

NOV 2025

ScandAsia



BUSINESS:

Ovodan opens fourth factory in China with Danish support

INTERNATIONAL:

Norway helps Cambodia move one step closer to a mine-free future

COMMUNITY

Malaysia looks to Sweden as it debates raising retirement age

Hovi Club Teuku Umar Elderly Day Care Centre



Holistic Growth for *a Changing World.*

Inspiring creativity, confidence,
and resilience in every child.

Enroll Now




ISB International School Bangkok

+662 963 5800 | admissions@isb.ac.th | www.isb.ac.th


Instant Booking


Easy peasy lemon squeezy



 Making an appointment with an immediate confirmation

 Real-time available slots provided

 Managing and rescheduling bookings with ease

 Booking health check-up and other services

 **Instant Booking** Fast and convenient

Contents



16

Hovi Club Teuku Umar elderly day care centre



20

Rebuilding Paradise: The Story of Nesat



24

Meet the Villagers in Nesat



26

Nightclub manager Tony Karlsson



30

80 Years of the United Nations

ScandAsia stories

14 Remembering Queen Sirikit

32 Myanmar groups plan to sue Norway's Telenor over data sharing with junta

36 Danish Ambassador brings 'sponge city' spirit to Manila

42 Malaysia looks to Sweden as it debates raising retirement age



14



32



36



42

One-Stop Shop
for all your editing,
design, printing and
digital printing needs

SCANDMEDIA



What we provide...

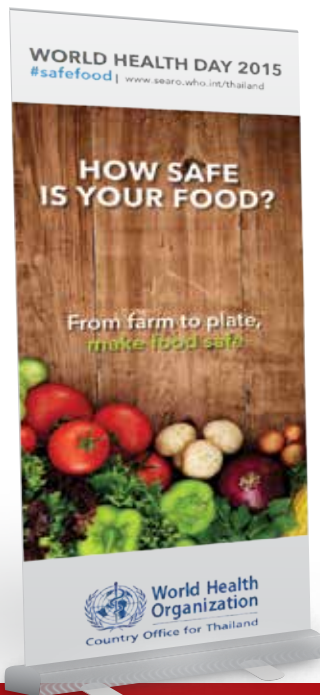
Publications

Brochures, Leaflets, Annual Reports,
Calendars & Cards, Planners, etc...



Marketing Materials

Roll-ups, Banners, CDs, Flags, etc...



Please contact

211 Soi Prasert - Manukitch 29, Chorakaebua, Ladprao, Bangkok 10230, Thailand

Tel: +66 2943 7166-8 Fax: +66 2943 7169 website: www.scandmedia.com

patcharee.scandmedia@gmail.com

suchaya.scandmedia@gmail.com

"Because Scand-Media is Your Partner in Communications"

Between community and enclave

Two stories in recent ScandAsia issues - the Nesat article in Cambodia in this November issue and the Thani Beach story in Thailand in the September issue - highlight how Nordic initiative and resilience can create something special abroad. Yet both raise a question that deserves reflection.

In Nesat, a group of expats including multiple Scandinavians are building a potential backpackers haven in the Cambodian jungle. What began as an escape from the coast 100 km away has become a self-contained village with cafés, bars, guesthouses and about 80 foreign residents - so distinct that locals now call it Phumi Barang, the "village of foreigners."

In Thani Beach, near Udon Thani, Danish entrepreneur Kenn Holm has built a "little Denmark" of homes around a lake and pool, complete with a Viking Café serving roast pork and smørrebrød. It is warm, friendly and accessible - but also unmistakably Danish.

Both projects are admirable. They create jobs, attract visitors and demonstrate Nordic creativity abroad. Yet they also reveal a paradox: while we in the Nordic countries spend years trying to avoid social and cultural "ghettos" at home, we may be reproducing them overseas.

In Denmark, Sweden, Norway and Finland, we ask newcomers to learn the language and integrate into local life - not to form enclaves of their own. Shouldn't we, as guests in Southeast Asia, strive for the same?

The intention behind these communities is not isolation but comfort - to be among people who share language, humor and habits. Still, the effect can easily look like separation. Thailand and Cambodia have recently seen similar "pop-up" foreign bubbles - from Israeli enclaves in Pai and Koh Phangan to Russian ones in Phuket - that sparked resentment in local media.

Nordic projects should aim higher. Integration should - and probably is - high on their agendas: learn the local language, employ and promote locals at every level, open events to neighbors, and make sure money circulates in nearby communities. Celebrate local festivals as eagerly as you celebrate midsummer or Christmas.

Cultural familiarity is pleasant; social isolation is not. Whether in Udon Thani or Koh Kong, the real success of these projects will not be how Danish or Swedish they feel, but how naturally they fit into the Cambodian and Thai communities that host them.



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

ScandAsia

ScandAsia is a printed magazine and online media covering the people and businesses of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland living and working in China, Hong Kong, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar.

Who should subscribe:

ScandAsia subscribers are typically Nordic expats and companies from the Nordic countries living in and active in Asia. Another group of subscribers are Nordic people living in the Nordic countries who subscribe to ScandAsia for personal or business reasons. We also have many Asian subscribers, who for a wide range of reasons are following the activities of the Nordic expats and companies via a subscription to ScandAsia.

The ScandAsia magazine is produced every month and distributed to all print version subscribers via postal services and to all eMagazine subscribers via email. Subscribing to the eMagazine is FREE - simply sign up on the ScandAsia.com website.

Become a ScandAsia user/

get free digital ScandAsia magazine or paid subscription via www.scandasia.com/

Publisher :
Scandinavian Publishing Co., Ltd.
211 Prasert Manukitch 29
Prasert Manukitch Road
Bangkok 10230, Thailand
Tel. +66 2 943 7166-8
Fax: +66 2 943 7169
E-mail: news@scandasia.com

Editor-in-Chief :
Gregers A.W. Møller
gregers@scandasia.com

Advertising :
Finn Balslev
finn@scandmedia.com
MB: +66 81 866 2577

Graphic Designer :
Peerapol Meesuan
Peerapol@scandmedia.com

Production Manager:
Sopida Yatprom



REGENTS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
PATTAYA

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

MORE THAN 30 YEARS OF

EXCELLENCE



Discover Regents International School Pattaya.

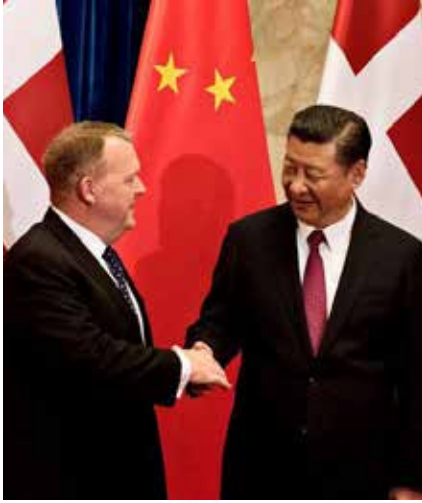
Celebrating more than **30 Years** of Empowering
Young Minds.



Contact admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th
or scan the QR code to book a visit and
learn more about our school.

CREATE
YOUR
FUTURE

Denmark urges tough EU response to China's rare earth export controls



Danish Minister for Foreign Affairs Lars Løkke Rasmussen has urged the European Union to take a firm stance on China's new export controls on rare earths. Speaking ahead of an EU trade ministers' meeting in Horsens in October, he said the bloc should "stick together" with Washington and "flex its muscles."

Beijing recently introduced strict licensing rules for products containing even small amounts of Chinese rare earth elements and announced that exports for over-

seas military use would "in principle" be banned. The metals are vital for electric vehicles, wind turbines, and defense technologies, and China accounts for about 70% of global mining and 90% of refining.

Rasmussen opposed retaliatory tariffs, saying the EU should maintain leverage while keeping "frank and open discussions" with Beijing. EU Trade Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič described the measures as "unjustified" and called for faster efforts to reduce Europe's dependence on China.

Clearing the path: Norway helps Cambodia move one step closer to a mine-free future

Norway has pledged USD 1.2 million to support Cambodia's mine clearance and victim assistance programs for 2025–2027, reaffirming more than three decades of cooperation between the two countries, Khmer Times reported.

The announcement followed a meeting in Phnom Penh between Norwegian Ambassador to Cambodia Astrid Emilie Helle and Senior Minister Ly Thuch, first vice president of the Cambodian Mine Action and Victim Assistance Authority (CMAA).

Ly Thuch thanked Norway for its continued support, describing the country as a key donor and long-standing partner in efforts to eliminate landmines and explosive remnants of war. He highlighted Norway's contributions to mine



clearance, data management, and capacity building, as well as its support during the Siem Reap–Angkor Summit on a Mine-Free World in 2024.

Ambassador Helle commend-

ed Cambodia's leadership in mine action and reaffirmed Norway's commitment to helping the country achieve its goal of becoming mine-free, particularly along the Cambodia–Thailand border.



CHRISTMAS AT STABLE LODGE

NOV. 22 - DEC. 21 SAT&SUN
STABLE LODGE'S CHRISTMAS LUNCH
FROM 1 PM to 4 PM
SCANDINAVIAN BUFFET W/WARM & COLD CUTS
THB. 795.- NET

PRIVATE CHRISTMAS BUFFET SMØRREBRØD,
AS YOU REQUEST ANY DAY FROM NOV. 22
10 OR MORE PEOPLE CAN SIT
THB. 795.- NET PER PERSON

DEC. 24

TRADITIONAL X-MAS DINNER
FROM 7 PM

PICKLED SALMON, ROASTED DUCK /PORK AND RICEPUDDING
THB. 1295.- NET. CHILDREN AGED 4-10 YEARS THB. 695.- NET
TICKET AVAILABLE FOR SALE AT THE RECEPTION.

DEC. 25

STABLE LODGE'S FAMOUS
CHRISTMAS LUNCH BUFFET THB. 895.- NET
PLEASE BOOK YOUR TABLE, LIMITED SPACE

BOOK NOW

Rattana@stablelodge.com
66 (0) 2653 0017 to 9

Indonesia urges WTO reform, backs Norway's Petter Ølberg as facilitator



Indonesia has called for firm political will to advance World Trade Organization (WTO) reform, with Trade Minister Budi Santoso urging members to restore trust in the rules-based trading system during the G20 Trade and Investment Ministerial Meeting in Gqeberha, South Africa, on 10 October 2025.

Santoso voiced support for appointing Norwegian Ambassador to the WTO Petter Ølberg as facilitator for the reform process and stressed the need to better communicate the WTO's achievements. He encouraged members to return to the Preamble of the 1994 Marrakesh Agreement as a guide for maintain-

ing a fair multilateral trade system.

He warned that rising unilateral measures are undermining multilateralism, creating skepticism among some members and weakening confidence in the WTO's ability to resolve disputes. "Despite its flaws, the WTO remains a vital global asset," he said.

G20 trade ministers at the meeting reaffirmed their commitment to a fair, inclusive, transparent and sustainable multilateral trade system, with Santoso urging that trade not be used as a political tool and that the development needs of developing countries be considered in all agreements.

Vietnam and Finland elevate ties to strategic partnership during Nordic visit

Vietnam and Finland have officially upgraded their bilateral relationship to a strategic partnership, marking a major milestone in more than five decades of diplomatic relations. The announcement was made during Vietnamese Party General Secretary Tô Lâm's official visit to Finland — the first by a Vietnamese party leader to the country.

Vietnamese Ambassador to Finland Phạm Thị Thanh Bình called the new partnership "a breakthrough," noting that Vietnam is Finland's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia. The framework will pave the way for high-level exchanges, deeper political dialogue, and strategic consultations.



During the visit, General Secretary Tô Lâm and a high-level delegation met with overseas Vietnamese communities in the Nordic countries, praising their role as cultural ambassadors and reaffirming the Party and State's support for their integration and development.

The partnership also opens new areas of cooperation in innovation, science and technology, climate action, agriculture, digital transformation, quantum technology, AI, culture, and education. Officials said the strengthened ties are expected to boost engagement within the Nordic and ASEAN–EU frameworks, creating new opportunities for trade and investment.

China puts a royal price tag on Norway's 'Salmon Queen'

China is reportedly demanding about 120 million NOK for the return of a Norwegian citizen imprisoned for alleged salmon smuggling.

Yimin Dong, a Norwegian national born in China, was sentenced in 2018 to 13 years in prison for allegedly smuggling Norwegian salmon into China through Vietnam and Tibet, during a period when Norwegian salmon exports to China were banned for political reasons.

Now nearing her 60th birthday, Dong has consistently denied the charges. Her family and Norwegian authorities have long sought her transfer to Norway to complete her sentence, citing poor health and concerns for her well-being.



Dong had previously worked for the Norwegian salmon company SalMar, though the firm stated she was not employed there at the time of her arrest.

According to Norwegian broadcaster NRK, China's Ministry

of Justice informed her family that a payment of 120 million NOK, plus additional costs, would be required for her release. A letter from September shows that Beijing rejected Norway's latest request for her transfer.

Your Scandinavian Hotel and Restaurant in Bangkok



**Stable Lodge
Hotel**

39 Sukhumvit Road, Soi 8, Bangkok, Thailand.

Tel: +66 (0) 2653 0017 Fax: +66 (0) 2253 5125

Email: hotel@stablelodge.com www.stablelodge.com

Ericsson faces US revenue slump and China risk



Ericsson's reliance on the US market has grown to around 43% of its year-to-date revenues, but third-quarter US sales fell 17% to about SEK 22.5 billion (USD 2.4 billion). The Swedish vendor is prioritising cost reductions

and AI-driven efficiencies to stay competitive.

China's share of Ericsson's revenue has also dropped, from around 8% in 2020 to 4% in 2024 (slightly over USD 1 billion) and about 3% in the third quarter of 2025. Reports

indicate Nordic vendors may face exclusion from China's market as national-security reviews continue. Ericsson's headcount in Northeast Asia has fallen by roughly a quarter since 2020.

CEO Börje Ekholm now identifies the US, India, Japan, and the UK as key markets. After rapid 5G deployment, India's annual revenues declined from SEK 31.6 billion (USD 3.3 billion) in 2023 to SEK 14.9 billion (USD 1.6 billion) in 2024. In Japan, a 5G deal with SoftBank helped lift third-quarter sales in Northeast Asia by 4% to SEK 3.8 billion (USD 400 million).

In the US, spectrum moves such as Echostar's license sales to AT&T and others could spur fresh investments.

Thai berry pickers in Sweden awarded compensation for exploitation

Twenty-nine Thai berry pickers have been granted a total of 2.3 million kronor in state compensation by the Swedish Crime Victim Authority following a case of severe labour exploitation in Västerbotten, northern Sweden.

Around 150 Thai workers arrived in Åsele in 2023 with promises of fair wages and conditions but were instead forced to work up to twelve hours a day, seven days a week, often without pay. Two berry company owners were convicted of aggravated human exploitation and ordered to pay damages.

According to the court ruling, the workers lived under harsh conditions, with poor housing, little food,



and limited freedom of movement. Many had their passports confiscated and were threatened with being sent home in debt. "We hope the compensation helps provide some sense of justice for the victims," said Magnus Öhrn, head of the compen-

sation unit at the Swedish Crime Victim Authority.

The case underscores growing Nordic scrutiny of seasonal labour practices in the berry industry, which relies heavily on migrant workers from Thailand.

Ørsted to cut 2,000 jobs globally – impact in Asia uncertain

Danish renewable energy developer Ørsted has announced plans to reduce its global workforce from about 8,000 to 6,000 employees by the end of 2027, citing the need to align staffing with current activity levels.

The company said the downsizing will take place through natural attrition, position reductions, divestments, outsourcing, and redundancies. The reorganisation reflects a shift in Ørsted's geographic focus, prioritising offshore wind markets in Europe and select areas in Asia-Pacific.

Ørsted employs staff across several Asian countries, including Malaysia, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Its Malaysia office functions as a global centre of excellence for engineer-



ing, IT, and finance, while the Taiwan team supports the Greater Changhua offshore wind projects. In Vietnam, the company recently opened an office in Hanoi as part of its entry into the offshore wind market.

Although Ørsted has not

specified how the job cuts will affect particular countries or departments, the restructuring is part of its broader effort to maintain competitiveness amid challenging conditions for renewable energy developers worldwide.

When quality meets equality

...your move becomes extraordinary.

At Asian Tigers Group, we cater to your custom move requirements, blending excellence and fairness for a move by highly trained professionals.

Let's Get Moving



asiantigersgroup.com



ASIAN TIGERS GROUP

- ◆ Moving Service
- ◆ Relocation Service
- ◆ Visa & Immigration
- ◆ Home Search
- ◆ School Search
- ◆ Orientation



Nordic Nations Remember Thailand's Queen Sirikit

Nordic missions and communities in Thailand have expressed their condolences following the passing of Queen Sirikit, the Queen Mother.

Thailand's Queen Mother Sirikit, who held a special place in the post-war revival of the Thai monarchy, passed away on 24 October 2025, according to the announcement by the Royal Household Bureau.

Nordic embassies in Thailand and many Nordic individuals expressed their sympathies to the Thai Royal Family. During the reign of her husband, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the royal couple's cordial relations with the Nordic royal families developed into lasting friendships.

"The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok extends its deepest condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother," wrote the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Bangkok on its website.

"We join the people of Thailand in mourning this profound loss and in paying tribute to Her Majesty's enduring legacy of compassion, public service and her valued contributions to the relations between Norway and Thailand," the message added, alongside a photo from Their Majesties' visit to Oslo in 1960.

The Swedish Embassy in Bangkok posted on its Facebook page:

"The Embassy of Sweden in Bangkok extends its deepest condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother."

"We join the people of Thailand in mourning this profound loss and in paying tribute to Her Majesty's enduring legacy of compas-



sion, public service, and her valued contributions to the relations between Sweden and Thailand," the post continued, accompanied by a photo from 2011.

The Royal Danish Embassy in Bangkok wrote in its condolence message:

"The Embassy of Denmark in Bangkok extends its deepest condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother."

"The Embassy joins the people of Thailand in mourning this profound loss. We pay tribute to Her Majesty's lifelong dedication to her people, her enduring legacy of compassion and service, and her valued contributions to the relations between Denmark and Thailand," the statement added.

The Embassy of Finland also expressed its condolences:

"The Embassy of Finland in Bangkok extends its deepest condolences on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother," the Embassy wrote on its Facebook page.

"The Embassy joins the people of Thailand in mourning this profound loss. Her Majesty's dedication to her people will be remembered with highest respect and appreciation."

The Danish Church in Thailand shared its condolences in Danish. Translated, the message read:

"On the occasion of the passing of the Thai Queen Mother, H.M. Queen Sirikit, the Danish Church in Thailand expresses our deepest condolences to our Thai friends and neighbours," wrote the Danish Church.

"As the wife of Thailand's longest-reigning monarch, King Bhumibol (Rama IX), Queen Sirikit had a close relationship with the Danish royal family."

"Below she is seen together with then-Crown Princess Margrethe during a state visit to Thailand in 1963," the Church added.

The Thai Nordic Association also shared a message:

"We express our deepest respect and heartfelt sorrow on the passing of Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother."

"Her Majesty's life of grace, compassion, and dedication has inspired generations, leaving a lasting legacy of kindness and service. Her devotion to culture, nature, and the wellbeing of others will always be remembered with deep gratitude and admiration," the TNA elaborated.

"May Her Majesty rest in eternal peace."

The postings were met with kind messages and support from both Thais and Nordic citizens.



Where Nordic care meets Balinese warmth

When I step inside Hovi Club Teuku Umar in Denpasar, cheerful music fills the room. About twenty seniors move in rhythm to simple dance steps shown on a screen. There is laughter, clapping, and an atmosphere that feels more like a social gathering than a care facility.

By Maria Xaver Dover

The space is bright and welcoming, with soft chairs, colourful details, and an inviting warmth. A small Finnish and Indonesian flag stand side by side — a quiet symbol of the partnership behind the place. A few exercise machines stand in one corner, while a physiotherapist occasionally visits to assist with individual training. Nearby, a small karaoke room with microphones often becomes the centre of joyful singing. Along the walls are peaceful corners for rest when needed. Staff move between rooms in blue uniforms reading “*Senior Care from Finland*.” It feels like a place designed not only for care but for connection.

“At Hovi, we believe ageing shouldn’t necessarily mean slowing down,” says Dewi Trisnawati, Managing Director of Hovi Care Bali. “It’s about helping people stay active, social, and proud of who they are.”

A Finnish family story with global roots

Hovi Group began in 1989 as a small family-run nursing home in Finland. Over the past 35 years, it has grown into a trusted name in elderly and dementia care. Today, led by Jussi Peltonen, the company continues its mission to help seniors live with dignity, independence, and purpose.

After years of success in Finland, Hovi expanded internationally — first to Singapore in 2018 and then to Bali in 2019. In Indonesia, the franchise partner Kasih Ibu Hospital Group operates two facilities: Hovi Club Teuku Umar, a day centre for seniors in Denpasar, and Hovi Assisted Saba, an assisted living residence near the island’s eastern coast.



Our mission, Own Your Life, is about giving decision-making power back to elderly people. Even when someone’s cognitive abilities decline, they should still have a say in their own lives.



*Jussi Peltonen,
CEO of Hovi Group*



“

At Hovi, we believe ageing shouldn't necessarily mean slowing down. It's about helping people stay active, social, and proud of who they are.

”

Dewi Trisnawati, Managing Director of Hovi Care Bali



“Our mission, **Own Your Life**, is about giving decision-making power back to elderly people,” says Peltonen. “Independence is deeply rooted in Nordic culture. Even when someone’s cognitive abilities decline, they should still have a say in their own lives.”

Hovi’s care philosophy is inspired by Finland’s landmark FINGER study, which showed that cognitive decline can be slowed through lifestyle changes. Care at Hovi revolves around five pillars: social activity, mental stimulation, physical exercise, healthy nutrition, and health management — principles woven into daily life at both centres.

Bridging two worlds of care

When Hovi Care opened in Bali, it entered a culture where formal eldercare was almost unheard of. In Balinese tradition, caring for aging parents is a family duty, and

placing them in a care facility can still be seen as neglect.

“Many families worry that others will think they’re abandoning their parents,” Dewi explains. “We spend a lot of time talking with them, explaining what we do. It takes patience.”

That patience has paid off. Over time, Hovi has built trust among both local and international families.

“Finland and Bali may seem far apart, but they share an understanding of compassion,” says Peltonen. “The Balinese approach to the elderly is incredibly warm and respectful — something we could learn from in the Nordic countries.”

Hovi’s model combines that warmth with structured Nordic methods: training programmes, digital systems, and evidence-based rehabilitation tools. Local staff, all certified nurses, receive continuous training through HoviAcademy, while Finnish specialists visit several times a year to conduct workshops and share new practices.

“All our staff are qualified nurses, but technology-based systems can be new for them,” Dewi says. “In Finland, training is very technology-driven. Here, we adapt creatively to different learning styles.”

The result is a care environment that feels both professional and deeply personal. Every morning, staff log their mood in an internal app — a small reminder that well-being starts with themselves.

Life and laughter at Hovi Club Teuku Umar

Hovi Club Teuku Umar is open Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Seniors can join for full or half days depending on their needs. On average, around ten participants attend daily, with up to twenty-five joining during outings or group sessions.

The centre offers exercise, music, games, creative workshops, and long conversations over coffee. The atmosphere is lighthearted, with laughter never far away.

“It’s important that everyone feels seen,” says Dewi. “Some are more social, others prefer quiet activities — but we make sure everyone gets equal attention.”

Participants include both local Balinese and long-term foreign residents. While language can be a challenge, the team bridges it easily through simple English, gestures, and plenty of smiles. Staff members also take English classes to improve communication.

Much of Hovi Club’s success lies in its sense of community. “We see ourselves as a partner to the family,” Dewi says. “They trust us with their loved ones, and that’s a big responsibility.”

A home for the final chapters

An hour’s drive from Denpasar, in the quiet coastal area of Saba, stands Hovi Assisted Saba. Nine residents live here — seven women and two men — most between seventy and ninety years old. The residence can host up to fourteen people, and most stay for about two years on average.



Inside, the atmosphere is calm and homely. Residents gather in shared spaces, chatting over coffee or reminiscing about earlier days. Personal belongings — framed photos, favourite cups, small keepsakes — give each room a sense of belonging.

Friendships here run deep. When one resident recently moved back to France, others were heartbroken to see her go. In a place where loss is an inevitable part of life, such bonds bring comfort and continuity.

"It's nice to have a few great friends here," says Carole, one of the residents.

Another resident, Sandy from Australia, shares: "My daughter lives in Bali. But I lost my husband and two sons. Sometimes I miss home, but I can always talk to my Australian friend about it."

For Madeline, the mix of care and comfort makes all the difference. "I'm happy to be here and make the best of the last years," she says. "We have good doctors and lovely staff. We are safe here."

Residents often go out for lunch or coffee, accompanied by caregivers — small but meaningful gestures of independence. "That's why we call it assisted living, not a care home," Dewi explains. "People still own their lives here."

Looking ahead

In Bali, eldercare outside the family remains a new concept. For generations, ageing and home have been inseparable. But as modern lifestyles change and more families live apart, attitudes are slowly shifting.

"People are starting to see that professional care doesn't mean giving up love or responsibility," says Dewi. "It can be an extension of family care, not a replacement."

Before Hovi Care opened, only two facilities on the island called themselves care homes. Today, more families are recognising that ageing with dignity and support is possible outside the traditional family home.

"The ageing population in Asia is growing rapidly," says Peltonen. "There's a real need for high-quality, research-based services that also respect local traditions."

At the heart of that mission lies the same principle that started it all in Finland — **respect, dignity, and the belief that growing older should never mean losing one's sense of self.**

Rebuilding Paradise: The Story of Nesat

In the middle of the dense Cambodian jungle, a new project is in full swing. Expats from around the world are building their new home after being driven from their old home at Otres Beach south of Sihanoukville by Chinese investors and rapid development. The new settlement in the Koh Kong jungle will serve as their haven.

By Alexander Vittrup



Nesat is a village built by a resilient community that has faced hardships and challenges, but is now thriving in the Cambodian jungle. Photo: Nesat Facebook



Nelly Schultz keeps a lot of photographs and postcards from good memories in Otres. Photo: Alexander Vittrup

Nesat is an expat village hidden deep in the Cambodian jungle. It was founded by an expat community pushed out of their home in Otres Beach by Chinese investors building casinos along the coastline. Forced from their homes and fearing their community would fall apart, they moved into the jungle to build a new home, Nesat, where they could live freely.

Otres

Otres Beach was a haven for backpackers. White sandy beaches stretched for miles. Colorful cocktails slid over beach-bar counters as sleepy tourists basked on sunbeds, soaking in the ocean breeze. Expats from all over the world made their way to this remote corner of Cambodia, living in guesthouses and rental apartments about 10 kilometers south of Sihanoukville.

"It was the place to be truly free," Aneliya "Nelly" Schultz remembers.

She and her Danish husband, Niclas "Nic" Schultz, ran a guesthouse, a restaurant, and a beach bar there. Otres beach was truly an untouched gem far from the rest of the world. But dark clouds were looming on the horizon.

A brewing storm

Some 1,500 kilometers from Otres Beach lies Macau, the Las Vegas of Asia. Giant casinos light up the skyline as millions of yen roll out on poker tables each night. Like neighboring Hong Kong, Macau had enjoyed decades of special administrative status, but in 2019 Beijing tightened its grip on Hong Kong.

The pressure spilled over into Macau and put the casino industry under strain. Operators began looking elsewhere to set up new businesses. Around the same time, Cambodia changed its laws on casinos and gambling.

“

They have been welcoming since we arrived, and it is nice to see how we can improve life for them.

”

All eyes on Sihanoukville

Many Chinese investors set their sights on Cambodia, especially Sihanoukville Province. Things changed fast. In 2018, investors started buying up property around Sihanoukville. The expats hoped Otres would be spared, but soon land was bought and Chinese businesses moved in.

Developers tore down what stood and started building. Skyscrapers and luxury resorts rose where guesthouses and beach bars had flourished. Living in Otres became unbearable. Construction roared late into the night. Power and water were disrupted for hours and sometimes days. And it became dangerous.

It started small. Tools and towels went missing—later bikes and motorcycles. Rumors spread of gangsters in downtown Sihanoukville—wild men on motorcycles with machetes. In October 2019, local police reported the murder of a Chinese national. The body was found cut into pieces and wrapped in a blanket; it was deemed a personal dispute between two Chinese nationals. To the expat community, it felt too close to home. Gunshots echoed through the construction sites. Otres no longer felt safe.

Offers from investors came daily. Many took the bait. One by one, people sold and left. When the community shrank, even those remaining knew they could not stay. Yet the thought of scattering to the four winds was unacceptable.

Community was always at the heart of Otres. As the core grew tighter, the idea of leaving together emerged. One day, three men set out on motorcycles with a goal: find a new place for the community to settle. Among them was Swedish rider Samuel "Sammy" Salvadores—and he already had a place in mind.



“

*Their community
has overcome
hardships and
challenges;
this is their paradise.*

”



Welcome to the Jungle

Koh Kong Province is covered in dense jungle and tall mountains and is one of Cambodia’s most rural areas. Sammy had been here many times. The Cardamom Mountains offer some of the best dirt-bike tracks in the region.

“I had always thought it was a beautiful area, and when we decided to look for a new place to settle, I figured this might be good,” he remembers.

The three men arrived at a piece of land about eight hectares in size, about one kilometer north of the tiny village of Phumi Chrouy Svay. It was far from perfect, but it had potential. It was almost 100 kilometers—hours of driving—from Otres, Sihanoukville and the problems there. The beach was not far, and the area had once been used for clay-digging projects. The old pits had filled with water and become a picturesque azure lagoon.

Next up Nesat

Excited, the three returned with news of the potential land. But just as the Otres residents were about to leave, Covid struck. Even more expats decided to forego Cambodia. But a small group was determined to stick together, so in January 2020 they moved to the area that would become Nesat Village.

The move was not easy. With Covid-19 restrictions in place and the land deal still in process, the expats were

not allowed onto the land yet. After moving between guesthouses in the local village, the group set up trailers to live in; they called it Camp Kickass. They built everything from the ground up—a toilet and a bathroom, and kitchen where they ate together at night.

“I was sleeping in a trailer on five stacked mattresses we had brought from Otres, with my giant Danish husband and a huge dog,” Nelly Schultz laughs.

Despite the hardship, Nic remembers that time fondly.

“It was the best time of my life. The deal hadn’t finished yet, so we couldn’t start building. Instead, we were just relaxing, hanging out and going to the beach. I felt so free,” he recalls.

Eventually, the paperwork finished and construction could start. Days were spent clearing forest and helping each other put down foundations. By early 2021, the first Nesat villagers moved into their newly built houses. Slowly but surely, the community grew as word spread about the new expat village.

The villagers even brought back many former residents of Otres who had left. Old friends reunited as the once-prosperous expat community of Otres healed in its new home in the middle of the jungle.

As of mid-2025, Nesat had approximately 80 permanent residents, with 71 landowners in the village from 31 different countries. In Otres, the expats relied on tour-



ism, and that has persisted in Nesat. Tourism has been a success, and the villagers hope it is only the beginning. Nesat currently has 15 guesthouses. The village has over 20 different restaurants, cafés, bars and breweries. The guesthouses have the combined capacity to house 250 tourists at once, and Nesat welcomed approximately 3,000 visitors in the high season of 2024.

Phumi Chrouy Svay

“Nesat” is Khmer and means fishing or fisherman. The expats named the land after the main profession of their local neighbours.

The arrival of the expats has had a big impact on their Cambodian neighbors. Locals have nicknamed Nesat “Phumi Barang,” meaning the village of foreigners. Phumi Chrouy Svay is growing too, and new professions and businesses have appeared.

Sammy has seen the development firsthand. “When we first moved here, there was only a single lady selling food by the road. Now the road is lined with small local shops—everything from street food to mechanics,” he says.

The main road has changed from dirt to asphalt. Tin shacks housing local families are being replaced with houses built with cement-block walls and tiled roofs. Many locals were hired in the initial construction of the first buildings and continue to find work as the vil-



lage grows. Locals are being hired to work as cleaners in guesthouses, behind bar counters, and in restaurant kitchens, bringing home larger salaries than they could earn in their traditional occupations as fishermen and rice farmers.

To Sammy, it is great to see the change. “They have been welcoming since we arrived, and it is nice to see how we can improve life for them.”

Sunset in Paradise

The sun sets over Kampong Som Bay. The last rays color the September sky in a delicate mix of pink and purple. Cicadas sing in the jungle as the Nesat villagers make their way to Klub Haus, a wooden dive bar hidden among low palms and fruit trees. It is open even outside the high season and serves as a place for the community to gather. Laughter and inside jokes almost drown out the speakers playing music from all over the world. Friends catch up under the yellow lights around the pool table or on benches. The mood is high, even in the low season. But the tourists will come; the villagers are hopeful. Their community has overcome hardships and challenges; this is their paradise.



Meet the Villagers

By Alexander Vittrup

Sammy does it right

Samuel "Sammy" Salvadores is from Trollhättan, just north of Gothenburg. He first came to Otres in 2009. He is one of the original Nesat villagers and was one of the three men who found the land for the expats to settle.

Back in Otres, Sammy was busy. He had a big guesthouse called Done Right, a beach bar, a paintball company, and a bigger family guesthouse, but that is in the past. Where his guesthouse used to be, there is now a helipad landing pad.

These days, Sammy has dialed down his business ventures; he says he is not as young and energetic as he used to be. He has remade his Earthship-style guesthouse from Otres, Done Right, and he even employs the same Cambodian staff as back then, who have moved with their families to work with Sammy in Nesat. It is smaller than in Otres, and that suits Sammy well - it requires less of him and he has more time to enjoy the Cambodian countryside. However, the entrepreneurial spirit he had in Otres is not entirely shelved, because when Sammy started missing bread and baked goods, he opened his own bakery, where the Nesat villagers can go to get all their baked goods.



Nic, Nelly and Ragnarok

Niclas “Nic” Schultz is from Frederikssund in Denmark. He and his wife Aneliya “Nelly” first came to Cambodia in 2017. It was only meant to be a short stop on their travels, but the couple arrived in Otres, fell in love with the place, and decided to stick around. In Otres, they ran a large guesthouse and a beach bar. Nic and Nelly were part of the small group of expats who moved to Nesat during COVID. They lived in a trailer in Camp Kickass until they were allowed onto the land.

Today, the couple have a bar named Ragnarok. Hidden among papaya trees and palms, Ragnarok is an open structure, where smooth tones from speakers mix with the sounds of the jungle. The couple built it themselves from the ground up, using wood and materials they had

brought with them all the way from their old bar in Otres. Nic and Nelly want Ragnarok to be a relaxing place for their friends and visitors alike to hang out. Nic says he grew up with the Danish pub culture and was inspired to create a place where it is more about socializing, relaxing, and making new friends rather than loud music and crazy parties.

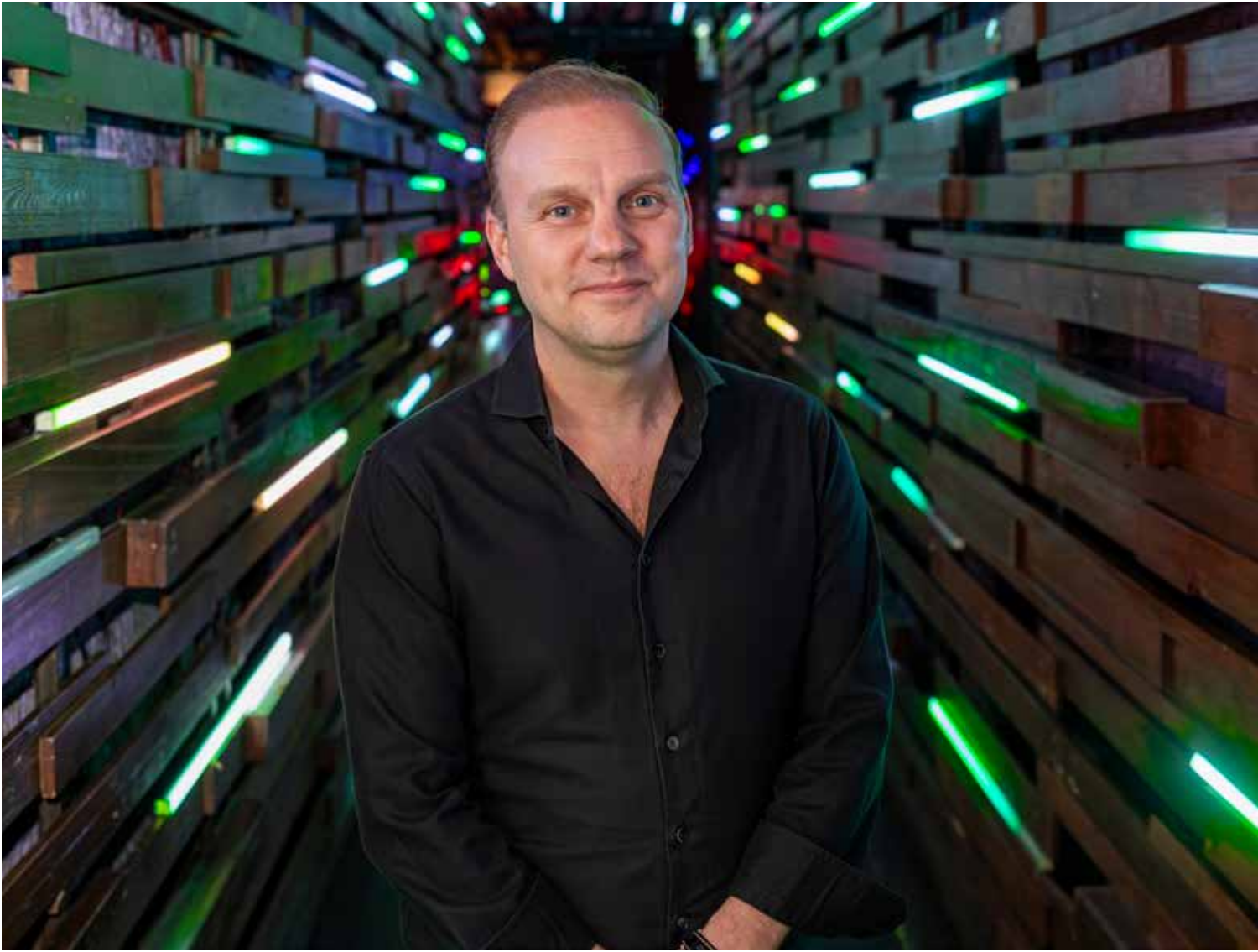


Petra’s Haberdashery

Petra Maria Hellman is from Turku, Finland. She has travelled the world, and, in 2017, her journey brought her to Otres. Like many before her, she planned to stay for a day or two, but Otres captured her heart and the days turned into months. Petra left when Otres shrank but stayed in Cambodia. After hearing that her friends were beginning to rebuild the community in the jungle, she quickly joined them. Since then, she has watched Nesat grow from land plots and dirt roads into an expat jungle paradise.

Her own contribution to the Nesat community is “Petra’s Haberdashery” (“HAB”), a small boutique where guests can buy clothing and souvenirs. The name came from Petra’s partner, while discussing what they might do in the village, her partner suggested the word “haberdashery”. Petra had never heard the word before, but she was immediately sold — it sounded cute and quirky, just the kind of thing she wanted to bring to Nesat.

Petra is hopeful about Nesat’s future. She plans to sit at her little rooftop café above the boutique, talking with guests, making new friends, and watching Nesat grow.



Nightclub manager **Tony Karlsson** returns to Thailand, reaching new heights on Khao San Road

*By Joakim Persson.
Photos: Dennis Thern.*

From coming to Bangkok as a backpacker and falling in love with the City of Angels, to now managing one of Khao San Road's most internationally recognised nightclubs, Tony Karlsson finds himself right where he belongs – reaching new heights in his career after some challenging years.

This Swede's F&B career has had its share of ups and downs within Thailand's thriving restaurant and entertainment scene. His story offers an interesting perspective on the challenges and successes of building a career in Bangkok's nightlife and hospitality industry.

It's an appropriate name for a nightclub - The Club. Open for 18 years, it was officially ranked among the Top 100 Nightclubs in the World by DJ Mag in early 2025. For Tony, it's a dream come true. He had long thought about finding a way to live and work in Thailand ever since first setting foot in the country.

So, let's rewind the clock and find out how he succeeded in realising his dream – and what lies ahead. Tony first came to Bangkok in 2004 and continued to come back to Thailand on six-month trips through to 2009, paired with working in Sweden to save up money.

"I fell in love with Thailand, to the extent that I cried during the airport taxi ride when having to return home. The contrast from my life in Sweden was total. I always used to be so restless and had too much energy at home, living in a small town; Ljungby. And I was always social and wanted to be where the action is. So, I first moved to Halmstad - a bigger town, where I worked for my dad's company."

Tony later got a job as a foreman in a dairy factory. Going back and forth to Thailand, he began thinking about how he could eventually settle in Bangkok and make a living there.



“
I fell in love with Thailand, to the extent that I cried during the airport taxi ride when having to return home. The contrast from my life in Sweden was total.
”

"Back then, the only opportunities for foreigners were basically as DJ, English teacher or diving instructor – unless you had higher education."

In Sweden, he had studied to become an electrician, but later decided, along with a friend, to enrol for a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management at Stamford International University.

"You studied for three months and then were off for a month, all year round. So, you got a lot of free time, which I spent mostly in Phuket and traveled frequently. I lived well as a student here, based on a Swedish student loan from the state," he describes his study years as a young adult.

"I went for it, and it turned out that I was good at studying – although I had had plenty of doubt –

And got good grades. The studies at this university also led to lots of networking."

When it was time for his final internship, he was simultaneously offered a nightclub job on Sukhumvit 11, the entertainment hotspot at the time. They offered him a management role, allowing him to complete his training there.

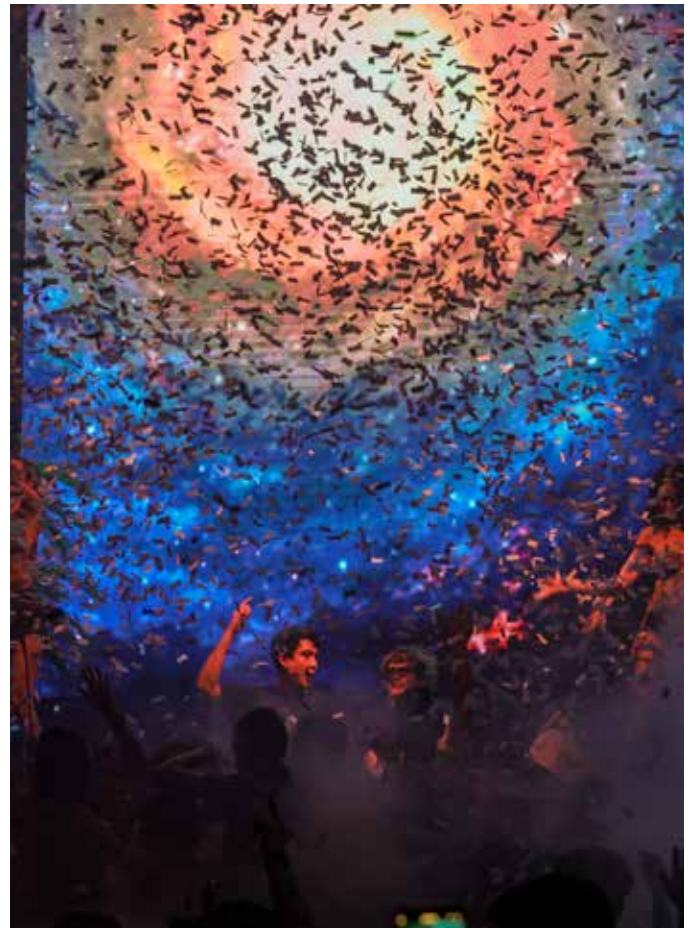
"From then on it was many long days with school during daytime and working at the club during the nights."

At this stage Tony's effort from early on to learn the Thai language also paid off: "At the university, I took a course where you learned the alphabet – though I didn't really learn to read. You were kind of forced into it in a way, because we had 80 staff, of which back then only a few spoke a bit of English. But anyway, it was a learning curve – that's for sure. Then they were forced to close down the business in 2014 due to street protests in downtown Bangkok, so I lost my job there."





As manager, I mainly have to think about the bigger picture; constantly taking notes about changes and improvements, and making sure that all the customers and crew are doing well.



Next, he was offered, via one of his university teachers, a job for Impact, Muang Thong Thani and their four Flann O'Brien's Irish Pub and Restaurant outlets in Tong Lor; at Asiatique The River Front, Silom and in Muang Thong Thani – first as pub manager and then area manager.

But a new challenge loomed; and one that tends to repeat itself: skyrocketing commercial property rents. Once a street or area becomes the talk of the town this phenomenon comes along.

"It was a million baht in monthly rent in Silom. Then you have to sell enormous amounts of drinks to make a profit on that. It's so sad; In the city centre, it just gets more and more expensive, so you can't get a profitable F&B business in the end. We end up with the nice hidden gems moving out from downtown," says Tony.

After three years with Impact that stint was over, while suddenly England was calling for Tony – through an Irish friend.

"He owned a virtual reality company in England and Dublin and asked if I could manage them. Right then I had nothing to do, and thought: 'Why not!' You learn new things by moving to a new country."

After some time in Northampton, Thailand again filled his thoughts. A contact asked for his advice on opening a new venue in Thong Lor, which led to them deciding to open it together.

"We built up everything from bare shell and this time I had to do everything by myself, without any big

administrative organisation backing things up. I ran the pub for two years, until another job offer came along from the network that was hard to say no to."

That offer was a Brand Ambassador role with Laiba, a Danish-managed bottled cocktail brand launched in Shanghai.

This was a complete game-changer for me and a great position; a daytime job working only five days per week. It didn't last long, though, because the Covid situation arrived. This was very sad as I had just reached the top that I had been fighting to reach," reflects Tony.

During Covid, he ended up in Spain, working for a Scandinavian call centre and spending time with his mother, who owned a house there.

"The job gave me freedom, but sitting in an office in Spain was only fun for a while. I started learning a bit of Spanish too. But if you've lived in Thailand for a long time, something feels missing. I just wanted to come back and waited for the opportunity while saving up money."

Once he could, Tony had a brief stint in Hua Hin, starting up a place that he sold after six months upon realising the seaside resort was mainly retirement-oriented.

"There was no drive there. So, then I went back to Bangkok, looking for a new adventure."

That brought him to today – offered a management role with Buddy Group, overseeing The Club Khaosan, a large nightclub with over 1,000-person capacity hosting international DJ acts and parties.



When asking around, Tony also found that this group had a good reputation. "We're a team of three at the club, plus the owner representative, who talk about everything, and we get suggested improvements approved. They invest to make it better, basically; the owner upgraded the sound system to Funktion-One Evolution-X, which offers one of the best club speakers in the world."

This investment paid off: The Club entered the Top 100 Clubs in the World, ranking 76th – a true game-changer. Tony's leadership has also significantly boosted revenue.

"Based on the public's votes it's actually very difficult to get on that list. We have a LED screen outside marketing this ranking, and then passersby get it and don't have to check the Google rankings anymore to understand what kind of place this is."

"As a nightclub it differs a lot from all the other places; first because of its location, which creates a lot of variation of people - both in ages and where people come from. It's like 30% Thai, 30% Western, and then the remaining are other Asians. Second is that its energy and vibe are higher than other clubs, with new guests and regulars mixed together."

As manager, Tony describes himself as the conductor of an orchestra. "I mainly have to think about the bigger picture; constantly taking a lot of notes about suggestions for changes and improvements, as well as all the smaller and bigger issues - and to make sure that all the customers

and crew are doing well and everything is taken care of."

"I don't have to be there all the time. I can even go on holiday for a few days without the roof falling down. So, I'm very happy with this position. Coming here on a daily basis is nostalgic in a way - to Khao San road, which remains how it was when you were younger. So, you always get a bit of energy from it. Although past nine pm the street gets almost a bit too lively for my taste; the whole street is almost like a nightclub."

As for the future, Tony says he could see himself as a Director of Food & Beverage at a major hotel, though he has so far avoided hotels for being "too structured."

"It would be a very big challenge if you got such a F&B role. I can also imagine starting a hospitality consultancy company later on. That's another goal I have. But right now, I'm not thinking of doing anything else."

As for Bangkok's nightlife development Tony thinks that it is much more spread out.

"Before, there were certain areas you could go to, but it's not so concentrated any more, except for on weekends, when you can feel that there's a buzz in certain places. That's why Khao San is good, because whether it's Monday or Saturday, we always have guests; always at least 500. Other than that, I really don't know where to go anymore, because there are so many places!"



Thailand Commemorates 80 Years of the United Nations





On 24 October 2025, Thailand joined the global celebration of the **80th anniversary of the United Nations (UN)**. The event, held at Siam Paragon, gathered representatives from the Thai government, ambassadors from several embassies, members of the private sector, and friends of the UN.

Mrs. Michaela Friberg-Storey, Representative of the UN Secretary-General and UN Resident Coordinator in Thailand, opened the ceremony with a warm and heartfelt speech, welcoming the audience and reaffirming the UN's support for Thailand's priorities.

"Thailand's progress towards the SDGs is driven by the determination and resilience of its people," she said.

The event, titled **"30 Stories, 17 Goals, One Road to 2030,"** stood as a testament to the power of partnership and collective action. Mrs. Michaela repeatedly emphasized the importance of working together to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): with collaboration among all sectors, real change can be made — for the people, by the people, and with the people.

This year's commemoration also echoed the UN Secretary-General's call for the world to stand together and renew its shared promise to uphold the UN Charter's values.

Following her speech, Khun Sarun Charoensuwan, Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, took the stage on behalf of the Royal Thai Government to extend congratulations on this milestone anniversary. He

highlighted the UN's vital role in promoting peace and security, advancing sustainable development, and upholding the dignity of people worldwide.

Khun Sarun expressed Thailand's heartfelt appreciation for the UN's continued partnership in supporting the well-being of Thai people, protecting the planet, and fostering peace and prosperity. He reaffirmed Thailand's commitment to advancing the SDGs and its long-standing role as host to the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)** and various other UN entities based in Thailand.

A special photo exhibition, organized by the UN in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, featured 30 stories from across Thailand, showcasing the resilience and creativity of individuals and communities whose lives have been improved through UN partnerships and programs.

During the launch, three Thais were invited on stage to share their personal journeys:

Khun Salma Gadae from Yala, who found a second chance at education through the Learning Coin for Equitable Education initiative. She shared how UN scholarship support strengthened her Thai literacy and empowered her to become a community leader preserving cultural heritage.

Khun Sarocha Kittisiripan, a visually impaired social entrepreneur and founder of PaperyBfly, spoke about turning her challenges into innovation. Supported by the UNDP Youth Co:Lab initiative, she creates job opportunities while breaking stereotypes.



Khun Sumitr Srivisut, a farmer and community leader from Nakhon Si Thammarat, described learning advanced and sustainable farming techniques through collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) — improving productivity and income while sharing knowledge with his community.

Their inspiring stories illustrated how Thai individuals, with the right support, can create meaningful change and drive progress in their communities.

The launch was attended by representatives of Member States, senior government officials, UN agencies, UN Goodwill Ambassadors including Cindy Bishop and Alex Rendell, as well as partners from the private sector, academia, civil society, and the media.

Myanmar groups plan to sue Norway's Telenor over data sharing with junta

Civil society groups in Myanmar are preparing legal action against Norwegian telecom company Telenor, accusing it of sharing customer data with the country's military regime. The groups claim the information enabled authorities to track, detain, and, in some cases, kill civilians.

Telenor, once one of Myanmar's largest foreign investors, sold its local operations in 2022 to the company Shwe Byain Phyu after facing pressure from the military to activate surveillance technology following the 2021 coup. The groups allege that the sale, which transferred data from about 18 million



users, gave the junta unrestricted access to personal information.

In a statement to Reuters, Telenor said it faced a "terrible and tragic situation" and that refusing military orders could have endangered its staff. The company said similar issues had been addressed in earlier investigations in Norway.

Among the claimants is Tha Zin, widow of lawmaker and artist Phoe Zeya Thaw, who was executed in 2022. Telenor, majority-owned by the Norwegian government, has not commented publicly on the new legal action.

Danish-led Lao Brewery thrives despite slowing economy

Lao Brewery Company (LBC), majority-owned by Denmark's Carlsberg Group, remains confident as Laos faces a slowing economy and a weak currency. The brewer behind the iconic Beerlao continues to expand production and reinforce its leading position in the local beverage market.

"We are selling more than 100 litres of beverages to each Laotian a year. There is no other country, to my knowledge, that meets that," says Henrik Andersen, Managing Director of Lao Brewery Company.

Founded in 1973 and backed by Carlsberg since 2002, Lao Brewery has grown from a small producer into one of the country's largest taxpayers and most successful companies. Its capacity now reaches 800 million litres annually — a dramatic rise from 20 million litres two decades ago.



Beerlao holds 90 percent of the domestic beer market, while the company also produces Tigerhead bottled water, Pepsi soft drinks, and popular snacks. Despite inflation and a sharp depreciation of the Lao kip, sales volumes have continued to rise.

LBC exports to 22 countries and contributes around US\$250 million annually to state revenues. Andersen credits the company's success to strong local partnerships and long-standing trust with the Lao government.

Norse Atlantic opens Stockholm–Bangkok route

Norse Atlantic Airways has launched its first direct flight between Stockholm and Bangkok, marking the airline's debut connection between Sweden and Thailand.

The inaugural service departed from Stockholm Arlanda Airport on 22 October and arrived at Suvarnabhumi Airport with a full load of 338 passengers. The route will initially operate twice weekly and increase to four weekly flights in December, using Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners.

At Suvarnabhumi Airport, the flight was welcomed by Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) executives and Bård Nordhagen, Chief Commercial Officer of Norse Atlantic Airways. TAT Deputy Governor Chi-



ravadee Khunsub said the new connection reflects growing confidence in Thailand as a long-haul destination and supports efforts to strengthen tourism ties with Northern Europe.

Thailand remains a top Asian

destination for Swedish travellers, welcoming 145,188 visitors from Sweden between January and mid-October 2025, an 8.56% increase year-on-year.

Singapore LTA to upgrade rail CCTV network with Finland's Nokia solutions



Singapore's Land Transport Authority (LTA) will enhance video surveillance across more than 50 train stations using Nokia's

IP/MPLS and fiber Optical LAN, deployed in partnership with Hitachi Rail.

The upgrade aims to support

high-resolution CCTV and real-time monitoring for passenger safety, with hardened ONUs and future-ready OLTs capable of 25 Gb/s. Nokia says Optical LAN can require up to 70% less cabling and 40% less power than traditional copper-based networks.

Data from station cameras will be backhauled to LTA's Operations Control Center via Nokia's IP/MPLS, improving capacity for live viewing and storage. Hitachi Rail said the project continues its long-term collaboration with LTA on critical transport infrastructure.

Nokia added that the solution is designed to scale with growing bandwidth needs, supporting secure, reliable surveillance across Singapore's heavily used rail network.

EU urges China to release Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai



The European Parliament has called for the “immediate and unconditional” release of Swedish publisher Gui Minhai, ten years after he was taken from his apartment in Pattaya, Thailand, and later jailed in China on espionage charges. A joint motion adopted in late October also urged an end to arbitrary detention and forced confessions, and the release of those detained for exercising fundamental freedoms.

Gui, 61, was one of four Causeway Bay Books associates who dis-

appeared in 2015 and is the only one still detained. Reporters Without Borders (RSF) describes him as an emblematic figure among press-freedom defenders in China, noting he has been denied consular access and family contact.

Angela Gui, his daughter, renewed calls for his release, saying the family still does not know his whereabouts or how his trial was conducted. According to RSF’s 2025 World Press Freedom Index, China ranks 178th out of 180 countries.

IKEA opens second store in the Philippines with new ‘Plan & Order’ concept

Swedish home furnishing giant IKEA has opened its second branch in the Philippines, introducing a new “Plan & Order” shop at Trinoma Mall in Quezon City.

At just 400 square metres, the Trinoma outlet is much smaller than IKEA’s first store in Pasay City – the largest in the world. Customers can still order from the full catalogue and pick up purchases at the new location, while small home essentials such as pots, pans, and organizers are available in-store.

“The most frequent products in the blue bags of our customers are pots, pans, dinnerware, glassware, and home organizers,” said Ricardo Pinheiro, Country Retail Manager of IKEA Philippines.



The new format aims to make IKEA’s design services more accessible, with personalized assistance at the in-store planning studio. The branch operates entirely cashless.

IKEA has not disclosed the location of its next Philippine branch but confirmed plans to expand both large-format stores and smaller Plan & Order shops across the country.

Filipino journalist questions Norwegian authorities over airport currency exchange incident

Filipino television host and journalist Gretchen Ho questioned Norwegian authorities after her relatives were reportedly refused a currency exchange at Oslo's Gardermoen Airport because they were from the Philippines.

According to Ho's viral social media post, her mother and other senior relatives were denied exchanging USD 300 for Norwegian krone after a currency counter employee cited "corruption and money laundering" as the reason. The incident prompted the Philippine ambassador in Norway to raise



the issue with the country's foreign ministry.

The Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) later clarified that the issue stemmed from an outdated list used by the forex stall, which still included the Philippines on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list. The DFA said Norway has committed to updating its records, noting that the Philippines was officially removed from the FATF and EU grey lists earlier this year.

Ovodan opens fourth factory in China with Danish support

On Friday 18 October, the Embassy of Denmark in China joined THORNICO and Ovodan Egg Group in celebrating the official opening of Ovodan's fourth factory in the town of Ziyang, Sichuan Province.

Ambassador Michael Starbæk Christensen attended the ceremony together with Ovodan's CEO Christian Stadil, Founder Thor Stadil, and Minister Counsellor for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries Katja Goodhew, alongside local Chinese officials.

The new factory marks a significant milestone for Ovodan and highlights the strong cooperation between Denmark and China in the food and agriculture sectors.

As part of the event, Ovodan hosted a Danish bakery seminar, opened by Henrik Marinus Pedersen, Global President of Ovodan. The seminar gathered around 50 guests, including representatives from major bakery chains, R&D and procurement directors, boutique bakery owners, and Ovodan's key partners.

Ovodan has operated in China since 2004, promoting modern food safety standards, sustainable production, and local partnerships. With the new facility in Sichuan, the company aims to further develop innovative bakery and food products for the Chinese market.



Danish Ambassador brings ‘sponge city’ spirit to Manila on World Architecture Day



Denmark’s Ambassador to the Philippines, Franz-Michael “Dan-Dan” Mellbin, joined members of the United Architects of the Philippines in celebrating World Architecture Day under the theme “Design for Strength.”

Ambassador Mellbin highlighted Denmark’s innovative approaches to resilient urban planning, such as sponge cities, communal swimming pools, and skate parks that double as water catch basins. These projects, he said, combine “green and gray” infrastructure to manage flooding while creating functional and enjoyable public spaces.

Copenhagen — designated as

the World Capital of Architecture by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects — was cited as a model of how design can address both environmental and social needs.

Amid recurring floods and climate risks in the Philippines, Ambassador Mellbin called for a shift from reliance on “Filipino resilience” toward more people-centered and innovative urban solutions.

The Danish Embassy reaffirmed its commitment to working with Filipino partners to promote sustainable and climate-resilient urban development.

Assembling success: Ayala and IKEA join forces in the Philippines

The Philippine Star reports that Philippine conglomerate Ayala Corporation has entered into a new partnership with Swedish home furnishing giant IKEA, hinting at an upcoming project “to bring something exciting to the north.”

While details of the collaboration remain undisclosed, the initiative is expected to involve Ayala’s Quezon City properties, including Vertis North and TriNoma. IKEA, which first opened in the Philippines in 2021 in partnership with the SM Group, continues to explore expansion opportunities in the country.

Ayala Corporation, one of the Philippines’ largest and oldest business groups, is known for its shop-



ping malls, real estate developments, and financial services, and has in recent years diversified into energy, technology, and retail.

The partnership aligns with Ayala’s strategy of working with leading global brands to enhance retail

standards and consumer choice. It also underscores the growing presence of Nordic design and lifestyle brands in the Philippine market, as demand for modern and sustainable living solutions continues to rise across Southeast Asia.

Finnish technology powers Bangkok's new Orange Line railway network

Bangkok Expressway and Metro Public Company Limited (BEM) has chosen Finnish technology leader Nokia to deploy a next-generation communications network for the upcoming MRT Orange Line — a major infrastructure project connecting Bangkok's eastern and western districts by 2030.

In partnership with Singapore's ST Engineering and Thailand's First One Systems, Nokia will provide an IP/MPLS Backbone Transmission Network to enhance the safety, efficiency, and reliability of the new metro line. The system will support CCTV surveillance, radio communications, public announcements,

passenger information displays, and supervisory control systems, ensuring secure, high-capacity data transmission between stations and the Operations Control Centre.

"Large-scale railway projects require deep technical expertise and seamless collaboration," said Stuart Hendry, Vice President of Enterprise Sales for Network Infrastructure at Nokia Asia Pacific. "We are delivering a world-class solution that meets the highest international standards."

Nokia's solution includes its 7250 Interconnect Router, 7210 Service Access System, and advanced service management platforms.



When completed, the 35.9-kilometre Orange Line will feature both underground and elevated sections, marking a major step forward in Bangkok's public transport modernization.

Norway and Vietnam explore co-processing as solution to plastic waste challenge



The Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi, together with Norwegian research institute SINTEF and the Vietnam National Cement Association, recently hosted a workshop titled "From Pilots to Policy: Addressing Non-Recyclable Plastic Waste through Co-Process-

ing in the Cement Industry."

The event brought together experts, policymakers, business leaders, and international partners to explore how co-processing — using non-recyclable plastic waste as alternative fuel in cement production — can help tackle one of today's most

urgent environmental challenges. It also marked the conclusion of Norway's OPTOCE Project (Ocean Plastic Turned into an Opportunity in Circular Economy), implemented over the past six years in eight Asian countries, including Vietnam.

Findings show that co-processing is both technically feasible and environmentally sustainable, offering a scalable solution to plastic waste. Participants also discussed policies and funding mechanisms to expand the practice nationwide.

Norwegian Ambassador Hilde Solbakken reaffirmed Norway's support for Vietnam in advancing this approach under the Just Energy Transition Partnership, emphasizing that success depends on joint efforts across all sectors.

Denmark-backed livestock project launched in northern Laos



CARE Denmark is supporting a new initiative to strengthen livestock systems and improve rural livelihoods in northern Laos, in partnership with CARE International in Laos, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment, and Lao agritech company AgCoTech.

The Enhancing the Commer-

cial Paravet Project (ECPPL) was launched on 17 October 2025 through a Memorandum of Understanding signed in Luang Prabang between Keoamphone Souvannaphoum, Country Director of CARE International in Laos, and Dr. Saykham Souksanith, Deputy Director of the Luang Prabang Provincial

Agriculture and Environment Office.

Funded by CARE Denmark and AgCoTech, the project aims to help smallholder farmers in Pakxeng district develop more resilient and profitable livestock systems. It introduces a commercial veterinary service model and gender-inclusive training for both male and female paravets to improve animal health, income, and food security.

The initiative also supports the generation of Verified Carbon Units (VCUs), linking improved livestock management to carbon reduction efforts and reflecting Denmark's commitment to climate-smart, inclusive development in Southeast Asia.

The project runs until December 2026 and is expected to directly benefit over 14,000 people across 26 villages in Pakxeng district.

Norwegian architect contributes to sustainable city planning in Sarawak

Alexander Nanta Linggi, Malaysia's Minister of Works and MP for Kapit, recently welcomed Norwegian architect and urban planner Hans-Jacob Roald from the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences.

The visit explored opportunities for sustainable urban development in Sarawak, focusing on the Kapit Master Plan, which outlines strategies for inclusive and environmentally conscious growth in the region.

Roald inspected infrastructure and redevelopment sites, including road upgrades and the former Kapit airport area, offering insights on planning approaches that balance



modern development with local culture and sustainability.

The initiative supports Sarawak's Post COVID-19 Develop-

ment Strategy 2030, which promotes international collaboration and greener urban models for the state's long-term growth.

Singapore minister attends Arctic Circle Assembly in Iceland

Singapore's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and for Trade and Industry Gan Siow Huang visited Reykjavík from 15–18 October 2025 for the Arctic Circle Assembly. In an opening-plenary speech on 16 October, she highlighted global impacts of Arctic warming and outlined Singapore's climate adaptation work, including seawalls, storm-surge barriers and coral restoration.

On the sidelines, Gan met Iceland's Minister for Foreign Affairs Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Arctic Circle Chairman Ólafur Ragnar Grímsson and Polar Dialogue Chair Katrín Jakobsdóttir. She also

met Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs State Secretary Maria Varteressian and Canada's Parliamentary Secretary Rob Oliphant to discuss developments in the Arctic and co-operation opportunities.

Gan underlined Singapore's participation in Arctic Council Working Groups and research links with the region. The National University of Singapore recently conducted fieldwork in West Greenland to refine acoustic and computer-vision techniques for glacier monitoring.

She also referenced Singapore's support for ocean governance under UNCLOS and the high-seas biodiversity treaty, and noted regional



climate-finance efforts through the FAST-P initiative with up to 500 million\$ in concessional funding. Gan departed Iceland for Singapore on 18 October 2025.

Telenor marks 25 years in Thailand with focus on digital future



Norwegian telecom group Telenor celebrated its 25th anniversary in Thailand, reaffirming its long-term commitment to the country's digital transformation and partnership with CP Group through True Corporation.

At the anniversary event in Bangkok, Telenor Chair Jens Petter Olsen, Group CEO Benedicte Schilbred Fasmer, and Asia CEO Jon Omund Revhaug highlighted the company's contributions to Thailand's connectivity since 2000, when

it first invested in TAC and later developed the dtac brand into one of the nation's leading operators.

The 2023 merger of True and dtac, jointly owned by Telenor and CP Group, has already delivered results, returning True Corporation to profitability and earning "Deal of the Year" recognition from the Stock Exchange of Thailand. Telenor executives emphasized that the company's role extends beyond investment, introducing Nordic expertise in AI, cloud solutions, and cybersecurity.

With 2025 marking both Telenor's 25 years in Thailand and 120 years of Thai–Norwegian diplomatic relations, the company described its presence as a bridge between the two nations, combining business innovation with broader opportunities for Thai society.

Malaysia and Finland deepen cooperation in education and circular economy



Finland is emerging as a key partner for Malaysia as the two nations ramp up collaboration in education centred on sustainability, circular economy and climate solutions.

Speaking at the “Climate Solutions from Finland” programme in Helsinki, Malaysia’s Chargé d’Affaires ad interim to Finland, Al-Fadil Adam, said Finland’s expertise in sustainable education models aligns well with Malaysia’s reform efforts.

Malaysia plans to integrate Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) from Year 1 by 2027, and sees Finland as a strategic collaborator in designing curricula that embed sustainability across disciplines.

The cooperation extends beyond classrooms, with Malaysian agencies such as MIDA and MGTC engaging in Finnish-led initiatives in areas like renewable energy, circular business models and electric mobility.

This growing Malaysia-Finland link offers a Nordic gateway into Southeast Asia’s evolving sustainability and green education agenda.

Norwegian and Southeast Asian ink makes its mark at Saipan’s tattoo festival

The second International Tatu & Arts Festival in Saipan concluded successfully, attracting tattoo artists and enthusiasts from around the world, including participants from Norway.

Organized by Ed Elenzano, also known as Dragon Edong, the four-day event took place at the Hibiscus Hall of the Fiesta Resort & Spa and saw a notable rise in participation compared to its first edition. “There are more participants this time compared to the first time we held it last year, but there is more to come. We will definitely be hosting another festival next year,” Elenzano said.

Artists from Japan, the United States, the Philippines, Thailand, France, England, Hong Kong, Malay-



sia, Singapore, Guam, and Norway showcased their work across several competition categories, including Best Japanese Tattoo, Best Dragon Tattoo, and Tattoo of the Day.

The inclusion of Norwegian

and Southeast Asian artists highlighted the event’s growing international scope, underscoring tattoo culture as a global art form connecting creative communities across continents.

Trine Dyrholm wins Best Supporting Actress at China's Golden Panda Awards

Trine Dyrholm has won Best Supporting Actress in the film category at the 2nd Golden Panda Awards in Chengdu, China, for her portrayal of Dagmar in *The Girl with the Needle*. The awards ceremony took place on 12–13 September 2025.

The Golden Panda Awards are jointly hosted by the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles and the People's Government of Sichuan Province. Held biennially and permanently based in Chengdu, the event presents 27 prizes across film, TV drama, documentary and animation.

International winners this year included Brazilian actress Delis Weinberg, who took Best Actress



in film for *O Último Azul*, and British director James Strong, who won Best Director in the TV-drama category for *Mr. Bates vs The Post Office*. Chinese actress Tiffany Tang received Best Actress in TV-drama for

Blossoms Shanghai.

Dyrholm's award adds to a long list of international recognitions for the Danish star, whose work has been widely screened across Europe and Asia.

Vietnamese and Danish designers discuss sustainable fashion



The Embassy of Denmark in Vietnam and Net Zero Vietnam Joint Stock Company recently hosted a public talk titled "The Future of Fashion – A Conversation on Sustainability," bringing together representatives from the fashion, design, education, and sustainability sectors of both countries.

Mette Ekeroth, Deputy Ambassador of Denmark to Vietnam, highlighted the role of cultural dialogue in advancing sustainable development. She noted that while Denmark and Vietnam are geographically distant, they share strong interests in sustainability and innovation, with their fashion industries increasingly con-

nected through global value chains and consumer trends.

"Fashion is not only a way to express identity but also a sector that can drive positive change through responsible production and consumption," she said.

Participants explored how Vietnam's fashion industry can grow globally through sustainable development, the importance of cultural identity in design, and opportunities for collaboration between Vietnam and Denmark.

The talk was part of the Danish Embassy's ongoing efforts to promote sustainable development through cultural exchange and strengthen bilateral cooperation under the Green Strategic Partnership.

Finnish researcher highlights labour exploitation of Thai berry pickers



Finnish researcher Minna Seikkula has raised new concerns about the exploitation of Thai berry pickers in Finland after meeting former workers in Chaiyaphum province, Thailand, in June 2025.

The workers, mostly from northeastern Thailand's Isan region, described debts, poor housing, and harsh working conditions during their time in Finland. Many had taken out loans to pay recruitment fees, only to return home with little or no profit.

Seikkula said that while wild-berry picking is deeply rooted in Finnish culture and "Everyone's Rights," it has become a commercial industry dependent on foreign labour. Recent human trafficking and corruption cases involving major berry companies such as Polarica and Kiantama Oy have drawn attention to the issue.

Although Finland amended its seasonal labour law to include berry pickers, Seikkula noted that systemic change requires more resources and stronger investigations. She also credited Thai activist Junya Yimprasert for helping workers speak out about exploitation and push for justice.

"The problem is not a few bad companies," Seikkula said. "It's about structural inequality and how cheap labour from the Global South sustains the comfort of the North."

Court cases in Finland remain ongoing.

Malaysia looks to Sweden as it debates raising retirement age

Malaysia is weighing changes to its retirement policy, with the government studying a proposal to raise the civil service's mandatory retirement age from 60 to 65, while the private-sector minimum remains at 60, according to The Malay Mail. UNDP's Edward Vrkić noted that longer working lives can bring social and wellbeing benefits, but policies must fit Malaysia's context.

At the recent World Social Security Forum, Sweden's approach was highlighted as a reference point. Swedish Pensions Agency Director General Anna Pettersson Westberg said raising the pension access age has "nudged" people to work longer. Sweden moved from 65 to 66 in 2023 and is set to reach 67 in 2026.

Global perspectives at the fo-



rum stressed that longer lifespans call for more flexible retirement pathways. The World Bank's Fiona Elizabeth Stewart cautioned that increasing the retirement age alone is a "blunt tool," urging retraining and support for older workers.

Japan's reforms were also cited, including expanded pension coverage and the option to defer old-age pensions to 75. In Malaysia, tax incentives for hiring workers aged 60 and above will be extended from 2026 to 2030.

Vietnam looks to Finland as it races to train thousands of English teachers



As Vietnam pushes to make English a second language in schools, education experts are turning their eyes to Finland's acclaimed education model for guidance. The Ministry of Education and Training estimates that by 2030, Vietnam will need more than 220,000 additional teachers capable of teaching in English, including 12,000 for preschools and nearly 10,000 for elementary schools.

Finland, where English is taught early despite Finnish and Swedish being the official languages, is often cited as a model for effective bilingual education. According to RAB Consulting, Finnish teachers typically hold master's degrees and possess excellent English skills. Vietnamese children moving to Finland tend to integrate faster if they have a solid

English foundation, said RAB Consulting's director and co-founder Tran Xuan Dieu.

Vietnamese universities are now looking to similar approaches, expanding English clubs, language training partnerships, and international exchange programs. Dr. Bui Hong Quan from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education noted that while many Vietnamese teachers meet basic language standards, few feel confident teaching young children in English — a gap Finland's comprehensive teacher education could help address.

Education experts in Vietnam also highlight the role of modern teaching methods. At DOL English, academic director Ha Dang Nhu Quynh points to "Linear thinking," a Vietnamese-developed approach

that blends language and logical thinking — a skillset that could complement the Finnish emphasis on critical and independent learning.

As Finnish universities explore deeper partnerships in Vietnam, educators say stronger English capacity among local teachers could open the door to broader cooperation — from classroom development to joint research and training programs.

A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY



"Bangkok Patana helped me explore a variety of cultures, experience a dedicated and hard-working environment...and these have certainly benefitted me. I will be forever grateful I was able to learn and grow at Bangkok Patana School."

Ceara Elliot, Class of 2009 Senior Designer,
Penguin Random House

admissions@patana.ac.th
www.patana.ac.th
Tel: +66 (0) 2785 2200

Read more about Ceara's story on our
Life After Patana Story blog.



Bangkok Patana School
The British International School in Thailand
Established 1957



Bangkok Patana is a not-for-profit IB World School, accredited by CIS