

OCT 2025

ScandAsia

BUSINESS:

H&M reopens first China flagship with new concept

INTERNATIONAL:

Experts discuss AI ethics at Nobel Prize Dialogue in Vietnam

COMMUNITY:

Minna Pietarinen brings "I Was Born a Girl" exhibition to Beijing

Theme:

Preschool and
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The First Step in a Lifelong Journey

Few decisions feel as momentous as choosing the first school for your child. It is both a beginning and a letting-go.

Almost forty years ago, I faced that moment when I had to choose the right preschool for my daughters, Nina and Monica. Twelve years ago, it was Nina's turn to make her choice for my granddaughters. Time has passed, the world has changed, but the feeling remains the same: a mix of excitement, anxiety, and hope as you hand over your child to new teachers, new routines, and new friends.

For expatriate families in Asia, this choice often comes with extra layers of uncertainty. The names of international curricula sound familiar yet foreign, and the glossy prospectuses all promise happy children in sunlit classrooms. But how do we know which preschool or kindergarten will truly fit our child — and our family life?

This issue of ScandAsia explores that question from many angles. We visit preschools that blend Scandinavian values with Asian warmth, and we meet educators who believe that curiosity and play remain the best tools for learning. We also hear from parents who have learned that proximity, communication, and a sense of community matter just as much as teaching philosophies.

Selecting a preschool is not about finding the “best” one, but the right one — a place where your child feels safe, where mornings begin with excitement rather than tears, and where learning is woven naturally into laughter and discovery.

In the end, the school we choose shapes not only our children's first steps in education, but our own sense of belonging in a new country. May these pages help you take that step with confidence — and a touch of joy.



Gregers A.W. Møller
Editor-in-Chief, ScandAsia

ScandAsia

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Sweden to phase out development aid to Myanmar by 2026



Sweden will phase out its development cooperation with Myanmar by 30 June 2026, according to a government announcement on 11 September 2025. The decision is part of a broader shift in Swedish aid policy aimed at prioritising Ukraine.

According to the Swedish government, conditions for development cooperation in Myanmar have steadily worsened since the military coup in 2021. The government said that Sida, the Swedish International

Development Cooperation Agency, may disburse up to SEK 175 million in 2025 and SEK 140 million in 2026 under existing agreements before the cooperation ends. Humanitarian assistance to Myanmar will not be affected.

“Ukraine is Europe’s foremost line of defence, and they are defending both their own freedom and ours. The restructuring of Swedish aid is therefore more important than ever. With this decision, the government continues its work to phase out several strategies in order to create room for even stronger support for Ukraine,” said Minister for International Development Cooperation and Foreign Trade Benjamin Dousa in the announcement.

The decision follows Sweden’s “Development Assistance for a New Era” policy, which reduces the country’s long-standing commitment to

spending one percent of Gross National Income on development aid.

Human Rights Myanmar described the phase-out as a severe blow to local human rights defenders, independent media, and civil society groups. According to the organisation, Sweden’s withdrawal could cost Myanmar’s independent media around USD 2.4 million annually and human rights groups about USD 255,000 from 2026. The NGO argued that the withdrawal undermines international solidarity and risks weakening efforts to document rights abuses under military rule.

According to Human Rights Myanmar, Sweden has provided about USD 176 million in development aid to Myanmar since the 2021 coup, with much of it directed toward emergency response, conflict resolution, democratic participation, and media programmes.

Indonesia launches new All Indonesia Arrival Card for travelers

Indonesia has rolled out the “All Indonesia” Arrival Card, a unified digital portal that combines immigration, customs, and health declarations into a single online form. The system is now mandatory at major entry points including Bali, Jakarta, and Surabaya.

Travelers must complete the form within three days prior to arrival. The process takes only a few minutes and generates a QR code to be presented on entry. The service is free of charge and replaces earlier platforms such as SATUSEHAT and the electronic customs declaration.

Authorities emphasize that the card is not a visa but a required entry declaration. Foreign visitors must still secure the appropriate visa, while ASEAN nationals remain eligible for visa-free entry. Indonesian citizens returning home are also required to complete the form using their national ID number.

Accessible via web or mobile app, the “All Indonesia” system allows families to submit one application together. Officials note the reform will reduce paperwork, speed clearance, and improve security, making the arrival process more efficient for both visitors and nationals.



Experts highlight ethical oversight in AI at Nobel Prize Dialogue in Vietnam

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping industries worldwide, but experts at the Nobel Prize Exhibition and Dialogue 2025 in Ho Chi Minh City stressed that rapid innovation must be aligned with ethical responsibility to ensure it benefits society.

Virginia Dignum, associate professor of AI responsibility at Umeå University in Sweden, described AI as a “double-edged sword.”

“Like Alfred Nobel, who always considered the impacts of scientific progress, we in the AI era must ask: what are the consequences of our work? Can AI be utilized for the

goodwill of humanity?” she said.

Dr. Abdul Rohman from RMIT University Vietnam warned that the global AI race remains technology-driven while neglecting people’s needs.

“When data ignores minorities, innovation fails,” he said, pointing to Ho Chi Minh City’s deaf community as an example.

Dr. Rita Mokbel, CEO of Ericsson Vietnam, added that closer cooperation between governments, universities, and businesses is needed, starting with integrating AI into education.

The event, held from 8 to 19



September, was co-organised by the Swedish Embassy in Vietnam and RMIT University Vietnam.

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Norwegian and Thai food supplement industries connect in Bangkok



The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok and the Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce hosted an exclusive reception on 16 September 2025 at the Norwegian Ambassador's Residence, bringing together Norwegian and Thai stakeholders in the food supplement industry.

The event, "*Bridging the Norwegian and Thai Food Supplement*

Communities," was held on the eve of Vitafoods Asia 2025, which took place from 17 to 19 September at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Centre in Bangkok.

Norway's Ambassador to Thailand, Astrid Emilie Helle, delivered opening remarks, followed by Axel Blom, President of the Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce. A keynote address was presented by

Waliga Snongkhun, Food and Drug Officer at Thailand's Food and Drug Administration, who outlined Thailand's regulatory requirements for food supplements.

Norwegian companies showcased at the reception included Epax, GC Rieber, Noromega, SalmoFer by Leroy Seafood, and Zooca—firms recognized for their expertise in omega-3 and marine-based ingredients. Their presentations provided Thai distributors, regulators, and industry professionals with insights into new products and collaboration opportunities.

Organizers noted that the event successfully fostered dialogue and created a platform for stronger ties between Norwegian suppliers and Thailand's nutraceutical community. More than 50 participants attended.

Sweden promotes greener buses and safer roads in the Philippines

Sweden is strengthening its support for sustainable transport in the Philippines. At the 2025 Transportation Forum, held on 11 September at The Westin Manila, Swedfund announced new studies to improve bus standards, reduce emissions, and back projects such as the EDSA Busway. The event was co-organized by the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) and Team Sweden.

Swedish Ambassador Anna Ferry highlighted Sweden's Vision Zero policy, which has halved road fatalities since 1997. "The goal of Vision Zero is to have zero fatalities or seriously injured from road accidents. It is not just a transport policy,



it's a shared responsibility across sectors," she said.

Several Swedish companies presented solutions. Volvo Buses showcased bus rapid transit systems to cut congestion, accidents, and emissions, while Axis Communications demonstrated how AI and

video data can improve safety and efficiency.

Philippine authorities welcomed the initiatives, noting they support priority projects, including the EDSA Bus Rapid Transit, Mindanao Railway, and wider adoption of electric vehicles.

Philippines and Finland boost cooperation on skilled worker mobility

The Philippines and Finland have strengthened cooperation on skilled worker mobility through their first Joint Committee Meeting on Skills Mobility, held on 17 September 2025 in Helsinki.

According to the Philippine Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the meeting marked a step forward in promoting safe and fair labor mobility for Filipino professionals and skilled workers. The Joint Committee, co-chaired by officials from both governments, discussed ethical recruitment, skills recognition and worker protection, while addressing Finland's labor market needs.

The Finnish delegation included representatives from the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Finnish Immigration Service, Work in Finland, and the City of Helsinki. The Philippine side



was led by DMW Assistant Secretary Levinson Alcantara and Deputy Chief of Mission Elaine Mae Laruan-Hernandez, along with embassy and labor officials.

Both countries adopted a Joint Declaration of Intent and considered a memorandum of understanding to institutionalize the cooperation. Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac said the declaration reaffirms a shared vision for labor mobility "characterized by fairness, dignity and mutual benefit."

Finland's Minister of Economic Affairs and Employment, Arto Olavi Sartonen, highlighted Finland's need for skilled workers and confirmed that the Philippines, along with India and Vietnam, remain primary sources for labor migration. He also committed to ensuring Filipino workers enjoy the same rights and salaries as Finnish employees.

As of 2023, about 12,770 Filipinos were employed in Finland, mainly in healthcare, technology, service and industrial sectors.

Laos introduces digital immigration form for foreign travelers

Laos has introduced a new digital entry and exit form, effective 1 September 2025, aimed at modernizing border control and improving the experience for international visitors.

The Lao Digital Immigration Form (LDIF) replaces the previous paper-based version. Foreign travelers are now required to complete the form online within three days before arrival, uploading a passport copy, visa, and personal photo. Once submitted, the system generates a QR code that must be presented at immigration checkpoints for both entry and departure.



Officials describe the initiative as part of a broader digitalization strategy to enhance convenience while strengthening national secu-

urity. By moving to an online system, Laos expects to reduce processing time at borders and minimize errors linked to manual paperwork.

The move aligns Laos with regional neighbors such as Thailand and Cambodia, which have already adopted digital solutions for immigration procedures. Authorities hope the streamlined process will make travel smoother and reinforce the country's efforts to position itself as a modern and accessible destination for global visitors.

“

*Switching schools
is common in the
expatriate world,
and it should
never be seen
as a failure.*

”

How to find the right Preschool and Kinder- garten for expat families

For many expatriate families, choosing a kindergarten or preschool in a new country is one of the most personal and, at times, overwhelming decisions. Beyond being the first step in your child's education, it's also where you, as parents, begin to find community and connection in your new home. A school quickly becomes more than classrooms and teachers; it can be a network of support and an anchor for expat life.

In cities like Bangkok, Singapore, or Kuala Lumpur, the choices are endless. From play-based preschools with gardens to academically structured programs tied to international schools, each claims to offer something unique. The challenge is matching those promises with your child's personality and your family's priorities.

The Child at the Center

Every child is different. Some adapt easily to group activities, while others need smaller classrooms and closer attention. A self-directed learner might thrive in Montessori, while a team-oriented child may flourish in a Reggio Emilia-inspired setting. Focusing on temperament helps you look past glossy brochures to what really matters.

A School That Fits Your Life

Location often outweighs philosophy. In traffic-heavy cities, a 30-minute commute can double, turning mornings stressful. Proximity to home or work often proves the biggest relief.

Language and communication matter, too. Many schools use English, but parents also need clear, timely updates from administrators. A supportive parent community—through coffee mornings or cultural events—can also become invaluable when settling into a new country.

Beyond Labels and Fees

Educational "labels" don't always match reality. A "Montessori" school may borrow only parts of the method, while a "British" preschool may not fully follow its adver-



tised curriculum. Asking how these philosophies work in daily routines often gives the clearest picture.

Costs also vary widely. Some prestigious schools charge high tuition, while smaller ones offer equally nurturing environments at a fraction of the cost. Remember to ask about extras like meals, uniforms, and activity fees—hidden costs that can add up quickly.





Trusting this “gut feeling” is not unscientific. Often, parents find themselves knowing within minutes whether a school feels right.



A Two-Way Conversation

It's easy to think of kindergarten selection as a one-sided choice, but schools are evaluating your family, too. Many will ask about toilet training, separation anxiety, or your child's ability to express basic needs. Some inquire about discipline at home to ensure their approach aligns with yours. These questions may feel probing, but they are usually a sign of a thoughtful, child-centered institution.

The Expat Advantage

Parent networks are one of the best resources. Online groups, playground chats, and embassy events often reveal truths brochures don't: how healthy the lunches are, how responsive the staff is, or how well the school delivers on promises. Recommendations are valuable, but every child's needs are unique.

A Journey, Not a Final Destination

Perhaps the most comforting truth is that no decision is permanent. Families move, children change, and sometimes a school that worked at age three may not be the right fit at age five. Switching schools is common in the expatriate world, and it should never be seen as a failure. Instead, think of it as responding to your child's growth and circumstances.

At the end of the day, the “perfect” kindergarten is not the one with the most impressive facilities or the highest tuition fees. It's the one where your child feels safe, supported, and inspired to explore. It's the place where they come home excited to tell you what they did that day, and where you, as a parent, feel confident that they are in caring hands.

Choosing a preschool abroad is a balancing act—between philosophy and practicality, between budgets and instincts, between your hopes for your child and the realities of life in a new city. With careful observation, open questions, and trust in your intuition, you will find the right place. And when you do, you'll know—not because the brochure said so, but because your child will show you.

Walking Through the Door

No matter how much you read online, the truest impression comes when you step into the school itself. The energy is usually immediate: do the children look happy, engaged, and comfortable? Are classrooms clean, colorful, and well-equipped? Is there outdoor space that invites play? A tour will also give you a sense of how teachers interact with children—whether they kneel to make eye contact, listen attentively, or encourage questions.

Trusting this “gut feeling” is not unscientific. Often, parents find themselves knowing within minutes whether a school feels right. If you leave with a sense of excitement and reassurance, it's worth paying attention to that instinct.

Seeds of ideas and attitudes, once taken root, can last a lifetime.

Starting from Nursery, Tanglin creates an environment where children's natural curiosity can grow and flourish into a lifelong love of learning.

Children thrive in our exciting learning landscape – one that has been cultivated through years of careful planning and the dedication of Tanglin's exceptional Nursery team. Classrooms, outdoor areas and the inspirational curriculum are designed to capture children's imagination, nurture their inquisitive minds and create a magical hive of activity.

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NIST International School: **A Bright Start in New Elementary Buildings**

What makes a child excited to come to school each day? At NIST International School, in the heart of Bangkok, it might be a library with reading bunk beds, a Makerspace buzzing with cardboard creations, or colourful art studios that spark imagination.

In August 2025, NIST opened two stunning new Elementary Buildings for Years 2–6, light-filled, sustainable spaces that bring creativity, exploration, and belonging to life.

For students, it's a world of possibilities. As one Year 5 student shared,

“I love how it has so much space and so many cool rooms and amazing spaces like the kitchen where we can do cool activities.”

Others feel the same:

“I like the new play spaces, like the Lego area, because it's fun to build,” said a Year 2 student.

“The library is neat, pretty and quiet. I love books.”
Another Year 3 student

Spaces That Spark Curiosity And Imagination

This 30,000-square-metre expansion nearly doubles the campus footprint, giving young learners space to explore,

collaborate, and thrive. The Elementary 1 and 2 buildings sit side by side, connected by a bridge, with year-level floors and shared spaces such as art studios, music rooms, a kiln room, a science lab, the sports hall, and a two-storey library that brings Years 2 to 6 together. Every detail is designed to spark curiosity, encourage exploration, and make learning an adventure.

“The maker spaces are cool. I can build with cardboard, and I can go at play times.” – Year 2 student

The new facilities include:

- A two-storey library with an extensive collection of books and cosy nooks that make reading feel special.
- Three Makerspaces for tinkering and creating.
- A fully equipped learning kitchen for cooking and collaboration.
- Bright art studios and a kiln room.
- A science lab designed for young explorers.
- A spacious sports hall, complete with a climbing wall and new outdoor play zones.

“The thing I love is the art studios... I am inspired when I see everyone’s ideas.” – Year 4 student

Supporting Transitions and Belonging

At NIST, teaching and learning in the Elementary School are guided by the IB Primary Years Programme (PYP), an inquiry-based framework that encourages curiosity, creativity, and meaningful connections. In Years 2–6, students explore transdisciplinary Units of Inquiry that integrate subjects such as language, mathematics, science, and the arts, helping them see how knowledge connects across disciplines.

The curriculum also emphasises the development of skills and attributes—collaboration, critical thinking, communication, and resilience—that prepare students for an ever-changing world. Projects, performances, and real-world applications give children opportunities to express themselves, work with others, and grow in confidence as learners and as global citizens.



A Community of Many Cultures

NIST is home to over 1,800 students from 77 nationalities, making it one of the most diverse international schools in Bangkok. With 22 active cultural groups, families are warmly welcomed into a community where differences are celebrated and connections flourish. For Scandinavian families in particular, NIST has long been a trusted choice: more than 70 Nordic students (around 4% of the student body) currently attend, supported by an active Nordic parent group.

Languages that Strengthen Identity

NIST also offers one of Bangkok’s most extensive language programmes. By Year 2, students can choose from a wide range of home and acquisition languages—including Danish, Swedish, and Finnish—helping them stay connected to their heritage while preparing for a global future.

Building Futures

The new Elementary Buildings are more than spaces to learn—they are places where children develop confidence, creativity, and friendships that will carry them into the future.

For families seeking a school that balances world-class facilities with a nurturing community, NIST offers a place where every child can learn, create, and belong, right in the heart of Bangkok.

For more information, visit www.nist.ac.th.

Tiny Tools, Big Ideas: How Woodwork Is Shaping Young Minds at Bangkok Patana

By Nadia Arias, Bangkok Patana School Teacher



In a sunlit corner of Bangkok Patana School's Foundation Stage, a group of preschoolers huddle around child-sized workbenches, goggles snug on their faces, tiny hands gripping real tools. They are building as they play and in the process, they are learning far more than how to hammer a nail.

Woodwork, once considered too risky or too advanced for early years education, is now a cornerstone of Bangkok Patana's hands-on learning philosophy. The initiative began with a simple observation: children thrive when given real materials and meaningful tasks. Educational consultant Kym Scott, during a visit to the school, identified woodwork as a powerful tool for fostering creativity, resilience, and problem-solving in young learners.

The school didn't have to look far for a champion. Nadia Arifs, an early years teacher with a passion for experiential learning, had long been intrigued by the cognitive benefits of woodwork. Inspired by its potential, she enrolled in specialist training with Pete Moorhouse, a leading figure in early years woodwork education. His course, delivered through Irresistible Learning, emphasised the developmental richness of working with real tools — from spatial reasoning to emotional regulation.



Back at Patana, collaboration with the Design+ Technology team helped transform theory into practice. Together, they designed a safe, developmentally appropriate woodwork space: child-sized benches, soft balsa wood, safety gear and a rigorous risk assessment. Sessions are conducted in small groups, with accredited teachers guiding children through the process, not toward a product, but toward discovery.

The results have been quietly revolutionary.

One child at the age of 7, determined to build a car, carefully measured and cut wood to size, later sharing his technique with a peer. His father reported that the finished car remains proudly displayed at home, a symbol of effort, pride and learning. Another child, at the age of four, spent over forty minutes immersed in his project before asking, “Ms Nadia, tomorrow, can I do more? I want to do it for my mummy.”

These moments, says Nadia, are what make the programme so powerful. “It’s not just about making things,” she explains, “It’s about children feeling capable, creative and connected.”

The conversations in the woodwork area are just as telling. “Zara, you don’t have to copy... You can make whatever you want!” said Hailey, age four. Zara replied, “I also like boats, but I’m not going to make it today.” These exchanges reflect a growing sense of agency and individuality, qualities that Patana nurtures across its curriculum.

Looking ahead to the 2025/26 academic year, the school plans to expand woodwork as part of its STEAM provision. More educators will be trained, and bespoke equipment is now being produced by suppliers in Thailand, paving the way for more ambitious projects.

In a world that increasingly values innovation, collaboration and adaptability, Bangkok Patana’s youngest learners are already practicing these skills with saws and sandpaper in hand. Woodwork at Patana is no longer a novelty. It’s a statement, that children, even at three or four years old, are capable of extraordinary things when given the right tools, the right guidance and the freedom to explore.

www.patana.ac.th



Creativity & Imagination: **Building Readiness for Tomorrow at ISB**

At the International School Bangkok (ISB), our Early Childhood program is a joyful place where curiosity drives learning and children's ideas are taken seriously. We believe that education goes far beyond academics. In PreK and Kindergarten, we nurture creativity, imagination, and self-expression essential skills that prepare children not just for school, but for life.

Children at ISB engage in hands-on, play-based learning experiences designed to spark their natural curiosity. Through storytelling, art, music, movement, and dramatic play, they explore who they are, how they relate to others, and how they can make sense of the world around them. Our Reggio inspired environments are intentionally designed to invite wonder and foster collaboration, while our teachers act as facilitators and partners in discovery.

Alongside joyful exploration, we ensure a strong foundation in early literacy, numeracy, and social-emotional learning. By combining creative expression with research-based instruction, we empower students to develop critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills — the very skills they will need to thrive in an ever-changing world.





At ISB, every child is curious, courageous, and ready for what's next. When children are given the tools to imagine, create, and connect, they build the confidence and readiness to take on tomorrow's challenges.

*By Honey Tondre
Elementary School Vice Principal*

To learn more about our Elementary School please visit.
www.isb.ac.th/curriculum-academics-learning/elementary-school





Why Movement is a Must for Your Little One's Development

By Mandy McFarlane
Head of Early Pathways at Bangkok Prep



We've all noticed that young children are constantly moving, and there's a good reason for it. For preschoolers, movement is a fundamental part of how they learn and grow. It's the language of early childhood development, laying the groundwork for everything from physical skills to academic success and emotional well-being.

Think about the simple act of a baby crawling. It might seem like just a way to get from point A to point B, but it's a complex process that helps build core strength, develop hand-eye coordination, and even wire the brain for later learning. As children get older and start to run, jump, and climb, they are not only strengthening their

muscles and improving their balance but also learning about cause and effect and spatial awareness.

This physical exploration is also vital for their cognitive development. When children engage in active play, they are using their bodies to solve problems, like figuring out how to get to the top of a slide or how to balance on a beam. These experiences help build important neural connections that support memory, attention, and executive functions, the very skills they'll need for school.

Movement also plays a huge role in social and emotional health. Through games and shared activities, kids learn to take turns, share, and communicate. Active play is a natural outlet for big feelings, helping children regulate their emotions and build self-confidence as they master new skills. So, the next time your child is climbing the couch or dancing in the living room, remember it's not just play, **it's powerful learning in action.**

You don't need a large space for your child to get moving. In smaller living spaces like condos, simple activities can provide valuable physical engagement. Try helping your child stir and mix food in the kitchen, creating a "mini obstacle course" with cushions and blankets, or playing "follow the leader." The key is creatively integrating movement into daily routines, proving that big development doesn't always need a playground.



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for children ages 2 to 5 encourages each child to learn and grow in their own way.

We believe that young children learn best when they feel safe, happy, and excited to explore.

Our approach is all about learning through play and discovery, where every child's natural curiosity is encouraged and celebrated.

COMMUNITY TIME

A time for fun, learning, and growing together through play and getting to know the rhythms and routines of the day.



WEXPLORE

A time to discover, play, and create in ways that nurtures curiosity and independence. The session is carefully designed so learners can follow their interests, make choices, and develop skills across many areas.



PERFORMING ARTS

Learners explore how music, singing, body percussion, movement, and simple actions create music and builds self-expression.



MATH LAB

Learners explore foundational math concepts through play-based learning, building critical thinking and problem-solving skills before discovering other mathematical functions.



VERSO'S LITTLE EXPLORERS PLAYGROUP

AGES 1-3 YEARS OLD
3:00PM - 4:00PM EVERY THURSDAY



SCAN TO BOOK

Only 1 adult per child
Limited to 20 families per session
Open to all families to join

WELL-BEING



Time given during the day to develop important physical coordination, movement and sensory skills, balance, and healthy habits.



VERSO
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



LEARNING LAB

A dynamic learning environment where learners engage in project-based and play-based inquiry, providing an interdisciplinary approach to learning.



LITERACY LAB

Beginning with oral language development in EY2-3, learners engage with stories, songs, and conversations. Progressing to EY4-5, they deepen these foundations while gradually exploring phonics and the formal aspects of reading and writing.



SWIMMING

Encourages independent pool entry and exit, comfortable submersion, supported floating skills, confidence, and safety awareness.



LANGUAGE LABS

In addition to English, both Thai and Chinese language classes strive to build the child's vocabulary, recognizing the alphabets and characters, while developing listening and speaking skills through songs, stories, and games.

VISUAL ARTS

Learners are introduced to the wonder of art by drawing, painting, sculpting, and more!



15 Mins
from Mega Bangna



BOOK A TOUR



198, Moo 4, Soi Sarasetthasiri, Suvarnabhumi 3 Road, Bangchalong Sub-district, Bang Plee District, Samut Prakan 10540 Thailand

+66 2080 6200 admissions@verso.ac.th

The Reggio Emilia approach to early years education



The first years of life — from toddlerhood through primary school — are often called the “golden years,” when nearly 90% of the brain is already developed, making this the most formative stage of childhood. In these years children build character, absorb values, and develop empathy, resilience, and self-regulation, while laying the foundations for lifelong learning and success.

The Reggio Emilia approach to education, born in Northern Italy after World War II, is rooted in the truth that the early years shape who we become. Rather than seeing children as empty vessels to be filled, Reggio views them as capable, curious, and full of potential. Learning is built through hands-on, interdisciplinary projects that encourage children to investigate real-world questions, connect across subjects, and share discoveries with peers.



At **ELC International Schools Bangkok**, we have pioneered the Reggio Emilia approach for over 40 years. With small class sizes, exceptional educators, and campuses designed as “third teachers,” our ateliers and green spaces spark imagination and inquiry. Our exclusive focus on the early years, extended beyond Kindergarten through Year 6 and shaped in collaboration with a founder of the Reggio Emilia approach, means we devote ourselves fully to what matters most in this formative stage of life.

At ELC, children experience:

- **Building deep knowledge** through hands-on, interdisciplinary projects
- **Developing future-ready skills** — creativity, collaboration, communication, compassion, and critical thinking in a joyful yet structured setting
- **Being seen, heard, and supported** through every step of the way
- **Learning through a curriculum** that values both creativity and academic excellence

ELC brings the Reggio philosophy to life in Bangkok, guiding families through the most formative years of childhood. Discover more at www.elc.ac.th.

At its heart are three defining ideas:

- **Projects of research** — long-term, hands-on investigations where children test ideas, connect disciplines, and collaborate.
- **The environment as a third teacher** — thoughtfully designed spaces that inspire wonder, independence, and creativity.
- **The hundred languages of children** — honoring the many ways children express themselves: through words, movement, music, art, building, and more.

Reggio values process over outcomes, fostering resilience, creativity, and collaboration. By co-constructing knowledge with teachers, family, and peers, children build critical thinking, adaptability, and communication — and discover that their ideas matter; mistakes are opportunities, and knowledge is built, not received.





Nurturing Young Minds Through The Curiosity Approach®

at Regents International School Pattaya

At Regents International School Pattaya, the journey of learning begins with wonder. As one of only two schools in Thailand—and the only one on the Eastern Seaboard—to be fully accredited by The Curiosity Approach®, Regents is redefining early childhood education for families seeking a nurturing, imaginative, and inspiring start for their children.

The Curiosity Approach® blends the best of Reggio Emilia, Montessori, Steiner, and Te Whāriki philosophies. At Regents, this means classrooms filled with toys, as well as real-world, natural materials that spark imagination and creativity. Everyday objects become tools for exploration, helping children develop critical thinking, independence, and a lifelong love of learning.

“Our educators have transformed learning environments to create spaces that feel like home—rich in texture, warmth, and wonder,” says Ms. Kelly Heasley, Assistant Head of Primary – Early Primary. “Children are encouraged to ask questions, make discoveries, and take ownership of their learning journey.”

Examples of Curiosity-inspired activities include:

- **Potion-making stations** using herbs, petals, and colored water to explore sensory play and early science concepts.
- **Loose parts play** with shells, buttons, and wooden rings that encourage storytelling, counting, and design thinking.
- **Nature walks** where children collect leaves, twigs, and stones to create art or investigate seasonal changes.
- **Mini-world setups** using recycled materials to build imaginative scenes like farms, space stations, or underwater worlds.

For families seeking a school that values creativity, connection, and child-led learning, Regents International School Pattaya offers a truly special environment—where curiosity isn't just encouraged, it's celebrated.

To learn more or experience The Curiosity Approach® at Regents International School Pattaya, families are invited to contact admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th.

Denmark In Your Eyes competition launches with focus on green living

Hundreds of Vietnamese students gathered in Hanoi on 18 September 2025 for the launch of this year's **Denmark In Your Eyes** painting competition, held under the theme “Green Living.”

Co-organized by the Danish Embassy in Vietnam and the Vietnam–Denmark Friendship Association (VIDAFA), the contest is open to primary and secondary school students. It also marks the lead-up to the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Vietnam in 2026.

The Danish Embassy noted that the initiative aims to raise awareness and inspire climate action through creative expression.

“This competition is not just about drawing, but also an opportunity for students to imagine a more beautiful world—and affirm that



such a world can become reality. I am excited to admire the works of students from across the country and hear their own stories about living green and protecting the planet,” said Danish Ambassador Nicolai Prytz.

Submissions are open until 20 December 2025, with an award cer-

emony planned for the end of the 2025–2026 school year in Hanoi.

This year's theme encourages students to reflect on how small daily actions—such as turning off lights, using cloth bags, cycling short distances, or planting trees—can create lasting environmental impact when practiced widely.

Finnish baby box concept inspires new initiative in Malaysia



Mamaway Malaysia has launched a nationwide campaign offering free Finnish Baby Boxes to expecting mothers and parents of newborns, inspired by Finland's decades-old

tradition credited with improving infant health and family well-being.

The initiative aims to give Malaysian families a safe, clutter-free sleeping option for newborns. Co-sleeping remains common in Malay-

sia, with over 60 percent of mothers sharing a bed with their babies during the first week. While valued for closeness, the practice can pose risks in certain situations.

The Mamaway Baby Box includes a certified hypoallergenic mattress and is designed to be sturdy and portable. Mothers can redeem the box at selected Mamaway outlets in Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Penang and Putrajaya by presenting their government-issued maternity record book, known as the Buku Pink.

Mamaway describes the box as “more than a product,” presenting it as a practical support tool for families with newborns.



Beyond tourism – Danes create new opportunities for Bali’s children

Forty children gather in the yard of a small village school in Bali, waiting for something special. Some rush forward with hugs, handshakes and high fives as international volunteers arrive, while others hang back, shy but curious. Music begins to play, and soon everyone – locals, foreigners, young and old – is dancing together. Laughter cuts through the tropical heat, and the energy is contagious.

By Maria Xaver Dover

This is not a typical school day. Instead of textbooks and drills, the morning is filled with games, music and group activities designed to make learning playful. For Educate Bali, it marks the start of a new partnership: the third school to join their growing network. For the children, it is a break from routine – and a taste of a different kind of learning, one that blends fun with future opportunity.

A vision with roots in Denmark

Educate Bali was founded just one year ago, born from conversations between two Danes and two Dutch friends who wanted to give something back to the island. Tourism dominates the economy, yet many families in rural areas struggle to provide their children with the skills needed for work in hotels, restaurants or tour operations.

For Danish entrepreneur Lukas Seerup Nielsen, who has lived in Bali for several years, the contrast was striking.

“In Denmark we grow up with a welfare system that guarantees equal access to schooling. Here, people are incredibly welcoming, but opportunities are not equal. From the beginning, it was important for us to create something that could make a real difference,” he says.



“

In Denmark we grow up with a welfare system that guarantees equal access to schooling.

Here, people are incredibly welcoming, but opportunities are not equal.

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From the outset, Educate Bali set itself apart from other small-scale initiatives.

“A lot of projects here are run with a bleeding heart but without long-term planning. My background is in business, and I know that sustainability requires strategy,” Lukas explains.

Language skills that open doors

Three full-time Balinese teachers are already on the payroll, with more being recruited as the network expands. Choosing local teachers was deliberate – not only to provide jobs but also to ensure that language, culture and teaching style are a natural fit.

For Prihartini Utami, who leads the teaching team, the mission is deeply personal.

“As a girl I dreamed of speaking English. I thought it was so cool when people could talk with foreigners. It changed my own life when I finally learned, and now I want to pass that dream on. The children deserve to believe they can achieve more,” she says.

At the small village school, she moves between groups with an encouraging smile. When a child hesitates, she kneels down to their level, repeating a phrase until the words come out. Slowly, confidence grows.



“

To get a job in tourism, English is the quickest tool you can give a child. It can be the difference between staying in the village or finding work in hotels, restaurants or travel agencies.

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English may not be the only skill children need, but on an island that lives on tourism, it is an immediate gateway to work. According to Lukas, Balinese pupils receive on average just 45 minutes of English lessons per week in the public system. Educate Bali's goal is to raise that to at least two hours with motivated local teachers.

"To get a job in tourism, English is the quickest tool you can give a child. It can be the difference between staying in the village or finding work in hotels, restaurants or travel agencies," Lukas says.

A growing community

When the volunteers arrive on this September morning, many greet each other with hugs and cheerful "Good to see you again!" Others meet for the first time and exchange smiles before diving into the day's activities.

Tobias Liljegren, a Dane who lives on the island, explains: "I come here with completely different financial means than most people in Bali. Being part of this project is my way of giving back. Helping the kids to learn English is like giving them a tool to see the world from a different perspective."

Over time, Educate Bali has become more than an educational project – it is a community that unites locals, expats and tourists. The weekly running club is part of that identity. Every Monday and Wednesday, participants set off together, sometimes just a handful, other times up to 40. For many, it is both exercise and a social gathering, a way to support the project while building connections.

Monthly volunteer events draw around thirty participants who travel to partner schools to run games, lessons and workshops. For the children, it means excitement and attention. For the volunteers, it creates friendships and a sense of belonging.

"I really value the sense of community with the other volunteers, a break from everyday life, and I love seeing how happy the children are when we play games with them," says Frederikke Gadegaard, a Danish volunteer living in Bali.

Oscar Stald Rasmussen, also Danish and based on the island, adds: "The locals give so much of themselves to all the foreigners who come to Bali. For me, it means a lot to give something back."



Funding with a strategy

Keeping such an initiative alive requires careful planning. Unlike many smaller projects, Educate Bali has built its economy on multiple income streams. The most important are rental incomes from villas that Lukas has developed through another company. On top of this come volunteer contributions, donations linked to the running club, and larger sporting events that Lukas helps to organise.

In Denmark, a formal partner association with five Danes on the board has been set up. This structure opens the door to grants from Danish and European foundations. Recently, Educate Bali secured support from CISU – Denmark’s largest umbrella organisation for civil society – to produce a short documentary about the project. The team now hopes to attract larger partners, including LEGO.

Emil Eldevig, a Dane with experience in NGO fundraising who has lived on Bali for several months, is leading the work to secure further funding.

“By setting up a Danish partner organisation, we are able to apply for support in Denmark and Europe.

It’s a technical step, but one that opens many doors for us,” Emil says.

Building for the future

Educate Bali is still a young initiative, but the vision is ambitious. With every new school that joins, the network grows, giving more pupils the chance not only to learn English but also to build confidence and gain access to future opportunities.

“Already, we have reached more than 500 children. That is real impact, and I am proud to contribute,” says Lukas.

For the children, the difference is felt right away. At the end of the morning, their voices ring out in chorus: “I am happy for today!” Some even shout that they wish it could happen every day.

For the volunteers, those words capture the essence of Educate Bali. The project is about more than language skills – it is about connection, confidence and hope. And for Bali’s children, each playful Saturday is a step closer to a brighter future.

From graffiti renegade to Embassy wall - that's full circle

In September, Bangkok hosted Krung Thep Creative Streets as part of the European Heritage Days 2025. Organised by the Danish Embassy together with the French Embassy in Thailand and other European partners, the initiative brought street art to the city from 15 to 19 September and opened historic buildings to the public during the final weekend.



Among the invited artists was the Danish Christian Storm. He created his own mural on a city wall and joined five others in a collaborative work on the Embassy of Denmark's wall.

"For an artist who once left Denmark searching for opportunities, being invited back by my country's Embassy in Thailand to showcase my graffiti feels like proof that my path has come full circle. Graffiti was once seen as illegal, something people didn't appreciate. Now I get to use it in a way that connects cultures. That's amazing," Christian Storm says.

A life built around graffiti

Christian Storm, now 48 years old, has been painting graffiti since the age of 14. What started as teenage mischief turned into a lifelong passion. For years, he worked by day at a kitchen company in Denmark and painted graffiti by night. Eventually, the chance came to turn his art into a career.

"I never really planned to make a living from it, but suddenly it became possible. Graffiti was always my hobby, and now I get invited to practice it around the world. It makes me feel lucky."

Denmark, however, offered limited opportunities for his style of work.

"I had a friend living in Korea, and I thought it would be exciting to take a chance there. That's also where I met my wife, and it made sense for us to build a life together," he explains.

Since 2021, he has lived in Seoul with his wife, an artist known as Junkhouse. The couple often work together and support each other on large projects.

He enjoys living in Asia, finding constant inspiration in the region's vibrant urban scenes. But he also misses Denmark, family and old friends – which is why he tries to return home at least once a year. When he is back, he also enjoys painting. This summer, he created a mural in the Danish city of Assens as part of a city development project, and at other times he has contributed with his art at Roskilde Festival.

Inspiration from cultures and colours
Travel has been central to Christian Storm's development.

"I've always moved between cultures, mingling with locals rather than being a tourist. You meet all kinds of people, different religions, different backgrounds – it's very inspiring," he explains.

But he does not see his work as bound by national or cultural context.

"Of course, it's different to paint in different places, but I don't think so much about where I am. I focus more on what I want to create and what I think looks good."

He often finds ideas in the small details of everyday life.

"I sit in cafés, watch people, look at colours, and store it all in my memory. That's where a lot of my inspiration comes from."



Painting in Bangkok

At Krung Thep Creative Streets, Christian Storm found himself painting in the middle of Bangkok's busy streets.

"When I paint on a big street wall, there is so much happening around me – traffic, people, noise. I put music in my ears and focus completely. It's an inner process. But it's also fun to hang out with the other artists. This event is a really cool experience for me," he says.

The collaborative work at the Embassy of Denmark was painted in red and blue tones, chosen for their symbolism in Thailand. For Christian Storm, the invitation to take part was both an honour and a personal milestone – showing how far graffiti has come, and how far he has come with it.



Life, Love and Football

“To love and honor, to comfort, and to cherish. In sickness and in health. For better or for worse.” The foundation of love and marriage. But life is filled with obstacles, and tough times can put love to the test. This is a story about hardships and challenges. About love and comfort. About support and determination. This is a story about a couple, who traveled the world and found peace in Cambodia.

By Alexander Vittrup

Cecilie Næsager is from Thy in northern Denmark. Shy by nature, Cecilie grew up in the rural countryside. She liked sports, volleyball, handball, badminton, and gymnastics, though ironically, she never cared much for football.

Jungbin Park has always loved football. He was born in Busan, South Korea. Extroverted by nature, he is the type who makes friends wherever he goes. From the age of six he dreamt of becoming a professional football player. He trained night and day and by age 16, he was being scouted by European leagues. In 2010 Jungbin's father signed a small exit-contract, and the Park family moved to Germany. When Jungbin was 21 years old, he moved to Denmark and played for Viborg FF, which is where he met Cecilie.

The two met on Tinder. Cecilie's friend had made her a profile – just for fun, mostly against Cecilie's better judgement. At the time Jungbin, like most Korean expats, used Tinder for friendships, so Cecilie didn't feel the same pressure from the other guys. The two exchanged contact information and stayed in touch.

It started as an online friendship. Jungbin was tired of only hanging out with football guys. Cecilie was intrigued by someone from a culture unlike anything she knew from Thy. The online friendship built up over many months, until one day in mid-September 2016, Jungbin desperately needed printer ink and with no idea where to look, he turned to Cecilie. The months of talking had gradually eased Cecilie's shyness, so she agreed to help him.

They met in front of Viborg library and Cecilie was nervous. It was her first time really meeting and talking to a foreigner, and she wasn't too confident in her spoken English.

Jungbin was nervous too. It was not meant to be a date; they were just going to buy printer ink. Still, she was beautiful and different from any girl he had met before, so laid-back and kindhearted.

Their connection grew stronger. She helped him learn Danish. He took her to new places she was normally too shy to venture into on her own. It wasn't long before romance blossomed. And on New Year's Eve 2018 Jungbin bent down on one knee and the two married in spring 2019.

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She could see the light behind his eyes begin to darken, and though she tried to comfort him, she was unable to fix anything.

”

Professional football is a tumultuous career. It requires a lot from a person – and their spouse. Jungbin had always been hardworking and focused on his goals, but Cecilie showed him how to slow down and appreciate the present. At the same time, Cecilie felt inspired by Jungbin's hardworking spirit, and she started to see how she too could accomplish her goals if she truly committed.

In 2019 the newlyweds packed up their life in Jutland and headed for the Swiss Alps, where Jungbin had been signed with Servette FC. A big move for the shy girl from Thy, but as long as she was with her beloved husband, and he was happy, everything would be all right. Jungbin played his best season yet. Games were won. He was named star player of the Swiss season. And his proudest supporter, Cecilie, was cheering him on. Everything was going so well.

And then COVID hit. Everything shut down. And tragedy struck. During practice Jungbin had an accident that resulted in a serious knee injury.



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We have a dream of settling down in Denmark eventually. But I always tell him, as long as you are happy playing football, I will support you. We are a team.

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The injury required surgery and Cecilie was mortified. She stayed by Jungbin's bedside, comforting and supporting him. Because of COVID and visa rules, Jungbin was not permitted to stay in Europe while recovering from his surgery, so together the young couple decided to leave Europe for Jungbin's home country, South Korea.

Korea sounded exciting, Cecilie had never been. She only knew what Jungbin had told her. Sure, it had not been part of their plan. The injury had been hard on them both. But it was a new adventure rarely experienced by young girls back in Thy. As long as they had each other, everything was all right. Jungbin had even signed with FC Seoul. Things were looking up.

And then misfortune befell the couple again. Back when Jungbin was 16 years old, his father had signed a contract with his old club, Jeonnam Dragons, to get his son to Europe. The contract stated that if Jungbin returned to Korea to play, he could play only for them. Jeonnam Dragons demanded that Jungbin stop playing for FC Seoul, or they would sue for 150,000 USD. Cecilie and Jungbin tried to negotiate. But the club leaked the case to the media. The story became about a selfish player who refused to honor a legally binding contract. Before they knew it, Cecilie and Jungbin were staring down a tsunami of public scrutiny.

The online hate was life-shattering. Cecilie could not go online without seeing thousands of faceless avatars mocking her husband. She watched him wear down. He would come home to their tiny apartment looking dead tired – and not from training. She could see the light behind his eyes begin to darken, and though she tried to comfort him, she was unable to fix anything. She feared the harassment from lawyers and fans alike would eventually make him snap.

To Jungbin, it had looked so bright. He had brought his wife to Korea, excited to show her where he came from. Now, with the legal situation and the online hate, she barely left the apartment. He was concerned for her. Jeonnam Dragons wanted 150,000 USD, way more than he could pay. He considered just giving up, and he became very depressed.





The lawsuit was solved by Jungbin's parents. The father, who had signed that cursed contract all those years ago, sold their house to pay Jeonnam Dragons.

Jungbin was free, but Korea was ruined. What was meant to be a fresh start for the young couple had turned into a traumatic legal nightmare. The couple moved to France, where Jungbin signed with Rodez AF.

France could be good, Cecilie thought, a fresh start. She could see a bit of light return to her husband, and seeing that made her feel better too. He even scored the winning goal in a game against a major rival club, and Cecilie was so proud. France could be good, if only he kept playing.

But things turned sour for the couple. Jungbin was benched. No matter how well he played and how hard he trained, it never seemed to matter to the club management, who refused to put him out on the field. Cecilie could see his frustrations. She heard whispers from other players' wives. Allegedly, something about a racist assistant coach with a vendetta against foreign players. She could see the light in her husband, which had just come back, fade once more. She was not thriving either. She had no friends in France. She found herself isolated, staying at home yet again.

This couldn't continue. The couple started to look around for a place to relocate. Offers were coming in from all over the world. Visakha FC in Cambodia offered him a contract – he declined. A club in India – he declined. Visakha FC offered a higher salary and better benefits – he declined again. They considered going back to Denmark to live with Cecilie's family.

And then Visakha sent a third offer. It was extremely rare for a club to send three separate offers. That was an opportunity too good to pass up. So Jungbin accepted.

Cambodia? Cecilie had to look it up on a map. Jungbin seemed excited, and she was excited for him, if not a little hesitant. Her in-laws thought it was crazy. But they had moved around so much, so maybe it was not a big deal, as long as they had each other. She decided to let Cambodia be a surprise.

And surprise it did. Upon landing in Phnom Penh, Cecilie and Jungbin were greeted by a happy group of people from Visakha FC. Immediately Cecilie felt a welcoming warmth that had been missing in France. It wasn't long either before she started making friends. Phnom Penh had a large Korean diaspora that welcomed her husband and, by extension, her with open arms.

The shy girl from Thy now has a large social circle, and every day friends ask to hang out. Jungbin is thriving too. He is doing what he loves; playing football, and that makes Cecilie happy. She cherished his success.

Cambodia is the place for them for now. It suits them well. But Jungbin and Cecilie both agree that it would be nice to one day return to Denmark to raise a family. They know a professional football career can't last forever.

"We have a dream of settling down in Denmark eventually. But I always tell him, as long as you are happy playing football, I will support you. We are a team," Cecilie says while looking lovingly at Jungbin.



Agneta's
World

Agneta de Bekassy



A tough start of September month

My September began on a sad note with the loss of my mother. She reached the age of 94, a noble age, which she herself considered good years. Even though, when I left Sweden after the summer, I knew I was seeing her for the last time and tried to prepare myself mentally, I didn't quite succeed. It feels as if one loses a part of oneself. Life goes on, after all, and one takes it day by day.

By Agneta de Bekassy



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Sometimes it feels as if one is being punished for having left one's homeland, and it hurts, as you still feel Swedish in your heart and soul.

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I was very surprised to learn that everything related to the funeral must be paid for before the estate inventory is completed if you are not registered as a resident in Sweden and you are an heir. Expensive is it to live, and expensive is it to die. Tell me, what in life does not have to do with money...

“Sometimes it feels as if one is being punished for having left one's homeland, and it hurts, as you still feel Swedish in your heart and soul.”

Soon after my mom's passing, I had the pleasure of spending a day with a good friend, former MGM photographer Daniel Herron, US-born and specializing in fashion and celebrities, during a one-day shoot in Cambodia, Angkor Wat, with Thai model Jane Kasemsarn.

The day before leaving for Siem Reap began with me joining Daniel on a shopping trip to select outfits, many carefully chosen to complement the ancient temple backdrops he had planned.

Since my visa had expired and I had left my passport with an agent, I worried it wouldn't return in time. It took longer than usual, but to my great relief, it was returned the day before we were due to fly. Daniel, meanwhile, worried about the weather, as it was rainy season.

With Bangkok Airways we flew to Siem Reap, which I had not visited before. Their new airport is enormous,



and we arrived in an almost deserted arrival hall, apart from the immigration staff who were ready to assist us. Everything went smoothly and within minutes we stepped outside to call for a taxi. The ride to our hotel, FCC (Foreign Correspondents Club), was short. Located in the best area, it is a truly great hotel with the most welcoming staff.

While waiting for check-in, we were offered a refreshing lemon sorbet, a delightful surprise. The check-in itself was just as quick and effortless, setting the tone for a very pleasant journey.



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Behind the scenes, what looks effortless on camera is actually the result of meticulous planning, creativity, collaboration, and dedication to the profession.

”



After unpacking, we explored the city. We passed the Royal Palace, our closest neighbor, and visited the local market where we picked up more traditional garments for the next day's photo shoot. From there, we continued to a restaurant recommended by the hotel. It turned out to be an elegant venue where we were treated like VIP guests. We ordered a selection of classic local dishes, two of them meat-based, and were delighted to find the Cambodian beef exceptionally tender and flavorful. In the kitchen worked more staff than guests.

After dinner, we strolled back to our hotel at a leisurely pace, admiring the beautiful architecture along the way.

A Cambodian beer in the hotel's outdoor bar, accompanied by a guitarist and singer, was the perfect way to end the evening. I felt a little sorry for the staff and performers, as we were the only guests in the bar.

What many people assume about modeling – that it's all glamour and simply looking beautiful – couldn't be further from the truth.

Watching Daniel and Jane work, I saw how much thought, preparation, and coordination goes into every shot. Lighting, angles, wardrobe, and location all play crucial roles, while the model's ability to convey emotion and story is as important as the photographer's technical skill.

Throughout the day, it was fascinating to see the synergy between photographer and model, the way each anticipated the other's moves, and how countless small

adjustments transformed a simple pose into a striking image. It all reminded me of my own years as a fashion model in Europe.

Behind the scenes, what looks effortless on camera is actually the result of meticulous planning, creativity, collaboration, and dedication to the profession.

The next morning, our first visit was to Banteay Srei, the "lady temple" built of pink sandstone about 45 kilometers outside the city. Incredibly impressive, it offered a stunning backdrop for photos.

Our second stop was Ta Prohm, the famous "Tomb Raider Temple," where we admired the centuries-old trees growing through the temple stones with their massive roots.

We were guided by Chet, who knew his country's history well and spoke excellent English. He turned out to be a hobby photographer, eagerly following Daniel's directions with his own mobile, while also acting as an assistant, carrying bags and looking after us.

It was a bit tricky for Jane to change clothes behind boulders while we kept watch for curious tourists, but she managed brilliantly.

After a few hours Daniel was satisfied, and we returned to our hotel. Never has a cold shower felt so heavenly. We packed up and enjoyed a very late lunch in the hotel's outdoor restaurant. Once again, we chose local specialties, and I couldn't resist a cold beer. Sitting outside to relax before heading to the airport was pure delight.



I must admit I couldn't resist buying three bottles of wine to bring back to Bangkok—so much cheaper than in Thailand. I quickly chose a white, a rosé, and a red, and asked Jane and Daniel to take one each. We were together, and I carried all three in a plastic bag as hand luggage. At security, however, I was stopped immediately. I had picked up one-liter bottles, which were not allowed onboard.

Talk about disappointment – and a reminder that penny-pinching sometimes defeats common sense. I didn't want the bottles poured out, so after much persuasion, the officers agreed that our guide, who also worked with the taxi company, could receive the wine. The officer promised to carry it out and leave it at the taxi stand for our guide to collect the next day.

I hardly dared hope it would work, but the following day I received an email confirming the bottles had been collected. That eased my mind, though I was still terribly disappointed.

Our flight back to Bangkok was rather bumpy with turbulence, but we landed safely. At immigration we said goodbye to Jane, who, with her Thai passport, passed through quickly. Daniel and I, however, ran into trouble. We had desperately tried on our phones to download the now mandatory electronic arrival card but failed. We were directed to a row of screens where people were lining up to complete the forms.

When it was finally our turn, both Daniel and I failed

again. Frustrated, I asked a policeman, who was directing fast-track guests and diplomats, if he could help me fill it in on my phone. After some hesitation, he did – though I will never forget the look he gave me, as if I had been born yesterday.

Of course, he managed quickly and then had to help Daniel as well. We were both upset that no staff were available to assist. One wonders how elderly people manage with these new procedures. Sadly, it did not feel like the friendly Thailand that once existed.

Our disappointment grew when we discovered that our suitcases had gone missing and had to be collected from the baggage storage office. It was an anticlimax after an otherwise wonderful trip.

I do hope to return to Siem Reap one day. With its river and beautiful architecture, I found it far more appealing than Phnom Penh.

"I am now eagerly looking forward to Daniel's book *Voyage Mode – Asia Collection*, which will soon be published, featuring beautiful photos from Vietnam and Thailand."

Now several challenges await in September. Soon SWEA Bangkok will celebrate its 25th anniversary – something to look forward to.

Until then, stay tuned.

Ericsson opens new office in Hanoi to support Vietnam's digital journey



Swedish telecom giant Ericsson has inaugurated a new office in Hanoi, strengthening its 32-year presence in Vietnam and reaffirming its role in the nation's digital transformation.

"The opening of our new office in Hanoi demonstrates Ericsson's long-term commitment to

Vietnam. Together with our partners, we helped lay the foundation for 2G, then moved step by step through 3G and 4G. Today, we are proud to stand with Viettel, VNPT, and Mobifone as we bring 5G to life in Vietnam," said Rita Mokbel, President of Ericsson Vietnam.

The new 5G-enabled office

showcases Ericsson's Enterprise Virtual Cellular Network (EVCN), which lets enterprises manage and control 5G connectivity for mobile devices and IT applications without relying on wi-fi.

Vietnam aims for its digital economy to contribute up to 30 percent of GDP by 2030, with 5G as critical infrastructure. Ericsson plans to support this vision through closer collaboration with government, operators, enterprises, and universities in sectors such as manufacturing, healthcare, and smart cities.

The company also highlighted partnerships with Vietnamese universities, including Ericsson Educate with PTIT and the AI Lab with RMIT, underscoring its focus on talent development and innovation.

Marimekko opens flagship store in Hong Kong

Finnish lifestyle design house Marimekko will open a new flagship store in Hong Kong on 16 October 2025.

Located on Leighton Road in Causeway Bay, one of the city's busiest shopping districts, the store marks a return to the same location where Marimekko first opened in 2012. Operated by Sidefame Ltd., Marimekko's franchise partner in Hong Kong and China since 2011, the outlet has been fully refurbished and upgraded to flagship status.

"We believe that even in a digitalized world, creative and emotionally engaging physical retail concepts play an important role as the hearts of brand culture. Together with our partner Sidefame, we are excited to



take this next step in Hong Kong to build the Marimekko phenomenon," says Natacha Defrance, Senior Vice President, Sales, Region East at Marimekko.

The store showcases Marimekko's updated concept, featuring the

iconic Unikko print on the exterior and an interior inspired by the brand's textile factory in Helsinki.

Asia remains Marimekko's key growth market under its 2023–2027 strategy, with Hong Kong playing a central role.

Norway's wealth fund excludes French miner over Indonesian nickel project

Norway's sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, has excluded French mining company Eramet from its portfolio over environmental and human rights concerns tied to a nickel project in Indonesia.

Norges Bank Investment Management, which oversees the Government Pension Fund Global, announced on 12 September 2025 that the decision followed recommendations from its Council on Ethics. The council found an "unacceptable risk" of serious environmental damage and human rights violations linked to Eramet's stake in PT Weda

Bay Nickel, a joint venture in North Maluku province.

The mine, one of Indonesia's largest nickel producers, has been accused of causing deforestation, destroying habitats of endangered species, and threatening the survival of the Hongana Manyawa, an isolated hunter-gatherer community reliant on the forest. Earlier this year, authorities seized 150 hectares of the concession for illegal encroachment into forest land.

Eramet, a minority shareholder, expressed regret over the exclusion, insisting it promotes best practices in mining and social responsibility,



Weda Bay Nickel denied the allegations.

Rights group Survival International welcomed the move, urging other investors to divest. As of June 30, the Norwegian fund held 0.44 percent of Eramet, worth USD 6.8 million.

H&M reopens first China flagship with new concept

H&M has reopened its original flagship store in Shanghai with a new concept, House of H&M, marking the Swedish retailer's return to one of China's most prominent shopping streets.

The six-story corner store

on Huaihai Road, first opened in 2007, was closed in 2022 amid the Xinjiang cotton backlash and weak demand following COVID-19. On 15 September, H&M unveiled the redesigned space as a "brand center" combining fashion, lifestyle, and

digital engagement.

Spanning more than 3,000 square meters across four retail floors, the store features apparel, home goods, a flower shop, and an exhibition area, while the upper levels house H&M's regional headquarters. A livestream studio on the ground floor will host Douyin sessions with celebrities, designers, and influencers, turning the store into a "brand broadcast hub."

H&M has also launched a dedicated Douyin account for the flagship, highlighting the importance of digital interaction. The reopening follows new flagships in Beijing and Shenzhen earlier this year. The company, which operates about 300 stores across Greater China, says its focus is on selective flagship openings, upgrades, and portfolio optimization for sustained growth.



ALK enters strategic partnership with GenSci in China



Danish allergy company ALK-Abelló has signed a strategic partnership with Chinese biopharmaceutical firm GenSci to develop and commercialise its house dust mite allergy immunotherapy (AIT) products in China.

Under the agreement, GenSci

gains exclusive rights to ALK's products Alutard® and ACARIZAX® until the end of 2039. GenSci will take responsibility for sales, marketing, and most clinical development and registration costs, while ALK will continue to handle production and supply.

ALK will receive an upfront payment of around DKK 245 million and is eligible for milestone payments of up to DKK 1.3 billion in total. While the partnership is not expected to materially affect ALK's 2025 earnings, it is projected to strengthen margins in the medium term.

"We're very excited about the

prospects of speeding up market uptake of ALK's evidence-based AIT products in China. We see a strong strategic fit and look forward to cooperating with GenSci, which has a well-proven track record in this important market," says ALK CEO Peter Halling.

China has the world's largest population suffering from house dust mite allergy, yet fewer than one million people are currently treated with AIT. Through the new partnership, ALK and GenSci aim to expand market penetration by investing in awareness campaigns, hospital collaborations, and digital healthcare initiatives.

Flying Tiger Copenhagen opens first store in Thailand



Flying Tiger Copenhagen has officially arrived in Thailand, opening its first store at EM-SPHERE in Bangkok on 15 September 2025.

The Danish retail brand is known for its playful and ever-changing product range, offering more than 1,300 items spanning homeware, stationery, kitchen essentials,

toys, party gear, and snacks.

Founded in Copenhagen in 1995, Flying Tiger has grown into an international lifestyle chain with stores across Europe, Asia, and the United States. The concept focuses on affordable design, combining functionality with quirky touches that aim to bring joy and creativity into everyday life.

The new EMSPHERE outlet marks the brand's first step into the Thai market, where it seeks to attract shoppers looking for Danish design and inspiration in a casual, accessible format.

Flying Tiger Copenhagen is located on the second floor of EM-SPHERE and is open daily from 10:00 to 22:00.

Danish companies reaffirm long-term commitment to Chinese market

Danish business leaders have highlighted their confidence in China–Denmark economic cooperation during a high-level roundtable in Copenhagen on 12 September.

Kasper Elbjorn, Senior Vice President of Danfoss, said China has become the company's second-largest market after nearly three decades of operations. "We are dedicated to our Chinese customers. Danfoss products align well with China's five-year strategy, and we are proud to contribute to its decarbonization plans. That is why we continue to invest in China, for China," he noted.

Lukas Lausen, Head of Global Trade and Investment at Danish Industry (DI), stressed that many



Danish companies have operated in China for decades, with some for over a century. "China is a very important market for Danish companies, and it will continue to be so in the future," he said.

The roundtable coincided with a visit by a Chinese delegation led

by Ren Hongbin, Chairman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT). More than 500 Danish firms have invested in over 1,300 Chinese projects spanning pharmaceuticals, maritime transport, clean energy, environmental technology, and food products.

IKEA and Gustaf Westman launch colourful design pop-up in Singapore



Swedish design took centre stage in Singapore as IKEA unveiled its collaboration with Stockholm-based designer Gustaf Westman. The launch, held at New Bahru, featured an exclusive media preview attended by Ambassador Anders Sjöberg and Mrs. Sjöberg,

together with representatives from the Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Singapore, Business Sweden, and media partners.

Guests joined a panel discussion with Gustaf Westman and Elena Leonova of IKEA, highlighting Sweden's tradition of democratic

design—making high-quality, innovative design accessible to all. The talk was followed by a showcase of the bold, colourful collection that combines playful creativity with Nordic heritage.

The 12-piece range is part of IKEA's upcoming VINTERFINT Christmas collection, bringing Westman's signature rounded forms and pastel tones into the holiday season. The pop-up marks Westman's first collaboration with IKEA and a fresh way of presenting Swedish design to Singaporean audiences.

"The Embassy congratulates IKEA Singapore, Gustaf Westman, and partners on a successful launch, strengthening Sweden's reputation as a hub for creativity and design innovation," the Embassy of Sweden in Singapore said.

Finnish artist Minna Pietarinen brings “I Was Born a Girl” exhibition to Beijing



The Embassy of Finland in Beijing has partnered with GlobalMoms Initiative and Genesis Beijing to present “I Was Born a Girl”, an art and poetry exhibition by Finnish artist Minna Pietarinen.

The exhibition opened on Monday 15 September 2025 and runs until Wednesday 8 October at Genesis Beijing, Chaoyang District. Admission is free.

According to the organizers,

the exhibition highlights the resilience and strength of women worldwide, combining artistic expression with advocacy for gender equality and human rights. Pietarinen’s works are complemented by factual texts prepared by UN Women Finland and Peppi Stünkel, with translations by Fei Yang.

The initiative is part of Finland’s broader cultural diplomacy efforts in China, showcasing Nordic perspectives on gender equality through art. “I Was Born a Girl” is also the artist’s first exhibition in Asia.

The exhibition is supported by the Finnish Embassy in Beijing and Genesis Beijing, with Peppi Stünkel serving as executive director.

Norway highlights opportunities at CIFTIS 2025 in Beijing

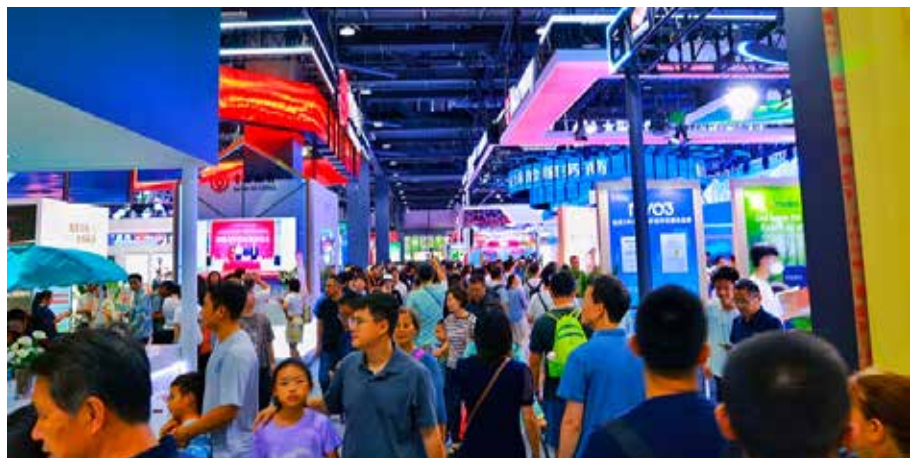
The 2025 China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS) concluded in Beijing on 14 September, marking one of the world’s largest trade exhibitions with record participation. Nearly 2,000 on-site exhibitors, 5,600 online participants, and more than 480 Fortune Global 500 companies joined the event, which resulted in over 900 agreements across sectors such as IT, finance, and construction.

Norway maintained a strong presence at both diplomatic and business levels. Henning Kristoffersen, Commercial Counsellor at the Norwegian Embassy in Beijing, emphasized the importance of China’s openness to Norway’s economy, pointing to opportunities in health-

focused products and maritime solutions.

Norwegian company Vitalis Pharma AS made its debut at the fair, showcasing seal oil supplements. Marketing manager Li Xi noted the

strong consumer response: “We spent time explaining the raw materials, legality, and benefits of seal oil. The enthusiasm was high, and many visitors placed orders on the spot.”



Nordic embassies support Hanoi Pride 2025

Hanoi Pride 2025 opened on 7 September under the theme “*From Longing to Belonging*.” The festival runs until 27 September with events celebrating diversity, resilience, and solidarity within Vietnam’s LGBTQIA+ community.

The embassies of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden jointly expressed their support, stressing their commitment to stand with local LGBTQIA+ organizations, amplify community voices, and promote equality and inclusion.

Norwegian Ambassador Hilde Solbakken attended the opening alongside fellow Nordic diplomats and international partners. On this occasion, the Embassy of Norway



received a Certificate of Appreciation from the organizers, recognizing Norway’s long-standing support for Hanoi Pride and its role in advancing diversity and human rights in Vietnam.

Since its inception, Hanoi Pride

has grown into a platform that unites activists, cultural groups, and international partners to foster visibility and dialogue. Nordic embassies emphasized that their participation reflects broader cooperation with Vietnam on human rights and social inclusion.

Swedish Club signs strategic partnership with Ping An in China

The Swedish Club has entered a strategic partnership with Ping An Property & Casualty Insurance Company, part of Ping An Group, to strengthen its presence in China. The agreement was announced on 15 September 2025.

This is the Club’s first partnership of its kind in China. By joining forces with Ping An, The Swedish Club can provide enhanced support for shipowners, operators, and charterers through Ping An’s nationwide network. Members will continue to

benefit from the Club’s international expertise while gaining easier access to local services and financial strength.

“China is at the heart of global shipping, and working alongside Ping An enables us to serve our members with greater efficiency, insight, and local presence,” said Thomas Nordberg, Managing Director of The Swedish Club.

Ping An noted the partnership combines international best practice with local knowledge, offering tailored insurance and risk management solutions. The Swedish Club, established in Hong Kong since 1982, sees this collaboration as a milestone in its commitment to Greater China’s maritime industry.



Swedish filmmaker honoured by Vietnam for cultural contributions



Swedish director Bo Öhlén has been awarded the insignia “*For the Cause of Culture, Sports and Tourism*” by Vietnam’s Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, recognising his efforts to promote the country’s history and culture.

The award was presented on 10 September at the Vietnamese Embassy in Stockholm by Ambassador Trần Văn Tuấn.

Öhlén directed *Victory Vietnam*, a documentary premiered in April 2025 to mark the 50th anniversary of Vietnam’s Liberation and National Reunification. Featuring historical

footage from Stockholm in 1975, the film was screened in Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, broadcast nationwide, and praised for its emotional impact and wide reach.

At the ceremony, Öhlén expressed gratitude for the honour, noting the documentary was created to reflect Sweden’s solidarity with Vietnam during the war. He added that he hopes the film will serve both as a historical record and as a way to deepen cultural ties between the two nations.

Thailand introduces fines for late-night drinking

From Saturday 8 November 2025, individuals in Thailand can face fines of up to 10,000 baht if they drink alcohol in licensed venues outside permitted hours.

The Department of Provincial Administration confirmed the change under an amendment to the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act. While previous rules only banned the sale of alcohol outside set hours, the revision now also penalises private consumers who continue drinking in restricted times.

The measure is presented as part of Thailand’s effort to promote responsible tourism and a safer nightlife environment. The new fines are expected to affect bars, clubs and lounges in nightlife hubs such as Bangkok, Pattaya and Phuket, where late-night alcohol sales are a major draw for international tourists.

Authorities have emphasised

the need for clear communication to visitors. Tourism operators are encouraged to provide information through brochures, hotel guides and digital platforms to help travellers avoid unintentional violations.

The government sees the move as a step towards sustainable tourism, balancing public health concerns with the country’s strong appeal as a nightlife destination.



Danish Seamen's Church in Singapore marks 40 years as a home away from home

The Danish Seamen's Church in Singapore celebrated its 40th anniversary on Saturday 13 September 2025 with a lively gathering of around 100 people at the Golden Bell.

Guests arrived in the late afternoon to a courtyard decorated with Danish flags, a marquee tent, and a festive barbecue buffet. Music filled the air, the kiosk sold sweets, and interim pastor Pia Sundbøll, who began her three-month posting on 8 September, was introduced to the guests.

In her speech, Pia Sundbøll reflected on how the church, though originally built for seafarers, has always kept its doors open to all. She later led the community in singing *I Østen stiger solen op*, a symbolic hymn for Danes living in Asia. Among the guests was Danish Ambassador Jakob Brix, alongside families, students, Danes on a gap year, and long-term residents.

In his anniversary speech, Oliver Andersen, the newly elected chairman of the church council, described the event as a strong reminder of the community's attachment to the church:

"I get the feeling from those who come that this is so important for the Danes here. Some visit weekly, others only once a year, but everyone expects us to be here. Seeing 100 people gathered is amazing — people meet new friends, expand their network, and experience a sense of belonging."

Oliver Andersen also shared his first memory of the church: attending a Christmas service in 1993 while visiting his father. Coming from a frosty Danish December to tropical Singapore, he thought Christmas would feel out of place — until the



hymn *Glade Jul* rang out.

"It was magical, and for me an instant bond with this place," he recalled.

Over the years, the church has been the setting for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and the occasional funeral, as well as cultural events, and even royal visits. It has hosted lively movie nights, festive bazaars, and traditional celebrations such as *Fastelavn* and *Sankt Hans*. It has also been a place of farewells,

offering dignity and comfort in times of loss.

In his speech, Oliver Andersen compared the church to a ship "laden with goodies, friendship, faith, traditions, and memories." Keeping that ship afloat depends on pastors sent from Denmark, dedicated volunteers, and loyal sponsors, he said, all of whom have helped maintain the Golden Bell as an open door for seafarers, expatriates, students, and backpackers alike.

Looking to the future, Oliver Andersen invited the Danish community in Singapore to continue supporting the church: "Come cruise with us for the next 40 years, so those who are here then will look back on 80 years of greatness for the DSC in Singapore!"



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