

SEP 2025

ScandAsia

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INTERNATIONAL:

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Thani Beach: A Danish Oasis in Thailand



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The Expat New Year

September in Asia may not come with falling leaves or crisp air, but for many Nordic expats, it still marks the beginning of a new season. After weeks - or months - reconnecting with family and roots in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, or Finland, this is the month when in-boxes refill, school gates swing open, and life in Asia picks up again.

It's a rhythm familiar to expats across Bangkok, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Manila, and beyond. Whether you're a family returning from the archipelago, a diplomat unpacking in a new post, or a business leader preparing for the year-end stretch, September signals a fresh start.

The pattern is almost ritualistic. International schools reopen. Chambers of commerce resume networking breakfasts. Ambassadors emerge from summer rotations and begin a new cycle of diplomatic initiatives. Embassy receptions are penciled in. Cross-cultural collaborations reboot. And once again, we step back into our dual lives - Nordic in heritage, Asian in setting.

This year's issue reflects that blend. Swedish fighter jets in Thai skies. A Danish community in the Thai countryside. Nordic voices behind sustainable development and grassroots football. These stories aren't just snapshots — they are reminders that the Nordic footprint in Asia is dynamic, connected, and growing.

The post-summer restart isn't just about logistics. It's a cultural reset. A chance to recommit to both the life we've built here — and the global values we carry with us. It's in the mix of languages over coffee, the after-school pickup in heavy traffic, the early meetings that span time zones — and the small, steady rituals that remind us who we are and why we're here.

So whether you're reading this back at your desk in Ho Chi Minh City, on a construction site in Penang, or from a rooftop in Phnom Penh — welcome back.

Let the new year begin - ScandAsian style.



Gregers Moller
Editor in Chief

ScandAsia

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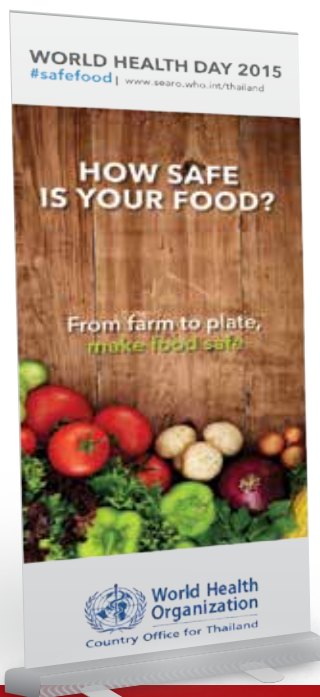
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Thailand's Swedish Gripen fighter jets involved in real combat for the first time



The Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) has deployed its Swedish-built JAS 39C/D Gripen fighter jets in combat for the first time, marking a significant milestone for both Thailand and Sweden's Saab AB.

On July 26, 2025, two Gripen

jets joined older F-16s in a mission targeting Cambodian artillery positions along the disputed Thai-Cambodian border. According to the Bangkok Post, the mission was successful, with all aircraft returning safely.

Thailand has operated the Gripen since 2011, but this marks the first time any Gripen has been used in real combat. Previously, the jets were limited to training, air shows, and patrols.

Developed under Saab's "Smart Fighter" concept, the Gripen is designed for network-centric

warfare, allowing real-time integration with radar, ground stations, and other aircraft.

This combat debut boosts Saab's credibility as it seeks to expand global sales. The Gripen is already in use by the Czech Republic, Brazil, Hungary, and South Africa. In June 2025, Peru signed a deal to acquire 24 JAS 39E/F jets.

The successful Thai mission is likely to strengthen Saab's position in the international defence market and reinforce Sweden's reputation as a developer of advanced, combat-ready military technology.

Thailand finalized Gripen jet deal with Sweden

Thailand has signed a contract to purchase new Gripen E/F fighter jets from Sweden, marking a significant step in the Royal Thai Air Force's modernization efforts. The agreement, which also includes an economic offset policy, was formalized on 25 August 2025 during a ceremony attended by Thai Foreign Minister Mr. Maris Sangjampongsa.

Mr. Maris Sangjampongsa described the deal as both a defensive deterrent and a foundation for Thailand's long-term defense industry ambitions. He emphasized that the partnership with Sweden would provide technology transfers to Thai businesses and strengthen the Air Force's operational capacity. The policy, he said, has been consistently prioritized across successive govern-



ments in Bangkok.

The foreign minister also underlined that the agreement reinforces confidence among Sweden and the wider international community in Thailand's adherence to

international law. His remarks followed recent border clashes with Cambodia, where he stressed that Thai military operations were strictly defensive, precise, and confined to military targets.

Norwegians in Southeast Asia can vote early in the 2025 elections

The election day for Norway's 2025 Parliamentary (Storting) and Sámi Parliament elections is Monday 8 September 2025. In many Norwegian municipalities, polling stations will also open on Sunday 7 September.

Norwegian citizens living abroad can cast their votes in advance at Norwegian embassies, consulates or other designated locations between 1 July and 29 August 2025. Postal voting is also possible, but ballots must arrive at the voter's municipality in Norway by 17:00 on 9 September 2025.

To be eligible to vote, you must be a Norwegian citizen, 18 years or older by the end of 2025, and

registered as a current or former resident in Norway. Citizens who have lived abroad for more than 10 years must apply to be re-registered. A valid photo ID, such as a passport, national ID card, driver's licence or bank card with a photo, is required when voting.

The Sámi Parliament election takes place on the same day as the parliamentary election. To vote in the Sámi election, you must be registered on the Sámi electoral roll before 30 June 2025 and meet the ancestry or language criteria for registration.

Full details about voting abroad are available on valg.no and norway.no. Norwegian citizens abroad who



cannot reach a voting station may apply for postal voting to ensure their ballot is received in Norway before the deadline.

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Thinking, Feeling, Doing

Caroline Ferguson, Bangkok Patana School

Global Citizenship Students Turn Passion into Purpose

Through research, service and reflection, students transform their passions into purposeful action for a better future.

How do we Develop Global Citizens?

A global citizen is someone who engages with the issues our world faces cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally — in other words, they think, feel and act to make the world a better place (see figure 1 below). They are educated about global issues and have the skills to think critically, they feel connected to others and are respectful of diversity and they act to bring about positive change in their world.



The Global Citizenship course for Key Stage 4 students focuses on developing these attributes in our Year 10 and 11 students. The course aims to:

- Develop students as Global Citizens;
- Prepare students for the core of the IB Diploma and Careers – related Programmes;
- Support students in self-evaluation and help them to find fulfilment in their lives.

At the end of the course, Year 11 students engage in their personal Passion Projects. This project links directly to future learning: students who pursue their passions not only strengthen their academic learning and research skills but also lay a foundation for successful Community Engagement experiences, CAS and Service Learning projects, World Studies Extended Essays, university applications and even future career choices.

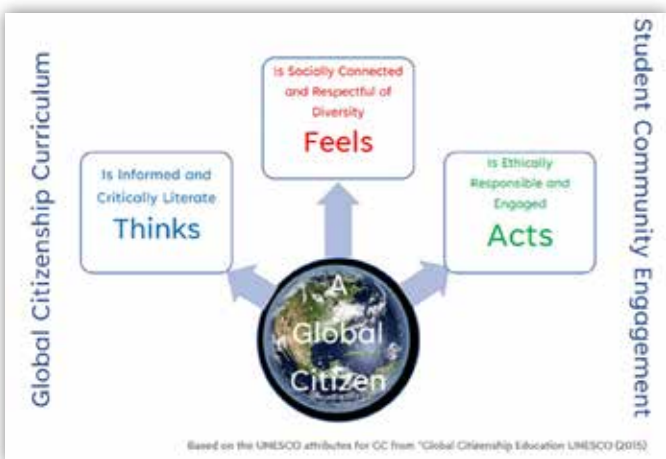


Figure 1: What is a Global Citizen?



Figure 2: Global Citizenship for Key Stage 4

What is the Passion Project?

Through the Passion Project, students explore one global issue, pose a research question and conduct research into its causes, impacts and solutions, ultimately producing a detailed research proposal. Along the way, they develop key skills: framing research questions, conducting effective research and referencing, presenting their ideas and giving and receiving peer feedback. This project is the culmination of their two-year Global Citizenship journey.

The outcome of this module is the Passion Project Poster Presentation. Students present their work to each other, offering an opportunity for peer review and feedback. This year, students from Grad '27 and their teachers selected a number of exemplary posters (see some of the best of these in figures 3 to 6), which were printed and displayed around the school. Research questions tackled a wide range of issues from 'What are the factors that affect intergenerational poverty and the impact of poverty on future generations in Trat, Thailand compared to Tak, Thailand?' (Andy Isaac) to 'To what extent is climate change impacting the future viability of the Winter Olympics?' (Valerie Luedi).

At our final celebratory assembly, these posters were shared and students also heard from three Year 13 students, Ada, Thiti and Shruti, who reflected on how following their passions had been central to their learning journey — and how they would guide their futures.

What do students learn from the Passion Project?

Engaging in this project helps students to develop research skills that will support their future studies. As one student reflected: "I learned about research and citation skills that will help me prepare for IB."

They also deepen their understanding of global issues at both local and international scales. In a survey of

Grad '27, 93% of students said they had learned about a global issue through their Passion Project, with over 68% responding that they learned a lot (scoring 4 or 5, out of 5). Some of the students' reflections capture this learning vividly:

"In my Passion Project I learnt about the importance of Global Issues, and how raising awareness makes me a better person who can reflect on this in university and outside of school."

"There are many different sides to an issue and you need to take a lot of different things into account when trying to do something about it."

"I learnt how multiple SDGs can connect to each other."

Many students reflected on the specific topics they had explored. One student commented that "Socio-economic factors and gender inequality greatly impact education for girls in low-income countries. I researched the effect Covid-19 had on school closures and more — the statistics were shocking."

Students are also encouraged to take their passions beyond the classroom. Over 90% of students indicated that they would be likely to engage in a community engagement (or service) experience linked to their Passion Project.

The Passion Project also connects to future pathways, supporting success in the IB, and strengthening university applications and career choices. This was highlighted in the presentation from our Year 13 students, Ada, Thiti and Shruti:

"Starting a Passion Project in Year 11 is good because it will provide a strong foundation for your journey in service, which will play a key role in the IB."

Ada, who is hoping to pursue a career in medicine, exemplifies the powerful link between passion, service and academic learning:

"My passion for understanding CVD, nutritio, and disparities in healthcare has been the basis for my community engagement team, Healing Hearts, and several academic projects, including my World Studies Extended Essay on how socioeconomic disparities in Thailand relate to the incidence or risk factors for CVD."
— Karnpichcha (Ada) Chanyarakskul

In Conclusion

The Passion Project helps students to develop critical thinking skills, build an ethical foundation through empathy and foster a commitment to community engagement. It also provides a solid grounding for their IB Diploma or Career Programme studies and, for many, will form the thread that connects university applications and even future career paths.

"Follow your passion. It will lead you to your purpose."
— Oprah Winfrey

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Indonesia granted 5-year Schengen visa privilege



Indonesia is the first Southeast Asian country to gain access to the EU's new Visa Cascade scheme, allowing eligible travellers to apply for a five-year multiple-entry Schengen visa with simplified requirements.

The European Commission approved the arrangement on 23 July 2025, following talks between President Prabowo Subianto and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. Indonesian nationals who have held a Schengen visa in the past three years and travelled to the EU at least once are now eligible, replacing the need to reapply for each visit.

EU Ambassador to Indonesia Denis Chaibi said the scheme supports trusted travellers and strengthens EU–Indonesia relations.

Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines have expressed interest in similar agreements, while Singapore and Malaysia remain unaffected due to their visa-free status.

Indonesia's inclusion is seen as a test case for broader EU–ASEAN cooperation. For eligible Indonesians, the visa eases attendance at trade events, business meetings, family visits and short-term study across the 27 Schengen countries.

Vietnam awards Finnish ambassador for legal cooperation

Finnish Ambassador Keijo Norvanto has received Vietnam's "For the Cause of Justice" medal for his contributions to strengthening legal and judicial cooperation between the two countries.

Justice Minister Nguyen Hai Ninh presented the award at the Ministry of Justice in Hanoi, noting the ambassador's role in fostering ties between the two ministries and consolidating legal relations, thereby deepening the long-standing friendship between Vietnam and Finland.

He said the cooperation supports Vietnam's institutional reform, technological development, innovation, and digital transformation. The minister expressed hope for the early signing of a memorandum of understanding to establish regular and effective collaboration, including with Finland's Rule of Law Centre at the University of Helsinki.

Norvanto thanked the minis-



try for the recognition and pledged continued support for rule-of-law cooperation, with digital transformation as a key focus. He expressed

confidence that his successor would further strengthen bilateral relations and expand academic and institutional partnerships.

Norway joins flag-raising ceremony in celebration of ASEAN on Hanoi

Deputy Head of Mission at the Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi, Mette Møglestue, participated on 8 August 2025 in the ceremonial flag-raising to mark the 58th anniversary of the founding of ASEAN and the 30th anniversary of Vietnam's membership.

Norway became a sectoral dialogue partner to ASEAN in 2015. Since then the country has cooperated closely with Vietnam on regional initiatives, like ocean governance and other bilateral programmes.

The embassy highlighted Vietnam's strong support for Norway's engagement with ASEAN, both in Jakarta and Hanoi, on their Facebook page.



"Vietnam is a proactive and reliable member within ASEAN, playing a central role in enhancing the

group's cohesion and external relations," the embassy noted.

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New Rules for CPR verification and postal procedures announced by the Danish Embassy in Bangkok



The Danish Embassy in Bangkok has announced a change in practice regarding confirmation of information from Denmark's Civil Registration System (CPR).

Starting 1 September 2025, the embassy will no longer be able to confirm CPR details directly. Instead, Danes who need documentation of their registered address or marital status must obtain a residence certificate (bopælsattest) or a civil status certificate (civilstandsattest) from the municipality in Denmark where they are currently or were most recently registered.

These certificates can be ordered online via the Central Person Register (CPR), and are also available in English.

For use in Thailand, the documents must be legalised in Denmark before they are valid. The embassy stresses that it cannot assist with the legalisation of Danish-issued documents, but provides information on its website about the process.

The embassy will, however, continue to issue passports-related attestations (pasattester), which can be issued in both English and Thai.



*Kenn Holm enjoying life in Thani Beach.
Photo by Maria Xaver Dover*

Thani Beach: A Danish Oasis in Thailand

It is a Sunday morning in Udon Thani. Despite the rainy season, the sky is a clear blue, and the ground is dry. In the pool, children play on colourful inflatables while the aroma of gravy and roast pork drifts across the warm air. It feels like a seaside holiday — until you remember that the nearest coastline is 550 kilometres away.

By Maria Xaver Dover





“

Thani Beach is for people who want to live in Thailand, but still enjoy a Sunday with roast pork or a slice of rye bread – the things we bring from Denmark.

”

This is Thani Beach, the creation of Danish entrepreneur Kenn Holm, who has called Thailand home for nearly four decades. Here, he has built homes for fellow Danes — not just houses, but a vibrant community. Nestled in the countryside near Udon Thani, Thani Beach is where rye bread and hygge meet the tropics, blending Danish traditions with the warmth of Thai hospitality.

Kenn cruises past in his white golf cart, greeting residents with a cheerful “Hello!” before heading to the Viking Café for lunch and a chat with friends. By sunset, the palm trees cast long shadows, the pool lights shimmer on the water, and conversations linger late into the night as cicadas sing in the background. That is the magic of Thani Beach.

FROM IDEA TO REALITY

The idea for Thani Beach grew out of Kenn’s own life experience. He first came to Thailand in 1987 as a 24-year-old from a modest Danish background. What struck him most was not the climate but the people.

“People just smiled at me in the street. It made me feel like I already belonged here,” he recalls.

Back in Denmark, he had tried many jobs without much joy. In Thailand, he found not only his place but also his wife. Fourteen years ago, the couple began laying the financial foundations for what would become Thani Beach. It was never a straightforward journey, Kenn admits.

Almost 20 years ago, Kenn had just been released from prison in Denmark, serving time for having cashed in a false check of 5 million Danish kroner. He was living in Denmark at the time. Before the bank found out, he had transferred the money to Thailand and bought land in the name of his then girlfriend.

But while he was serving his time, the Thai girlfriend sold it all and when he came back, the money was gone.

Still, the setback only reinforced his determination to build something lasting — a place where Danes could feel at home far from home.

With his current wife as his business partner, Kenn started over on his dream.

“Everything you see here, we have built ourselves,” he proudly says.

“But of course there are people who try to pull you down when things are going well. That has been hard for me,” he says.

A PLACE FOR BOTH EVERYDAY LIFE AND LEISURE

According to Kenn, 20 families are currently connected to Thani Beach. There is room for 22 more families. They are in the process of building 10 detached houses, and the first two have been put up for sale. Some residents have built their own houses, while others are renting. For many, it is not just a place to live — it is a lifestyle.





Both children and adults love to take a swim here. Photo by Maria Xaver Dover



One of the houses in Thani Beach. Photo by Maria Xaver Dover

The entire area is designed with level pathways, making it accessible for wheelchair users and the visually impaired. At its centre lies a large lake and swimming pool, framed by palm trees. Just a few steps away is the Viking Café — the community’s beating heart — where Danish classics meet Thai flavours, and conversations flow easily across tables.

On Sundays, the café fills with the smell of roast pork, caramelised potatoes and red cabbage. Thursdays are for open-faced sandwiches. The menu is familiar, comforting — and deeply Danish.

“Thani Beach is for people who want to live in Thailand, but still enjoy a Sunday with roast pork or a slice of rye bread – the things we bring from Denmark,” says Kenn.

Among the regulars is 47-year-old Sonny Lloyd, who often makes the trip with his daughter. While she runs straight to the pool to play with the other children, Sonny finds his place at the table.

“I’ve lived in Thailand for many years, and I feel more Thai now. But it’s easier for me to laugh with Danes. That’s why this community, with good conversations and laughter, still means a lot to me,” he says.

THE VITAMIN LAND

For Kenn, Thailand has always been what he calls his “vitamin land.”

“Too many people are stuck in a hamster wheel. I’ve learned to live more like the Thais. We can get things



A Sunday with roast pork at Viking Café.
Photo by Maria Xaver Dover

“

For now, this project fills the space in my mind. It gives me a reason to wake up in the morning, and it makes me happy to see that it also creates joy for others.

”

done tomorrow – we don't need to stress ourselves out today,” he says.

But even at a slower pace, the days seem to fly. He rises early, enjoying the cool of the morning before the heat sets in.

“Mornings in Thailand are something special,” he adds with a smile.

That rhythm of life is felt by others too. At the café, 68-year-old Niels Henrik Nielsen quietly enjoys his lunch. His hands tremble slightly; he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease seven years ago. For a time, he spent summers on a houseboat in Denmark and winters in the south, but eventually, his illness made that lifestyle impossible.

“Three years ago, I decided to move to Thailand permanently. I recently bought a home in Thani Beach, and I'm very happy with that decision. I start the day with a short swim, enjoy the sun, and can really feel how the warmth helps. At the same time, I value the community among the residents,” he says.

PASSING IT ON

The story of Thani Beach has also reached Denmark. At meetups back home, Kenn shares his journey with growing audiences; the next gathering is expected to attract around 30 participants.

“It makes me very happy that people in Denmark are interested in it. In many ways, this is a dream come true,” he says.

And yet, he keeps dreaming. New ideas surface constantly: hosting stays for Danes with disabilities, creating a retirement home for those who wish to spend their final years in Thailand.

“Germans and Swedes have done it before, so why shouldn't we?” he asks.

Still, his path has a clear horizon. At 70, Kenn plans to retire. That gives him just under a decade to see his ideas take shape.

“For now, this project fills the space in my mind. It gives me a reason to wake up in the morning, and it makes me happy to see that it also creates joy for others. But at some point, I need to slow down,” he says.

A QUIETER FUTURE

When that day comes, Kenn imagines a different rhythm: early mornings with coffee, a swim in the pool, perhaps a trip to Nong Khai by the Mekong. And all the while, the community he built will carry on — children still playing in the pool, roast pork still being served on Sundays, laughter still rising into the warm evening air.

Thani Beach will remain what he dreamed it to be: a little piece of Denmark under the palms.



“

With the arrival of AI, I expect up to 50% of management consultants to be laid off in the next five years.

”

Pasi-Haatainen

Singapore update: Consultant Pasi Haatainen Outlines Opportunities and Challenges

By Joakim Persson

Pasi Haatainen, a long-term Singapore resident, and Finnish Business Council Singapore (FBC) Chairman since 2021, has lived and worked in the city-state since 2007. His extensive experience in business transformation and advisory services positions him to provide a nuanced view of Singapore's evolving business and trade landscape. In the post-Covid era, Pasi offers a candid assessment of the challenges confronting companies, the implications of AI adoption, and emerging cross-border opportunities with Johor.

Pasi's arrival in Singapore came at a turning point in his career. Having been laid off during the Nokia–Siemens Networks merger in the United States, he was encouraged by friends already living in Singapore to make the move. The city-state's reputation for efficiency and ease of doing business proved enticing.

"It took me one hour to set up a company here and get the bank account sorted, and then Nokia hired me back as a consultant," Pasi recalls.

This period not only marked the start of his consultancy work but also provided him with an early insight into the agility of Singapore's business environment. Over the next fourteen years, Pasi worked with multinational companies across Southeast Asia, Europe, Russia, and Pakistan. Two Finnish firms, Taival, a boutique strategy company, and Headlong Finland Oy, a small IT firm, engaged him as Head of Business Development. Although these ventures struggled to gain traction in the market, they were complemented by his growing consultancy business, which focused on transformation programmes.

More recently, Pasi led the establishment of Rakuten Mobile's global headquarters in Singapore, navigating government grants, recruitment, and organisational setup precisely at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. "It was a challenging period, but also extremely rewarding," he notes, highlighting the skills required to manage both operational logistics and regulatory requirements during unprecedented times.

Although his early career was rooted in telecom at Nokia, Pasi has intentionally avoided limiting his expertise to a single industry. His consultancy, Dationic (formerly Dynamic Business Consulting), provides services across strategic planning, sales development, digital transformation, and large-scale change programmes.

"Short-term efforts can yield long-term benefits – that's our philosophy with clients," he explains.

As an MSc-qualified Transformation Leader with over twenty years of experience, Pasi has led programmes in industries as diverse as telecom, insurance, banking, mining, and even the coffee sector.

Clients typically engage him to oversee major programmes, address operational underperformance, or independently manage vendors. He emphasises the importance of well-defined contracts, particularly when organisations rely on large consulting firms that may oversell services. "Many corporations don't fully understand the pitfalls or the terms of their contracts. I help define agreements, analyse vendors, and provide practical solutions – an efficient way to address transformation challenges."

His client base is diverse, spanning European, American, Indonesian, and Filipino companies, reflecting a preference for independent, strategic advisory services that are not bound to a particular consulting brand.

Digitalisation and AI are central to Pasi's consultancy, yet he insists that the core principles of transformation remain unchanged. "Fifteen years ago, we called it change programmes or process re-engineering. Today, it's digital, but the essence is still about people, processes, and technology."

He stresses that technology alone does not guarantee success. "A lot of times, companies start off with changing some technology, whatever that may be. You can introduce cutting-edge tools, but without team buy-in and aligned processes, it won't stick. People and processes are the hardest elements to change. Then technology also follows through; that's the easy part!"





“AI and Supercomputers” FBC visit to NSCC Singapore’s Innovation 4.0 facility on 5 June 2025

“

Technology is the easy part. People and processes are the hardest to change.

”

“Usually, you have to have a well-defined strategy, and then the transformation is what drives that through. And people think that everything’s transformational, when it’s actually normal operational excellence. Real transformation is about growth, innovative concepts and doing something new; that’s usually when transformation programmes come into play,” he elaborates.

“In the Nordics, large-scale programmes were underway in the 1990s. In Asia, many businesses relied on labour-intensive models for decades and are only now recognising the need for digital transformation – though success remains limited for most,” he observes.

The rise of digitalisation initially boosted demand for management consultants. Firms like Accenture now employ over 770,000 people worldwide. However, Pasi anticipates significant disruption with AI adoption.

“With generative AI, 50 per cent or more of junior consultants could become redundant within five years. Endless hours producing and polishing presentations will no longer be necessary,” he predicts.

For independent consultants, AI is a transformative tool. “It allows me to produce research papers and tailored use cases effortlessly. And a lot of times the customers don’t realise what their current problems are and what their competitors are doing - lacking the research capabilities. An experienced consultant equipped with AI can accomplish what previously required a full team. This may create a golden era for senior advisors – companies will seek veterans who can intervene immediately and deliver results, rather than maintaining large teams of analysts.”

Despite this, broader business conditions remain challenging. “Decision-makers across industries hesitate to commit to new projects due to geopolitical and economic uncertainties, which slows deal-making,” Pasi notes.

Networking remains central to Pasi, where he leverages his FBC chairmanship to enhance both his personal and company brand. “People mainly buy from people, not companies,” he asserts, highlighting the importance of visibility and credibility in consulting.

As FBC’s representative on EuroCham’s board, he coordinates joint initiatives to expand networking opportunities for Finnish companies.

“FBC wanted to combine forces with EuroCham, which I think is going to give more opportunities for Finnish companies to network and to get a bigger audience. I think that might give more value; Events are a lot of times based on what’s in demand of that year. Now of course AI is still big.”



FBC visit to newly opened Neste Refinery in Singapore, the largest Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) producer in the world

Event formats have evolved post-Covid, with members now favouring targeted networking over generic gatherings. "People are fatigued from physical events and prefer networking without a predefined topic. We've organised whisky and champagne tastings, as well as company visits, to reflect members' interests. Quality and relevance are now more important than sheer quantity."

FBC will also celebrate its 40th anniversary later this year, culminating in a high-profile event to recognise both the council's history and ongoing relevance. Despite these efforts, attracting new members remains challenging. Many Finnish companies rely on informal networks or personal initiative rather than joining formal associations, reflecting Singapore's highly social and self-directed business culture.

Singapore continues to offer strong incentives for foreign companies establishing regional or global headquarters. These include grants, tax breaks, and government support, designed to attract innovative enterprises. Pasi cites Nightingale, a Finnish Health Tech company, as a recent example of a firm leveraging Singapore's promotional schemes to establish its regional headquarters.

Singapore is a hub for international trade and a gateway to Asia, with extensive trade networks and strategic maritime location. But despite foreign investor confidence in Singapore there is a crucial difference compared to before, and by no means any small matter. In 2025, the increased costs of living, and other challenges relating to Singapore and running a business there have become – to quote Pasi – a "major hindrance".

"Rents have increased 50–100% post-Covid, and household costs continue to rise. Over 3,000 F&B outlets closed in 2024. We have hard times getting highly skilled people in here because the spouse can't easily get

a work permit, while in Malaysia and Thailand you can. If Singapore does not address these issues, it risks losing competitiveness. Hong Kong is becoming increasingly attractive, offering lower rents, higher salaries, and far cheaper vehicles," Pasi observes.

For Singapore there are two clear paths emerging in 2025. "I meet a lot of people throughout the year who are about to set up their company and considering Singapore for global headquarters, especially digital mobile-only companies and based on Shopify. Mainly they give taxation as a reason and that the people they hire are working from home all around the world and not in Singapore. So, putting the headquarters here is less about the people," says Pasi. "And even Singapore is recognising that."

In addition, the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEC), launched in January 2025. This initiative enhances cross-border connectivity, facilitates the freer movement of people, and strengthens the regional business ecosystem. 'JS-SEC' is intended to supercharge cross-border investment, enhance supply chains and foster a Singapore–Johor economic corridor.

"Singapore encourages companies to headquarter here while placing operations in Johor to benefit from efficiencies. I toured some Johor facilities with the FBC and was impressed by the scale and ambition. This is a strategic move to maintain Singapore's appeal despite rising costs," he says.

For now, Singapore remains a preferred HQ location for many of the 14,000 European companies based there – but Pasi's message is clear: to stay competitive, the city-state must tackle its cost and talent challenges while embracing regional opportunities.

Have fun, get drunk, wear flowers

It's a Friday night on 22 August 2025 and Chang beer is flowing free. The buzzing from chitchat fills Jusmagthai bar at an American military base, located in the heart of Bangkok as participants arrive. In the bar, a statue of Captain America, with his shield emblematic of his Thai location, welcomes the patrons. Tonight's event is the Social Explorer 3, hosted by the Thai-Nordic Association. Tonight is a night for laughter, catching up with old friends, and making new ones.

By Alexander Vittrup



Food is set up on a table moved close to the walls, with chicken skewers, chicken wings, spring rolls, and nachos accompanied by every type of dip the heart could desire. A diverse platter reflects the attendees of tonight. It's an open tap, and two ladies behind the bar are busy fighting the unquenchable thirst of the guests.

Every new arrival is immediately asked to sign up for the game of the night. Each person is given a piece of paper with depictions of Nordic imagery: Viking helmets, swords, and mythological monsters. Every piece of paper has a counterpart. The point of the game is to walk around, talk to new people, and find your match. There are prizes at stake. When a match is found, the lucky couples write their names on their paper and put it in a bowl to be drawn in a lottery later. After putting their names in the bowl, they also receive a colorful

lei, flower necklace. As the event progresses and more and more matches are made and connections formed, the dark mahogany hall fills up with color — blue, orange, yellow, and purple — as more flower necklaces are given out.

The game is meant to help manifest the point of tonight's event, community.

"We want to bring the Nordic community of Thailand and Bangkok together, that is the importance of this evening," Filip Wallberg says excitedly as he checks out the bowl with paper slips and names. He is the treasurer and Vice Chairman of the Thai-Nordic Association, and alongside Chairman Alexander Wetterling, he is one of the head organizers of the event.

They have previously had success with Social Explorer 1 and 2, though the turnout was higher at those events. But it's August and a lot of the seasonal com-



We want to bring the Nordic community of Thailand and Bangkok together, that is the importance of this evening.



community members have yet to return from the European summer.

Bottles of Beefeater and Jim Beam are brought into plain view in the bar, and the drinks are pouring. Laughter and small talk buzz around the long tables. Despite the organizers' name and the Viking imagery, not everybody here has their roots in Scandinavia.

British, American, German, Malay, and Thai, the event is a true melting pot of origins, and for some that can be a controversial topic. However, for others the multinational crowd is welcomed with open arms.

Filip Wallberg views the broader turnout for tonight's event as a positive.

"We are welcoming to everyone – Nordic people and friends."

Coworkers, neighbors, spouses — as long as they have a ticket, everybody is welcome to mingle.

"We basically want to share the Nordic community with people from different countries," Filip Wallberg says with a smile.

But there are certainly Nordic people to be found here. Crossed flags on clothing and the sound of languages with vowels unfamiliar to English are signs that Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes are blending into the crowd.

The mixed background of the guests serves as a way to optimize what a lot of people are here for: networking. Guests are jumping from table to table, group to group, as new acquaintances are made, names introduced, and business cards exchanged. In a giant metropolis like Bangkok, small communities must strengthen their bonds and stand together.

Halfway through the night, as the food is running out and the beer mugs are conquering table space, attention is suddenly called to a man with a microphone: Alexander Wetterling, the chairman of the Thai-Nordic Association. It is time for the matchmaking lottery. Excited eyes follow Filip Wallberg's hand as it searches the bowl for the right slip of paper. Two names will be drawn from the bowl. The winning prize is a chance to get a shirt or blouse tailor-made, Thai style.

Names are drawn, and winners are announced with both cheering and booing from jealous friends. Pictures are taken with the winner, vice chairman, and chairman, all with smiles from ear to ear.

Alexander Wetterling takes the mic and thanks people for coming. He highlights the importance of a night like tonight and finishes his short speech by wishing everybody a good time.

"Have fun, get drunk, wear flowers," he says, and everybody cheers.

Thai massage therapists claw back legitimacy in Sweden with new certification system



A national certification initiative launched by ThaiWISE, a Swedish NGO supporting Thai women, has successfully led to the reinstatement of Thai massage services on wellness platforms across Sweden — but only for those salons that meet strict ethical and professional standards.

By Nice Pojanamesbaanstit



ThaiWISE
HELA MÄNNISKAN I MALMÖ

The new network, called NuadThai Nordic, now issues a blue certification mark to qualified Thai massage salons, helping distinguish legitimate health-focused businesses from those previously implicated in illegal sexual services. As a result, both Epassi and Benifex (formerly Benify) have agreed to reinstate access to the Friskvårdsbidraget (Swedish wellness allowance) for all certified salons, offering hope and recovery to an industry shaken by scandal.

One of the driving forces behind this turnaround is Siwanart, a 61-year-old salon owner in Borlänge. Her story is not just about personal resilience — it's about helping lead the collective fight for justice and recognition.

Siwanart came to Sweden 21 years ago from Sa Kaeo in Thailand.



Siwanart



Kusuma

After being forced to change careers due to illness, she found her calling in traditional Thai massage. She built up her salon with great heart and dedication, with a clientele that often used the Swedish Wellness Allowance (Friskvårdsbidraget) — an important support for legal health services.

What happened?

Friskvårdsbidraget is a government-approved wellness allowance provided by Swedish employers. It allows employees to get partial reimbursement for health-promoting activities, such as gym memberships, yoga classes, or traditional Thai massage — as long as it's for health and not for sexual entertainment.

“

Overnight, my regular clients couldn't use their wellness benefits anymore. We followed every rule, but still had to bear the consequences.

”

Earlier in 2025, Swedish media and police revealed that around 20 Thai massage salons had been offering illegal sexual services. This violates Swedish law, particularly the Sex Purchase Act (Lag 1998:408), which bans buying sexual services in any form — even if “consensual” or offered in massage salons.

The scandal led major wellness providers like Epassi and Benify (now Benifex) to remove all Thai massage services from their systems — punishing hundreds of legitimate businesses alongside the guilty few.

Industry-wide suspension

When news of illegal activities at a handful of Thai massage salons made national headlines, the ripple effects were immediate. Without distinguishing between the guilty and the innocent, major wellness platforms like Epassi and Benify (now Benifex) suspended all Thai massage services.

“It was devastating,” says Siwanart.

“Overnight, my regular clients couldn't use their wellness benefits anymore. We followed every rule, but still had to bear the consequences. For months, I worried the trust we'd built — and my entire livelihood — was slipping away.”

It felt like all of us who behaved were punished for the mistakes of others. I feared that everything I had built would collapse.”

ThaiWISE and NuadThai Nordic (NTN) lead the way

In this difficult time, Siwanart found support from ThaiWISE (Thai Women in Sweden Empowerment).





We are trained, experienced, we help people feel better, we pay taxes, and we contribute to society. All we ask for is to be treated with fairness and respect.



“It was like finding fellow travelers,” she says, emphasizing the importance of community. A key person in this work is Panadda Changmanee, known as “Yui,” project manager at ThaiWISE.

To restore trust in legitimate salons, ThaiWISE launched the NuadThai Nordic network, aiming to set clear standards and distinguish wellness services from illegal activities.

The result was a blue certification mark, indicating that the salon has been thoroughly reviewed and adheres to ethical and professional requirements.

What defines a legal Thai massage salon in Sweden?

- Officially registered business
- Pays taxes and issues legal receipts
- Provides services for health and wellness only
- Has staff trained in professional massage techniques
- Does not offer sexual services, which is illegal under Swedish law
- Complies with health and labor regulations

Illegal massage salons:

- Offer or imply sexual services
- Operate without proper registration or permits
- Avoid taxes or labor protections
- Violate Sweden’s Sex Purchase Act, tax laws, and worker rights laws

Epassi and Benifex open the door for certified salons

Now, both Epassi and Benifex have chosen to collaborate

with NuadThai Nordic. This means that salons that are certified and display the blue mark can once again offer wellness services through Epassi.

“You have to fight for what you’ve built, especially when you do everything right and pay your taxes,” says Siwanart.

A plea for respect and fairness

Her message to the public and authorities is clear:

“We just want people to understand the difference between legitimate Thai massage salons like mine – which follow all the rules,” says Siwanart.

“We are trained, experienced, we help people feel better, we pay taxes, and we contribute to society. All we ask for is to be treated with fairness and respect.”

Siwanart’s journey continues – a strong testament to perseverance and the collective effort to ensure that the authentic art of Thai massage is understood, valued, and safe for everyone in Sweden.

Certification paused amid overwhelming demand

The success of the NuadThai Nordic initiative has sparked widespread interest among Thai massage salons across Sweden. In fact, demand has been so high that the network has temporarily paused new membership applications as of 16 May 2025. The team is now focusing on supporting and evaluating the many salons already in the process.

According to ThaiWISE, applications are expected to reopen in early 2026. Until then, the organization thanks everyone for supporting a more ethical and professional Thai massage industry in Sweden.

Erikshjälpen sends emergency aid to Cambodian families fleeing Thai-Cambodia conflict

Swedish aid-organisation Erikshjälpen has launched an emergency response to support children and families displaced by the conflict along the Thai-Cambodian border.

The organisation has allocated SEK 600,000 from its disaster fund to finance humanitarian relief. The aid includes distribution of drinking water, food, sleeping mats, clothing, hygiene products and school materials, as well as psychosocial support and child protection screening to safeguard vulnerable children from



exploitation and abuse.

“Children in these areas are in an extremely vulnerable situation. Our goal is to meet their most urgent needs quickly while creating conditions for safety and protection,” said Anders Malmstigen, Erikshjälpen’s International Director.

shjälpen’s International Director.

The conflict, which flared up again in May 2025, escalated in mid-July with armed clashes that caused civilian casualties and significant destruction.

Although a ceasefire was reached at the end of July, the situation remains unstable, forcing many Cambodian migrant workers to return to temporary shelters or transit centres. Shortages of clean water, food and shelter have left families in urgent need of assistance, Erikshjälpen says.

Nordic countries issue call for action on Rohingya crisis

At an international conference in Cox’s Bazar this week, Bangladesh’s interim government leader Muhammad Yunus presented a seven-point proposal aimed at ensuring the safe repatriation of 1.3 million Rohingya refugees currently living in Bangladesh. The initiative calls for an end to violence in Myanmar, stronger international engagement, and implementation of provisional measures from the International Court of Justice.

The conference, titled “Stakeholders’ Dialogue,” was convened to bring global actors together in search of solutions to the crisis, which began with the mass exodus of Rohingya from Myanmar’s Rakhine state in August 2017. Yunus warned that delay in addressing the situation would only deepen the



humanitarian tragedy.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden joined Canada, the UK and several other countries in issuing a joint statement marking the eighth anniversary of the Rohingya exodus. The Nordic missions condemned escalating violence by Myanmar’s military regime and armed groups,

and urged immediate humanitarian access as well as the release of wrongfully detained individuals.

Nordic countries have been active supporters of humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya population in Bangladesh over the years, through aid projects and NGO intervention.

Danish investor CIP signs offshore wind agreement in Vietnam



Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) has entered into a Joint Development Agreement with Vietnam National Oil and Gas Group (PVN) to develop one of the country's first offshore wind projects.

The agreement was signed in Hanoi. Denmark's Chargé d'Affaires Mette Ekeroth was present at the ceremony.

Vietnam has set ambitious renewable energy targets under its Power Development Plan VIII

(PDP8), aiming for offshore wind to play a central role in reaching net zero emissions. According to the Danish Embassy in Vietnam, the partnership between CIP and PVN brings together international expertise and local capacity. It marks a step from strategy to concrete project development.

CIP is the world's largest dedicated fund manager within renewable energy infrastructure and has extensive global experience in offshore wind. The cooperation with PVN is expected to contribute to Vietnam's energy security, green job creation, and long-term sustainable growth.

Norway hooks big gains in Vietnam's seafood market at Vietfish 2025

The Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi highlighted Norway's continued cooperation with Vietnam in the fisheries sector during the opening of the Vietnam Fisheries International Exhibition (Vietfish 2025) in Ho Chi Minh City.

First Secretary of the Embassy, Erlend Skutlaberg, attended the ceremony, where the annual flagship event of the Vietnam Association of Seafood Exporters and Producers (VASEP) once again focused on the theme of innovation and sustainability.

Norway has been a longstanding partner to Vietnam in fisheries, with Norwegian companies contributing expertise and advanced technological solutions aimed at building a more sustainable industry. Among

them is Optimar, which returned to Vietfish this year to present its Electric Stunner (EI-Stunner). The equipment allows fish and shrimp to be stunned quickly and safely, reducing stress and ensuring animal welfare.

The Norwegian presence at the event follows a record seafood export from Norway to Vietnam in 2024, reaching 72,000 tonnes, with

salmon and mackerel as the main products. This marked a significant increase from just 30,000 tonnes in 2023.

The embassy underlined that these contributions reflect the shared values of Norway and Vietnam in promoting responsible seafood production and long-term cooperation in the sector.



Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce shows support for Thai textile heritage

The Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce (SweCham) joined cultural and industry leaders at the opening of *EM DISTRICT Sense of Thai 2025*, held at Emsphere on 29 July 2025.

Executive Director Anna Olsson-Moore represented the chamber at the event, which was presided over by Her Royal Highness Princess Sirivannavari Nariratana Rajakanya and featured a fashion show celebrating Thai textile heritage. The showcase included works by 14 leading designers and highlighted handwoven silk from the SUPPORT Foundation.

SweCham has praised the initiative for promoting Thai soft power and cultural craftsmanship, stating on their Facebook page that “these



cultural expressions connect people across borders and showcase the rich heritage of the Kingdom.”

In a press release, the Thai-Swedish Chamber of Commerce

encourages people to “celebrate the splendor of Thai culture, craftsmanship, and creativity at ‘EM DISTRICT Sense of Thai 2025,’ on view now through 13 August at EMSPHERE.”

Swedish firm to launch Taiwan’s first wave energy pilot



Taiwan, traditionally focused on solar and offshore wind, is now opening its ports to wave energy. Swedish company Eco Wave Power Global AB, in partnership with I-KE International Ocean Energy Co., a subsidiary of Lian Tat Company, will establish the nation’s

first pilot station at Suao Port in northeastern Taiwan.

I-KE has secured a land use tender from Taiwan Port Corporation for the 6.75-hectare site, which is divided into three test zones. Eco Wave Power and I-KE hold exclusive rights to Zone C, where they

plan to install a 100 kW onshore wave energy conversion unit under a turnkey sale agreement signed in late 2024.

“This tender award is a groundbreaking moment for Eco Wave Power and for Taiwan,” said Inna Braverman, Founder and CEO of Eco Wave Power. “It demonstrates the commercial viability of wave energy and paves the way for large-scale deployment.”

If successful, the pilot could expand to 20 MW in the medium term and up to 400 MW along Taiwan’s coastline, advancing the country’s energy transition.

Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce promotes reforestation efforts in Bang Kachao



The Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce (TNCC) has promoted the sustainability work of its premium mem-

ber, Bangchak Corporation, which is leading reforestation and conservation activities in Bang Kachao, Samut Prakan Province.

Bangchak, represented by Senior Executive Vice President of Sustainability Management and Corporate Communications, Mrs. Gloyta Nathalang, joined community leaders, environmental groups, and athletes in planting rare mangrove species at the “Bangchak Fulfilling Societal Happiness Forest Park.”

This marked the second year of the initiative, which focuses on biodiversity conservation and environmental education in the area often described as Bangkok’s “green lung.”

Bangchak has been a long-standing member of TNCC, and Mrs. Gloyta Nathalang currently serves as Board member of the organisation.

Danish Grundfos partners with Million Trees Foundation in Philippines

The Million Trees Foundation, Inc. (MTFI) of the Philippines and Denmark’s Grundfos have launched the “Circle of Life” project at the La Mesa Watershed in Quezon City on 18 August 2025. The initiative aims to strengthen the country’s reforestation drive through tree planting in watersheds and forest areas to ensure sustainable water supply and soil rehabilitation.

The inauguration was attended by MTFI chairman emeritus and Annual Million Trees Challenge founder retired Gen. Reynaldo Velasco, together with MTFI president Melandrew Velasco.

Grundfos, the world’s largest pump manufacturer, is financing and supporting the efforts for reforestation in the Philippines, to underline

its previously stated mission to promote sustainability, reduce environmental impact and support community engagement in Southeast Asia.



Norwegian Embassy attends briefing on Vietnam's governance reforms

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh met with diplomats in Hanoi on 31 July 2025 to update them on Vietnam's administrative reorganisation and two-tier local government system, aimed at achieving upper middle-income status by 2030 and becoming a high-income nation by 2045.

He highlighted four strategic pillars: science, technology, innovation and digital transformation; international integration; institutional reform and legal enforcement; and private economic development, along with new policies in education, healthcare and culture.



The Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi reported that Chargé d'Affaires a.i. Mette Moglestue attended the meeting and reaffirmed Norway's

cooperation with Vietnam in ocean protection, circular and green economy, energy transition, and green maritime.

Vietnamese Embassy in Finland marks 80th National Day and August Revolution



The Vietnamese Embassy in Finland hosted a celebration on 19 August to mark the 80th anniversary of Vietnam's August Revolution and National Day.

The event gathered Finnish parliamentarians, government of-

ficials, diplomats, business representatives and the Vietnamese community in Finland, reflecting the growing friendship between the two countries.

In a speech, Ambassador Pham Thi Thanh Binh highlighted the his-

toric significance of the August Revolution and National Day, which not only changed Vietnam's destiny but also inspired global struggles for independence. She emphasized Vietnam's achievements over 80 years of development and reaffirmed the strong partnership with Finland in fields such as education, technology, innovation, trade and sustainable growth.

As part of the celebration, the embassy organized a cultural exhibition titled Vietnam Heritage, showcasing traditional values and natural beauty, including UNESCO-recognized sites. The event offered both a moment of reflection for the Vietnamese community in Finland and a bridge to deepen understanding and cooperation between the peoples of Vietnam and Finland.

Filipino-led agency takes over Miss Universe Denmark franchise



House of Yugen, an international media and talent agency founded by Filipino entrepreneur Josh Yugen, has been appointed as the new franchise holder of Miss Universe Denmark.

The move comes as Denmark prepares for the 74th Miss Universe pageant in Bangkok this November.

The agency, which also holds the Miss Universe franchises for Bahrain, Pakistan, and Egypt, will

oversee the nationwide search for Denmark's next representative. The role succeeds current Miss Universe Victoria Kjær Theilvig, whose win at the 73rd pageant was Denmark's first.

Yugen said the platform will be open to all Danish women without registration fees, aiming for inclusivity and merit-based selection. Casting will include interviews, runway assessments, and cultural presentations, with training in public speaking, advocacy, and media engagement.

Miss Universe Denmark 2023, Nikoline Uhrenholt Hansen, will serve as a judge and council member. Filipino creatives will contribute to catwalk, design, and mentorship. The announcement was made during Copenhagen Fashion Week alongside Yugen's Woven Wisdom fashion event.

IKEA launches flagship store on JD to boost growth in China

Swedish home furnishings giant IKEA has opened an official flagship store on Chinese e-commerce platform JD.com, expanding its digital and omnichannel presence in the country.

The store offers over 6,500 products across 168 categories, from furniture to home accessories, and integrates IKEA's logistics and membership services. It complements the brand's online channels including its website, Tmall store, mobile app, and WeChat mini programs.

IKEA will manage inventory from its warehouses, with parcel deliveries handled by JD Logistics and



larger shipments following IKEA's logistics network, covering 301 cities nationwide.

"This launch is another step

forward under our 'growth plus' strategy," said Pontus Erntell, president of IKEA China. "It will help us reach more Chinese families who value convenience, quality and service."

The move comes amid rising competition in China's home and lifestyle market, with both domestic and global brands investing in e-commerce. JD has also seen more international home brands join this year, including Muji, Natuzzi Italia, and Hay.

Finnish KONE opens first training academy in the Philippines

Finnish elevator and escalator company KONE has opened its first training facility in the Philippines. The new KONE Academy is located in Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, and will serve as a national centre for training elevator technicians in installation, maintenance, modernisation and safety procedures.

The academy is expected to train over 600 professionals annually, with plans to increase capacity to 800 by 2027. KONE aims to certify approximately 4,400 technicians in the country by 2030.



The facility also operates as a Customer Experience Center, where clients and partners can explore KONE's technologies, including connected elevators, smart

access solutions and building integration systems.

KONE's expansion in the Philippines comes as the country experiences rapid urban growth. The urban population is projected to reach 102 million by 2050, and around 70 percent of local governments are currently engaged in smart city initiatives.

KONE runs more than 40 similar training facilities globally, including centres in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Danish brand Perspirex withdraws from Indonesia citing unfair play

Danish antiperspirant brand Perspirex has announced its withdrawal from the Indonesian market, citing unfair competition and smear campaigns.

In a statement posted on its official Indonesian Instagram account, the company said: "Indonesia, kami pamit" (Indonesia, we bid farewell), explaining that while it aimed to help people feel more confident, the market environment became hostile.

"Many brands started overclaiming. Some undermined us through smear campaigns. 'Buzzers' were used to damage our reputation. We tried our best but could not continue," the company wrote.

Perspirex claimed that competitors engaged in "black campaigns" and used paid social media accounts, or "buzzers," to harm the



brand's image. It also accused rival products of making misleading marketing claims.

Produced by Danish company Riemann A/S, Perspirex is marketed internationally as a high-performance antiperspirant. In Indonesia,

it was sold as a premium product via official distributors and online platforms.

The company did not specify when sales would end or whether it plans to return to the Indonesian market in the future.

Kongsberg Maritime opens new offices in Jakarta and Batam



Norwegian marine technology provider Kongsberg Maritime has expanded its presence in Indonesia with new offices in Jakarta and Batam – an island just off the coast of Singapore – to support commercial and governmental customers.

The announcement was made at the Inamarine Expo in Jakarta on Wednesday 31 July 2025, with Norway's Ambassador to Indonesia, Rut Krüger Giverin, in attendance.

Dedicated teams in both cities will provide local sales, service, spare parts, and aftermarket support. Ac-

cording to Patrick Banks, Vice President of Aftermarket Sales, APAC, the move is aimed at strengthening customer engagement and enabling faster, more responsive service.

"Indonesia is a vital and fast-evolving maritime nation, and both Jakarta and Batam are key hubs in that landscape," says Banks. "With over 200 shipyards in Indonesia, Jakarta is a major center for shipping operations, government agencies, and maritime trade, while Batam has the highest concentration and plays a central role in regional shipbuilding and repair."

Kongsberg Maritime delivers technology for marine automation, navigation, dynamic positioning, propulsion, energy management, deck handling, and ship design, serving clients across all sectors of the maritime industry.

Norwegian electric vehicle batteries may push to rival China's dominance

Norway has become the latest Nordic country to strengthen Europe's green technology ambitions, as Morrow Batteries in Arendal begins producing lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries to reduce reliance on Chinese electric vehicle supply chains, according to Politico.

The company is majority-owned by renewable energy group Å Energi and was founded in 2020 together with ABB, Siemens, Danish pension fund PKA and Norwegian investment firm Nysnø. Backed by the Norwegian government and the European Union, Morrow has



started manufacturing LFP batteries for energy storage and defense, with plans to expand into electric vehicle production. Three new facilities are scheduled to open by 2029.

China's rapid adoption of LFP batteries has helped brands like BYD and SAIC dominate the global electric vehicle market, outpacing

European and U.S. rivals. LFP batteries are cheaper, more sustainable and longer-lasting than the nickel-manganese-cobalt batteries still widely used in Europe, though they offer shorter driving ranges. Industry experts view Norway's investment as a key step for Europe to secure its electric vehicle supply chains.

Norway's role is particularly significant given its position as a global leader in electric vehicle adoption. In 2023, nine out of ten cars sold in the country were electric, and the government aims for all new sales to be zero-emission by the end of 2024.

Telenor data transfers linked to arrests and executions in Myanmar

Norwegian telecom operator Telenor is facing renewed scrutiny over its former operations in Myanmar, after reports revealed that sensitive user data was shared with the military junta following the 2021 coup. The disclosures suggest the information was used to track and arrest democracy activists, some of whom were later executed.

According to Norwegian broadcaster NRK and the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, Telenor complied with more than 1,300 data requests from the junta, handing over phone records, call logs, SMS data, addresses, and location information. Those targeted included Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as young supporters

of Myanmar's pro-democracy movement. Telenor has said that refusing such demands could have endangered the lives of its employees.

The case has gained added weight after Myanmar-based outlet Mizzima revealed that Telenor's transfer of metadata enabled the junta to locate 88 Generation Students leader Ko Jimmy, also known as Kyaw Min Yu, who had gone into hiding after the coup. He was arrested on 23 October 2021 and executed on 23 July 2022.

Former Norwegian Burma Committee director Audun Aagre said Telenor had been warned that failing to delete sensitive data risked complicity in crimes against humanity.

Telenor, majority-owned by



the Norwegian government, sold its Myanmar operations in 2022 to Lebanon's M1 Group and a local partner with junta ties. The operator was later rebranded as Atom, though rights groups allege the military still retains access to user data under the new ownership.

Swedish man arrested in Pattaya on high-profile drug charges

A 37-year-old Swedish man was arrested on drug trafficking charges on 4 August

2025, when Thai authorities raided a luxury residence in the Pattaya area in Chonburi Province.

The arrest followed an extensive investigation and surveillance operation.

According to Thai media outlet *Truth Through the Lens*, the suspect is a high-profile fugitive listed with an Interpol Red Notice. The suspect stands accused of acting as a global moderator for "Archetyp," an online platform used to distribute drugs via private chat rooms across Scandinavia and Europe.

Spokespersons for the Thai police expressed that the arrest is part of an ongoing crackdown on transnational crime, aligned with government policy to strengthen national security and uphold Thailand's international legal credibility.



Nordic cities and Singapore are among world's top sustainable tourism destinations



Copenhagen, Stockholm, Helsinki, Oslo, and Singapore have all been recognised on Tripadvisor's new Best of the Best Sustainable Norway tourism Destinations 2024 list, launched in

collaboration with the Global Destination Sustainability Movement (GDS-Movement).

The new category highlights destinations that combine positive traveller reviews with verified achievements in social, economic, and environmental sustainability.

Nordic cities claimed four of the top ten positions worldwide. Copenhagen secured the number one spot globally, recognised for its long-standing climate action policies, extensive cycling infrastructure, and responsible tourism initiatives. Stockholm also placed among the leaders, praised for its integration of

sustainability in urban planning and tourism.

Helsinki and Oslo were equally acknowledged for their green transition efforts, particularly in renewable energy, sustainable mobility, and inclusive city planning. Together, the four Nordic capitals underscore the region's reputation as a frontrunner in sustainable development.

Singapore also made the global top ten. The city-state was recognised for its integrated approach to sustainability, including urban greening, efficient public transport, and strong environmental policies.

Denmark promotes safe and sustainable workplaces in Vietnam

The Embassy of Denmark in Vietnam and CO-Industri, the Central Organisation of Industrial Employees in Denmark, have highlighted the importance of safe and sustainable workplaces during a recent visit to local Vietnamese businesses and craft villages.

The delegation visited Kim Lan Ceramics Village, where Danish support has contributed to reducing environmental impact, improving workplace safety, and enhancing product quality in traditional production. The group also visited Hitachi Energy, Studio CHS, and LTP Garment, where they observed how green production methods, worker well-being, and safe working environments have supported both business growth and competitiveness.



In discussions with the International Labour Organization (ILO), Denmark underscored the importance of global labour standards and strong social dialogue in promoting decent work and fair opportunities for all. The Embassy promoted the Nordic model—where strong social services, education, and unions fos-

ter innovation and prosperity—as it offers valuable lessons for Vietnam.

The Embassy of Denmark expressed its commitment to continuing exchanges and cooperation with Vietnamese partners towards creating a fair, inclusive, and sustainable labour environment, and wished for further collaborations.

Danish Michelin-starred chef to join World Gourmet Festival in Bangkok

The 25th edition of the World Gourmet Festival will bring some of the world's leading culinary talent to Bangkok this September, including Danish chef Eric Kragh Vildgaard from the two-Michelin-starred restaurant Jordnær in Copenhagen.

The festival, hosted by Anantara Siam Bangkok Hotel from 22 to 28 September. In total, chefs from 16 Michelin-starred restaurants will take part, representing 22 stars between them.

Eric Kragh Vildgaard, known for combining Nordic simplicity with refined techniques will collaborate with German twin chefs Mathias and Thomas Sühning in a special dinner at the restaurant Spice Market.

Eric Kragh Vildgaard founded Jordnær together with his wife Tina in 2017, transforming a modest sub-



urban hotel restaurant north of Copenhagen into one of Denmark's most acclaimed fine dining destinations. The restaurant has earned two Michelin stars and international recognition for its elegant, seafood-driven Nordic cuisine, while also

ranking on The World's 50 Best Restaurants list.

The World Gourmet Festival is regarded as Thailand's most prestigious culinary event, attracting international stars and local innovators alike.

Stressless Adam wins Red Dot Award



The Norwegian design brand Ekornes, a corporate member of the Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce, has been awarded the prestigious Red Dot Award: Product Design 2025 for its recliner Stressless Adam.

The Red Dot Award is one of the world's most respected recognitions for product design, honouring innovations that successfully combine functionality with outstanding aesthetics.

"Stressless Adam represents a bold step forward in the design of motorised recliners. It challenges the conventional notion that functionality must come at the expense of aesthetics. With Stressless Adam, we've managed to harmonise ad-

vanced comfort features with a refined, Scandinavian-inspired design language," said Mariana Sousa, Head of Design at Ekornes AS, in Ekornes's press release.

The Red Dot jury also highlighted the design's balance of comfort and Scandinavian influence, noting that "although the Stressless Adam armchair clearly focuses on comfort, its Scandinavian-influenced design ensures a harmonious appearance."

Ekornes is one of the world's leading furniture design brands and has brought international attention to Nordic design. One of the company's eight factories is located about an hour's drive outside central Bangkok.

Norwegian Embassy in Yangon welcomes new Deputy Head of Mission



The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Yangon has welcomed Svenn J. Bjerkem as its new Minister Counsellor and Deputy Head of Mission.

Bjerkem brings with him more than three decades of experience at the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with extensive expertise in public diplomacy, protocol, and consular affairs. His diplomatic career includes postings in Africa's Sahel region, where he worked on devel-

opment and humanitarian aid during his assignment in Bamako, as well as a recent role in Helsinki focusing on security and defense policy.

In a Facebook post, the embassy expressed Bjerkem's excitement for the job and his interest in exploring Myanmar's rich history and culture through its literature. He looks forward to working with local partners and building connections with the people of Myanmar.

Taiwan delegation visits Swedish laboratories

On 21 August 2025, the Representative of the Taipei Mission in Sweden, Gu Ruisheng, accompanied a delegation led by Dr. Cai Hongying, President of the National Applied Research Laboratories (NARLabs), to visit Sweden's top technical university, KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm.

At KTH, the delegation was welcomed by the Vice President for Global Relations, Prof. Stefan Östlund, and the Director of the International Office, Prof. Urban Westergren, who provided an overview of the university's research and international cooperation. Also present were Dr. Shufen Zeng, Head of the Science and Technology Division at Taipei's National Science and Technology Office in Lithuania, and Mr. Yunbin Lu from the Education Division in Sweden.

During the meeting, Dr. Cai



expressed NARLabs' readiness to serve as a platform for academic and research collaboration, highlighting its seven national research centers and the upcoming AI and Robotics Research Center. He invited deeper cooperation between Taiwanese universities and research institutions and KTH.

Prof. Östlund commended NARLabs for successfully combining education, research, administration, and service in its mission. Prof. Westergren also announced that during his planned visit to Taiwan in October, he intends to visit NARLabs' Tainan branch.

Thailand plans free domestic flights for international visitors

Thailand's Ministry of Tourism and Sports has proposed offering 200,000 free domestic flight tickets to foreign tourists in an effort to boost travel across the country. The initiative, titled "Buy International, Free Thailand Domestic Flights", is awaiting cabinet approval and would run from September to November.

The scheme would allow international travellers booking flights to Thailand to claim a free round-trip domestic ticket, including luggage, on six participating airlines: Thai Airways, Thai AirAsia, Bangkok Airways, Nok Air, Thai Lion Air and Thai Vietjet. The government has requested 700 million baht from the central budget to fund the campaign, which is expected to generate about 8.8



billion baht in tourism revenue.

Tourism officials hope the plan will encourage visitors to explore less-travelled destinations beyond Bangkok and the main tourist hubs. Industry representatives, however, have suggested the campaign could be more effective if paired with ef-

forts to lower domestic airfare and region-specific marketing.

As of mid-August, Thailand has recorded 20.8 million international arrivals this year, a 7% decrease compared to the same period in 2024. China remains the top source market, with 2.9 million visitors.

Charlotte Cappi Grunnet to serve as acting pastor at Danish Seamen's Church in Hong Kong



Charlotte Cappi Grunnet will serve as acting pastor at the Danish Seamen's Church in Hong Kong from 12 September 2025 to 12 March 2026, according to the Danish Church Abroad.

She will take leave from her current role as student and parish pastor at Frederiksberg, where she has been serving 30,000 students for the past 16 years.

"I am excited. When you have a desire to travel, it is a fantastic opportunity to be a pastor for seafarers and Danes living in Hong Kong," says Charlotte Cappi Grunnet.

She explains that she looks forward to working in new surround-

ings and meeting Danes both in the harbour, on ships, in the church, in the Danish Room and around the city.

"From my time as a volunteer seamen's pastor in Sri Lanka, I know the special importance of Danish churches abroad for Danes living overseas, those travelling through and the seafarers – a meeting place socially, culturally, linguistically and religiously. I also know the broad perspective that comes from cooperating with other international pastors. I look forward to meeting everyone and to the adventure," she says according to the Facebook page of the Church.

Danish consultants shares expertise at circular economy in the Philippines

Danish consultant agency NIRAS contributed its expertise in sustainability at

the Innovation for Circular Economy (ICE) Hackathon, organised by the Pasig City Government and

UNDP Philippines.

Senior Business Development Manager Joyce Asilo represented NIRAS, sharing insights on circular business models as well as on business viability and impact assessment for circular solutions. Her presentation provided inspiration for participants in developing their own circular economy concepts during the workshop.

The event formed part of ongoing collaboration between Nordic embassies in the Philippines and local partners to support Pasig City's efforts to advance its circular economy initiatives.



Norwegian Chargée d’Affaires joins ASEAN Family Run in Bangkok

On 8 August 2025, the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok, led by Chargée d’Affaires, Thea Ottmann, took part in the ASEAN Family Run to commemorate the 58th anniversary of the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The event, organised by Thailand’s Department of ASEAN Affairs under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, brought together ASEAN stakeholders and partners. Thai Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Maris Sangiampongsa, opened the event with remarks before joining the run. Among the participants were Bangkok Governor Dr. Chadchart Sittipunt, representatives of the diplomatic corps from ASEAN member and partner states, as well as del-



legates from government agencies and the private sector.

The year 2025 also marks the 10th anniversary of the ASEAN–Norway Sectoral Dialogue Partnership. The Norwegian Embassy

noted that Norway looks forward to strengthening cooperation with ASEAN in key areas such as ocean sustainability, the green transition, and trade and investment.

Vietnamese and Swedish folk traditions in Hanoi concert

Swedish fiddler Mats Edén and Vietnamese đàn bầu artist Ngô Trà My came together on Monday 5 August in Hanoi for a unique concert titled *Between the Strings*, blending folk traditions from Sweden and Vietnam.

The performance featured the unique pairing of the violin and đàn bầu (Vietnamese monochord), creating a soundscape described as both strange and familiar, solitary yet harmonious. Held at 14 Phan Huy Ích Street, the event offered a cross-cultural experience inviting reflection and celebration.

Mats Edén, a leading figure in Swedish folk music, brought the heritage of Värmland through his fiddle and melodeon. He co-founded the folk ensemble Groupa in 1981 and received Sweden's prestigious Zorn badge in gold in 2019. He is currently a professor at the Malmö Academy of Music.



Ngô Trà My is a seasoned soloist and lecturer at the Việt Nam National Academy of Music. She has performed with traditional and

experimental groups, including The Six Tones and the Asia Traditional Orchestra, and advises the C asean Consonant Ensemble.

Indonesian students get Nordic style health check-ups

Indonesia is looking to Sweden and Norway as models for a new student health initiative launched on Monday 4 August 2025.

The Cek Kesehatan Gratis Sekolah (CKGS) program introduces health screenings for over 58 million students with the long-term goal of creating structured health report cards similar to those used in the Nordic countries.

"Just like in Sweden and Norway, we hope students won't just graduate with academic transcripts,



but also health report cards," says Asnawi Abdullah, Head of the Health Policy Agency at the Health Ministry.

In Sweden and Norway, regular school health checks are integrated into national healthcare systems and include evaluations of physical and mental well-being throughout a student's school years.

Indonesia's current screenings include checks on nutrition, mental health, vision, hearing, reproductive health and more. The data will form part of a national digital health record system, according to the Presidential Communications Office.

Vietnamese girls' football team debuted at Homeless World Cup in Oslo with Norwegian support



With the support of the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) and the Football For All in Vietnam (FFAV) project, Vietnam participated in the Homeless World Cup for the first time. The tournament took place in Oslo, Norway, from 21 August to 1 September 2025.

The Vietnamese team consisted of four ethnic minority girls from Tuyen Quang province. Aged 16–17, the players were part of FFAV, a project funded by the Norwegian Government and NFF, and jointly implemented by NFF and the Vietnam Football Federation (VFF). Since 2001, the initiative has promoted grassroots football while integrating life skills education, gender equality, and youth empowerment.

“By sending four female players to this tournament, we wanted to reaffirm our commitment to supporting the development of grassroots football, especially school football, in Vietnam,” said Anders Haselgard, representative of the NFF.

Vietnam joined 22 women’s teams from around the world in Oslo, which hosted the Homeless World Cup for the second time. The event drew over 500 players from 48 countries, with Vietnam among six nations making their debut this year.

For the players, the tournament was both a sporting and personal milestone. “I felt extremely proud to wear the shirt representing Vietnam in Oslo. This was not only an opportunity to learn and

make friends, but also to spread the spirit of Vietnamese football – fair play, solidarity and determination,” said La Kim Tam, one of the players, in an interview with Phunu Vietnam before departure.

Through projects like FFAV, Norway and Vietnam have continued to deepen their cooperation in sport and development, showing how football can be a platform for inclusion, education, and lasting partnerships.

“The Robber’s daughter” is coming to Vietnam

The Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi has announced the release of the Vietnamese edition of *Ronia – Daughter of the Robber Chief*, a classic children’s book by celebrated Swedish author Astrid Lindgren.

The book has been published by the Women’s Publishing House Vietnam and was translated by Nguyễn Bích Lan. At the launch, Ms. Khúc Thị Hoa Phượng, Director of the publishing house, expressed hopes that *Ronia*’s story will inspire children in Vietnam “to dream big, live kindly, and cherish true friendship.”

The Swedish classic follows

the adventures of *Ronia*, the brave daughter of a robber chief, who learns about friendship, courage, and freedom. First published in 1981, *Ronia* has since become one of Lindgren’s most beloved works worldwide.

Ronia – Daughter of the Robber Chief is not the first of Astrid Lindgren’s beloved children’s books to be translated into Vietnamese. *Pippi Longstocking* first arrived in Vietnam in 1991 under the name “Pippi Tất Dài,” and *Emil of Lönneberga* made his debut in the country in 2008.

The Vietnamese edition is now available in bookstores across the



country, offering young readers and parents alike the chance to enjoy this Scandinavian children’s classic in their own language.

Webinar to explore Finnish AI tools for student wellbeing in Thailand



The Thai-Finnish Chamber of Commerce is drawing attention to an upcoming webinar on “Wellbeing at School and Home: AI Supporting Families”, or-

ganised by Vision Finland Magazine. The event will take place on Tuesday 9 September 2025 from 14:00 to 15:30 (Thai time) via Microsoft Teams.

The webinar will examine how Finnish education practices and artificial intelligence can support the wellbeing of students in Thailand, both at home and at school. Parents, educators, and school leaders will gain practical tools to help children succeed academically and emotionally in Thai learning environments.

Speakers include Sofia Korpela from Glow Learning on student wellbeing, Susanna Nicol from EQ for Kidz on emotional growth and resilience, and Pia and Jim Solatie from Sisufy on AI tools for families and educators.

By combining Finnish and international expertise, the session aims to provide strategies that can strengthen family engagement and student wellbeing in Thailand.

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