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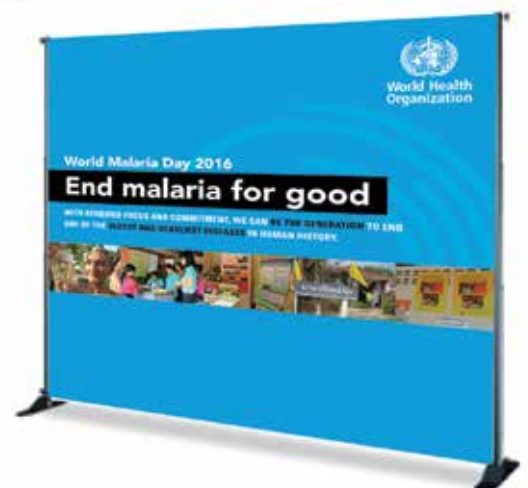
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# Visa rules confusion

**T**hailand wants more tourists. It wants them to stay longer. It says so repeatedly.

The official policy reflects this ambition. Nordic travellers, like many others, are now granted 60 days visa-free entry, with the option to extend for another 30 days. On paper, this is one of the most generous entry regimes in Southeast Asia.

But the reality at the border tells a different story.

While the government promotes longer stays, immigration enforcement increasingly focuses on limiting them. Travellers who return after extended stays — even when fully complying with visa rules — may face questioning, shortened stays, or outright refusal of entry based on a perceived “abuse” of the system.

This creates a fundamental contradiction.

On one side, the message is clear: come more, stay longer. On the other, the practical signal is: don't stay too long, or you may not be allowed back.

The problem is not that Thailand enforces its immigration laws. Every country has the right to distinguish between tourists and those effectively residing without the proper visa. The issue is that this distinction is not clearly defined in rules that travellers can understand and plan around.

Instead, decisions are often left to discretionary assessment at the border.

For travellers, this creates uncertainty. A visitor can follow the written rules — 60 days, extension, exit, return — and still face problems simply because their pattern of stay raises suspicion. There is no clear threshold, no published limit, and no predictable outcome.

Compared to neighbouring countries, the difference is noticeable. Malaysia offers longer stays with relatively predictable re-entry. Vietnam offers shorter stays, but a more consistent and rules-based system.

Thailand, by contrast, offers generous access combined with uncertain continuity.

For many long-stay travellers, predictability matters as much as generosity. The ability to plan ahead — to know whether you can return — is essential.

If Thailand wants to position itself as a base for long-term visitors, remote workers and retirees, clarity will be key. Without it, the country risks losing exactly the segment it is trying to attract — not because the rules are too strict, but because they are too unclear.



**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.

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# Vietnam plans easier access to public services using Nordic digital solutions



Vietnam is seeking to improve access to public services by learning from Nordic countries' use of digital solutions.

The country is working to streamline its administrative system and expand digital technologies in government services.

At a seminar in Hanoi on March 18, representatives from Denmark,

Finland, Norway, and Sweden highlighted how digital tools are used in public administration, taxation, and citizen services. The event was organised by the Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics in cooperation with the Nordic embassies in Vietnam, as part of ongoing collaboration on governance and digital development.

## Focus on user-friendly digital services

Norwegian Ambassador to Vietnam, Hilde Solbakken, emphasised the importance of accessibility.

"Digital solutions must be user-friendly, accessible, and inclusive, designed not only for the digitally proficient but also for citizens with limited digital literacy. We are pleased to share our experience and support Vietnam's reform and digital transformation journey," she said.

Danish Ambassador to Vietnam, Nicolai Prytz, highlighted the role of digital tools in taxation.

"Denmark demonstrates that a transparent, equitable, and citizen-centered tax system can operate effectively with robust and flexible digital tools. Ensuring these solutions are user-friendly is key to helping taxpayers comply with ease," he said.

# Denmark and Cambodia look to strengthen ties ahead of 60th anniversary

Cambodia and Denmark are looking to expand their cooperation as the two countries approach the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations next year.

The outlet reported that the topic was raised during a meeting between Cambodia's former Prime Minister Hun Sen and Denmark's ambassador to Cambodia, Danny Annan, in Phnom Penh, citing a statement from the Cambodian Senate.

During the meeting, both sides expressed satisfaction with existing relations and highlighted opportunities to deepen cooperation, particularly in trade, investment and economic development, Fresh News English reports.

Hun Sen also pointed to the upcoming anniversary as an opportunity to organise joint activities aimed at strengthening bilateral ties.

According to the report, the meeting further touched on regional developments, including the border

situation between Cambodia and Thailand, with Cambodia reiterating its commitment to resolving the issue through peaceful negotiations.

No specific agreements were announced following the meeting.



# Finnish Red Cross strengthens disaster partnership with Philippines

After years of helping communities rebuild after typhoons and earthquakes, Finland is deepening its humanitarian partnership with the Philippines.

A delegation from the Finnish Red Cross visited the Philippines from March 11-13 to strengthen cooperation with the Philippine Red Cross.

During the visit, Finnish Red Cross Secretary General Eero Rämö met with Philippine Red Cross Chairman Richard J. Gordon to discuss continued support for disaster recovery and community resilience.

The delegation also travelled to Cebu to see recovery efforts first-hand. There, assistance was distributed to 501 families in Tabuelan through cash grants and food services provided by the Philippine Red Cross.

Finland has for years supported disaster response efforts in the Philippines, where communities are frequently affected by typhoons and other natural disasters.

The visit highlighted the strong

humanitarian ties between the two countries and their shared commitment to helping vulnerable communities recover and prepare for future disasters.



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# Norway eyes carbon credits from Indonesia floating solar projects



Indonesia is reviewing a possible scheme under which Norway would buy carbon credits from planned floating solar power projects in the country.

Eniya Listiani Dewi, Director General of New and Renewable Energy and Energy Conservation at Indonesia's Energy Ministry, said Norway has shown interest in securing the carbon credits before the projects become operational.

She said the Norwegian side has already identified several possible project locations and started early talks with the Indonesian government.

According to Eniya, the carbon

credits under discussion are estimated to be priced at 20\$–40\$ per tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>. She said the level is seen as attractive from a financing perspective, but the government is still studying the details.

Indonesia is also reviewing long-term price risks, as some of the floating solar projects may only be completed next year or later. Officials are assessing how any funding from Norway's purchase of the credits can be used most effectively.

# Danish giant Maersk opens SGD 200 million automated warehouse in Singapore

Danish shipping and logistics company Maersk has opened a new fully automated warehouse in Singapore, marking its largest investment in the country to date.

The new facility, World Gateway II, spans 1.1 million square feet and represents an investment of more than SGD 200 million – equivalent to around US\$156 million. With the addition, Maersk has doubled its total warehousing footprint in Singapore.

The site is designed to support e-commerce and contract logistics across the region, serving industries such as retail, consumer goods and technology.

"The launch of World Gateway II reflects the importance of Singapore to our global network and the immense opportunities we see in Asia," said Maersk CEO Vincent Clerc.

The warehouse is equipped with advanced automation technologies, including robotics and au-



tomated storage systems, aimed at improving speed, accuracy and efficiency in order handling.

Maersk said the expansion is part of its broader growth strategy in Asia-Pacific, where demand for logistics and e-commerce services continues to rise.

"Doubling our warehousing footprint in Singapore is a bold step forward and a strong vote of confi-

dence in this market and our customers," said Chang Kee Seng, Head of Maersk Contract Logistics Asia Pacific.

Once fully operational, the facility is expected to employ around 500 people.

Singapore is a key hub for Maersk and serves as the company's second-largest base outside Copenhagen.

# Sweden and Philippines seek stronger collaboration on cancer treatment

A new health leader in the Philippines has opened the door to deeper cooperation with Sweden on cancer care, Embassy of Sweden in Manila reports.

In a recent discussion with the newly appointed Philippine Department of Health Undersecretary Dr. Gloria Balboa, Team Sweden presented key priorities in the Sweden-Philippines strategic partnership in cancer care.

The discussion focused on efforts to move cancer diagnosis from late stages to earlier detection. Strengthening healthcare capacity and promoting exchange of knowledge and expertise were also highlighted.

Another area of cooperation is the development of digital solutions



in healthcare.

Both sides expressed their commitment to deepen collaboration to improve cancer outcomes and strengthen the health system.

The partnership is also aimed at supporting the Philippines in delivering more accessible and high-quality care for patients across the country.

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# The Global Compass: Navigating International Education in Southeast Asia

Choosing a school is one of the most important decisions when relocating abroad. For expat parents in cities like Bangkok, Singapore, Hanoi, or Manila, the aim is usually to find a school that offers an international education while still reflecting the values and learning style of their home country.

*By Napat Rodnoi*

For many families, the search for the best international school quickly becomes a very personal decision. Southeast Asia offers a wide range of international schools with impressive campuses and strong academic results. But the 'best' school is not defined by its buildings. It is the one where children feel comfortable, stay curious, and gain the confidence to explore the world.

This guide offers an overview of the main things to consider when choosing an international school. In this issue, you will also find profiles of several schools that explain how they approach learning and student life.

## Defining Your Educational Priorities

Before you start booking school tours or meeting with admissions officers, it is very helpful to sit down as a family and talk about what matters most to you. Every child is different, and what works for one student might not work for another. By defining your priorities early, you can avoid feeling overwhelmed by the many options available.

One of the first things to consider is the **philosophy of education**. Many Western education systems focus on encouraging curiosity and teaching students how to think

for themselves. In these schools, the process of learning is often considered just as important as the final grade. On the other hand, some Asian international schools might place a much stronger emphasis on academic results, hard work, and performing well in exams.

Neither approach is "better" than the other. Some children thrive in a high-pressure environment where they are constantly pushed to be the best. Other children might do much better in a school that focuses on creativity and emotional well-being. Understanding which environment suits your child's personality is the first step toward a successful school experience.

Another priority to discuss is your **long-term plan**. Are you living in Southeast Asia for only a few years before moving back home? If so, you might want a curriculum that matches your home country exactly. Or, are you a "global nomad" family that moves every few years? In that case, a fully international pathway might be better because it is recognized by universities all over the world.





“

*You have the chance to give your child an education that is truly global, surrounded by friends from every corner of the world.*

”

## The Curriculum Landscape

Most international schools in Southeast Asia follow one of three major educational systems. While they all aim to prepare students for the future, they do it in different ways.

### 1. The International Baccalaureate (IB)

The IB programme is perhaps the most famous international curriculum in the world. It is very popular among expat families because it is designed to be “**portable**.” Because it is the same all over the world, a student can move from an IB school in Singapore to one in London or New York without missing a beat.

The teaching style in the IB is “inquiry-based.” This means that instead of just listening to a teacher and memorizing facts, students are encouraged to explore ideas through projects. In an IB classroom, you will often hear students asking “why” just as much as “what.” This makes the programme very attractive to families who value critical thinking and want their children to become global citizens.

### 2. The British Curriculum

The British system is another very popular choice. This system usually leads to **IGCSE exams** (at age 16) and **A-Levels** (at age 18). Many parents choose the British system because it is very structured and organized. It has clear “benchmarks,” which are goals that students are expected to reach at certain ages.

There is a sense of traditional academic discipline in the British system that many families appreciate.



The milestones are predictable, and the final exams are recognized by the best universities in the world. For families moving between Europe and Asia, the familiarity of the British system can make the transition much easier.

### 3. The American Curriculum and AP

The American system is known for its flexibility and its focus on the “whole student.” Unlike some systems where students have to pick a specific path early on, the American curriculum allows students to choose a wide variety of different subjects. This helps students build a unique academic profile based on what they actually enjoy.

In the final years of high school, many American international schools offer **Advanced Placement (AP)** courses. These are college-level classes that allow students to focus deeply on specific interests, such as biology or history. If a student does well in their AP exams, they can often earn credits that count toward their university degree, saving them time and money later on.

### Beyond the Classroom: What Else Matters?

The curriculum is important, but many other factors also influence what a school is really like. When you visit a school, take a moment to look beyond the shiny classrooms:

- **The Teachers:** Are they excited to be there? Do they stay at the school for many years, or is there a high turnover of staff? Good schools usually have

teachers who stay long enough to really get to know the students.

- **The Facilities:** While you don't need a professional-sized stadium, you should check if the school has the tools your child needs. If your child loves swimming, a good pool matters. If they love coding, check the computer labs.
- **The Community:** International schools are often the social center for expat families. A school with a strong parent-teacher association (PTA) can help you make friends, find your way around a new city, and feel like you belong.

In many cases, finding the right fit matters far more than choosing the most famous school in the city.

Navigating the world of international education in Southeast Asia can feel like a difficult task, but it is also an exciting opportunity. You have the chance to give your child an education that is truly global, surrounded by friends from every corner of the world.

By sitting down as a family, defining what you value most, and understanding the different curricula available, you can find a school that is much more than just a place of learning. You can find a place that feels like home. Remember, the right school is the one that helps your child find their own way in the world.



## When the Year 6 Classroom Became a Refugee Camp



For Year 6 students at Bangkok Patana, the new term started with powerful topic: Migration. On their first day back from holidays, their normal morning quickly became something far more memorable. As the whistle blew for registration, students were gathered and told that their lives had changed. They were now refugees, stranded in a refugee camp with nothing but a passport and a new identity.

From that moment, the Year group was transformed. Queues of migrants lined up to have their passports checked by immigration officers before visiting the medical tent to ensure they were



free from contagious diseases. Students then had to choose a country and attempt to gain entry. Each country had strict and varied requirements, including qualifications, savings, language skills or health checks. Some students were accepted, but many were turned away and forced to try again elsewhere.

Life in a new country was not always easy. Migrants had to navigate challenges such as completing lengthy visa applications in an unfamiliar language or working in menial jobs to prove their worth. These tasks required time, effort and patience, often preventing students from applying to another country. Frustration, disappointment and uncertainty quickly became common feelings.

The level of engagement throughout the activity was remarkable. Students were fully immersed, carefully considering



their choices and supporting one another where possible. As the experience unfolded, it became increasingly clear how difficult and unfair the process could feel. Many students reflected on how little control they had and how exhausting it was to keep trying.

By the end, there was a strong sense of realisation. Students recognised that for real migrants, this is not a game or a lesson, but a lived reality. The experience fostered empathy,



understanding and meaningful learning that will stay with them long after the topic ends.

As parents and educators, we often read that the best learning is by doing. Experiences such as the one above are part of the curriculum, so that children develop an awareness of society beyond their own community along with empathy and understanding. To find out more about our programmes contact admissions@patana.ac.th.



# ISB's College Counseling: A Personalized Approach to Global University Success

Navigating the college admissions process can be overwhelming for students and families, but International School Bangkok (ISB) sets itself apart with a world-class, individualized college counseling program that is unmatched by any other school in Thailand. With a focus on personalized guidance, strategic academic planning, and a deep understanding of global university admissions, ISB ensures students are well-prepared for success at top institutions worldwide.

## Tailored College Counseling from Start to Finish

Unlike other schools in Bangkok that offer limited college advising, ISB provides a highly structured and individualized counseling process beginning in Grade 9. Each student is assigned a dedicated college counselor, who works closely with them to explore their interests, refine their academic and



extracurricular profiles, and build a strong application strategy. ISB's counselors bring extensive experience from leading international universities and have strong relationships with admissions officers globally, ensuring students receive up-to-date insights and expert advice.

## Unparalleled Academic Pathways & Flexibility

ISB offers a breadth of academic pathways that no other school in Bangkok provides. Students can choose from the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, Advanced Placement (AP) courses, or a personalized ISB diploma with specialized coursework. This flexibility allows students to tailor their education to match their university aspirations—whether aiming for the Ivy League, top UK institutions, competitive STEM programs, or creative arts schools. The school's rigorous curriculum is complemented by internships, research opportunities, and co-curricular leadership experiences, making ISB graduates stand out in the competitive university landscape.



## Global University Acceptances & Results

ISB's college counseling program consistently yields outstanding university placements, with students gaining admission to the most selective institutions across the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Europe, and Asia. From Harvard, Oxford, and Stanford to top universities in Australia and Japan, ISB students secure places in highly competitive programs, thanks to the school's strategic guidance and holistic support.

## A Commitment to Student-Centered Success

Beyond academics, ISB prioritizes the well-being and aspirations of each student, ensuring they find the best-fit university rather than just aiming for rankings. Through one-on-one counseling, parent workshops, and university fairs, ISB creates a collaborative support system that helps families make informed decisions about higher education.

For families seeking the most comprehensive and personalized college counseling experience in Bangkok, ISB is the clear leader. With a commitment to excellence, flexibility, and global success, ISB's college counseling program provides students with an unparalleled advantage as they step confidently into their university journeys.

For more information about ISB, please visit our website [www.isb.ac.th](http://www.isb.ac.th)



# The Quiet Four: University Destinations to Watch

By Alexander Manners, Future Pathways Counsellor at Bangkok Prep School



For decades, international students have focused on the traditional “Big Four” study destinations: the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada and Australia. Their appeal is easy to understand. These countries offer globally recognised universities, cultural and linguistic familiarity and, for some students, the possibility of longer-term migration.

But sometimes the dominance of these destinations is also a matter of visibility. When certain countries have long been positioned as default options for international students, it can be easy to overlook places quietly building strong higher education systems of their own.

In counselling conversations, subtle shifts in priorities are beginning to emerge. Students and families increasingly talk about best fit not only in terms of academic programmes, but also finances, lifestyle, climate and long-term opportunities.

While this list is far from exhaustive, here are four countries quietly emerging as interesting options for internationally mobile students.

## Estonia

Estonia may not be the first country families think of when considering university in Europe, but it has quietly built a reputation as one of the continent’s most innovative societies. Known for its digital governance and highly connected public services, Estonia has embraced technology in ways that shape both everyday life and higher education.



Universities offer a growing number of programmes taught in English across fields such as business, technology and international relations. Tuition fees are often significantly lower than in the traditional study destinations, while students still benefit from a high quality of life within the European Union.

Despite its small population, Estonia has produced a remarkable number of successful technology companies, earning it a reputation as something of a “Silicon Valley of Europe”.

## Malta

Officially an English-speaking island nation in the Mediterranean, Malta sits at a cultural crossroads between southern Europe and North Africa. Its distinct Maltese language reflects this mix, while the country’s architecture and history reveal centuries of influence from neighbouring regions.

For many European students, Malta has long been part of the conversation, whether for a full degree or as part of an Erasmus exchange experience.

Today its universities offer the opportunity to study in English within the European Union in a compact academic environment. For students seeking a European degree in a Mediterranean setting, Malta presents a distinctive alternative to larger and more traditional destinations.



## Ireland

Ireland occupies an interesting space in international higher education. As one of the few English-speaking countries within the eurozone, it offers students the familiarity of an English language academic environment while remaining firmly embedded within the European Union.

Irish universities are widely recognised for their academic quality, and the country’s strong connections to global technology and pharmaceutical industries have helped position it as an attractive destination for students interested in business, science and technology.

For international students seeking an English-speaking European degree with strong industry links and post-graduation opportunities, Ireland presents a compelling alternative to more traditional study destinations.



## Hungary

Hungary has long been home to some of Central Europe’s most historic universities, yet it often sits outside the spotlight of international study destinations. In recent years the country has become particularly well known for its English-taught medical programmes, which attract students from across Europe and beyond.

Universities such as Semmelweis University and the University of Szeged have built strong international reputations in health sciences, while a growing range of programmes in other disciplines are also offered in English. Tuition fees and living costs can be considerably lower than in many traditional destinations.

For students seeking a European degree in a historic academic environment, Hungary offers another distinctive path.

## Going Forward

As international education continues to evolve, destinations like these show that the global university landscape is broader and more diverse than the traditional “Big Four” might suggest.

## About the Author

Currently working as a University Guidance Counselor at Bangkok Prep and holding an MA in Careers Counselling from the University of Derby, Alexander brings a fresh perspective shaped by a background in fashion and advertising, and his own student-focused, student-centred, student-led approach.



# Why British Education Leads the World

## and why families across Asia are choosing it for their children



**A**cross the world, more families than ever are choosing a British education for their children - even when a wide range of international options are available. From American programmes to the International Baccalaureate and bilingual systems, parents today have more educational choices than ever before. Yet despite this variety, the British curriculum continues to attract growing global demand.

The numbers illustrate this clearly. According to ISC Research, there are now almost 15,000 English-medium international schools worldwide, educating 7.4 million pupils and generating more than \$67 billion in annual tuition fees. Nearly half of these schools follow a British-oriented curriculum, and the sector has grown by 8% in just five years.

So what lies behind this continued global appeal? And what does a British education actually mean for a child growing up in Bangkok today?

At Brighton College Bangkok - named British International School of the Year at the Independent Schools of the Year Awards 2024 and Best International School in Thailand at the World Business Outlook Awards 2025 - the answer is visible every day in the classroom.

### A Global Education with British Roots

The growth of British international schools is no coincidence. Around the world, parents increasingly recognise the strength, academic rigour and international credibility of the British education system.

Southeast Asia has seen particularly rapid growth. International school numbers in the region have increased by 11% over the past five years, one of the fastest rates globally. Thailand sits at the centre of this expansion, with Bangkok now home to several high-performing British international schools.

For many families, the reasons are clear. Parents want qualifications that open doors to leading universities around the world - whether in the UK, the United States, Australia or elsewhere. Just as importantly, they want an education that encourages curiosity, independence and the ability to think critically.

### What a British Education Looks Like

At Brighton College Bangkok, a British education follows a well-established academic pathway.

Pupils study the English National Curriculum, which is widely respected for its academic rigour and structured progression. In the Senior School, pupils first complete International GCSEs (IGCSEs) before moving on to A Levels, one of the most respected pre-university qualifications worldwide.

This two-stage approach is carefully designed. IGCSEs provide

strong foundations across a broad range of subjects, while A Levels allow pupils to specialise in the areas where they have the greatest interest and ability.

The result is a system that produces students who are not only knowledgeable, but confident thinkers with genuine expertise in their chosen subjects.

## Why the A Level Pathway Works

For many families, the strength of the British curriculum lies in the balance it strikes between breadth and depth.



### Focused academic study

A Levels allow pupils to concentrate on the subjects they enjoy most and where they perform strongest. This depth of study provides excellent preparation for demanding university courses such as medicine, engineering, economics or law.

### Flexibility and choice

Pupils shape their own academic programme according to their interests and ambitions. At Brighton College Bangkok, pupils can choose from 21 different A Level subjects, allowing them to design a pathway that reflects their individual strengths.

### Clear and rigorous assessment

A Levels are primarily assessed through final examinations, rewarding genuine understanding and subject mastery while helping students develop strong revision and examination skills.

### Global recognition

Universities around the world understand and value A Level results,

making the admissions process clear and transparent.

Beyond academic results, pupils also develop important skills such as critical thinking, communication and intellectual independence - qualities that will serve them well long after they leave school.

## Where Results Speak for Themselves

At Brighton College Bangkok, the outcomes of this approach are clear.

In recent examinations, almost half of all A Level grades were awarded A\* - the highest possible

grade. These results place the school among the strongest-performing international schools in Thailand and the wider region.

Pupils are regularly recognised by examination boards as the highest-performing students in Thailand or Southeast Asia in their subject.

Of course, behind every result is a personal story. Pupils such as Kotaro, who achieved four A\* grades and is now studying Computer Science at the University of Cambridge; Tui, who also gained four A\* grades and is studying Biological Sciences at Imperial College London; and Proud, who achieved the remarkable distinction of A\* grades in all ten of her IGCSE subjects.

Graduates from Brighton College Bangkok regularly go on to leading universities, including University of Cambridge, Imperial College London, London School of Economics and prestigious, top-tier universities across the world like Emory University, Northeastern University, Boston University, Chulalongkorn University, Thammasat University and Mahidol University.

The school has also been inspected by the British Schools Overseas Inspectorate and awarded the highest rating in every category, from academic outcomes to pastoral care.

“The academic rigour and personalised teaching I received at Brighton College Bangkok made all the difference. I was constantly encouraged to go beyond the curriculum.”

*Kotaro, Alumni Class of 2025 - now studying Computer Science at the University of Cambridge*

**Why Bangkok Families Are Choosing British**

For families considering their children's education, both global trends and local results point in the same direction.

The rapid growth of British international schools across Southeast Asia reflects a clear priority among parents: an education that combines academic depth, internationally recognised qualifications and strong preparation for university.

But perhaps most importantly, the British curriculum develops the habits of mind that shape successful adults. Pupils learn how to analyse ideas, question assumptions and communicate their thinking clearly and confidently.

These qualities matter not only for university admissions, but for success in an increasingly complex global world.

At Brighton College Bangkok, we are proud to deliver this tradition of academic excellence. As the sister school of Brighton College UK - named England's Independent School of the Decade by The Sunday Times - we bring the same ambition, standards and ethos to every pupil in Bangkok.

Because ultimately, education is not only about examination results. It is about giving young people the knowledge, confidence and character to shape their own future.



global issues such as natural disasters have affected different regions. This approach enables children to see links across their learning.”

### What is international about the IPC?

As Regents prepares children for life in an increasingly interconnected world, understanding similarities and differences between people and cultures is a central focus of the IPC. This international perspective is embedded across subject units to enrich learning.

“While many curricula are purely knowledge-based, the IPC encourages our children to be

## The IPC at Regents

- ensuring key skills and knowledge are met while encouraging a global mindset

In Years 1 to 6 at Regents International School Pattaya, the high standards and benchmarks of the English National Curriculum provide children with the essential literacy and numeracy skills needed for future success. Alongside this core curriculum, students also follow the International Primary Curriculum (IPC), a highly respected and internationally recognised programme that offers a cross-curricular, thematic approach to learning.

### Do you teach ‘subjects’ through the IPC?

Subjects such as Science, History, Geography, Art and Design Technology are taught with learning objectives that meet, and in many cases exceed, those of other curricula. These subjects are delivered through carefully

planned thematic units, selected by teachers to ensure that key knowledge and skills are developed progressively throughout a child’s time at school.

Although learning is approached from different subject viewpoints, real-life understanding does not sit neatly within individual subjects. The IPC’s cross-curricular structure allows children to make meaningful connections between areas of learning for themselves.

### Ms Tamika Daley-Bacchus, Head of Primary, explains:

“During their final Year 6 unit, children took on the roles of ‘historians’ and ‘geographers’. They explored the history of home and host countries, how nations have worked together, and how



globally minded and socially conscious,” adds Ms Daley-Bacchus. “This is clearly demonstrated in units such as ‘Saving the Rainforest.’”

Links to the Sustainable Development Goals help children understand real-world challenges and inspire them to make positive contributions to global change.

To explore the IPC and Regents International School Pattaya, contact [admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th](mailto:admissions@regents-pattaya.co.th)

# China summons Maersk after Panama ports takeover

China has summoned representatives from Danish shipping giant Maersk and Swiss-based MSC to a meeting on international shipping practices. The move comes after Panama cancelled contracts for two canal ports previously held by Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison.

The dispute centres on the Balboa and Cristóbal terminals near the Panama Canal. In February, Panama moved to cancel CK Hutchison's concession and handed temporary control to Maersk's APM Terminals Panama and MSC during a transition period.

China has already criticised Panama's handling of the case. Earlier in February, Beijing called the



Panamanian court ruling against CK Hutchison "shameful" and warned Panama it would pay a "heavy price."

The latest meeting adds a new diplomatic layer to a case that has

already triggered legal threats from CK Hutchison and raised wider questions about control of strategic infrastructure around the Panama Canal.

# Swedish man jailed in Singapore for molesting three women



A Swedish man was sentenced in Singapore on 16 March to five months and six weeks in jail after admitting to molesting three women in separate incidents.

Jan Roger Mattias Ditlofsson,

58, pleaded guilty to three charges of using criminal force to outrage modesty. Two of the incidents took place at a hotel on 3 October 2025, shortly after he arrived in Singapore to watch the Formula One race.

According to court proceedings, Ditlofsson had been drinking before he entered the hotel. He first kissed a 47-year-old chef twice on the cheek after asking her for directions, and later grabbed the breast of a 60-year-old woman at the hotel buffet area.

While out on bail for those offences, he was involved in a third incident at another restaurant. A 23-year-old waitress extended her hand, thinking he wanted to shake it, but he instead kissed the back of her hand.

His lawyer said cheek-kissing can be part of social culture in parts of Europe, but accepted that this did not excuse his actions. Singapore prosecutors said the offences showed disregard for the women's autonomy and dignity.

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*Sweden was the first Western country to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1969*

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# Ambassador Johan Ndisi wants to modernise Sweden's heritage in Vietnam and grow the relationship

Swedish-Vietnamese trade relations are currently in a particularly dynamic phase. Swedish investments into Vietnam are at an all-time-high. At the center of this development is Sweden's new ambassador to Vietnam, Mr. Johan Ndisi. Since taking up his post in August 2024, his first assignment in Asia, the pace of bilateral engagement has accelerated.

*By Joakim Persson*

Ambassador Johan Ndisi is thrilled about being in Vietnam. This is his third posting as an ambassador, and his first in Asia,

"It feels both very exciting and a great privilege to be able to be in this super interesting country, which also shares a special and important history with Sweden! As I have travelled around, I've learnt a great deal not only about Vietnam, but also about Sweden and its longstanding Vietnamese contacts, which originates from Sweden being the first Western country to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam in 1969," Johan Ndisi explained.

"The Vietnamese definitely remember that and it's our brand; something that definitely makes a difference and distinguishes us from other countries. And the fact

that we have contributed a large amount of development aid has also led to a lot of government-to-government contacts and strong people-to-people relations."

"One of my ambitions here is to make use of and build upon the strong legacy we have and to develop it and modernise it. And to engage in a forward-looking dialogue about the decades ahead," says Mr. Ndisi, who has been with the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs since September 2003.

Ambassador Ndisi's time in Vietnam has been somewhat of a crescendo. First there was the visit to Sweden by Vietnam's Vice President, Vo Thi Anh Xuan, from 10–13 November 2024 celebrating 55 years of diplomatic relations between Sweden and Vietnam. Then less than a year later, the official visit by Vietnamese Prime Minister Phạm Minh Chính took place from 11 to 13 June 2025.

During PM Phạm Minh Chính's visit, a wave of partnerships was sealed - spanning from AI innovation, green manufacturing, aviation, education, and air traffic tech.

"The fact that Vietnam is prioritising Sweden is very positive," the Ambassador says.

"A big step was taken when we entered into the sectoral partnership on Science, Technology, Innovation and Digital Transition. These areas have the highest priority on the Vietnamese agenda and we see that there is both expertise and know-how, but also where several Swedish companies – when it comes to the green transition, digitalisation, etc. – are global leaders. So, these are new areas of cooperation that will now be deepened, and year by year we will add more and more substance to the cooperation," says the ambassador, underlining that this takes things to the next level.



“

*One of my ambitions is to make use of the strong legacy Sweden has in Vietnam and to develop it and modernise it.*

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*The Ambassador visited the National Hospital of Pediatrics—formerly Olof Palme Children’s Hospital in Hanoi—a symbol of Sweden’s long-standing support to Vietnam.*

Smart healthcare is a perfect example of such bilateral collaborations, where Vietnam needs to improve its public health standards.

“When it comes to modernising and upgrading, we have Swedish companies and know-how that can build everything from operating rooms to those with hi-tech instruments. Sweden has many good companies in this area and here we can build on the fine foundation that we have, with, in 2026, 50 years of health cooperation!

Under the radar of the media, there are also many Vietnamese delegations travelling to Sweden. In October 2025 alone, there were six of them, including a visit from Vietnam’s Minister of Home Affairs.

“In particular, they are studying the Swedish model very closely. Vietnam is also a country that will have an aging population in the future, and is now looking at how to further develop the pension system that Sweden already has.”

“I’ve visited a lot of Swedish factories that manufacture here that play an important role in their companies, as well as businesses’ global value chain operations. And it’s very clear that Swedish companies are expanding.”

Several grand openings of new factories have taken place, including by Assa Abloy and Hestra Gloves, each inaugurating their second plant. The Ambassador also visited Polarium’s cutting-edge, energy storage factory, as well as Autoliv’s air-bag cushion plant currently under construction.

“When you visit these, the work they do is very impressive. Hestra continues to champion craftsmanship and sustainability, embodying Swedish values of quality and environmental responsibility!”



*Traffic safety campaign carried out by the Embassy and Cau Giay District at Nam Trung Yen Primary School, November 2024.*



During the official visit of Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh to Sweden in June 2025, numerous business agreements were reached between the two countries, notably a sectoral strategic partnership in science, technology and innovation, and green transition.

Ensuring their attractiveness as employers is also a common denominator noted by the ambassador: "For all of these companies, it's great to see both the Swedish and Nordic way of working, with a mindset of taking care of your staff. When you talk to management here, they understand that there is also competition, not least for skilled manpower."

Noteworthy from a Swedish perspective is also the established and comprehensive academic collaborations between the two countries. One example is that Swedish researchers benefit from studying Vietnam's much larger population. Another is that no fewer than 65 Vietnamese have completed their doctorates at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden.

"It's incredible to see this high number of Vietnamese PhDs!"

A second part, highlighted by the ambassador, is that with each passing year Vietnam becomes more and more interesting, which has a lot to do with the fact that in the next decade an additional, whopping, 37 million people are expected to enter Vietnam's consumer class!

"It's a country of 100 million people and has averaged 7% growth for three decades, so there's an incredibly fast-growing middle class here. Thus, Vietnam is not just a place for production, but also a growing market. I think that, slowly but surely, more Swedish companies will start to think about Vietnam as a consumer market."

In 2025, Business Sweden organised a 'Focus Asia'

SME study trip that included Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), aiming to help Swedish SMEs explore expansion opportunities in the region.

"Together with Business Sweden we could give our perspective, but also link them up with partners and help them to take part in various company visits. And as ambassador, I'm very much available to act as a door opener."

Ambassador Ndisi's educational background is in political science from Uppsala University, before being accepted to the diplomatic programme of the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

"At the Ministry for Foreign Affairs I have over the years worked with many different things, among them the EU enlargement and other EU issues."

"I learned a lot during that period and had fantastic managers," he adds. "It was an incredibly good school for a young diplomat, and a privilege to work with such capable people."

"Later, my leadership role began when I became the group leader for the Horn of Africa and West Africa. That then brought me back to EU educational issues, when I went to Albania and became our ambassador. And when I returned home, I served as the Deputy Head of Communications and Deputy Head of Africa."

Prior to Vietnam the ambassador also worked at Sweden's EU representation in Brussels as well as at the foreign ministry's EU unit.



# Emanuel wants to make floorball bigger than football in Laos

The floorball sticks had been stored away under the stairs in Emanuel Lakongseng's house for years when his wife finally told him to do something about them.

*By Freja Nanna Mogensen*

Either throw them out, she said, or use them. He chose to use them – and two years later, the 45-year-old Swede is helping build what he hopes could one day become one of Laos' biggest sports movements.

"I know it sounds like, 'yeah, good luck with that,'" Emanuel says with a laugh. "But you have to set the aim high."

Today, he is the main driving force behind the Lao Floorball Federation, which is introducing the Nordic sport to schools across the country and trying to build a broader grassroots movement around it.

A sponsored child led him to Laos  
Emanuel first came to Laos as a teenager while travelling in neighbouring Thailand in the early 2000s.

At the time he had sponsored a child in Laos through a charity programme and decided to visit the country out of curiosity.

"Laos is close, I should go see if the kid exists," he says.

"And I fell in love with Laos right away."

He later returned and eventually settled in Vientiane, where he met his Lao wife in church in 2005. Today they live in the capital with their two teenage children.

Alongside his volunteer work with floorball, Emanuel helps run cafés with his wife and has previously worked as an English teacher and in development organisations.

A hobby that got out of hand

Although floorball is widely played in Sweden, Emanuel never played it at a competitive level.

After moving to Laos, he occasionally joined a small expatriate floorball group in Vientiane. The real turning point came when a Swiss acquaintance gave him a batch of floorball sticks.

For years they gathered dust in his home.



Until his wife insisted something had to be done with them. Instead of throwing them away, Emanuel began introducing the sport to local schools. He also contacted a Lao sports club and offered to teach them the game.

“Now floorball is a hobby that got out of hand,” he says.

## Schools are leading the sport’s growth

Today the federation has around 200 members, but Emanuel believes the real potential lies in schools.

So far floorball has been introduced at five schools in Laos. In the coming school year, the federation hopes to expand to as many as 25 schools.

Schools that receive equipment are expected to form teams and participate in a national tournament planned for November 2026.

Teachers from participating schools will also receive training so they can continue coaching the sport themselves.

“Floorball is very easy to learn,” Emanuel says. “All you really need is a stick and a ball.”

That simplicity, he believes, makes it ideal for a country where sports infrastructure is still developing.

## A sport open to everyone

For Emanuel, the ambition goes beyond simply introducing another sport.

With a background in development work, he sees floorball as a tool for youth development – not only for physical activity, but also for building teamwork, structure and ambition.

While football dominates in Laos, opportunities are not equal.

“Team sports are very powerful for children and youth development,” he says.

“Football is huge here, but girls don’t really play,” he says. “There are very few team sports available for girls.”

Emanuel hopes floorball can help change that — and his ambitions are high.

“I want floorball to be bigger than football in Laos by 2040,” he says.



# She was afraid of the water, but now Lisa teaches kids in Singapore to swim

Lisa Thrane has lived for two decades on the island of Singapore. With the South China Sea to the east, the Strait of Malacca to the west, swimming pools attached to every condominium, and multiple beaches, Singapore is surrounded by water. This is the perfect setting for Danish Lisa, who runs her own swimming coach service, Braveswimmers.

*By Alexander Vittrup*

## Childhood fear

"As a kid I was terrified of water," Lisa remembers. "Neither of my parents could swim. But my mother made me take swimming lessons. I would always try to come up with excuses not to go. The water was too dark, too cold."

It wasn't until Lisa met a special coach with whom she could resonate. The coach was able to break through the fear and make Lisa trust her. Suddenly the pool wasn't too scary, the water not too dark.

Lisa began to swim a lot, and at the age of 14, she was swimming in championships. She had summer jobs as

a lifeguard in Vejle and Kolding. To Lisa, swimming meant friendship and mentorship.

"My friend group was my swimming team; we were close. Swimming can be lonely, it is only you and the black line on the bottom for laps on end. But we knew that we all jumped in the water together and we got out of the water together," Lisa tells. "I was also fortunate to have a string of really good coaches. They built the confidence in me that I needed. They made me strong and determined."

Lisa even met her husband, Nicolai, during swimming practice.



*Swimming is a life skill. In the pool, if you don't know how to keep yourself afloat, you drown.*



## A move to Singapore

In 2002, Nicolai was offered a job in Singapore, so Lisa packed a bags and set course for the tropics with him. Lisa had a degree in childcare and figured she would find a job once they arrived.

Finding a job turned out to be easier than she had hoped. After meeting fellow Danish expats in Singapore, Lisa mentioned she had worked as a swimming coach, and within days of arriving on the island, she was asked if she wanted to coach local children. From then on, Lisa gained more and more clients over the years, and at one point she was coaching over 120 people of all ages.

During the pandemic in 2021, Lisa and her family returned to Denmark, after Lisa had finished a Masters degree in Counselling. But in 2025, Lisa and Nicolai returned once again to Singapore, where Lisa has now started a new swim coaching business, Braveswimmers.

## Swimming as a life skill

To many parents, swimming may be seen as just one of many options when choosing an activity to put their child in. But to Lisa, swimming is special.

"Swimming is a life skill," Lisa says. "In all other sports, you are able to breathe. But in the pool, surrounded by water, if you don't know how to keep yourself afloat, you drown."

"We are on an island, there are pools everywhere. I have been to so many pool parties or beaches and seen kids or grownups who cannot swim jump in the pool. I have had to save so many people over the years," Lisa says.

Lisa has experienced that a lot of people don't have the same respect for water that she has growing up in Denmark, and that is something she would like to change through her coaching.

## A bond of trust

With her background in childcare, Lisa has a special professional mindset when it comes to teaching children how to swim.

"It is about trust," Lisa explains. "Many children are like me; they are scared of the water. What I will do is get in the water with the child, and I will ask the child to swim to me. Many adults would perhaps take a few steps away from the child as they are swimming, making the child swim further, but I won't. The child needs to trust that I will stand still and that they can rely on me."

That trust between trainer and trainee, that special relationship, is what originally made Lisa fall in love with swimming.

"I trusted my coaches, I believed them fully, so when they believed in me, I believed in me," Lisa tells.

## Fun for all ages

While Lisa is mainly focused on teaching kids, often beginners, to feel comfortable in the pool, she is happy to take on any client, at any age and swimming level. Through Braveswimmers, Lisa coaches people from 6 months old to 60 years old: beginners and advanced swimmers.

"I teach the new ones how to feel comfortable in the water, and I teach strong swimmers how to perfect every stroke they take," Lisa says.

Swimming is hard and exhausting, but that does not mean there is no time for games.

"Kids should have fun," Lisa says. "I teach them how to swim, but we also play games and have fun in the pool!"

"In Singapore, a lot of parents want their kids to succeed and do well, but I don't think you can truly succeed if you don't have joy for what you are doing. I love swimming and I love coaching people, that's how I succeed."

# The goal is to have fun, How Johnni build a football team in Taiwan



By Alexander Vittrup

Few things are as universal as football; enjoyed around the world by professionals and amateurs alike.

Johnni Nielsen has lived with his family in Taiwan since 2009. He has worked for 15 years to bring a bit of Danish team spirit to a more strict Taiwanese sports culture.

Today, he runs the football club FC Vikings in Taipei.

## Father and son

Football has always been a part of Johnni Nielsen's life. It is something he shared with his son. The two of them would go to the local park in Sanchong to play. Here the father-son duo started drawing attention from the local kids in the park.

On the first day, it was just Johnni and his son. On day two, 4–5 other boys had asked to join them. Within

a month, Johnni had 20 boys playing football in the public park.

The boys in the park went to the local school, where the options for playing football on teams were limited. So Johnni got the idea to start his own club.

"I also had the idea of playing matches against other teams, so I went to my son's school to see if they could help us make that happen," he says.

However, Johnni soon realized that the Taiwanese school system plays by different rules when it comes to sports and education.

## A different culture

In Taiwan, students interested in sports are placed in a special program that focuses on training and becoming professional athletes. That often means that traditional

subjects and education become secondary to sports practice.

“They are basically asking the kids to choose between education and becoming good at a sport. It’s a completely different mindset,” Johnni explains. “And the biggest problem is that when they graduate from school, they are left with a sports degree that doesn’t grant them many job opportunities apart from becoming professional athletes.”

Further pressure is placed on the kids, because most schools receive prize money from the government if their students win matches or medals. This can incentivise trainers and coaches to push the children even harder to perform well.

“It’s crazy. I have seen small kids who go to the gym in hopes of getting bigger and stronger so they can win more games. It is all about winning. To me, that completely sucks the fun out of sports,” Johnni says.

Luckily for Johnni, his son’s school had a PE teacher, a former professional rugby player, who, like Johnni, agreed that kids should have fun playing. So Johnni was allowed to start a football club at his son’s elementary school.

## Vikings through the years

Originally the team was made up of Johnni’s son and his friends. But, when his son and the other boys aged up into middle school, so did FC Vikings. When they got to high school, so did FC Vikings, and when the boys decided to go to college, FC Vikings went with them.

Today FC Vikings is a club for all ages.

Unlike most other clubs in Taiwanese schools, FC Vikings relies on sponsors for funding rather than the Taiwanese government.

“That makes us freer. We don’t need to win to afford to keep playing. We can afford to encourage our players to focus on school and grades as well as on football,” Johnni explains.

But that freedom has come at a cost.



## Playing against the system

Johnni has met his fair share of scrutiny and disapproving looks since starting FC Vikings.

“I think some trainers are jealous of us. Maybe they don’t think we play by the rules. But if you ask me, the rules should be changed,” Johnni says.

Johnni and FC Vikings have felt the brunt of the jealousy.

“We tried playing in a more professional league for a season, but we didn’t feel welcomed by the other teams, so we didn’t go back for the next season. I know the boys have felt judgement too, because they play on my team”, Johnni says.

Over the years, Johnni has lobbied for changes to the system that divides schools into normal classes and sports programs.

“The people in the different ministries know my name and know what I stand for. And over the years, we have seen some change for the better,” Johnni says.

## The fun of playing

FC Vikings is now more than 15 years old, and Johnni has coached around 500 young boys and girls who have passed through the club.

FC Vikings have changed the lives of many children. Children from poorer or broken families have had the opportunity to play football without giving up on an education that could bring future opportunities.

The first group of boys from the local park back in 2010 are now young men. Most have moved on. Some have become football coaches themselves. All have fond memories of their time at FC Vikings.

“It has been incredible to watch them all grow up. I am incredibly proud of all of them. It has not been easy for them to stand against the system with me, but it means so much to me that they have,” Johnni says.

“I love football – not winning. I want kids to have fun playing. Playing with a smile is always better.”



Agneta's  
World

*Agneta de Bekassy*



# Five women, two weeks and a whirlwind tour of Bangkok

From TRIBE at EmSphere to Song Wat cafés, canal boat adventures and late lunches in Chinatown, five women rediscover Bangkok together.

**W**hat do you think will happen when four power girls decide to come and visit you in Bangkok?

That's what I found out in February. They swept in like a whirlwind. Two of them had lived in Bangkok before and the other two had visited several times.

I knew it was going to be two very hectic weeks, as I was sent a whole Excel spreadsheet in advance with all the excursions, restaurants, malls, etc. that had to be fitted into those two weeks.

I couldn't resist sending the question back: will there be any time for sleep or something spontaneous?

The answer came rapidly: "We'll see."

I was very curious to see how the five of us would get along for two weeks living under the same roof, very close to each other, sharing bathrooms and much more.

Even if we are all independent women and used to our own walls, it went surprisingly well. There were lots of great discussions and much laughter.

So, what did we do?

One of the first days we went to TRIBE. If you are not familiar with TRIBE, I can tell you it's kind of a unique beach club on the fifth floor of a shopping mall called EmSphere, located near Phrom Phong.

Which city in the world can proudly boast a beach club inside a shopping mall?

Here our wonderful friend, who was also the creator of the extensive Excel spreadsheet, had already booked us in. We were warmly greeted by the manager and shown to our big sofas by the edge of the pool. The view here is great. Behind the pool bar you can see the Skytrain rushing by and part of the skyline.

As it was close to lunchtime, we immediately asked to see the menu, not forgetting the wine list.

One of us ordered the snacks and then it came to wine. We all said: "Please bring us Prosecco and a bottle of rosé wine." The service was quick and soon we toasted each other with Prosecco and wine, while we cheerfully munched on French fries with mayonnaise or ketchup, as well as delicious beetroot chips.



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*I don't even dare mention how many bottles were consumed, but by the time we left TRIBE we had clearly been elevated to VIP status.*

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*When I waved goodbye to the last of my dear friends, it suddenly became so quiet, and the twenty pairs of shoes in the hallway were gone.*

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I don't even dare mention how many bottles were consumed, but by the time we left TRIBE we had clearly been elevated to VIP status.

Another day we decided to discover, for me, a less known area: Song Wat.

Here you will find small coffee roasters, very cool murals, charming restaurants, small boutiques, a beautiful mosque and much more. Song Wat Road is one of the oldest and shortest streets in Bangkok, well worth a visit. The road is historic in the Sampantawong District.

None of us could resist trying a cup of coffee in one of the coffee shops.

Another place we all enjoyed a lot is the Shanghai Mansion in Chinatown. This is a typical Chinese hotel with beautiful décor and, believe it or not, the rooms have no windows. Here we ordered their dumplings and of course bottles of rosé wine for a late lunch. This hotel offers live music on the terrace where you can sit and watch the bustling street – never a dull minute.

Before we left, we asked if it was possible to have a look at one of their rooms, but unfortunately for us and fortunately for the hotel, all the rooms were occupied.

Another highlight was when we took a two-hour boat tour organized by Hidden Bangkok. I already knew about this boat trip, but it's actually worth doing more than once. We entered the boat carrying Prosecco, chips and plastic glasses – we are always well-prepared ladies.

The long-tail boat took us along some of the canals, passing the enormous golden Buddha and stopping at a place where one can buy art, vintage things, etc., have something to drink or just look around. On our way we could wave to the lazy, big monitor lizards lying in the sun along the canals.





Just as our boat trip ended, the heavens opened and rain came pouring down. We had a restaurant booking quite a distance away and were already soaked by the time we managed to find a taxi.

During the two weeks we managed to try out several restaurants, from exclusive ones to more or less “holes in the wall”. I was very surprised that, after twenty-one years in Bangkok, I had not discovered the restaurant KRUA KHUN PUK on Sukhumvit, very close to my home. I can’t even count how many times I have passed it, always seeing lots of people waiting for a table and even queuing on the street.

Here we had both lunch and dinner:

Basic, great Thai food, efficient service and we were served on real porcelain. The prices are low compared to similar restaurants. I didn’t think it would be possible to reserve a table, but it was. This was a very positive surprise to me and if you still haven’t tried it, go ahead. It took me far too long to try it.

My friends disappeared shortly to Koh Samet, but I couldn’t join them. I think I must be the only one living here for so many years and not having paid a visit to Koh Samet. One day, hopefully...

When only two of the power girls were left, we dined at Gigi Dining Hall & Bar on Sukhumvit 45. Here you can enjoy a unique combination of Italian food and a

lively bar experience.

It is said that Gigi Dining Hall & Bar was founded with a vision to offer a place where people can enjoy delicious Italian food and beverages in an inviting atmosphere.

In my opinion it has become a very successful project. In the bar you can enjoy the famous Iron Balls gin among many other tasty cocktails. The DJ plays songs you both know and are not familiar with – a good mixture.

Of course we did a lot of other things too and we managed to have at least one dinner at home.

People usually say “the more cooks, the worse the soup”, but that wasn’t the case for us. We helped each other prepare salmon fillets on a bed of spinach in the oven, and one of us made the most amazing salad where every ingredient was cut into exactly the same tiny size – that certainly wasn’t me.

A delightful evening together.

Everything comes to an end, and so did our weeks together. When, close to the middle of the night, I waved goodbye to the last of my dear friends, it suddenly became so quiet, and the twenty pairs of shoes I had been tripping over in the hallway were gone.

To you, my dear friends – come back soon. You enrich my life and I get to see parts of Bangkok I have totally forgotten!



# International Women's Day: Bangkok wall becomes tribute to women by Danish and Thai artists

The shade offered a short escape from the Bangkok heat in Bechakitti Park. Under it sat Danish street artist Stine Hvid while people slowly gathered around the newly unveiled murals.

*By Helene Sadjadi-Munk*

It was two days before International Women's Day. Around the artists, guests had come to see the paintings and celebrate the occasion.

For about eight days, the 41-year-old artist had been painting in Bangkok together with Thai artist Waris.

Stine Hvid is a visual artist who mainly works with murals and street art. She grew up in Fredensborg and today lives in Hillerød with her dog Eddy. Before moving there two years ago, she spent around 20 years living in Copenhagen.



She has worked professionally with art since 2013 and holds a master's degree in visual communication from the Royal Danish Academy of Design.

"I have many titles: street artist, muralist – I guess I'm an 'all-around Stine,'" she says with a smile.

## Thoughts into images

Stine Hvid is lively and easy to talk to. She greets people warmly and quickly starts chatting with the visitors who have come to see the murals. Yet she also explains that describing art in words is not always easy. As an artist, much of the work happens in the head, and thoughts do not always translate neatly into sentences.

Still, she eagerly shares the ideas behind the mural.

The painting she created in Bangkok together with Waris centres on women from different parts of the world. In the mural, they pass flowers to each other.

The gesture symbolises peace and solidarity between women across cultures.

The artists chose the lotus flower because of its strong connection to Thailand. The flower holds an important cultural and spiritual meaning in the country.

Another flower in the mural is the mimosa. In many places, it has become a symbol of International Women's Day and is often used to mark the day and celebrate women.

The overall idea, she explains, is unity between women.

## Art and representation

Among the guests at the unveiling was Danny Annan, Ambassador at the Royal Embassy of Denmark in Bangkok.

He highlighted how art helps shape the way societies see themselves.

"It reminds us how important art is," he said.

He also pointed to an imbalance in public monuments. Statues of men outnumber statues of women by roughly ten to one, and when women are portrayed, they are often chosen because of their beauty rather than their achievements.

"That is something we should change," he said.

According to the ambassador, projects like the murals can help inspire future generations.

"We hope to inspire the next generation of leaders," he said.

For Stine Hvid, the mural is also a reminder.

She feels privileged to live with the freedoms she has.

"It's important to show that we are aware of that privilege, and that we think about the women who don't have the same freedoms."

# AstraZeneca aims to be first with full cell therapy capabilities in China

AstraZeneca plans to build a cell therapy manufacturing and supply base, as well as an

innovation centre, in Shanghai.

The facility will produce CAR-T cell therapies, a type of cancer

treatment that modifies a patient's immune cells to target and destroy cancer.

It supports AstraZeneca's ambition to become the first global drugmaker with full end-to-end cell therapy capabilities in the country.

AstraZeneca said the new site will support the production and supply of treatments for China and other markets in Asia.

The company also plans to establish a production base for radioconjugate drugs in Guangzhou, aimed at providing cancer therapies across the Asia-Pacific region.

The expansion forms part of a wider investment plan in China running through 2030.



# Ericsson partners with VNPT to upgrade Vietnam's airports

Sweden's telecom giant Ericsson has entered Vietnam's airport sector through a new partnership with state-owned operator VNPT.

The collaboration will deliver next-generation mobile infrastructure to major airport projects across the country, aiming to modernise connectivity for both operations and passengers.

Under the agreement, VNPT will deploy Ericsson's latest radio and RAN technologies to improve network capacity in dense indoor environments such as airport terminals. The upgrade is expected to support more efficient passenger processing, baggage handling and overall airport operations.

The move marks a new step



in Ericsson's expansion in Vietnam, where demand for digital infrastructure is growing alongside rising air travel and economic development.

Vietnam's airport upgrades come as countries across South-

east Asia invest in smarter, more connected transport hubs, creating opportunities for international technology providers — including Nordic companies — to strengthen their regional presence.

# Telenor completes True stake sale

True Corporation has confirmed that the share sale between Norway's Telenor and Arise Digital Technology was completed on 13 March.

Under the deal, Arise acquired shares equal to 24.95 percent of True's paid-up capital from Telenor. Arise is an investment holding company ultimately controlled by Suphachai Chearavanont, chairman of True and chief executive officer of CP Group.

Following the transaction, CP Group remains the company's largest shareholder with a 25.01 percent stake. Arise has become a new major shareholder with 24.95 percent, while Telenor's holding has been reduced to 5.35 percent.

True said the change in major shareholders will not have any sig-



nificant impact on the company's business direction, management, or operations. The company also noted

that Arise is not required to make a mandatory tender offer under Thai takeover rules.

# Finland and Taiwan discuss closer cooperation on AI and technology

A delegation from the Finnish Parliament visited Taiwan this week to discuss closer

cooperation on technology and security.

The group, led by Mats Löf-

ström, met with Taiwan's Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim in Taipei.

During the meeting, both sides highlighted opportunities to strengthen collaboration in areas such as artificial intelligence, science and technology.

Taiwan pointed to its strengths in semiconductors and electronics manufacturing, while Finland was noted for its expertise in telecommunications and space technology.

The talks also addressed shared challenges, including cybersecurity, disinformation and infrastructure security.

Taiwan Today reported that both sides expressed interest in expanding cooperation between Finland and Taiwan in response to growing technological and security challenges.



# Sudden death of Danish former Singapore Symphony Orchestra planner

The Singapore Symphony Orchestra has announced the death in Oslo of its former head of artistic planning, Hans Sørensen. Hans, who was Danish, moved to Norway last year to take the same role at the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra. No cause of death has been disclosed.

He served with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra from 2019 to 2025, where he helped shape the orchestra's artistic programmes and led several internationally recognised recording projects. During his tenure, the orchestra also navigated the challenges of the pandemic and



attracted record audience numbers.

Sørensen was known for supporting young musicians, including Singapore violinist Chloe Chua, and for developing acclaimed recordings released by labels Pentatone and Chandos Records.

Originally from southern Denmark, Sørensen built a career in classical music management that included work with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra.

Last year he moved to Norway to take up a new role with the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra.

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# Danish furniture maker ScanCom to close after 30 years



ScanCom International A/S announced early last month that it would cease operations and close the company, citing several difficult years after Covid-19 and a continued challenging market outlook. The announcement, made on March 3, noted that the firm has produced outdoor furniture for

more than 30 years, with its main production hub based in Vietnam.

The Copenhagen-headquartered company said it had attempted a major turnaround over the past two years, following years of declining turnover and cost pressure. However, changes to management and support from owners and

external consultants did not deliver signs of a profitable future.

ScanCom's focus has since shifted to a controlled shutdown, which includes protecting customers with existing orders and winding down remaining functions in Vietnam and other locations. Chairman Peter Andsager said the company is working with relevant authorities and unions to support employees in Vietnam and elsewhere during the transition.

ScanCom was founded in Korsør, Denmark, in 1995 and has had commercial and production operations in several countries, including Vietnam, Brazil, Indonesia, Germany, the UK and Spain. Lars Larsen Group A/S acquired full ownership of ScanCom in 2019.

# Chinese Putailai ditches Sweden plans for Malaysia plant

Chinese battery materials company Putailai is turning to Southeast Asia after scrapping a planned project in Sweden. The company said on 11 March it will invest 297 million USD in a new plant in Malaysia to produce lithium-ion battery anode materials.

The new facility will have an annual capacity of 50,000 tonnes and is expected to take about 24 months to build. Putailai said the plant will serve customers across Southeast Asia and other overseas markets.

The move comes as Southeast Asia continues to attract investment in the electric-vehicle supply chain. Malaysia recorded new-energy ve-

hicle sales growth of more than 50 percent in 2025, while Thailand and Indonesia also saw strong expansion.

Putailai had earlier announced plans for a 100,000-tonne integrated anode production and research base in Sweden in 2023. That project was cancelled in December 2024 after the company failed to reach an agreement with regulators.

Other Chinese battery companies have already expanded across Southeast Asia, including CATL, EVE Energy and BTR. Putailai said it plans to increase anode shipments in 2026 as its overseas production capacity grows.



# Finnish palm oil fraud; Neste under investigation

Finnish sustainable aviation fuel producer Neste has been named among European companies that received shipments from Indonesian firms under investigation in a palm oil fraud case.

The Indonesian probe alleges that companies and officials falsely labelled palm oil as palm oil mill effluent, known as POME, a waste byproduct used in biofuel production. Authorities say the practice may have helped firms avoid higher taxes and cost the Indonesian state millions in lost revenue.

The report said shipments labelled as POME were sent to both Neste and Italian energy company Eni from Indonesian suppliers now linked to the investigation. There is no suggestion that Neste or the other buyers knew about or were involved in any fraud.



Neste said it had instructed its supplier to exclude the implicated companies after the Indonesian investigation became public. The company also said tests on shipment samples from 2023 to 2025 were consistent with palm-derived waste

rather than palm oil.

The case has raised new questions about oversight in the biofuel supply chain. Palm oil has long been linked to deforestation, and the European Union is due to ban its use in biofuel from 2030.

# Danish brand Fritz Hansen tests new retail concept in Singapore



Danish furniture brand Fritz Hansen is testing a new retail concept in Singapore that combines a showroom with a restaurant.

The concept, launched at Henderson Road, pairs the brand's furniture showroom with a dining space, allowing customers to experience the products in everyday use.

"You experience furniture in real time," said Dario Reicherl, CEO for Asia at Fritz Hansen to Tatler.

The idea is inspired by similar setups in South Korea, where the company has combined retail, office space and hospitality to create what

it describes as a "third space" for customers, designers and partners.

According to Reicherl, traditional showrooms can feel static, while combining them with dining encourages visitors to spend more time in the space and interact with the furniture naturally.

The Singapore location is part of Fritz Hansen's broader expansion in Asia, where it continues to test new retail formats.

# Pandora signs solar power deal for Vietnam facility

Danish jewellery company Pandora has signed a memorandum of understanding with Vietnam Singapore Smart Energy Solutions JSC to use electricity from a solar farm for its production facility in Vietnam.

The agreement was signed on 13 March by Pandora Production Vietnam and VSSES. According to VSSES chief executive officer Pham Van Thuy, the partnership supports cleaner manufacturing and opens the way for more efficient green energy solutions.

Pandora's Vietnam facility is located in Vietnam-Singapore Industrial Park III in former Binh Duong Province. The site represents an investment of more than 150 million USD.

The company said the factory



will run entirely on renewable electricity. Once fully operational, it is expected to produce up to 60 million jewellery pieces per year and create up to 7,000 jobs.

Pandora is headquartered

in Denmark and employs around 39,000 people worldwide. The company says it uses 100 per cent recycled silver and gold and aims to halve greenhouse gas emissions across its value chain by 2030.

# Sweden, Norway and Singapore team up on solar charging for electric boats

Sweden's Candela, Norway's Ocean Sun and Singapore's Canopy Power have joined forces to develop floating solar-powered charging stations for electric vessels in remote parts of Asia-Pacific.

The partnership aims to reduce diesel use on islands and in coastal communities by combining Candela's electric P-12 ferry with floating solar panels from Ocean Sun and microgrid systems designed by Canopy Power.

According to the companies, the system could help island resorts and remote operators replace diesel generators and diesel boats with



a cleaner transport setup. Candela says its hydrofoil ferries use 80 percent less energy than traditional vessels and also reduce noise, vibration and emissions.

Candela and Canopy Power have signed a memorandum of un-

derstanding to work with stakeholders, policymakers and resort owners in the region. The goal is to demonstrate that electric boats powered by on-site renewable energy can lower operating costs compared to diesel-based transport.

# Trade between Sweden and Thailand hits new momentum

Trade between Sweden and Thailand is picking up speed.

New figures show that Swedish exports to Thailand reached around SEK 6.5 billion (THB 22.3 billion) in 2025. That marks a rise of about 10 percent compared to the previous year.

The increase highlights a steady demand for Swedish industrial strength. Machinery and engines dominate exports, followed by paper, paperboard, and transport equipment.

At the same time, imports are also flowing in the opposite direc-

tion. Sweden brought in goods from Thailand worth approximately SEK 5.3 billion (THB 18.2 billion) during the same period.

These imports are largely made up of machinery and engineering products. Transport equipment also plays a significant role.

One category, however, stands out.

Tyres have surged sharply, growing by 39 percent from 2024. They now account for around 10 percent of Sweden's total imports from Thailand, making them one of the fastest-growing segments.

Food products are another key component. Around 17 percent of imports from Thailand consist of food items, underlining the country's role as a major supplier of agricultural goods.



# Midsummer enters Thai market with innovative solar solutions



A Swedish solar company is making a move into Thailand. The company Midsummer has opened a new regional office in Bangkok, aiming to expand its presence and bring innovative solar technology to the Thai market.

The company is already putting its plans into action. Lightweight and flexible solar panels have been installed at two facilities in Thailand, with more projects in the pipeline.

The expansion reflects growing demand for sustainable energy solutions in the country.

During a recent visit, Sweden's Deputy Head of Mission Per Linnér met with the company to discuss future cooperation.

The forum is organised in collaboration with the Royal Thai Embassy Stockholm and is expected to highlight partnerships supporting green growth.

According to the Swedish Embassy, Midsummer's move is the latest example of Swedish companies contributing to Thailand's transition towards more sustainable energy solutions.

# Thule opened in Manila: Bringing mobility-driven lifestyle to the Philippines

Swedish transport and outdoor brand Thule has spotlighted changing mobility habits in the Philippines during an event at its concept store in Manila's Mall of Asia.

"Filipinos today are constantly on the move. From work and travel to fitness, family time, and creative pursuits, people are balancing many parts of their lives," Merrill Sua, director of Jake Bros Inc said to

The showcase brought together media, partners and Swedish Ambassador Anna Ferry, focusing on how Filipinos combine daily routines with travel and active lifestyles.

"At Thule, our goal is to offer solutions that make it easier and safer to bring their life wherever life takes them," Merrill Sua added.



Thule was founded in Sweden in 1942, and continues to expand its presence in Southeast Asia.

# Sweden supports scholarships for disadvantaged students in Vietnam

A small step can change a life – 52 times over.

In Da Nang, a new wave of support is giving disadvantaged students a chance to dream bigger, the Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi reports.

The Embassy of Sweden in Hanoi has joined hands with the Vietnam Red Cross Society to award 52 scholarships to children facing difficult circumstances.

The scholarships are part of the Children Above All – Aid (CAAA) programme. More than 200 million VND has been invested, directly into the future of these young students.

In addition to financial support, students are also offered long-term mentorship, guidance, and encouragement – from their early school years all the way to graduation, and even into their first jobs.



Since 2006, the programme has supported around 100 students in Da Nang, with total funding nearing 4 billion VND.

Many have already gone on to complete vocational training, college, or university.

# Only foreign player: Finnish star joins Vietnamese volleyball club

Finnish volleyball player Suvi Kokkonen has joined Vietinbank's women's volleyball team ahead of the 2026 national championship in Vietnam.

The 1.82m outside hitter is expected to arrive in Vietnam today, March 23 and will begin training with the team ahead of the tournament, which starts in early April in Hanoi.

Kokkonen is the only foreign player recruited by Vietinbank for the first round of the competition and is seen as a key addition to strengthen the squad.



Vietinbank has chosen to sign only one foreign player for the upcoming tournament. To strengthen the squad further, the team has also brought in two domestic players on loan, who have already shown strong form at the Hoa Lu Cup 2026 in Ninh Binh.

# Danish mental health study behind Philippine plan for greener cities



New Danish research is helping shape a major green transformation in Philippine cities.

A study from Aarhus University has found a striking link between access to green areas and the risk of schizophrenia. Using satellite data,

researchers showed that people without nearby greenery were up to 50 percent more likely to develop the illness.

The findings are now part of the wider conversation in the Philippines, where dense urban living and limited green space remain major

challenges.

In cities like Metro Manila, residents have access to far less greenery per person compared to cities such as Singapore or Kuala Lumpur. Urban congestion and car-focused infrastructure have further reduced opportunities for outdoor activity.

Against this backdrop, the Philippine government has launched the “Green, Green, Green” program. The initiative sets aside billions of pesos to support urban projects such as parks, gardens, bike lanes, and shaded walkways.

While the program aims to beautify cities, officials also see it as a step toward improving public health – including mental well-being.

# Wise secures licences in Thailand: Sending money just got easier for expats

Global fintech company Wise has become the first non-bank to secure five regulatory licences in Thailand, allowing it to expand its services and operate locally, the company said in a press release.

Wise is a global financial technology company that offers international money transfers and multi-currency accounts. Its platform allows users to hold, send and spend money in different currencies through one app, often at lower cost than traditional banks.

The licences, granted by the Bank of Thailand and the Ministry of Commerce, enable Wise to offer a fully digital foreign currency wallet and issue its payment cards in the country.

New services for users

Wise was already available



to customers in Thailand, but the new approvals allow the company to offer more integrated services locally, including sending, receiving and spending money across multiple currencies within one app.

The move is expected to benefit individuals and businesses making cross-border payments, including expatriates in Thailand who regu-

larly transfer money abroad.

More than 17 billion dollars move in and out of Thailand each year, creating strong demand for faster and cheaper international payments.

Wise said the approvals mark another step in its expansion across Asia-Pacific, one of its fastest-growing regions.



## Novo Nordisk steps in as 43 percent of students are overweight in Ho Chi Minh City

Around 43 percent of students in Ho Chi Minh City are overweight or obese, which points to a growing public health challenge in Vietnam, according to the Danish Embassy in Vietnam.

Denmark's Ambassador to Vietnam, Nicolai Prytz met this week with Ho Chi Minh City Vice Chairwoman Tran Thi Dieu Thuy to discuss the launch of the "Cities for Better Health" initiative in the southern metropolis.

Novo Nordisk to help tackle childhood obesity

The programme is led by Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk and focuses on tackling non-communicable diseases such as obesity, diabetes and hypertension.

In Vietnam, efforts will centre on childhood obesity, with cooperation between local authorities, health organisations and communities.

Rising childhood obesity in urban Vietnam

The increase in childhood obe-



sity is not limited to Vietnam.

According to UNICEF, the number of overweight children in East Asia and the Pacific has more than doubled over the past two decades, with more than 113 million affected.

The report points to changing diets, increased consumption of ultra-processed foods and sugary drinks, and aggressive marketing tar-

getting children as key drivers.

In Vietnam, the share of overweight children aged 5–19 rose from 8.5 percent in 2010 to 19 percent in 2020.

Vietnamese authorities have also begun responding to the trend. Among other measures, the country has approved taxes on sugary drinks, which are set to reach 10 percent by 2028.

# THE CALM AFTER THE STORM

Sometimes, learning doesn't need a spotlight. It begins quietly, with focus. In History, Year 3 students rode straight into the eye of the storm as they explored Ernest Shackleton's *Endurance* expedition. When the students were ready to write their thoughts, they were bursting with ideas and genuine emotion.

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