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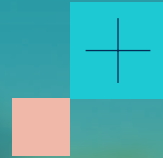
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Sweden's rare relationship with Vietnam

Fifty years after the end of the Vietnam War, Sweden and Vietnam stand as partners not only in trade, but in trust. What began as a bold diplomatic gesture in 1969—when Sweden became the first Western country to recognize North Vietnam—has matured into a resilient, multifaceted relationship grounded in shared values and a long-term vision for sustainable development.

Sweden's early support for Vietnam was more than diplomatic rhetoric. It took the form of concrete, lasting contributions—from the Bai Bang paper mill and mobile field hospitals to major healthcare institutions like the National Children's Hospital in Hanoi and the Uong Bi General Hospital. These projects were investments in a better future for Vietnam, and they remain enduring symbols of Sweden's solidarity when it mattered most.

While Sweden's temporary closure of its Hanoi embassy in 2010 raised eyebrows, the reopening in 2017 and revival of bilateral engagement in the years since has proven that the foundation laid decades ago was too strong to be undone by political missteps.

Today, that foundation is being built upon in new ways. Swedish companies such as ABB, AstraZeneca, IKEA, Electrolux, and Syre are playing key roles in Vietnam's rapidly growing economy - particularly in green technology, renewable energy, healthcare, and sustainable consumption. Syre's planned \$1 billion investment in polyester recycling is just one example of how Swedish expertise is helping to drive Vietnam's climate ambitions.

Vietnam, for its part, sees Sweden not only as a valuable investor, but as a strategic collaborator in digital transformation and innovation. The two countries continue to strengthen their ties through education, cultural exchange, and diplomatic cooperation that reflects their shared commitment to equality, sustainability, and human development.

As we mark this anniversary, we are reminded that not all international relationships are shaped by economic opportunity alone. In an age of transactional diplomacy, Sweden's bond with Vietnam stands out as a rare case of principled solidarity.



Gregers Moller
Editor in Chief

ScandAsia

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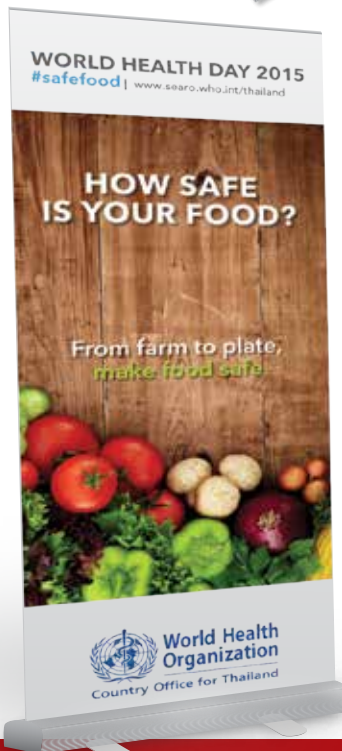
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Swedish ambassador reflects on Sweden–Vietnam ties 50 years after unification



In a recent interview with the Vietnamese government's online news portal, Sweden's Ambassador to Vietnam, Johan Ndisi, reflected on the deep and enduring relationship between the two countries—one that began in the midst of war and has grown through decades of solidarity and cooperation.

"Sweden was the first Western country to establish diplomatic ties

with Vietnam, in 1969," Ambassador Ndisi noted. "Our support during the years of resistance and reunification laid the foundation for a friendship built on trust, mutual respect, and shared values."

The ambassador highlighted the symbolism of Sweden's early solidarity, including public demonstrations led by then-Prime Minister Olof Palme against the war in

Vietnam, as well as Sweden's development assistance in health care, governance, and education during the post-war rebuilding years.

Asked about the evolution of the relationship, Ambassador Ndisi emphasized that while Sweden no longer provides traditional aid, the bilateral ties have matured into a dynamic partnership focused on dialogue and shared experiences. "Vietnam is a country with ambition and resilience, and Sweden continues to be a friend and partner in its journey."

Marking 55 years of diplomatic relations, Ambassador Ndisi said Sweden remains committed to supporting Vietnam's priorities, including sustainability, social inclusion, and good governance. He also pointed to the strong people-to-people ties, cultural exchanges, and educational cooperation that continue to strengthen the bond between the two nations.

"Our partnership today is not only about history—it's about building the future together," he said.

On Facebook, the Ambassador wrote:

"During these last two days I have witnessed incredible scenes in HCMC. Families have lined the streets, socialising, waving flags and eating together."

"I am also particularly glad the original footage from the streets of Stockholm, filmed by Bo Öhlén on 30 April 1975 were shown in Hanoi as well as in HCMC as part of the commemorations."

"The last two days have highlighted the tragic history, the incredible reconstruction of the country as well as the youthful optimism that you see daily," Ambassador Johan Ndisi adds.



Securitas wins SwedCham Hong Kong award

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong held its Annual General Meeting recently at The Do – WLAB, welcoming members and celebrating achievements within the Swedish

business community. During the meeting, Guru Bala, Country CEO of Securitas, and Shan Wu, General Manager of AstraZeneca Hong Kong, were elected as new board directors. Thomas Ek-

berg, President APAC of Zinzino, was re-elected to the board.

Securitas also received the SwedCham Annual Award for its dedication to safety and its strong support of the Swedish community and the Chamber.

Two new honorary members were announced: Per Augustsson, former Consul General in Hong Kong and currently Swedish Ambassador to China, and Gabriella Augustsson, outgoing General Manager of SwedCham.

The event also featured an engaging panel discussion on developments in Asia, with insights shared by Johan Nylander, Florian Hoffmann, and Veronique Lafon-Vinai.



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Norway urges Indonesia to defend global trade system amid tariff tensions



Norway has urged Indonesia to support the rules-based global trade system as protectionist signals from major economies raise concerns.

Norwegian Ambassador to Indonesia, Rut Krüger Giverin, told the Jakarta Globe that countries like Indonesia should “stand up for multilateralism” amid growing trade tensions.

“We are concerned about current signals from the U.S., which may affect the global economy,” said Giverin. “Indonesia has a key role as a G20 member and regional leader to uphold the global trading system.”

The remarks follow recent comments by former U.S. President Donald Trump suggesting tariffs of up to 60% on Chinese goods if re-elected, fueling fears of renewed trade conflicts.

Norway, a strong proponent of the World Trade Organization (WTO), emphasized that open and fair trade benefits smaller economies reliant on global market access.

Indonesia and Norway already cooperate on trade and environmental initiatives, and Oslo hopes Jakarta will remain a partner in defending international trade frameworks.

Sweden sees Vietnam as a strategic partner for innovation and sustainable growth

Sweden views Vietnam as a key partner for innovation, green growth, and sustainable development, according to Johan Forssell, Sweden’s Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade.

During a business forum in Hanoi on Friday 17 May 2025, Forssell expressed optimism about the long-term trade potential between the two countries, highlighting Vietnam’s role as a growing market for Swedish solutions in areas such as sustainable energy, healthcare, and smart infrastructure.

“Vietnam is a dynamic market that offers many opportunities for

Swedish companies, especially those focused on innovation and sustainability,” says Minister Forssell.

The minister led a delegation of 50 Swedish companies to Vietnam to explore business opportunities and strengthen bilateral trade ties. The companies represented sectors including green transition technologies, digital solutions, and manufacturing.

The forum, organised jointly by Business Sweden, the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi, and the Vietnam Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VCCI), was part of activities marking 55 years of diplomatic relations between Sweden and Vietnam.



According to Forssell, the European Union–Vietnam Free Trade Agreement (EVFTA) plays a significant role in encouraging trade and investment. The minister encouraged further reforms in Vietnam to improve the business environment and ensure sustainable development.

Vietnam and Sweden reaffirm commitment to deepen cooperation

Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Le Thi Thu Hang met with senior Swedish officials during an official visit to Sweden from 20 to 21 May 2025, reaffirming the two countries' commitment to strengthening their bilateral relationship.

She held talks with Dag Hartelius, Secretary of State at the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other senior officials, including Camilla Melander, Mikael Lindvall, and Anna-Karin Hedström.

The Deputy Minister emphasized Vietnam's view of Sweden as a key partner in Northern Europe and called for closer cooperation through increased delegation exchanges and



stronger ties between government and parliamentary bodies.

Dag Hartelius expressed Sweden's interest in expanding cooperation with Vietnam in trade, in-

vestment, innovation, education, and security.

The visit marked a step toward reinforcing the long-standing partnership between the two nations.

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Arctic Blue Beverages wins Double Gold in San Francisco for fourth time

Finland's Arctic Blue Beverages has won a Double Gold and four Silver medals at the 2025

San Francisco World Spirits Competition.

Arctic Blue Gin Rose received

its fourth Double Gold Medal since launching in 2022. The award is given only when all judges rate a product as outstanding.

Made with Finnish wild blueberries and cinnamon rose petals, the gin is known for its floral aroma and natural colour.

Three newer products also earned Silver Medals: Nightwish Gin (a collaboration with the Finnish band), Arctic Blue Coastal Dry Gin, and the classic Arctic Blue Gin and Arctic Blue Gin Cask.

Now in its 25th year, the San Francisco World Spirits Competition is considered the world's most respected blind-tasting contest for spirits.



Novo Nordisk and Nanyang raise haemophilia awareness in Thailand

Novo Nordisk and Thai footwear brand Nanyang have partnered to raise awareness of haemophilia in Thailand by delivering 1,500 specially designed shoes to members of the Thai Haemophilia Patient Club.

Part of the "EquiStep" project, the initiative promotes equitable access to healthcare. The Cocoon shoes, created by artist Kru Parn – Somnuek Klangnok, were presented at a ceremony in Bangkok on 6 May 2025.

"These shoes represent a leap forward for haemophilia patients in Thailand," said Enrico Cañal Bruland, General Manager of Novo Nordisk Pharma (Thailand) Ltd.

While not medical devices, the shoes are meant to raise awareness of the daily risks haemophilia patients face, such as internal bleeding

from minor injuries.

Nanyang Managing Director Dr Chakrapol Chandavimol said the project reflects the company's mission to blend design with social contribution.

Haemophilia affects about 2,000 people in Thailand, many of whom remain undiagnosed or lack

access to treatment.

Dr Monthon Suwannuraks, President of the Thai Haemophilia Patient Club, said the shoes symbolise a shared public-private commitment to improving access to care.

The EquiStep project marks an ongoing effort to support those living with chronic conditions.



Norwegian seafood exports to China reach record high

In April 2025, Norway's seafood exports hit a record 14.3 billion Norwegian kroner (approx. USD 1.33 billion), up 2% from the previous year, driven by higher volumes and demand in markets like China and the U.S.

Exports to China rose 14% year-on-year to 913.8 million kroner, supported by strong demand and competitive pricing for Norwegian salmon. Christian Chrømer, CEO of the Norwegian Seafood Council, noted a shift in salmon exports from Europe to Asia and the U.S., helped by warmer sea temperatures and improved fish quality.

U.S. exports grew 23% to 1.4 billion kroner in April, leading value growth for the fourth straight month. However, Chrømer flagged

concerns over potential impacts from new U.S. tariffs.

From January to April, total seafood exports reached 58.5 billion kroner, up 7.3% year-on-year.

A Seafood Council survey also found 78% of Chinese consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable seafood, reflecting growing environmental awareness.



Saxo Singapore Sees EAM Assets Double in 2024



Saxo Bank's Singapore operations reported strong growth in 2024, with assets managed through its External Asset Manager (EAM) segment doubling over the past year. About 25% of Saxo Singapore's institutional revenues now come from its wealth management arm, which includes EAMs and

family offices.

Ivan Chang, Saxo's regional manager for institutional business, credited the growth to the bank's open-architecture platform and tech-driven solutions that attract independent asset managers seeking scalable, cost-efficient platforms with broad investment access.

Key features such as digital onboarding, integrated client reporting, and single-account access to global markets have boosted Saxo's appeal among EAMs serving sophisticated private clients.

This growth aligns with Saxo Bank's global performance. The bank posted an adjusted net profit of DKK 1.074 billion (approx. USD 160 million) in 2024, up from DKK 653 million the year before. Client assets rose to DKK 853 billion from DKK 745 billion.

While exact figures for Singapore's EAM asset growth were not disclosed, the surge reflects growing interest in platform-based wealth solutions across Asia, especially in Singapore, Hong Kong, and ASEAN markets.



Swedish Minister Visited Vietnam

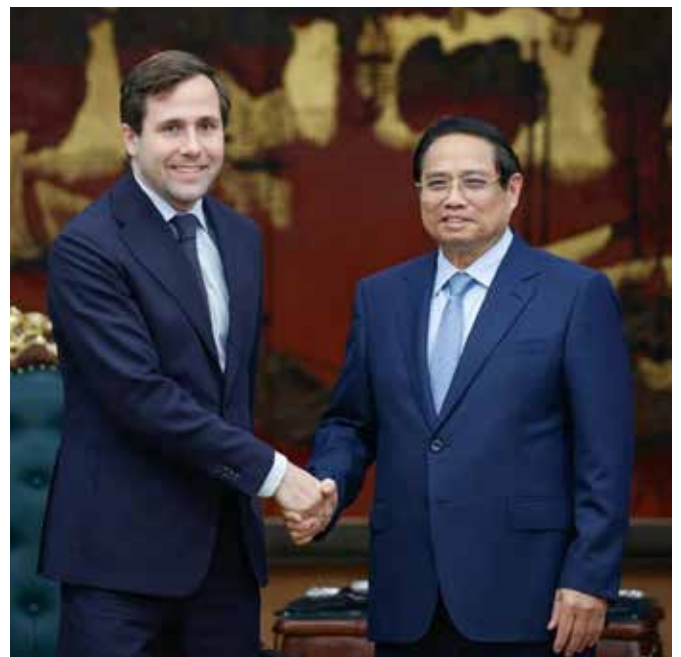
By Nguyen Thu Huyen

Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Benjamin Dousa, has begun an official visit to Vietnam aimed at strengthening bilateral relations and boosting Swedish engagement in the country's green and digital transformation.

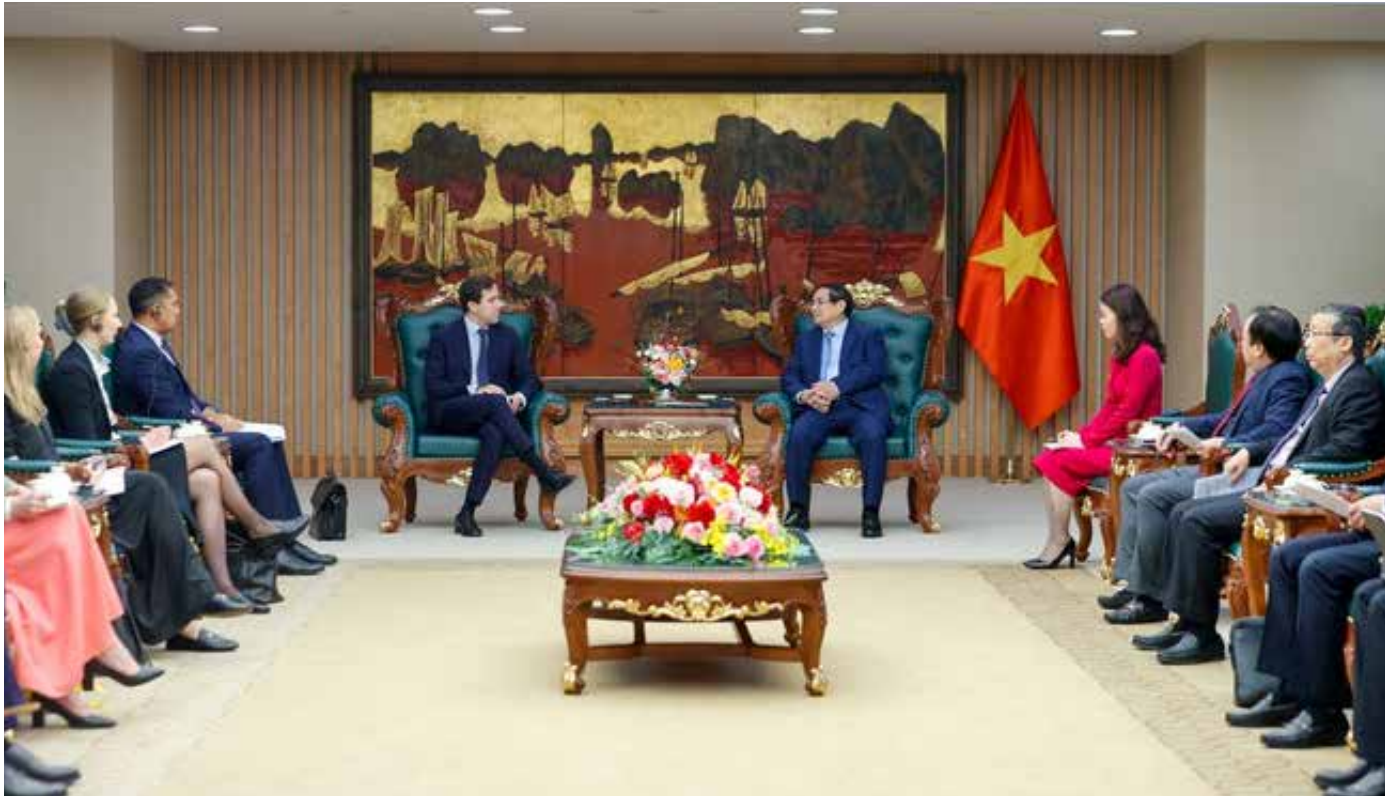
On May 12, at the Government Office in Hanoi, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh welcomed Minister Dousa, reaffirming Vietnam's consistent policy of valuing its relationship with Sweden.

Highlighting the goodwill between the two peoples, the Prime Minister mentioned the Swedish documentary *Victoria Vietnam*, presented to Vietnam on the 50th anniversary of the Liberation of the South and National Reunification. The film stands as a vivid testament to the enduring affection of the Swedish people for Vietnam.

He expressed sincere gratitude for Sweden's past assistance—particularly in non-refundable aid—and for its continued cooperation across various sectors. The Prime Minister also acknowledged the legacy of Swedish-funded projects such as the Bai Bang Paper Mill, the National Pediatric Hospital in Hanoi, and Uong Bi Hospital in Quang Ninh, calling them symbols of long-standing friendship and effective collaboration.



For his part, Minister Dousa expressed strong admiration for Vietnam's rapid development, political stability, and economic goals—highlighting targets of over 7% growth in 2024 and a projected 8% in 2025. He empha-



sized Vietnam's growing appeal to Swedish investors and enterprises.

Substantive Cooperation for Comprehensive Development

The two sides agreed that Vietnam and Sweden share many common values—particularly people-centered development, social welfare, reduced inequality, and sustainable progress. The Prime Minister said Vietnam is actively studying Sweden's experience in areas such as cultural industries, affordable housing, urban planning, and environmental protection.

He emphasized great potential for future cooperation in digital transformation, green transition, science and technology, healthcare, education, and strategic infrastructure. Vietnam, with its position in Southeast Asia, offers a gateway for Swedish goods to enter the ASEAN market of over 600 million people. In return, he encouraged Sweden to help Vietnamese goods reach Nordic markets more effectively.

Bilateral trade turnover reached USD 1.5 billion in 2024, up 15% from 2023. However, the Prime Minister noted this still falls short of both countries' full potential. He proposed intensifying high-level exchanges, promoting investment, expanding market access, and strengthening business-to-business ties. With this momentum, he said, Vietnam and Sweden could soon elevate their relationship to a strategic partnership.

Minister Dousa agreed, affirming Swedish companies' interest in sectors such as renewable energy, clean technologies, logistics, healthcare, and smart manufacturing. He voiced Sweden's readiness to establish a long-term cooperation strategy with Vietnam based on mutual trust and shared values.

Political Commitment and Multilateral Engagement

Beyond bilateral ties, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh called on Sweden to promote early ratification of the EU-Vietnam Investment Protection Agreement (EVIPA) by EU member states—vital for boosting European investment in Vietnam. He also urged Sweden's support in lifting the European Commission's "yellow card" on Vietnamese seafood under IUU (Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated) fishing rules.

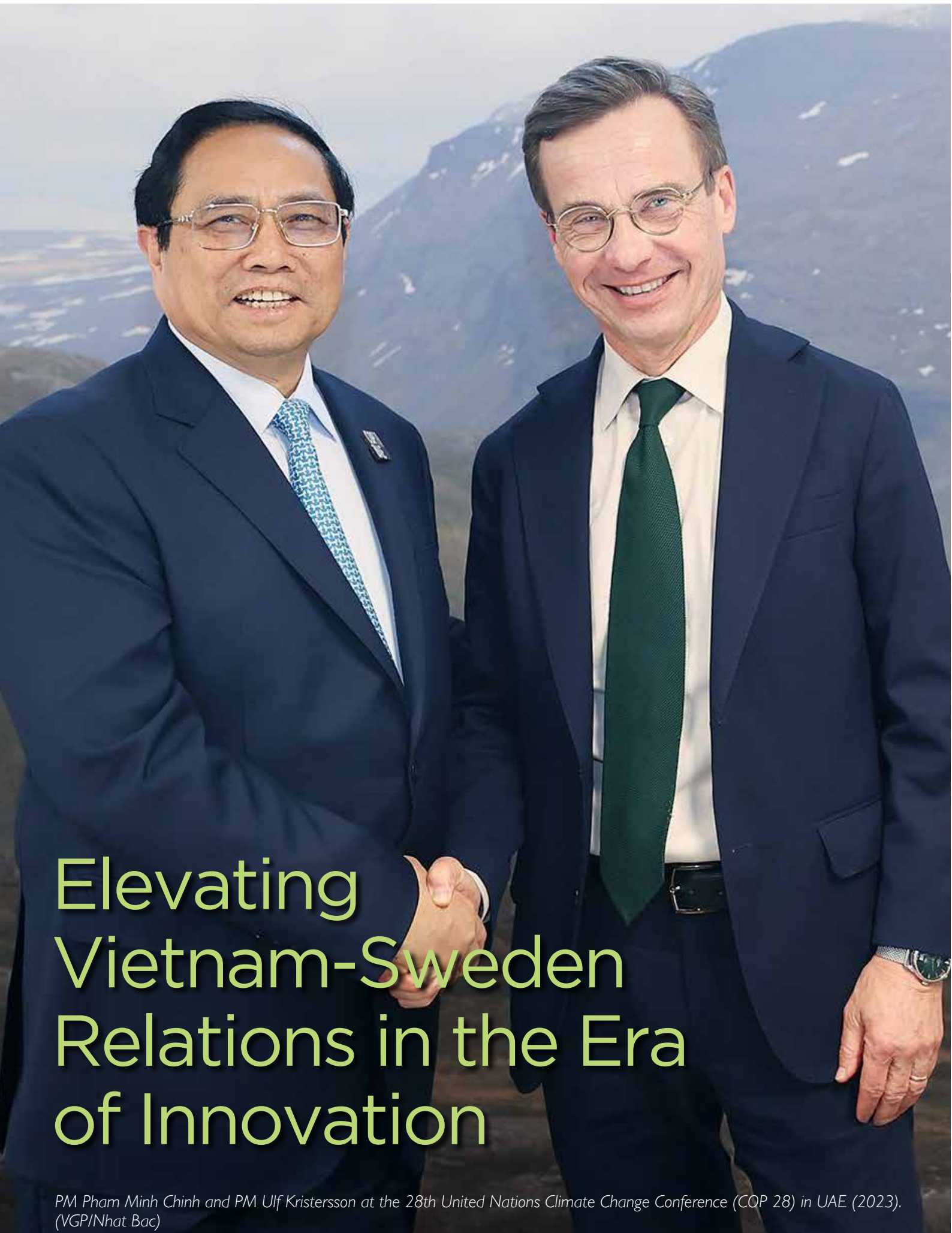
Minister Dousa responded positively, pledging to advocate for EVIPA ratification and to work with EU partners to ease regulatory barriers and improve cooperation with Vietnam.

Both sides emphasized the importance of enhancing people-to-people exchanges, especially among younger generations, to foster long-term friendship. Prime Minister Chinh concluded: "The Vietnam–Sweden relationship is a model of trust, sincerity, and effectiveness. Vietnam always welcomes partnerships with nations that share our vision and development values."

Minister Dousa will speak at the "Enhancing Vietnam–Sweden Healthcare Cooperation" conference, co-hosted by Vietnam's Ministry of Health and Team Sweden. The event will feature Swedish companies such as AstraZeneca, Getinge, and Ericsson.

His visit also includes a tour of the Vietnam National Children's Hospital—a symbol of Swedish support—and participation in the Sweden–Vietnam Infrastructure Investment Dialogue, spotlighting collaboration in green energy, AI, digital infrastructure, mining, and semiconductors.

"Vietnam is a key partner in Southeast Asia with great potential for increased cooperation," said Minister Dousa. "This visit promotes Swedish solutions and explores future partnerships in infrastructure, healthcare, and sustainability."



Elevating Vietnam-Sweden Relations in the Era of Innovation

*PM Pham Minh Chinh and PM Ulf Kristersson at the 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 28) in UAE (2023).
(VGP/Nhat Bac)*

The official visit of Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to Sweden from June 11–13, 2025, marks a pivotal moment in the bilateral relationship, opening avenues for enhanced collaboration in science, technology, innovation, and digital transformation. This visit signifies a strategic advancement in Vietnam–Sweden relations amidst the global digital era.

By Nguyen Thu Huyen

From Historical Foundations to Strategic Leap: Governmental Direction

Established in 1969, Vietnam–Sweden relations have been built on a robust foundation of mutual support and cooperation. Sweden has consistently been a significant partner in Vietnam’s journey toward independence and national reconstruction.

Vietnamese Ambassador to Sweden Tran Van Tuan emphasized that Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh’s visit aims to steer the two nations toward a sectoral strategic partnership, particularly in science, technology, innovation, and digital transformation. This juncture presents an ideal opportunity for both countries to explore sustainable and long-term cooperative ventures, aligning with the demands of the digital age.

Sweden, renowned for its innovation and scientific research, ranks second globally in the Global Innovation Index (GII), investing approximately 3.6% of its GDP in research and development (R&D), surpassing the EU average. Conversely, Vietnam boasts a youthful workforce, adaptable production capabilities, and a rapidly expanding consumer market. The Vietnamese Communist Party’s Politburo recently issued Resolution No. 57-NQ/TW on December 22, 2024, underscoring a high political commitment to advancing science, technology, innovation, and national digital transformation. This initiative aims to propel Vietnam swiftly into the digital era and global integration. Establishing a sectoral strategic partnership in science, technology, and innovation will enable both nations to leverage each other’s strengths for mutual development in the contemporary era.

In the current phase, fostering collaboration between Swedish and Vietnamese enterprises is crucial, especially in high-tech sectors such as smart infrastructure development, renewable energy, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, and software outsourcing. These areas present significant potential and mutual interest for both countries.

Business Leadership: Technology, Sustainability, Connectivity

Within the framework of the visit, the Vietnam-Sweden Business Forum convened, bringing together 100 Vietnamese and Swedish enterprises. This forum serves



Sweden is the cradle of global nutritional science, setting leading standards for organic milk and functional foods



*- Tran Bao Minh,
Vice Chairman of Nutifood*

as a vital platform for businesses from both nations to engage in substantive discussions, forge connections, and cultivate partnerships in high-tech industries, digital transformation, and sustainable development. Prominent companies such as Nutifood, HoaBinh Group, H&M, SYRE, and FPT Software...exemplify the new wave of collaboration, where technology, social responsibility, and innovation converge within the global value chain.

In the Vietnam-Sweden collaborative ecosystem, enterprises are not merely implementers but catalysts for transformation. Each entity contributes a unique perspective – from nutrition and fashion to event organization and technology services – united by a shared ethos of innovation, sustainability, and globalization.





This visit aims to steer the two nations toward a sectoral strategic partnership, particularly in science, technology, innovation, and digital transformation.



*- Mr. Tran Van Tuan,
Vietnamese Ambassador
to Sweden*

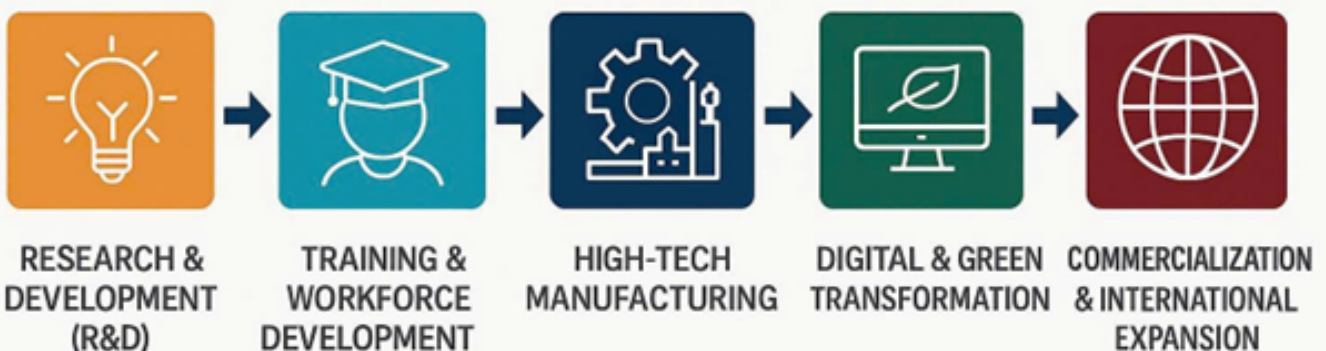
Mr. Tran Bao Minh, Vice Chairman of Nutifood, stated, "Sweden is the cradle of global nutritional science, setting leading standards for organic milk and functional foods. Nutifood is proud to be the first Vietnamese enterprise to establish a strategic partnership with Sweden, aiming to enhance the health of Vietnamese people through high-quality nutritional solutions."

With a long-term vision, Nutifood established the Nutifood Nutrition Research Institute Sweden (NNRIS) and has operated the Nutifood Factory in Sweden since 2020. Specialized nutrition formulas such as FDI and NuVi Power, along with medical nutrition products like Värna, have been developed based on international research and adapted to Vietnam's nutritional context. Despite challenges such as differences in technical standards and product development mindsets, Nutifood has progressively localized international technologies to create products suited for Vietnamese consumers.

HoaBinh Group (The MICE Leader), though not the organizer of the current Vietnam-Sweden Business Forum, actively promotes economic diplomacy and international cooperation. With over 15 years of experience in event organization – particularly international conferences, high-level dialogues, and specialized forums, HoaBinh Group has established itself as a pioneer in creating connective spaces among businesses, policymakers, and academia.

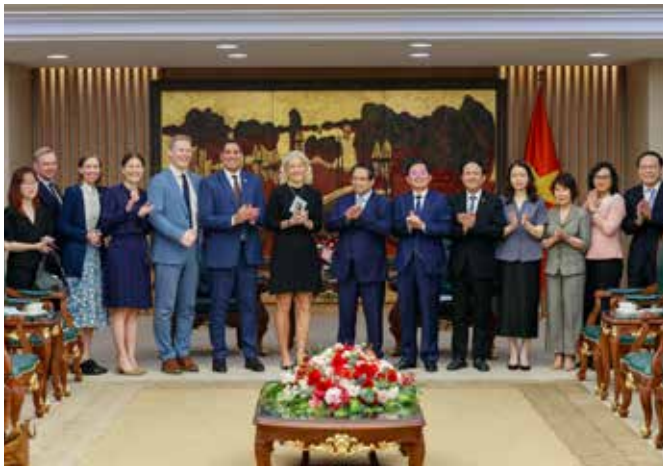
According to CEO of HoaBinh Group Hoang Lan, the MICE industry has evolved beyond logistical services to become an essential catalyst for innovation. "MICE is

TECHNOLOGY & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT – VALUE CHAIN BETWEEN VIETNAM AND SWEDEN



DIGITAL & GREEN TRANSFORMATION VALUE CHAIN

Vietnam and Sweden are progressing toward constructing a comprehensive cooperation value chain, spanning from research and development to application and international expansion in high-tech sectors.



not just a service industry but a foundational catalyst for innovation connections from policy dialogues to technological collaborations,” she emphasized. In the deepening Vietnam-Sweden partnership, the involvement of professional organizers like HoaBinh Group enhances business connectivity, fosters public-private partnerships, and supports digital transformation and sustainable development.

Speaking to a ScandAsia reporter, an H&M spokesperson highlighted the company’s strong commitment to sustainability, continuous investment in improving labor conditions, health and safety at partner factories, and minimizing environmental impacts from production activities. Over nearly three decades, H&M has established new standards and rigorously applied the Sustainability Commitment and Responsible Purchasing Policy, maintaining long-term, trustworthy relationships with global suppliers. In Vietnam, a key supply market, H&M appreciates advancements in environmental protection and sustainable social practices but also recognizes challenges in the global supply chain when aiming for circular economy goals and scientifically-based emission reductions.

SYRE, a pioneer in textile recycling and the circular economy, has selected Vietnam as the strategic location for its first large-scale recycling plant. Following a \$100 million Series A funding round in May 2024, SYRE identified significant potential in Vietnam’s dynamic textile industry and strong commitment to the circular economy and sustainable development. However, achieving this goal requires substantial government support, particularly in updating regulations on importing textile waste, currently classified as “waste” but poised to become vital “recycled materials” in the circular textile industry. SYRE has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Binh Dinh province to establish necessary conditions for its inaugural recycling plant in Vietnam, focusing on criteria such as access to industrial zones near infrastructure, green energy, and recycled materials.

FPT Software, a leading Vietnamese enterprise in technology and digital transformation, is progressively expanding its footprint in Northern Europe. According to Mr. Andrew Allison, CEO of FPT Software Sweden, this region presents substantial opportunities yet demands



high standards in technology, transparency, and cultural understanding.

FPT identifies three strategic opportunities: collaborating with global leaders in smart manufacturing, clean energy, and digital finance; leveraging Vietnam’s positive image to enhance presence; and partnering with Northern European businesses in innovation, AI, and green technology - aligning with FPT’s “AI-Semiconductor-Automotive-Digital-Green” strategy.

FPT proposes three priority policy areas to bolster Vietnam-Sweden cooperation: establishing favorable legal frameworks for technology transfer; developing joint training programs and coordinating tech personnel between the two nations; and intensifying national branding efforts to elevate the credibility of Vietnamese tech enterprises in developed markets.

Today’s innovation-driven partnerships serve as a proving ground for tomorrow’s strategic depth. From policy formulation to product development, from conferences to concrete actions, Vietnam and Sweden are jointly scripting a new chapter in their comprehensive partnership, grounded in data, sustainability, and corporate synergy.

Five Strategic Cooperation Areas between Vietnam and Sweden by 2030

1. **Green Transition:** Renewable energy, recycling, sustainable packaging, and carbon emission reduction
2. **Digital Transformation:** 5G, AI, semiconductors, and intelligent digital infrastructure
3. **Healthcare & Life Sciences:** Digital health, diagnostic technology, and medical research
4. **Education & Human Resource Development:** Technical training, especially in energy and high technology
5. **Sustainable Trade & Investment:** EVFTA, EVIPA, strategic investments, and addressing IUU yellow card issues



Destination
management specialist
Peter Stenberg thrives
and expands within
the world of travel

At ITB Asia (travel trade show) in Singapore, Peter Stenberg represents his Kota Kinabalu-based Rustic Travel. There, he meets with various hospitality groups and local tour operators, mainly aiming to sign up new hotels and negotiate contracts with suppliers. His so-called DMC – Destination Management Company – is headquartered in Sabah (Borneo), where the business he started along with his wife has continued to grow annually and also managed to survive the most difficult test possible: Covid-19. Peter shares his story and how this part of the travel industry operates, facilitating what end customers buy as trips via physical travel agents in Europe.

By Joakim Persson

The start of Rustic Travel goes back to 2013, while Peter's debut within the travel sector goes even further. After college, he worked for Scandinavian Leisure Group, going to the usual vacation spots such as Mallorca, the Canarian Islands, Cyprus and more. Later, he went to Sabah on a holiday to spend some time with an old colleague – a trip that would change his life forever.

"I liked it there and was bored of Denmark. And being entrepreneurial, I started knocking on doors to see if I could land a job – which I did, with a Danish company within oil and gas logistics," recalls the Dane.

It was a regional job which involved lots of travelling in the region, bringing Peter to India among other countries.

"That's where I got my real business education because anyone that has been doing business in India knows how difficult it is," states Peter. "It was a fantastic job; I was in my late 20s at that time, learned a lot and was exposed to various things."

When the Danish operations later closed down, Peter's background within tourism kicked in. And as he wanted to remain in Borneo, he then decided to start a travel company together with his partner (who also became his wife).

"What we did was crazy, because we basically started off with absolutely nothing. I believed, as a Dane, that we could begin by focusing on the Danish market and have an edge. For the first two, three years, we did all kinds of direct marketing on that market and we managed to get a bit of volume within B2C into Sabah."

B2B market entrance

One thing led to another, and hotels started noticing Rustic Travel as a partner that could generate business.

"Suddenly we started getting better contract rates, which also meant we could enter into the B2B market – where your profits are lower, but the volumes much higher. So that's our core business today: ninety-five percent of everything we sell is via travel agencies in Europe," Peter explains.

"In Malaysia, we have contracts with probably around 100 hotels. We stick to a smaller, good selection that we can manage well and have good relationships with. Also, we know why we want to sell certain hotels on specific markets."

"And now, 12 years later, we are still going strong, offering trips not only all over Malaysia but also in Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, and now also Nepal."

Their forecasted volume is now 10,000 room nights for the whole year.

"Aside from the Covid years, we've managed to grow our revenue by 20 to 30% every year – which is something we are quite proud of. And what is the secret sauce when we're all selling the same in this industry? We find the good suppliers, the good tour operators, and then we have to bundle it up. And we have to offer good prices, be super-efficient and hyper-focused on delivering what we promise. Because in Europe, the consumer laws are really strict. So, should there be delays in the itinerary, it will be costly."



“

We have to offer good prices, be super-efficient and hyper-focused on delivering what we promise. Because in Europe, the consumer laws are really strict.

”



As a DMC, Peter says they are no better than any of their suppliers. And when some mistake occurs is when they really have to show if they are a good or a bad travel provider:

“We need to know our suppliers and we need to visit them once in a while. It’s essential to have a personal relationship with them, so that we find a solution when something goes wrong.”

Covid survival

The Covid-19 epidemic meant two years with no income for the company, however. Rustic Travel overcame that crisis by cutting down its staff to a bare minimum. In addition, Peter took the decision to move with his family to Singapore, as he was able to find a job there.

“Logistics was booming at the time, and those companies had problems getting people, especially in a place like Singapore that relies on a lot of foreign workers. And with an office already there, I had a permit to stay. I started working for the Danish company DSV and did that for 2.5 years. Then, when the travel business started bouncing back enough, I returned to focus on our travel company.”

Today, they are back at 15 full-time staff and happy to have managed to re-recruit nearly every staff member they had pre-Covid. A general manager at the headquarters in Sabah oversees the operations.

Nature and adventures

Rustic Travel is clearly a Borneo and nature specialist: “Sabah is still the core product – that’s our specialty. Usually, our customers are people interested in adventures, where Malaysia in particular is a country one visits for its stunning nature and outdoor activities. And the same goes for our focus in Vietnam. But if your target is spending two weeks on the beach, you won’t book it with us. There’s no value we can add to that.”

When asked to mention the three most important reasons to visit Sabah, Peter responds:

“First and foremost, everybody should visit Kinabatangan River, where you have the best wildlife in Southeast Asia. Second is the amazing beaches, both on islands and also at some of the beach resorts. Third will be the people: like in many other Southeast Asian destinations, people are very friendly, curious, and talkative. And in Malaysia, most people can speak English, so you can actually communicate with most locals.”

Elaborating further on their differentiation, Peter informs:

“It’s when we provide these tailor-made trips that we can actually add value into the chain, because if you travel in Malaysia for, say, two weeks it may involve four domestic flights, and boat and land transfers, in addition to the hotels. And for the accommodation, we are not more expensive than if you book online yourself. We add in more value because we do the tours and trans-



fers as well, and where we have a much more hands-on knowledge.”

“In the end, it’s definitely more expensive to enter a travel agency in Copenhagen and buy all-inclusive. However, it will save people a lot of time and when you buy from a travel agency within the EU, you have the consumer rights protection. So, most people are actually okay to pay 10 – 20% more for the package price and avoid having all the hassle themselves,” adds Peter.

“The big change happening in the market, I think, is that the more expensive packages are still booked through agencies, and the more budget ones are booked via the OTAs.”

“We also do incentive groups for companies, taking a trip usually for 3 – 4 days, wanting to give their key customers some great days, or bringing their key staff on an outing, and that may include some training.”

Especially companies from Italy, Portugal, and Spain book such outings, and Peter thinks it’s more normal for companies in Southern Europe to invite customers or bring employees on retreats.

“Any day I might get a call from someone who knows someone: ‘Hey, I met you back in 2015 and we are thinking about adding Malaysia to our travel offers.’ It’s all about good, old-fashioned networking and relationship-building for B2B sales.”

Attending travel trade shows in Europe is also necessary, including ITB Berlin.



“There, you can easily shake hands with 150 different buyers from the travel agencies. And if two or three of those turn into new clients, we are super happy, because each one can result in a lot of bookings annually.”

As for here in Asia, individuals and, for instance, Nordic companies can also be supplied.

“Absolutely! And we hear all the time that the travel agency sector is doomed, but I can tell you I could come up with so many different kinds of niche segments within our industry that we could develop!”



What keeps me here?

I have been asked many times recently:
what keeps you in Thailand?

By Agneta de Bekassy

A single woman, no longer in my youth, and with no family here – what am I still doing here? Well, sometimes I ask myself the same question.

The answer I usually give is: Bangkok hasn't stopped fascinating me yet, despite my 18 years in this bustling city! This city changes from day to day – you never know what's happening around the corner. It's a vibrant mix of people from all over the world – or at least from most corners of it.

That diversity has also led to an incredible culinary scene. And if you're like me, with a deep passion for food and wine, then you're truly surrounded by it here. Bangkok is a culinary mecca. I can hardly think of a cuisine that isn't represented here.

What surprises me, though, is how underrepresented Swedish cuisine is. In recent years, we've had the Michelin-starred VILLA FRANTZÉN, but why don't we have a simpler restaurant serving traditional Swedish comfort food in Bangkok?

I know such places exist in Pattaya, and most likely in Hua Hin and Phuket – perhaps even in other parts of Thailand. A well-cooked traditional Swedish dish is hard to beat.

Chef Mateo

During my years in Bangkok, I've had the pleasure of meeting many chefs – both established stars and those with star potential. I've enjoyed classic Mediterranean dishes, Italian of course, Indian, Thai, and many more.



“

Bangkok hasn't stopped fascinating me yet, despite my 18 years in this bustling city!

”

Recently, I met a chef from Texas who works for a Swedish-Thai family, ensuring they're served well-prepared, flavorful, and nourishing meals. His relaxed style and creativity caught my interest right away. Since I visit this family almost weekly, I've often taken the chance to talk to him about his culinary journey – and of course, to sample his cooking.

I can already reveal that his polenta might be the best I've ever had – and that's saying something, considering I used to eat polenta regularly while living in Lugano, in the Swiss region of Ticino.

His baking is also impressive. I'm not usually one for sweets, but his banana cake, sometimes enhanced with chocolate and nuts, absolutely melts in your mouth. It's impossible to say no.

Let me introduce you to Chef Mateo.

Born and raised in Texas, he readily admits that he must have been born with a passion for food. His younger sister was opening a restaurant right after completing her culinary training. One day, when a couple of chefs didn't show up, Mateo quit his job and stepped in to help.

"It was in my sister's restaurant that my career in a professional kitchen began," he says.

I asked who had inspired him to start cooking, and he told me it was his aunt's and grandmother's cooking that inspired him the most. He used to hang around in his aunt's restaurant, which she had for many years.

"They have a background in Mexican cuisine, and both women put their soul into their dishes. You could really feel – and taste – that. It taught me to put my heart on the plate, too," he added. "I've also had the privilege of working with many inspiring chefs around the world."

Naturally, I was curious about what brought him to Thailand. Mateo explained that he came here to seek inspiration and to learn more about Thai cuisine.

When he first arrived, he worked as a chef at CARNE. He also consulted and helped conceptualize

new restaurant openings and culinary projects across Southeast Asia. Most recently, he was even shortlisted to become head chef at KOL, a high-end London restaurant known for its Mexican-inspired cuisine. But in the end, he chose to stay in Bangkok.

Now he is working on a farm-based project and cooking privately. I asked if he sees this as a long-term path.

"To be honest, I had never cooked in someone's home before – it was totally unfamiliar to me," he said. "But it's given me the opportunity to do R&D, work on kitchen design at the farm, and learn more about organic permaculture farming. Right now, we're growing eight different types of chilis from Latin America, among many other vegetables."

I recently heard about "private dining" experiences, where chefs are hired to cook in someone's home for paying guests. It seems to be a growing trend, especially in Bangkok. I asked Mateo if that was something he could see himself doing in the future.

Here Mateo hesitated before answering, clearly taking a moment to reflect.

So, I followed up by asking what kind of cuisine he enjoys preparing and cooking.

"My background is in Italian, Japanese, and modern American cuisine," he said, "but I really love it when I get a chance to cook Mexican food."

He admits that he loves a good taco and barba-coa – a traditional Mexican dish made from meat that's slow-cooked until tender, often seasoned with chilies, garlic, cumin, cloves, and other spices. The word barba-coa originally referred to a method of cooking meat over an open fire or in a pit covered with leaves. These days, it's usually steamed or braised. Mateo also has a flair for all kinds of smoked meats.



“

My dream? Well, just to go on with what I'm doing, as it gives me great satisfaction.

- Chef Mateo

”



“I'm quite proud of my tortillas,” he adds – and I must say, after trying them, he has every reason to be.

Recently, Mateo was a guest chef at TONY'S, located on Sukhumvit Soi 11. Although I often visit Soi 11 and some of its restaurants, I had never been to Tony's before. It turned out to be a lovely place – with a warm and welcoming atmosphere – and I had the pleasure of meeting its friendly owner.

I asked Mateo how he and Tony knew each other. He explained that they first met years ago when Mateo took part in an event at the legendary Havana Club.

“I felt truly honored when Tony invited me to come and cook for 'Cinco de Mayo,’” he said. For this special evening, the Italian restaurant was transformed into a celebration of Mexican culture.

Guests were given colorful sombreros, and the menu featured a range of popular Mexican dishes. It was a lively and successful night. Here are some of the delicacies:

- A guacamole topped with fresh uni from Japan, served with warm corn chips
- Pork neck carnitas cooked in pork fat with mandarin orange and spices
- Beef cheek barbacoa smoked with local jackfruit wood
- All the tortillas for these tacos were hand-pressed using heirloom corn masa
- The salsas were very spicy but delicious, using ingredients like tomatillos, chile tepin, and chile guajillo





For dessert: a milkshake spiked with rum, homemade roasted banana-malt ice cream, crème fraîche whipped cream, garnished with a churro and cajeta (a Mexican-style caramel made from goat's milk and cinnamon).

Tony's has been open for about four years now. It's a traditional Italian restaurant that offers both indoor and outdoor seating.

To wrap up my interview, I asked Mateo about his future goals and dreams. His answer came without hesitation:

"Keep on cooking and developing my skills. I love to find simplicity in my cooking and also improve on my technique. In my opinion, food should be authentic and simple, have a place in the market, and not be easily duplicated."

"My dream? Well, just to go on with what I'm doing, as it gives me great satisfaction."

Mateo isn't a stranger to the idea of opening his own restaurant in the future and putting Mexican cuisine on the map in Bangkok. Let's hope his dream comes true one day.

What More Do I Appreciate About Bangkok?

Let's talk about something other than food for a moment. There's so much more I appreciate about Bangkok. Take healthcare, for example. The international hospitals here are almost like five-star hotels. In how many countries can you sit down in a hospital and listen to live piano music in the lobby, drop by Starbucks, or shop for luxury beauty products – just to name a few things?

You rarely have to wait long – if at all – before you're taken care of. Most doctors have studied or trained

abroad, and they usually speak English well.

In other words, you feel seen and taken care of. The nurses are often dressed in neat pastel uniforms with little caps on their heads – none of those shapeless county-issued coats and orthopedic shoes you see elsewhere. I find it comforting to rest my eyes on something stylish when I'm not feeling well.

Of course, all these extras come at a price. Nothing in life is free, unfortunately. Insurance isn't cheap, but in my opinion, it's a necessity. I'd rather cut back on partying or a trip and put that money toward good insurance.

The "regular" hospitals are probably very good too, but for us foreigners, it can be harder to make ourselves understood – or to understand others – if you're not fluent in Thai.

What Else Fascinates Me?

Well, as a woman, I feel very safe here. Unless it was absolutely necessary, I wouldn't walk home after a night out or visiting friends if I were in Sweden. But here, I do it often, and in my 18 years of living here, I've never felt afraid or been harassed. Maybe this is where I should knock on wood?

I could go on and on. Maybe there will be a part two – time will tell.

Stay tuned!



When the craving for something sweet hits!

An average Swede eats about 15 kilograms of candy per year, and Sweden has the highest candy consumption in the world, largely due to the tradition of “lördagsgodis” (Saturday candy treat) and the wide selection of pick-and-mix candies.

By *Agneta de Bekassy*

Who doesn't remember the anticipation of the candy bag you got to buy on Saturday—or that kind parents had already picked up for you? How tempting were those little chewy yellow bananas, the salty fish, the white sugar cubes, the raspberry hearts, etc.

Nowadays, we can buy pick-and-mix candy at IKEA in Bangkok, but unfortunately, the selection isn't very big, and the candy often feels like it has been sitting there a bit too long.

I have some good news. There is now a small candy kiosk at IconSiam that offers 80 different kinds of pick-and-mix, as well as the popular Aladdin chocolate boxes—and if we're very lucky, we might also find my favorite chocolate Guldrougat (Gold Nougat, a very specific product by Marabou), among other popular Swedish chocolates.

On a grey Tuesday afternoon, 20 May 2025, I decided to take a trip down to IconSiam to meet the two men behind SOFTA. We finally got our beloved Swedish pick-and-mix candy here in Bangkok.

Located on the sixth floor near “Harbour Land,” you'll now find 80 varieties of Swedish candy—so dearly loved by us Scandinavians—along with the classic red Aladdin chocolate box and a range of delightful Marabou chocolates, including Mintkrokant, Apelsinkrokant, Schweizernöt, and the timeless Milk Chocolate.

The men we have to thank for this are childhood friends from Filipstad: Gustaf Ryhed and Kenny Rundh. These two enterprising young men have played sports together and shared many creative ideas over the years. Both started working at a young age—Gustaf has been active in the hotel and restaurant industry, while Kenny, a frequent visitor to Thailand, had long been brainstorming ways to bring something new to the Thai market. After much consideration, he concluded it was time to put Swedish candy on the map in Thailand—an idea we Scandinavians warmly welcome.

The pandemic delayed their plans somewhat, but it also gave them the opportunity to thoroughly plan how best to realize their vision. As many of us know, starting a business as a foreigner in Thailand can be a complex and time-consuming process. Gustaf and Kenny encountered several obstacles along the way, but they never gave up.

When I asked why they chose IconSiam as the location for their candy corner, they explained that there simply weren't many other places with space available. While areas like Sukhumvit and, to some extent, Sathorn might host more Scandinavians, they hope that once Thai locals fall in love with the candy too, they might expand to places like EMSPHERE—which I personally think would be a perfect fit. Imagine if hotels also joined in, offering a small candy corner in their lobbies.

Just picture coming back to your hotel room after a long day, craving something sweet or sour, and discovering a vending machine in the lobby offering a small jar of pick-and-mix candy—pure joy! This could be a great idea for hotels, especially those with many Scandinavian guests.

Currently, the IconSiam store employs three full-time staff and two additional helpers. Their Thai manager has proven to be a great asset—communication and getting things done is much smoother when you speak the language, as any non-Thai speaker here can attest to.

Now the question remains: will our Swedish candy become part of Thai daily life?

Early feedback shows that “licorice” may not be a Thai favorite (yet), but the sour candies are already a big hit.

For now, Gustaf and Kenny are still living in Filipstad (a city known for its Wasa bread), but who knows—maybe they'll decide to settle permanently in Thailand if the candy business takes off. Will Thai children start looking forward to a Saturday candy bag just like we did when we grew up? Let us hope.

It remains for me to wish the guys all the best.

In the meantime, pick up your Saturday sweets at IconSiam and enjoy every bite!



Now there is a Fika Academy?!

Did you know that the Fika Academy was recently launched in Sweden? Here's what you need to know about this new initiative.



By Agneta de Bekassy

The Fika Academy will explore fika culture in a broad sense. This includes the social ritual—what we create and accomplish over fika—as well as its many accompaniments.

The Fika Academy aims to be a resource, an inspiration, and a collaborative partner that gathers and shares knowledge about fika. It will also encourage engagement, promote public education, and support activities and research related to fika.

The Academy will collaborate with stakeholders across society, including associations, businesses, and public institutions, at the local, regional, national, and international levels.

Each year, the Fika Academy will have the opportunity to award two distinctions:

One for notable contributions related to the social ritual of fika

One for contributions related to fika's culinary elements and accompaniments

The first board of the Fika Academy consists of:
Stina Almroth, PhD in international nutrition and author of *FIKA: Made in Sweden*

Jonas Engman, ethnologist and curator at the Nordic Museum

Frida Bäcke, Nobel Pastry Chef 2024 and co-owner of the bakery SOCKER SUCKER

Louise Cederström, with long-standing experience in associations and a background in marketing

Emily Grabe, business economist with various roles in the food industry

Jan Hedh, Master Baker and Pastry Chef, appointed as an Honorary Member

The Academy also includes an **Expert Council** of five members and a **Start-up Council** of three members.

Fika is a tool—it brings joy, security, and a sense of community. It helps us build relationships, fosters innovation, connects generations, and so much more.

I suppose most of us—and not only us Swedes—can't imagine a day anymore without fika, true or not?

Välkommen till FikaAkademins konstituerande möte. 22/4 2025.

En trappa över gården, K22. Problem att komma in? Ring 070-373 05 81.



Sweden and Philippines Talk Sustainable Mining and forestry



Ambassador Anna Ferry of Sweden has paid a courtesy visit to Philippine Depart-

ment of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga in Manila,

where they discussed expanding collaboration between Sweden and the Philippines on environmental initiatives.

The meeting focused on areas such as responsible mining, sustainable forestry, and disaster risk reduction and management, according to a statement from the Embassy of Sweden in Manila.

The visit follows a high-level Philippine delegation's trip to Sweden in March, led by Secretary Yulo-Loyzaga, to study the Scandinavian country's sustainable mining practices. The Philippine government is reportedly looking to adopt aspects of Sweden's model to guide its own development in the mining sector.

Singapore's DSTA signs new deal with Denmark's OMT

Singapore's Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Denmark's Odense Maritime Technology Group (OMT) to explore the application of additive manufacturing (3D printing) in naval contexts. This collaboration, announced during IMDEX Asia 2025, aims to investigate the use of 3D printing in designing small unmanned surface vessels and developing scalable production methods.

This partnership builds upon previous collaborations between DSTA and OMT, notably the development of Singapore's Multi-Role Combat Vessel (MRCV). The MRCV, designed to function as a mothership for unmanned systems, incorporates advanced technologies and



is based on OMT's Iver Huitfeldt and Absalon designs.

The MoU signifies a strategic move to integrate cutting-edge manufacturing techniques into naval

engineering, potentially enhancing the efficiency and adaptability of future maritime assets.

Sweden and EGAT deepen partnership for green energy transition in Thailand

Thailand's Electricity Generating Authority (EGAT) and Sweden have launched the "Pioneer the Possible Thailand 2025" initiative to advance green energy collaboration. The event, held on 20 May 2025 in Nonthaburi, was co-hosted by EGAT, the Swedish Embassy in Thailand, and Business Sweden.

EGAT Governor Thepparat Theppitak and Swedish Ambassador Anna Hammargren reaffirmed both countries' commitment to sustainable energy. Sweden, a leader in renewable technologies, offers expertise in hydrogen, solar energy, smart grids, and digital innovation.

The initiative builds on an ex-



isting agreement between EGAT and Business Sweden, focusing on biomass and hydrogen development. Discussions also covered smart grids and digitalization to enhance energy efficiency and reduce

carbon emissions.

"Pioneer the Possible Thailand 2025" aims to support Thailand's clean energy transition through Swedish-backed innovation and aligns with global climate goals.

TikTok opens first European data center in Finland



TikTok has launched a new European data center in Finland, marking a key step in its strategy to localize data storage for European users. The facility, located in Haminanmaa, is operated in collaboration with Norwegian

data center specialist Green Mountain and represents part of TikTok's "Project Clover" – a transparency and data governance initiative aimed at bolstering trust among European regulators.

The Finnish data center will

store TikTok user data from the European Economic Area and the UK, aligning with regional data protection laws and enhancing control over information flow. According to Green Mountain, the partnership will also leverage renewable energy sources, reinforcing both companies' commitments to sustainability.

TikTok said the move aims to "strengthen existing privacy controls" and enable greater oversight by third-party European cybersecurity firms. A second data center in Ireland is also in progress.

With this strategic investment, Finland joins the growing Nordic role in powering the global digital economy through green, secure infrastructure.

BANPU and Denmark's CIP launch \$500 million carbon capture venture in the U.S.



Thai energy group BANPU has partnered with Denmark's Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) to launch a joint venture focusing on carbon capture,

utilization, and storage (CCUS) in the United States, beginning with a USD 500 million investment.

The venture involves BANPU's U.S.-based subsidiary BKV Corporation and CIP's Energy Transition Fund. Under the agreement, BANPU will hold a 51% stake through BKV, while CIP takes 49%. The investment may grow to USD 1 billion, depending on future project developments.

The partnership aims to support global decarbonization efforts by developing, constructing, and

operating CCUS projects. BKV will contribute assets such as the Barnett Zero and Eagle Ford CCUS projects in Texas, and will lead operational efforts using its technical expertise. CIP will bring experience in financing sustainable infrastructure.

The collaboration reflects BANPU's strategy to diversify into low-carbon and sustainable energy, marking a significant step toward its broader energy transition goals.

China to expand imports of high-quality Finnish products and technologies

China has expressed interest in increasing imports of high-quality goods and advanced technologies from Finland, marking a new phase in bilateral trade cooperation.

The commitment was made during a meeting between Chinese Premier Li Qiang and Finnish President Alexander Stubb in Beijing on 8 May 2025. Both leaders discussed strengthening ties in clean energy, green transition, and digital innovation.

Premier Li noted that Finland's expertise in innovation and sustainability aligns with China's development goals. The two sides also agreed to boost investment and deepen cooperation under the China-EU strategic partnership.

President Stubb's visit to China



is his first since taking office in March 2024. Discussions also touched on multilateral cooperation and global security.

According to China's Ministry of Commerce, bilateral trade

reached USD 7.5 billion in 2024. Finnish exports were led by machinery, electronics, and forest products. The renewed focus on high-quality imports presents opportunities for Finnish companies in various sectors.

Indonesia and Denmark explore offshore wind cooperation

Indonesia and Denmark are strengthening cooperation on offshore wind energy to support Indonesia's shift to renewables and advance its blue economy. Officials from Indonesia's Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries met with Danish representatives to discuss applying Denmark's decades-long offshore wind expertise to Indonesia's maritime zones.

"Denmark is a strategic partner in marine spatial planning," said Kartika Listriana, Director General of Marine Spatial Planning. The partnership has already aided Indone-

sia's marine planning and highlights offshore wind as a key renewable energy source.

Permits for offshore wind projects will involve both the Marine Affairs Ministry (sea space permits) and the Energy Ministry (infrastructure and cable route approvals). Denmark shared its success in wind energy, which powers over half its electricity and supports 30,000 jobs.

Minister Sakti Wahyu Trenggono emphasized that marine spatial planning is essential to achieving a sustainable and equitable blue economy in Indonesia.



Normet announces bond redemption as operations continue across Southeast Asia



Finnish underground technology specialist Normet Group has announced that it will redeem a 30-million-euro hybrid bond originally issued on 19 May 2023. The redemption will take place on 19 June 2025, in accordance with the

bond's terms.

In financial terms, redemption means that the company is paying back the full amount of the loan to investors—along with interest accrued—thereby ending the bond before its maturity date. This is

typically seen as a sign of financial strength.

"This notice of redemption is irrevocable," says Timo Koponen, Chief Financial Officer at Normet Group.

Normet is a global leader in developing technology and services for underground mining, tunnelling, and civil engineering. Headquartered in Finland, the company employs over 1,800 people in more than 50 locations across 30 countries.

Normet has a strong presence in Southeast Asia, including operations in Singapore and Indonesia. Through its regional hubs, the company supports infrastructure and mining projects throughout the region, including in Malaysia, Hong Kong and Thailand.

New interim Danish pastor leads first service in Hong Kong



Sunday 11 May marked the first service led by Hans Krab Koed, who is serving as interim pastor at the Danish Seamen's Church in Hong Kong during May and June.

The church invited the Danish community to attend the service and welcome their new pastor.

"I am looking forward to meeting with you," Hans Krab Koed wrote ahead of the event, expressing his excitement to meet the congregation.

"Come and welcome Hans to Hong Kong," the church encouraged the congregation in a post prior to the service.

Koed, who has previously served in Danish churches abroad, will be supporting the Hong Kong congregation through the early summer months.

Danish Foreign Minister Visits Danfoss Factory in China

During his recent visit to China, Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen toured Danfoss' factory in Tianjin to mark 75 years of diplomatic relations between Denmark and China.

The Tianjin facility, opened in 1996, was Danfoss' first in China and remains a key manufacturing site. It produces components for HVAC, refrigeration, and industrial applications, and includes a major R&D centre for sustainable cooling and heating technologies.

Recognized in 2019 by the World Economic Forum as a Lighthouse Factory, the site features AI-powered inspections, smart sensors, full automation, and operates entirely on renewable energy.

In 2023, Danfoss added a 7,000m² green technology research centre focused on heat pumps and cooling systems for data centres. Later this year, it will open its largest global production hub in Haiyan,



also powered by renewable energy.

Minister Rasmussen praised Danfoss as a symbol of strong Danish-Chinese cooperation, noting its role in the company's global value chain.

Swedish doctor Elly Reinolds named Swedish Woman of the Year 2025

Dr. Elly Reinolds has been named Swedish Woman of the Year 2025 by SWEA International for her humanitarian work and global impact.

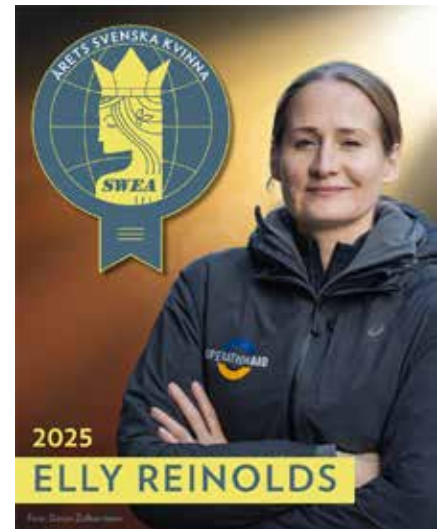
A specialist in gynecology and obstetrics, Reinolds co-founded OperationAid following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The organization has delivered relief supplies, donated ambulances, and established activity centers for families in war zones. She also promotes emergency preparedness and conducts research on civilian healthcare in conflict zones in collaboration with the Swedish Defence University.

In Sweden, she serves on the advisory council of the Folke Bernadotte Academy and is an advocate for Ukrainian women.

"I accept this award with deep gratitude and humility," said Reinolds.

SWEA President Lotta Rigby Fors praised her civil courage and commitment to women and children in need.

The award will be presented on 7 August 2025 in Stockholm during SWEA Sweden's Summer Days.



Alan Walker to Headline 2025 Singapore Grand Prix, Highlighting Nordic Talent on Global Stage

Norwegian DJ and producer Alan Walker will headline the 2025 Formula 1 Singa-

pore Grand Prix, performing on the Padang Stage in Zone 4 on Sunday, 21 September.

Famous for his hit Faded, Walker brings Nordic representation to the event's entertainment lineup, which also features Foo Fighters, The Smashing Pumpkins, CL, and Kylie Minogue. All performances are included with Grand Prix tickets.

Walker, who grew up in Bergen, Norway, has collaborated with fellow Nordic artists such as Swedish singer KIDDO and Norwegian artists MRD and Torine.

The Singapore Grand Prix, taking place from 19 to 21 September, combines world-class motorsport with over 80 live performances across nine stages, attracting fans from around the globe.



ABB receives 2025 SwedCham Award for Sustainable Industry Leadership



Swedish-Swiss technology company ABB has received the 2025 SwedCham Honorary Award from the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in China for its leadership in sustainable industrial transformation.

Presented during the Sino-Swedish Business Insights Forum & Gala Dinner on 9 May in Shanghai, the award recognizes ABB's role in promoting energy-efficient solutions, automation, and digitalization in China's green transition.

"ABB has shown true leadership in driving sustainable industrial transformation in China," the Chamber stated.

The company's efforts align with China's dual carbon goals and highlight its commitment to responsible business and innovation. ABB also supports talent development by engaging with local communities and educational institutions.

Zhang Zhiqiang, Managing Director of ABB China, accepted the award, which was presented by Chamber Chairman Peter Ling-Vannerus.

ABB's continued focus on R&D, electrification, and digital solutions reinforces its long-term dedication to sustainability and strengthens Swedish industrial presence in China.

Southeast Asians remain vital to Finland's work-based immigration

Work-based immigration to Finland dropped by 23% in 2024 due to economic challenges, according to the Finnish Immigration Service (Migri). Despite the decline, Southeast Asian nationals, particularly from Thailand, the Philippines, and Vietnam, continued to play a major role, especially in agriculture and caregiving.

Thailand was the second-largest nationality applying for work permits, driven by a new 2024 rule requiring wild berry pickers to apply for residence permits—bringing about 1,300 Thai workers.

Out of 11,103 first work-based permits granted in 2024, many went to Southeast Asians. Meanwhile, construction-related permits fell 72%, and specialist applications dropped to 1,224.



Student migration remained strong, with 14,163 applications, mostly from Bangladesh and Nepal. Family-based migration also saw high numbers from Southeast Asia,

with 18,018 permits issued.

Migri forecasts 11,000 work permit applications in 2025, with a potential rebound to 15,000 in 2026 if economic conditions improve.

Philippine Delegation Explores Circular Economy Innovations in Sweden and Denmark

A Philippine delegation of national and local officials recently visited Sweden and Denmark to explore circular economy practices, with support from the Nordic embassies and the Nordic Council of Ministers.

Participants included representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), and the Pasig City Government. Philippine Ambassador to Sweden, Patrick Chuasoto, welcomed the group in Stockholm.

The delegation studied best practices in extended producer responsibility, deposit return systems, and waste and wastewater management. They visited facilities including Stockholm's Sjöstadsverket Water Innovation Centre and Copenhagen's Amager Bakke (Copenhill) waste-to-energy plant.

Technologies featured included Envac's underground waste collec-



tion, Scania's biogas vehicles, and Recoma's PackWall boards made from discarded packaging. In Norway, the group tested TOMRA's reverse vending machines for beverage container returns.

The visit highlighted how Nordic cities combine smart technology, public engagement, and policy to promote sustainability. DOST

and Pasig officials emphasized the value of civic education, institutional support, and public-private partnerships.

The visit followed a Memorandum of Understanding signed in December 2024 between the Nordic embassies and Pasig City to strengthen circular economy collaboration.

Finland shares video guide for Thai seasonal berry pickers and workers

The Embassy of Finland in Bangkok has published an informational video in Thai aimed at individuals interested in traveling to Finland for seasonal work, including wild berry picking.

The video explains the procedures for obtaining a work permit, highlights the importance of a valid employment contract, and outlines key working conditions. It is part of



Finland's effort to promote transparency and ensure that seasonal workers from Thailand are well-informed before arriving in the country.

The video can also be watched here:

<https://youtu.be/g6Qel5Nd-rl>

According to the embassy, the initiative supports fair labor practices and better protection for foreign workers.

Norway and Thailand celebrate 120 years of diplomatic ties



Norway's National Day celebration in Bangkok this year took on special significance as it coincided with the 120th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Norway and Thailand.

The milestone was marked by the launch of the "From Sea to Sky: 120 Years of Friendship" campaign, a joint initiative by Seafood from Norway and Thai Airways International. The campaign was officially launched at a luncheon at the Residence of the Norwegian Ambassador to Thailand, H.E. Mrs. Astrid Emilie Helle, attended by diplomats, business leaders and media.

The campaign also marks the 65th anniversary of Thai Airways and the first anniversary of the reinstated direct flight between Bangkok and Oslo.

Novo Nordisk and Danish Embassy lead obesity forum in Thailand

The Royal Danish Embassy and Novo Nordisk co-hosted the first Danish-Thai Obesity Policy Forum to address Thailand's rising obesity crisis, which affects over 40% of the population and could cost nearly 5% of GDP by 2060. Government officials, healthcare leaders, and industry experts stressed the urgent need for public-private collaboration to reduce the growing health and economic burden. Denmark's Ambassador Danny Annan and Novo Nordisk Thailand's Enrico Cañal Bruland highlighted the shared commitment to long-term solutions through sustainable policies and partnerships.



Swedish minister treated to Vietnamese street food in Hanoi

Sweden's Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade, Benjamin Dousa, experienced a cultural highlight during his visit to Hanoi when he was invited to sample traditional Vietnamese street food by the Swedish Ambassador.

According to the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi, Minister Dousa tried bún riêu cua, a northern Vietnamese crab noodle soup known for its rich and savoury flavour.

The embassy noted that exploring local cuisine is a meaningful way to connect with a country's culture and traditions, calling food "a universal language that brings

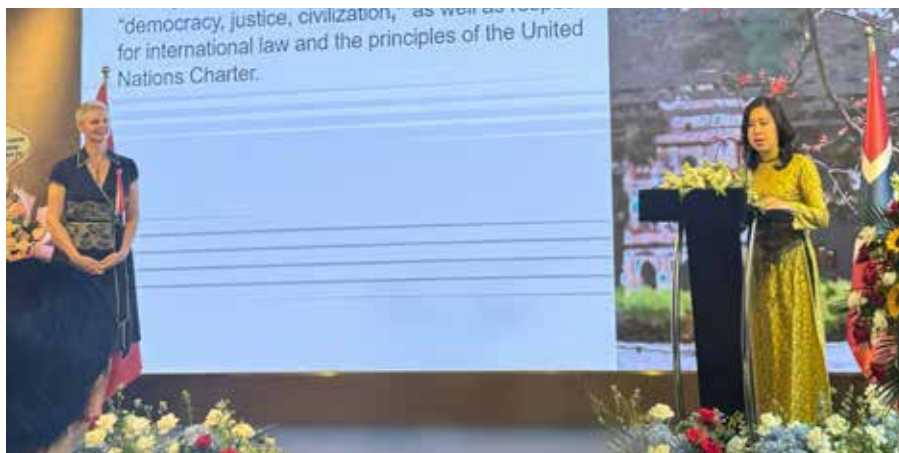


people together.'

The culinary experience was part of Minister Dousa's broader visit to Vietnam aimed at deepening

bilateral ties and promoting Swedish business involvement in the country's green and digital transformation.

Vietnam and Norway deepen cooperation on green economy and energy transition



Vietnam and Norway are strengthening cooperation in renewable energy, green shipping, and sustainable trade. The partnership was highlighted during Norway's Constitution Day celebration in Hanoi on 16 May 2025, with

remarks from Norwegian Ambassador Hilde Solbakken and Vietnam's Deputy Foreign Minister Le Thi Thu Hang.

Ambassador Solbakken emphasized shared priorities in climate action and marine protection, not-

ing Norway's support for Vietnam's green energy transition. She also pointed to promising collaboration in waste management, aquaculture, and renewable energy.

Vietnam is Norway's second-largest trading partner in ASEAN, with bilateral trade exceeding USD 450 million in 2024. Norwegian seafood exports made up over USD 250 million of that total.

Deputy Minister Le Thi Thu Hang welcomed the growing ties, particularly in the green economy, and highlighted ongoing work on a cooperation framework for a sustainable marine economy. The initiative will also support Vietnam's Just Energy Transition Partnership (JETP) with international partners, including Norway.



Philippines' New Digital Nomad Visa

The Philippines are about to offer a new digital nomad visa that will open the door for foreign remote workers to legally live and work in the country for up to two years. The initiative, introduced by President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos at the end of April, is part of a broader effort to boost the economy and tourism by aligning with global trends in remote work and long-term travel.

While applications are not yet open, the visa is expected to be available within the next few months, offering a legal framework specifically designed for non-resident professionals working online for overseas companies. This could

prove especially attractive for many Nordic citizens already spending part of the year in Southeast Asia and considering longer stays — particularly those combining lifestyle ambitions with remote employment flexibility.

Marcos: Clear Legal Pathway Needed for Long-Term Remote Work

In launching the program, President Marcos stressed the need for a structured legal pathway for digital nomads, a group that has grown rapidly in recent years due to the widespread adoption of remote work. According to the president,

the Philippines must ensure that those who wish to live temporarily in the country for work purposes are not employed locally, but rather provide services to foreign companies while contributing economically during their stay.

This legal distinction is key to the visa's structure. Applicants must demonstrate foreign income and are explicitly barred from engaging in local employment. The intent is to attract self-supporting professionals who will rent homes, use local services, and contribute to tourism spending without competing in the domestic job market.

Up to Two Years in Paradise: What the Visa Offers

The new digital nomad visa will be issued for one year initially, with the option of a one-year extension. This allows for a potential two-year stay without needing to exit and re-enter the country or apply for alternative visa types.

The key eligibility requirements are as follows:

- **Age:** Minimum of 18 years old
- **Remote Employment:** Proof of remote work using digital tools (computers, smartphones, etc.) for non-Philippine employers or clients
- **Income Requirement:** Sufficient income earned abroad to support oneself while in the Philippines
- **Criminal Record:** Clean legal record in home country and internationally
- **Health Insurance:** Valid medical insurance covering the entire duration of stay
- **No Local Job Contracts:** Applicants must not be employed by Philippine companies or engage in activities that would take jobs from locals

While the exact income threshold has yet to be disclosed, prospective applicants are advised

to begin preparing documents that demonstrate their employment and earnings outside the Philippines.

Strong Appeal for Long-Stay Travelers

The Philippines' natural beauty and affordability make it an ideal destination for long-term visitors. Its 7,600 islands range from the bustling capital region of Manila to tranquil beaches in Palawan, Siargao, and Bohol. Combined with a warm climate, widespread English proficiency, and improving internet infrastructure, the country is emerging as a strong competitor in the digital nomad landscape.

Christina Frasco, Secretary of Tourism, reinforced this vision:

"With our unparalleled natural beauty, vibrant culture, and the warmth of the Filipino people, the Philippines stands ready to welcome digital nomads to travel, work, and thrive across our islands," she said.

This message is particularly relevant to Nordic nationals, many of whom already visit the Philippines for extended vacations or winter stays. The new visa provides a legal framework that could make these stays longer, more stable, and easier to plan—especially for those tired of constantly renewing tourist visas or doing border runs.

Global Movement: Digital Nomad Visas on the Rise

The Philippines joins a growing list of countries — such as Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, and several EU nations — that now offer specific long-stay options for remote workers. Each country's requirements vary, but the shared trend reflects the changing nature of global work and lifestyle patterns.

For Nordic nationals, who often benefit from remote-friendly professions, these new visa options make it possible to work from across the globe while maintaining ties to employers or clients at home. The introduction of such visas also reflects governments' growing recognition of digital nomads as an economic asset rather than a grey area in immigration law.

What Nordic Travelers Should Watch For

While the full visa application process in the Philippines is still under development, those interested in applying should prepare by gathering documentation on:

- Proof of non-Philippine remote employment or freelance contracts
- Bank statements or income verification
- Proof of health insurance valid in the Philippines
- Police clearance certificates from home country
- Valid passport with sufficient remaining validity

Nordic citizens considering this visa may also benefit from monitoring the launch via their national embassies in Manila or through regional updates in Southeast Asia's digital nomad networks.

Importantly, this visa could offer more than a legal stay—it presents a gateway to building a new kind of life abroad, supported by the flexibility of remote work. For those already wintering in Asia or seeking a more permanent base in the region, the Philippines may soon be a top contender.



ISB International School Bangkok

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR CLASS OF 2025 GRADUATES ON THEIR ACCEPTANCES TO UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AROUND THE WORLD.

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Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
University of Queensland
University of Sydney

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University of Ottawa (2)
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Maryland Institute College of Art
Massachusetts Maritime Academy
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Santa Clara University (7)
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School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2)
School of Visual Arts (2)
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Southern Utah University
St Lawrence University
St Olaf College (3)
Stanford University
Stetson University
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stony Brook University (2)
SUNY College at Geneseo
Syracuse University (7)
Temple University
Texas A&M University, College Station
The College of Wooster
The New School (7)
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Trinity University
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University of California, Santa Cruz (11)
University of Colorado, Boulder (3)
University of Dayton
University of Hawaii at Manoa (3)
University of Illinois, Chicago (2)
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (10)
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University of Massachusetts, Amherst (6)
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor
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