led me to where I am now," begins Michel, while sitting down in the floral/tropical-decorated French brasserie Palmier by Guillaume Galliot, only steps away from the Bangkok's main river.

"Also, I had as a dream to live and work abroad; in a warmer climate, so I tried to figure out how that could happen; moving abroad through work. I understood that this could most easily be possible when working for an international hotel company, with opportunities to be transferred."

Crucially, he had also decided to study on university level for a bachelor degree. Michel achieved this through studies at the well-known Grythyttan School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts & Meal Science (part of Örebro University) and is an important centre for Swedish gastronomy. The graduating students from this school are seen as the future pioneers of Swedish gastronomy and in the hospitality industry.





You can develop in different ways, and one of the best parts of this role is experiencing new places, not just for holidays but by living and immersing in a culture.



"I am very grateful that I spent the time required to get that degree," he reflects. Without it his international hospitality ambitions would have fallen flat. Also, initially he applied for many jobs abroad from in Sweden, but had zero response.

"One must start by working for a local hotel and then try to be transferred abroad. So I found a job as bar manager with Marriott in Copenhagen, and figured that by working there for a few years I could be transferred to other positions abroad. And that worked. After two years I got an opportunity to work for The Ritz-Carlton in Doha, Qatar. Since then, I have continued moving to new places and positions. And that would not have happened had I not had a Bachelor degree; every employer requires that for this role."

He worked as Food and Beverage Manager at Dorado Beach a Ritz-Carlton Reserve, Puerto Rico and after that became a Four Seasons employee - one of the most envied luxury brands for hotels, resorts and residences worldwide. The next career step was to be appointed Director of Food and Beverage; first in Maldives (during 2019 – 2021) and then in Athens (2021 – 2024).

"In this position one works in a hotel during a period lasting typically 3-5 years. Then they like to see you moving on to the next place, so that someone else can arrive and bring new ideas to the table based on their experiences and yourself can also move on and not only share but also further your own knowledge."

There is also a steady stream of new hotel openings not least within the APAC region, and for new openings experienced team members are very much needed.



"Absolutely so, and we employ quite a lot from outside but we prefer to let employees grow within the brand and hotel. When it comes to jobs within this sector it looks very bright now; where we actually have challenges to find talents; to fill our positions."

As for his new Bangkok posting, Michel had also stayed in the hotel privately with his wife on vacation. "That had made our eyes opened up to this hotel's great quality and how nice it was. The fact the hotel is so special also contributed to being interested in working here."

He agrees to the description that the hotel has an urban resort feel: "It's like being in a resort here as you get the feeling of being in a vacation setting, with green trees, the river, and no traffic noise whatsoever. And yet, when entering its lobby, it very much feels like a city hotel, so I think it's a mix of hotel and resort."

Later the opportunity came up, as the F&B role became vacant, to which Michel was encouraged to apply by his wife, and also by his previous Four Seasons hotel's general manager.

It is also a sort of homecoming since Michel's wife, who is from the Philippines, grew up in Bangkok. "Since a long time ago she had wanted to move back here," says Michel, who is himself a big fan of Asian food.

"While growing up one of my best friend's family owned an Indian restaurant, so I was often offered Indian food. That was a taste sensation for a young Swedish man and awakened his interest already then for Asian cuisine. Thai food was equally a taste experience, when trying, and that it could have so many flavours! I love it,



including with quite a lot of chilli as well. So, it has been extremely positive to come here to Bangkok and to be able to have direct access to all the flavours and dishes that I love.”

He describes his F&B role as dynamic: “You can develop in different ways, and one of the best things with this role is to get to experience new places, as part of your work - and not just for holidays but to live in and experience a culture during several years. I find that to be exciting!

With 299 guest rooms to serve, with seven restaurants and bars, and substantial meetings and events facilities there is no lack of duties and motivating challenges for the Swede in his latest F&B role. From a steady stream of weddings and regaining a Michelin star for one of the restaurants, to making guest chefs dinners and even a truffle auction into successful events that strengthen the hotel’s position within an increasingly competitive market, Michel has a lot on his plate.

“Normally we might have two weddings every Friday, Saturday, Sunday, each wedding attended by between 200 up to close to 1000.”

“Palmier by Guillaume Galliot is a recent rebranding in collaboration with a 3 Michelin star chef from Hong Kong. And we are working a lot on our Chinese restaurant where we had a Michelin star earlier. In general, being innovative is key in order to keep our business and market position as there are many new hotels coming on board, not least here by the river.”

Also under Michel’s watch, and supported by a skilled bar management team, the hotel houses Bkk Social

Club, a bar ranked in 2024 in the enviable 12th position among the World’s 50 Best Bars.

Four Seasons subscribes to service culture that everything should constantly improve. “That aim never ends, and while being service-minded comes naturally to Thai associates they also need to be trained about for example French food and traditions, which many of them obviously have not experienced previously. So that’s part of our challenge: to translate that French culture.”

As the Director of F&B Michel’s role is more administrative, focusing on the operations and the economy. While he is not spending his time in the kitchens we can certainly be seen out in the restaurants – including helping out at breakfast – where guests stand a chance to meet him, including at dinner time.

12 hour working days tend to be the norm, starting with a morning meeting, though he gets 2 days off weekly.

Passionately committed to outstanding service and performance, Michel thrives at his new hotel home in Bangkok, Thailand, a country home also to three more Four Seasons properties. For now, all his focus lies on Four Seasons Bangkok at Chao Phraya River.



Agneta's
World

Agneta de Bekassy



Busy Year End

First of all, I would like to take the opportunity to wish you a good continuation. I hope you all had a merry Christmas and are now getting ready to start the new year, 2025.

As mentioned in my December column, I would like to give you a short update about what happened in late December.

On the 14th, the Swedish School Organization had its last gathering. Parents and kids enjoyed saffron buns and coffee, what we in Sweden call FIKA. As every language is a gift, it's important for children from mixed marriages to maintain their Swedish language, even though almost everybody in Sweden is familiar with English today. Being able to talk to grandparents in Swedish is an extra plus.

The same day, SWECHAM hosted a well visited Christmas lunch at Hotel Westin. The ballroom was nicely decorated to give a Christmas feeling. Santa Claus was present for the young guests, well, even for us adults. He greeted the kids with a typical "ho, ho, ho" and gave the young ones a little gift, while happy parents enjoyed the delicious buffet with all the Christmas specialties, washed down with cold beers, snaps, and wine. A lottery with great sponsors was not missing, and a jazz/blues singer entertained.

Many Swedes are very fond of SNUS. In fact, the so-called “White Snus” has become more popular and frequently used in Sweden nowadays. A Swedish producer was very generous, donating many SNUS boxes containing different flavors to happy users. A thank you to the company “www.haypee.com” on behalf of the snus lovers. How is the outlook for Thailand? Can snus become as popular here as it is in the Scandinavian countries? Let’s see – it might take some time for the Thai people to get used to it. It’s good for us non-smokers, who don’t like the smell of cigarettes, as snus is odorless.

With this lunch, SWECHAM also came to the end of a busy, successful year.

On the 17th, the probably most prestigious Thai vineyard, Gran Monte in Khao Yai, hosted an event at a completely unknown place – at least to me – called The Electric Sheep, to celebrate several awards the family had earned from Austria and Hong Kong for their wines. Father, mother, and two daughters are all involved in the production and everything else related to winemaking and distribution. It’s a real family business.

In 2021 the family was a recipient of the Thailand Tourism Award. The estate is located in a valley 350 meters above sea level and has a wine grape planting area of 100 rai (40 acres).

Asoke Valley Winery is Gran Monte’s winery, which began operations in late January 2009. The winery has a maximum capacity to produce 300,000 bottles of wine per year. They use imported wine-making equipment from France, Germany, Italy, and Australia. The daughter, Nikki Lohitnavy, is the in-house oenologist and winemaker.

If you are visiting Khao Yai, why not pay a visit to “Granmonte Wine Cottage”? This seven-room accom-

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”

modation offers a stunning view of the vineyard and the valley’s tropical jungle. The restaurant VinCotto is the name of the family restaurant and here you can order the award-winning wines paired with dishes made after old family recipes. During December, the temperature is around 15 degrees in the mornings, nice for a change. Well worth visiting and as I had the pleasure to try several of their prestigious wines, I can promise you that they are exquisite wines and they will not disappoint you.





There have been some great concerts e.g., the Frenchman Frank Herrgott, had a Piano solo recital at the Yamaha Music Hall at Siam Pathumwan House on the 6th of December, as well as on Sunday the 15th at the Goethe Institute, with some special guests. I'm sure we will see and hear more of Frank in 2025.

Walking around town shortly before Christmas is a delight. You will see the most outstanding Christmas decorations, the only thing missing is the snow. I know that all the visiting Scandinavians probably prefer to feel the sand among their toes, instead of cold snow that gives them icy feet.

On the 24th of December (Julafton) the Nordic countries, Sweden, Denmark and Finland, held a service together at the beautiful, old Christ Church on Covent Road. (The Norwegian priest held a service at Pattaya.) This is a very longstanding tradition and after the service, Nordic Thai Association offers the participants a glass of Glögg (mulled wine) and 'aebleskiver'.

The Christ Church is an Anglican church in Thailand. It has both English and Thai language congregations. The church was built in 1905 in a Neo-Norman style. The church can seat 450 persons. If you haven't been visiting this old, beautiful church, you should do so. You will find the church on Covent Road, close to BNH (Bangkok Nursing Home.)

Most of us Scandinavians probably go back home



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Walking around town shortly before Christmas is a delight. You will see the most outstanding Christmas decorations, the only thing missing is the snow.

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after church and prepare for the traditional Christmas table. I did and I wondered why the Christmas ham is mostly seen as the most important dish on the table.

Already more than a thousand years ago, an annual winter festival was arranged in Sweden, sometime around the darkest day of the year. The Asa gods Frej and Odin, were central to the festival that was called JOLNIR and from Jolnir the name Juul became the name of the Vikings' Christmas. For Christmas you got to feast on fresh brewed beer, baked bread, fresh fish and meat. Archeological finds show that the pig was the dominant type of meat. From the 17th century, there is evidence that ham was eaten at Christmas in Sweden, but not until the 19th century it was served rimmed.

Mostly the ham was both rimmed and smoked and in the 20th century, because many people served the nitrite, red rimmed variant with mustard grilling, it became dominant.

Towards the end of the century, the demand for organic hams began to increase. Today the Christmas table has become a bit more vegetarian in many households. Some families prefer a complete change of food and go for oysters and Champagne instead of the quite heavy, traditional food.

If I had been a fan of oysters, I would probably have done the same. I could easily go for an Osetra or Beluga caviar served with Champagne, but my wallet doesn't



agree unfortunately.

While writing this, we still have a couple of days until 2024 is over. It has been a rough year in my opinion and let us hope that 2025 will be a bit smoother.

Stay healthy and happy, that's the most important. GOTT NYTT ÅR! Godt Nytår! Hyvää uutta vuotta! Godt Nytt År! A HAPPY NEW YEAR! Sah-wah-dee pee mai!

Chinese Yi Peng 3 departs from Kattegat after weeks



The Chinese bulk carrier Yi Peng 3, anchored in the Kattegat for weeks due to suspicions of undersea cable damage, has now begun its voyage away from the area. The Danish Defense Command informed Ekstra Bladet of the ship's departure, confirming that they monitor its movements. "I confirm that Yi Peng 3 is departing the Kattegat area. We track the ship with our relevant resources," said Tobias

Roed Jensen, press advisor for the Defense Command.

Using the tracking service Vesselfinder, observers noted the vessel heading north. Additionally, the Swedish Coast Guard informed SVT Nyheter that the ship is en route to Port Said in Egypt, traveling independently. Hanna Bühler from the Coast Guard confirmed, "They stated they are traveling to Egypt on their own initiative."

Over the past month, Yi Peng 3 attracted international attention after it passed over two data cables in the Baltic Sea, which later showed damage. This raised significant investigative interest.

On Thursday, experts from Denmark, Sweden, Germany, China, and Finland boarded the ship for a thorough inspection. Jonas Bäckstrand, Deputy Director General of the Swedish Accident Investigation Authority, stated to SVT, "We made observations that will be important."

Despite being in international waters, where Danish and Swedish authorities lacked the authority to detain or board it, Chinese authorities invited experts for onboard investigations.

As Yi Peng 3 finally sails away, the maritime community and involved nations stay watchful, anticipating the potential implications of the ship's activities and the expert inspections' findings.'

IKEA plans pop-ups to expand in the Philippines

IKEA is exploring new strategies to strengthen its presence in the Philippines, including potential in-store pop-ups to boost brand awareness and test market demand. These initiatives, still in the early planning stages, aim to evaluate customer interest in areas without existing IKEA stores. "Pop-ups could be a great marketing and customer relationship tool," said Max von Bodungen, IKEA's digital and remote selling manager.

While IKEA faced a global sales decline this year, its Philippines market saw notable growth due to expanded delivery and assembly



services. The company's enhanced nationwide delivery network and assembly options have made its products more accessible.

Von Bodungen highlighted the importance of understanding lo-

cal consumer behavior, explaining that Filipino customers often start with small purchases before moving on to larger items. He added, "A physical presence in every major city would be ideal, but it requires a strong customer base to sustain a full-fledged store."

IKEA Philippines has also tailored its offerings to local preferences, such as the exclusive "dipper" item, while maintaining its global product range of over 9,000 items. As the brand considers its next steps, it remains committed to leveraging high volume to keep prices competitive.

Wartsila: Vietnam could save billions by 2050 with carbon-neutral power

According to Finnish technology group Wärtsilä, Vietnam could save up to €26 billion annually by transitioning to a carbon-neutral electricity system by 2050.

Wärtsilä, a global leader in technology solutions for the energy and marine sectors, emphasizes the importance of focusing on renewable energy as part of the country's goal to achieve net-zero emissions.

To reach this goal, Vietnam must prioritize flexible power plants that can quickly adjust capacity and balance the energy supply. Wärtsilä recommends that Vietnam implement

flexible technologies and upgrade transmission systems to ensure the stable and sustainable operation of the grid.

"By adopting flexible energy systems and expanding renewable sources, Vietnam can significantly reduce costs while meeting its ambitious environmental targets," said Pham Minh Thanh, Wärtsilä's country director for Vietnam.

Vietnam has already taken steps toward this goal by setting higher renewable energy targets in its latest energy plan, signaling a positive shift toward a sustainable energy future.



Ørsted sells half of its stakes in Taiwanese offshore wind farm



Ørsted has finalized an agreement to sell a 50% stake in its Greater Changhua 4 offshore wind farm to Cathay Life Insurance for DKK 11.6 billion (approximately \$1.64 billion).

The deal, prepared for over a year, follows Cathay Life Insurance's selection as the preferred bidder in October 2023 after a competitive process. Ørsted retains the remaining 50% ownership, with Cathay set

to pay in installments through 2024 and 2025.

Part of Ørsted's broader Taiwan portfolio, the Greater Changhua offshore wind farms include four projects totaling 2.4 GW of planned capacity. Greater Changhua 4 is tied to the 920 MW Greater Changhua 2b and 4 project, which secured grid capacity in 2018. Construction is ongoing, with completion expected by late 2025.

Earlier in 2024, Ørsted inaugurated the 900 MW Greater Changhua 1 and 2a projects, the largest offshore wind farms in Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific, now fully operational and grid-connected. This milestone underscores Ørsted's commitment to advancing renewable energy in Taiwan.

Finnish company investigated for bribery linked to Thai operations



Global Group Finland, a cleaning company founded by a former Finnish Defense Forces CFO and a lawyer, is under investigation for bribery involving its Thai-linked operations. The company, established in 2009, primarily imported cleaning products from

Thailand for telemarketing sales in Finland.

The former defense official, serving as CEO and residing in Thailand since 2008, managed operations abroad, while the lawyer handled business affairs in Finland. Allegations of extensive gift-giving, including electronics and vouchers worth hundreds of thousands of euros, have surfaced. These gifts were reportedly used to incentivize purchases and maintain customer loyalty, raising ethical and legal concerns.

The investigation was triggered by an audit following the company's bankruptcy in 2019. Authorities identified 84 recipients of gifts,

including 28 public officials who received items valued at €139,000 and 56 corporate employees who accepted gifts totaling €229,000. Prosecutors have charged the CEO and the Finland-based executive with bribery and accounting fraud.

Both executives deny wrongdoing, claiming the gifts were promotional incentives to drive sales, a common strategy in telemarketing. However, prosecutors argue the practice constitutes bribery.

The case will go to trial in Helsinki District Court on March 3, 2025. Prosecutors are seeking over two years of unconditional imprisonment for both defendants.

Danish dogs suffer psychosis – Chinese chew bones recalled

Several dogs in Denmark have exhibited psychotic symptoms after consuming chew bones produced in China, according to Danish media TV2. Veterinarians across the country have reported unusual behavior in dogs, such as drooling, panic, and fear of the dark.

Vestermose Animal Clinic initially issued a warning via a Facebook post, identifying specific chew bones. Although the post was later deleted, it had already been shared 1,600 times. One of the mentioned products, Chrisco chew rolls made with beef hide and chicken, has now been recalled by the manufacturer.

“We don’t yet know if our product is the cause of these cases, but we are investigating,” says Karina Pedersen, Purchasing Manager at Chrisco.



Both veterinarians and Chrisco urge dog owners to discard the chew bones as a precaution. Laboratory tests are underway to determine if the products contain harmful substances.

Nysnø and EPS Ventures invest in Zinus' sustainable maritime solutions

Nysnø Climate Investments and Singapore-based EPS Ventures have announced a NOK 50 million investment in Zinus, a Norwegian leader in maritime charging and shore power technologies. The funding aims to drive innovation and growth in sustainable maritime solutions.

Endre Eidsvik, CEO of Zinus, welcomed the new investors, emphasizing their maritime expertise and the strategic boost for international expansion. Nysnø and EPS Ventures will join Zinus's Board of Directors, working alongside existing shareholders such as LOS Gruppen and Eviny Ventures.

Zinus's technology focuses on reducing the maritime industry's carbon footprint by enabling ships to switch off fossil fuel engines during port stays, cutting CO2 emissions. The investment will also support the development of hybrid and electric vessels, vital for maritime decarbonization.

The partnership includes plans to expand Zinus's team from 50 to 65 employees by 2025. Yvonne Silden Langlo of Nysnø highlighted the company's critical role in tackling maritime emissions, while Gary Ong of EPS Ventures underscored the importance of shore power for green shipping.



Headquartered in Bømlo, Norway, Zinus has been a global pioneer in zero-emission power solutions since 2018. The collaboration marks a significant step toward advancing the green shipping revolution.

Swedish Fintech Vilja to open development center in Kuala Lumpur

Swedish fintech firm Vilja will establish a development center in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, by 2025, investing RM50 million over the first five years.

The move aligns with Vilja's plans to expand globally, focusing

on digital innovation in artificial intelligence and cybersecurity. CEO Fredrik Ulvenholm announced the initiative during Sweden-Malaysian Digital Day in Stockholm, alongside Kamelinder Singh, Head of Foreign Direct Investment at Malaysia Digital

Economy Corporation.

Ulvenholm highlighted Kuala Lumpur's talent pool, government support, and strategic location as key factors behind the decision. This follows Vilja's earlier establishment of its ASEAN headquarters in the city and partnerships with Malaysian companies, including InsiteMY, Finology, and RC Technology.

Anuar Fariz, CEO of Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation, praised Vilja's investment as a testament to Malaysia's position as a leading digital hub in the region.

"We remain committed to supporting Vilja's success under the Malaysia Digital initiative," he said.

Vilja aims to meet growing demand for its cloud-native core banking platform across ASEAN.



Finnish Ambassador seeks stronger ties with the Philippines, says consul



The newly appointed Finnish Ambassador to the Philippines, Saija Nurminen, has pledged to strengthen bilateral relations between Finland and the Philippines. Ambassador Nurminen,

who assumed office in September 2024, visited Cebu yesterday to meet with business sector representatives.

Jose Franco Soberano, Finland's honorary consul in the Visayas, ex-

pressed optimism about enhanced collaboration under her leadership.

"Ambassador Nurminen's extensive diplomatic experience and strategic vision open new doors for partnerships that benefit both nations," he said.

Ambassador Nurminen brings a wealth of international diplomacy experience, including roles in Berlin, Washington, Geneva, and Brussels. Prior to her appointment, she served as Director of the Personnel Unit at Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The consulate aims to focus on initiatives in employment, education, and technology while fostering deeper cultural exchange, especially in the Visayas region.

"This is an opportunity for mutual growth between Finnish and Filipino institutions," Soberano noted.

Norwegian Catrine celebrates as half-sister Rose receives passport in Thailand

After years of effort, 12-year-old Rose, an orphan in Thailand, has received her Norwegian passport, allowing her to reunite with her half-sister, Catrine Hægeland Øglænd, in Norway. This milestone follows over two years of legal battles, during which Catrine and her family invested 1.5 million kroner and countless hours to secure Rose's future.

Rose, whose parents passed away in 2017 and 2020, has lived with a family friend in Thailand. On December 10, she proudly received her Norwegian emergency passport at the embassy in Bangkok. "I'm ex-

tremely happy," said Catrine, 37, who was on vacation in Thailand when the news broke.

Rose shared her excitement, holding up her passport and exclaiming, "Here's my passport!" However, the young girl also felt bittersweet emotions about leaving her current life behind.

Catrine expressed relief at the outcome. "Finally, this nightmare is over. We are thrilled to become a complete family," she said. Preparations for Rose's first Norwegian winter are underway, with winter clothing and other essentials on their list.

The case, described as com-



plex by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, underscores the family's determination to bring Rose home. "Everything feels new and a bit scary for her, but I believe it will be very good," Catrine concluded.

Oatly closes Singapore facility to streamline production in Europe

Swedish oat milk producer Oatly announced that it will close its manufacturing facility in Singapore, the company's first in Asia, to streamline its supply chain. This decision, revealed on December 18, aims to serve the Asia-Pacific market through Oatly's existing facilities in Europe.

Opened in October 2021 in collaboration with Yeo Hiap Seng, the Singapore plant produced up to 60 million liters of oat milk annually, sourcing oats from Sweden. The closure marks a strategic shift in Oatly's asset-light supply chain approach.

Oatly's CEO, Jean-Christophe Flatin, stated that the move will op-



imize production capacity while reducing capital costs. The separation of Oatly's Greater China business from the broader Asia market has already led to significant operational improvements.

Following the closure, Oatly expects non-cash impairment charges between \$20 million and \$25 million in the fourth quarter of 2024. Additionally, restructuring will result in net cash outflows of \$25 million to \$30 million through 2027, accounting for anticipated equipment sales.

Flatin expressed gratitude for the Singapore team's efforts over the years, emphasizing the importance of simplifying operations to focus on sustainable growth. This strategic decision reflects Oatly's ongoing commitment to enhancing efficiency while pursuing its mission of promoting plant-based alternatives in a competitive market.

Danish Consulate hosts Nordic Diversity Film Day in Shanghai

The Danish Consulate General in Shanghai recently hosted a Nordic Diversity Film Day, collaborating with representatives from Finland and Norway. Over 100 attendees gathered to enjoy a curated selection of Nordic films that illuminated the complexities of diversity in identity and sexuality.

The screenings featured several impactful films from the Scandinavian countries:

Finland: *Light Light Light* by Inari Niemi

Norway: *The Tree* by Ida H. El-døen and *Night Ride* by Eirik Tveiten

Denmark: *The Shift* by Amalie Maria Nielsen and also *Aquari* by Leo Clara Mendes

The event not only showcased the rich storytelling traditions of the Nordic region but also sparked meaningful discussions on themes such as coming-of-age, sexuality,



personal growth, and identity.

Following the screenings, an engaging conversation provided attendees with valuable insights and emphasized the importance of creating confidential spaces for unconditional freedom of expression.

"This event was a true testament to the power of Nordic cinema in promoting dialogue, fostering

reflection, and encouraging fresh perspectives," the Danish Consulate General in Shanghai stated about the Nordic Diversity Film Day in a shared post on their Facebook page. They expressed gratitude to all who joined and look forward to hosting future screenings that continue to explore these vital themes.

Swedish Embassy highlights children's rights at Bangkok Book Festival



The Embassy of Sweden took part in the Bangkok Children's Picture Book Festival this year, focusing on promoting children's rights through literature.

With support from IKEA Thai-

land, the embassy introduced the "Little Library," a dedicated reading space featuring picture books and creative workshops for children and families.

The furniture from the Little

Library will be donated to vulnerable communities to help spread the joy of reading even after the festival ends.

Swedish diplomats engaged young readers by sharing Swedish children's stories, aiming to spark imagination and creativity. The event featured Anna Hällgren, a Swedish expert in children's literacy, who collaborated with local Thai partners to share her expertise.

The embassy also hosted exhibitions on the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, showcasing works by past laureates, including Swedish illustrator Eva Lindström and South Korean artist Baek Hina.

Through initiatives like this, Sweden continues to emphasize the importance of children's education, creativity, and freedom of expression.

Finland looks to Filipino workers to address labor shortages

Finland is increasingly turning to Filipino workers to fill critical labor shortages, particularly in sectors like healthcare, construction, IT, and emerging green jobs. Finnish Ambassador to the Philippines, Saija Nurminen, emphasized this during her recent visit to Cebu, her first since her appointment in September 2024, Phil Star reports.

"Filipino workers are adaptable and skilled, and there's great potential for collaboration in upskilling and vocational training," Nurminen said at a press conference in Cebu.

She highlighted Finland's globally recognized education system



and expertise in sustainable technologies, including waste management, as areas for deeper partnerships. Finnish companies are already exploring green projects in the Philippines, with Cebu identified as a promising hub for investments.

To boost these efforts, Finland's Minister of Labor is visiting the Philippines in January 2025, aiming to enhance recruitment and government cooperation.

The visit also underscored Finland's commitment to strengthening bilateral ties through labor mobility, education, and sustainability initiatives, as both countries prepare to mark the 20th anniversary of their relations in 2025.

Ocean Infinity takes delivery of first robotic vessel from Vard, built at its Vietnam facilities

Ocean Infinity has announced the delivery of its first unit in a new series of 85-meter robotic vessels, which Norwegian company Vard constructed at its Vung Tau, Vietnam, facilities. Named Armada 86 01, the vessel will enhance Ocean Infinity's operations across various sectors.

The Armada 86 01 will operate from shore and aims to utilize green ammonia as fuel. This change reflects the company's commitment to sustainable practices in maritime operations.

This steel-hulled DP2 multirole vessel performs functions such as geophysical surveys, geotechnical sampling, inspection, and maintenance. With these capabilities, the Armada 86 01 effectively supports Ocean Infinity's fleet of remotely operated vehicles (ROVs), seabed drills, and Continuous Penetration Testing (CPT) systems.

In addition, the vessel fea-

tures a removable aft bulwark that enables over-the-stern deployment of Ocean Infinity's Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) fleet. Furthermore, the moonpool includes a modular Launch and Recovery System (LARS) that operates fully automated and allows remote control from Ocean Infinity's Remote Control Center (RCC) network.

The Armada 86 01 accommodates up to 16 crew members and payload personnel, providing crucial support for extended missions.

Ultimately, the delivery of the Armada 86 01 represents a significant milestone for Ocean Infinity. The company continues to expand its capabilities while committing to innovative maritime solutions. By focusing on sustainability and advanced technology, Ocean Infinity positions itself to lead in the changing landscape of maritime operations.



Swedish study warns of pesticide overuse in Cambodia

A Swedish study led by Cambodian researcher Putheary Ngin of the Royal University of Phnom Penh has found that excessive use of pesticides is endangering Cambodia's crops, waterways and public health.

The Umea University report, released Wednesday, detected 56 polar pesticides in groundwater and 43 in soil across four provinces along the Mekong River.

Polar pesticides dissolve easily in water, increasing environmental risks. Misuse has surged due to limited understanding of safety instructions, often written in foreign languages, for chemicals imported from Vietnam, Thailand, and China.

The study highlights the need for better farmer education and sustainable practices.

"This overuse harms beneficial insects that protect crops," said Rica Joy Flor of the International Rice Research Institute. The practice traps farmers in a cycle of excessive spraying, reducing ecological balance and increasing dependency.

Targeted strategies and diversified farming approaches are key solutions, researchers emphasized.

"Policymakers and public health campaigns must prioritize sustainable agriculture to protect farmers, consumers, and the environment," Putheary Ngin urged.





Tax payers in Thailand must include all transferred income in their tax report in 2025

With effect from January 1, 2024, Thailand's Revenue Department revised its interpretation of the Revenue Code, significantly impacting personal income tax liability for Thai residents with foreign-sourced income. These changes are important for both Thai nationals and expatriates residing in Thailand. Below, we break down what these changes mean and how they could affect you.

ScandAsia has consulted the legal department of the Thai Revenue Department to bring clarity on the subject. The purpose is to cut through the gossip and give our readers the basic facts of how the changes will affect foreigners who are tax residents in Thailand. You are a tax resident in Thailand if you stay in Thailand at least 180 days within a given tax year.

ScandAsia has tried to trans-

late the legal explanation of the Legal Department of the Thai Revenue Department into a language code that should be understandable by the majority of our readers. If you have specific questions, ScandAsia encourages you not to listen to third-person gossip but to contact the Revenue Department directly with your question.

Let's give the word to the Legal Department:

The Key Change

Previously, Thai residents were only required to pay tax on foreign income if that income was brought into Thailand within the same tax year it was earned. However, under the new interpretation, foreign-sourced income will now be taxable in Thailand whenever it is remitted into the country, regardless of the tax year in which the income was

earned. This amendment applies exclusively to income earned from January 1, 2024, onwards.

Income that is not remitted into the country will not be taxable in Thailand until it is remitted.

Who Is Affected?

Any Thai resident who derives income from foreign sources will be impacted. A Thai resident is defined as anyone physically present in Thailand for at least 180 days within a given tax year. Importantly, the rule applies equally to Thai nationals and foreigners who qualify as Thai residents.

Retirees or expatriates living in Thailand who bring foreign income into the country should also be aware that this income is subject to the same rules as any other foreign-sourced income. However, those earning income from a coun-

try that has a double taxation treaty with Thailand can apply for tax relief, provided they have proof of taxes paid in the foreign country.

Double Taxation Relief

Thailand has 61 double tax treaties with other countries. The Nordic countries all have such treaties. If your foreign income has already been taxed in one of these treaty countries, taxpayers can apply for a foreign tax credit to avoid double taxation. It is essential to retain relevant documentation, including proof of income and taxes paid, to qualify for such relief.

What Do You Need to Do?

To comply with these changes, taxpayers should:

Maintain Accurate Records: Keep all documents related to foreign income that is remitted into Thailand, such as bank statements, contracts, and tax payment receipts from the source country.

Understand Double Tax Treaties: If your foreign income comes from a country with a double taxation agreement with Thailand, gather the necessary documentation to claim tax relief.

Maybe Consult Tax Experts: Consulting a tax advisor familiar with international and Thai taxation laws is recommended. But if your situation is not complicated, you can easily handle it yourself. Don't be afraid to go to meet the Revenue Department covering your residence address.

Enforcement and Penalties

The Revenue Department has increased its capabilities to check your actual situation through international cooperation. Thailand is a member of the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, enabling the exchange of financial information with other member countries.

If discrepancies are found between your own income declaration and the income information obtained through the Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes, taxpayers need to explain this. If they cannot explain the difference in a satisfying way, they could face severe penalties, including:

- A fine equal to twice the tax amount that should have been paid.

- A monthly surcharge of 1.5% of the unpaid tax amount.

Broader Implications

This change reflects Thailand's broader efforts to enhance tax transparency and compliance. To handle the situation, Thailand has established a new International Tax Affairs Center under the Revenue Department. The establishment of this center underscores Thailand's commitment to managing cross-border tax issues effectively.

While the revised interpretation does not specifically target foreigners or retirees, its implementation highlights the importance of proper tax planning for anyone residing in Thailand with foreign-sourced income.

Final Thoughts

The recent changes to Thailand's Revenue Code mark a significant shift in how foreign income is taxed for Thai tax residents. Whether you're a Thai national or an expatriate, understanding these rules and ensuring compliance is crucial to avoid penalties. Staying informed and seeking professional advice will be key to navigating these changes effectively.

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