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National  
Football Player

# Elias Dolah

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# A New Era in Early Alzheimer's Treatment

Anti-Amyloid Therapy treats early-stage Alzheimer's before severe dementia

Alzheimer's disease begins developing in the brain many years before symptoms appear. The condition is caused by the accumulation of beta-amyloid protein in the brain, forming plaques that damage nerve cells and gradually impair memory and cognitive function.

Today, a new treatment approach known as Anti-Amyloid Therapy is changing how early Alzheimer's disease can be managed. Unlike traditional treatments that only relieve symptoms, this therapy is designed to slow disease progression and preserve brain function for longer, helping patients maintain independence and quality of life.

## WHAT IS ANTI-AMYLOID THERAPY?

Anti-Amyloid Therapy uses antibodies that bind to beta-amyloid proteins in the brain and help the body remove these harmful plaques. By reducing amyloid accumulation, the treatment helps slow cognitive decline in patients with early Alzheimer's disease or mild cognitive impairment.

Treatment is administered via intravenous infusion every few weeks under specialist supervision, with regular brain imaging to monitor safety and effectiveness.

## WHO CAN BENEFIT?

Anti-Amyloid Therapy is suitable for:

- Patients with early-stage Alzheimer's disease
- Patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI)
- Individuals diagnosed through advanced brain imaging or biomarker testing

## EARLY DETECTION IS KEY

Specialist centres now use advanced diagnostic tools such as:

- Cognitive testing
- Blood biomarkers
- MRI brain scans
- Amyloid PET scans

These technologies allow Alzheimer's disease to be detected earlier than ever before, enabling earlier treatment and better long-term outcomes.

**Early diagnosis**  
can change the future of  
**Alzheimer's disease.**



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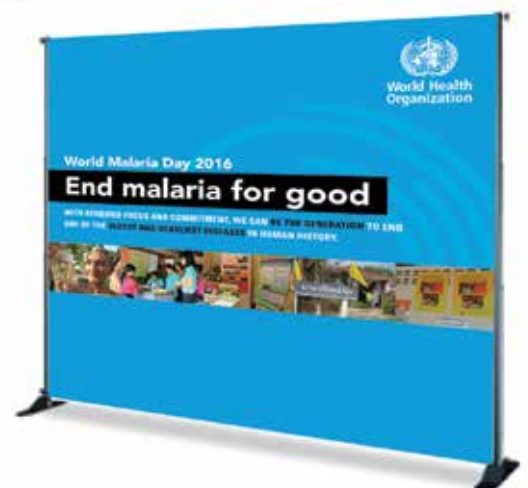
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# Nordic-trained football talents find opportunities in Asia

In this issue of ScandAsia, we present the Thai–Swedish footballer Elias Dolah - a player whose career reflects both European training and Southeast Asian opportunity.

But Elias Dolah is not alone.

Over the years, ScandAsia has followed a number of athletes with Nordic connections who have built their careers in Thailand and across the region. Players such as Mika Chunuonsee and Kevin Deeromram have, like Dolah, combined international upbringing with local ambition, contributing to the development of football in Thailand.

What emerges from these individual stories is not yet a clear trend—but it is more than a mere coincidence.

A growing number of players with Scandinavian ties are finding their way into Southeast Asian leagues. In many cases, they arrive with technical training shaped in Europe, combined with cultural or family links to the region. For football clubs, this can be an attractive combination: players who bring international standards, yet adapt easily to local conditions.

At the same time, Southeast Asian football itself is evolving. Leagues in Thailand, Vietnam, and neighbouring countries are becoming more competitive and more professional. This creates space for players who may not break through in Europe's top tiers, but who can still perform at a high level.

Seen in this light, the presence of Thai–Nordic players is part of a wider global pattern, where football careers increasingly move across continents. Yet the Scandinavian connection is noticeable. Nordic training systems are widely respected for their discipline and technical focus, and players shaped in that environment often carry those qualities with them.

It would be premature to describe this as a new Nordic export success. The numbers remain limited, and many of the players involved have dual heritage rather than being direct “exports” in the traditional sense.

Still, the direction is worth noting.

If more players follow this path - combining Nordic development with opportunities in Southeast Asia - we may be looking at the early stages of a small but meaningful bridge between two football cultures.

For now, it remains an emerging pattern.

But it is one we hope to see continue.



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

## ScandAsia

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# Norwegian union moves in: New push for workers' rights in Vietnam

Norway and Vietnam are looking to work more closely together to improve conditions for workers. Representatives from the Norwegian General

Confederation of Labour met with Vietnam's main labour organisation in Hanoi to discuss closer cooperation on workers' rights. Among those attending were LO Norway

Vice President Are Tomaszgard and Vietnam General Confederation of Labour Vice President Huynh Thanh Xuan.

The talks focused on how to better protect workers in Vietnam, including those in informal jobs and on digital platforms. The two countries also discussed improving wage negotiations, strengthening social protection and offering more training to help workers adapt to changes such as digitalisation and the green transition. Vietnam also called for continued Norwegian support for a joint project aimed at improving working conditions.



# Bad news for Scandinavian travellers: Thai Airways cuts flights during May

Thai Airways is reducing flights to all three Scandinavian capitals in May, as weaker tourism demand and rising fuel costs force the airline to scale back operations.

The Thai flag carrier will cut its services to Copenhagen, Oslo and Stockholm from seven weekly flights to five between May 18 and May 27, according to schedule adjustments.

The reductions are part of a broader adjustment across the airline's network, affecting routes in Asia, Europe and domestically in Thailand.

Fuel costs and weaker demand Thai Airways said the changes are driven by a combination of softer travel demand and higher fuel prices, as global energy markets remain volatile amid tensions in the Middle East.

Thailand's Civil Aviation Authority (CAAT) has also warned that airlines may continue adjusting flight schedules following the

Songkran holiday period, citing rising operational costs and shifting travel patterns.

Beyond Scandinavia, several major routes are also affected.

Flights to cities such as Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing and Shanghai are being reduced, while some regional routes in Southeast Asia and South Asia are seeing fewer frequencies or temporary suspensions.

In Europe, Istanbul, Frankfurt and Munich are also facing cutbacks during May.

Thai Airways said that flight schedules may change further and that options are available for passengers and travel agents affected by the adjustments.

Travellers are advised to check their bookings and stay updated on any changes ahead of departure.



# Warship ceremony marks 80 years of Denmark-Philippines ties

A naval warship in Subic Bay became the setting for a symbolic milestone as Denmark and the Philippines marked 80 years of diplomatic relations.

The commemorative logo was unveiled aboard the BRP Miguel Malvar on 7 April 2026. Danish Ambassador Franz Michael Mellbin led the ceremony together with Philippine Navy officials and representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The location underscored the strong maritime link between the two countries. Subic Bay, a key port area, provided a fitting backdrop for an anniversary centered on cooperation at sea.

Ambassador Mellbin reaffirmed Denmark's support for strengthening the Philippines' defense and

maritime security. He also stressed the importance of protecting the international rules-based order at a time of growing global uncertainty.

The anniversary logo reflects the partnership, featuring symbols of industry, renewable energy, and maritime cooperation.

Denmark and the Philippines share close ties in the maritime

sector. The Philippines is a major supplier of seafarers, while Danish shipping companies employ many Filipino sailors.

Cooperation continues to grow in areas such as shipbuilding, training, digitalisation, and green shipping—showing that the partnership is not only historic, but still evolving.



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# Deadly methanol case in Laos: Distillery breaks silence and claims innocence

A local distillery in Laos previously linked to a deadly methanol poisoning case now claims it has been cleared of wrongdoing, according to *The Age Australia*. The case, which shocked travellers across Southeast Asia, left six foreign tourists dead, including two Danish women.

The distillery had initially been implicated, but now says tests show its products were not responsible. A relative of the owner told *The Age*: "If it was only this product they were drinking, they would not have died."

The incident took place in Vang Vieng in November 2024, where



several backpackers fell seriously ill after drinking alcohol believed to be contaminated with methanol. Among the victims were two Australian teenagers as well as Danish friends Anne-Sofie Orkild Coy-

man, 20, and Freja Sørensen, 21. The group had reportedly been staying at Nana Backpacker's Hostel, where the drinks were served.

Earlier this year, 10 hostel employees were found guilty of destroying evidence linked to the case. They received suspended sentences and fines of around \$185, sparking anger among the victims' families. Authorities are not pursuing further charges over the deaths, although a man connected to the distillery is still facing legal proceedings.

Despite the latest developments, it remains unclear what caused the poisoning.

## Brunei opens visa-free access to 90 countries to boost tourism

In a move set to reshape its tourism future, Brunei is rolling out visa-free access to citizens from more than 90 countries, *Travel and Tour World* reports.

Among them are Indonesia, Denmark, Austria, United States, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates.

According to the Brunei Tourism Development Department, international arrivals are expected to rise by 20 percent in 2025. This follows a broader push to strengthen the sector through relaxed visa rules, improved infrastructure and stronger global marketing.

And tourism is already gaining momentum.

In 2024, Brunei welcomed around 250,000 international visitors. That number is projected to



reach 300,000 in 2025. At the same time, tourism's contribution to GDP is expected to grow by 15 percent, underlining the sector's increasing importance to the national economy.

The strategy is also about positioning.

With neighbours like Malaysia,

Singapore and Indonesia already benefiting from similar policies, Brunei is now stepping up its game. The country is targeting both eco-tourism and luxury travel, highlighting its untouched nature, cultural heritage and high-end hospitality.

# Malaysia considers nuclear energy in major shift away from coal: Finland ready to help

Malaysia is considering nuclear energy as it looks to move away from coal. And Finland is stepping in as a potential partner.

The talks took place during a recent meeting between the Finnish Embassy in Malaysia and the country's main energy company, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB).

Finland is positioning itself as a key partner, offering expertise in safe and sustainable energy solutions as Malaysia is under pressure to change its energy mix as it pushes towards net-zero targets.

Nuclear power is now being discussed as a long-term solution.

The two countries are already



working together in parts of the energy sector, but cooperation could now expand. Further talks are ex-

pected, with both sides looking to deepen cooperation in the coming months.

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# The Value of Competition in Primary Sport

*By Jayne Jauncey, Leader of Primary Physical Education, Bangkok Patana School*

**O**ur approach in Primary PE ensures that competition is not about winning at all costs, but about supporting the whole child to learn, grow and thrive. In primary education, competition often sparks debate. Some worry that competitive events may create pressure for young children, while others see them as a vital part of their growth. Current guidance from UK Sport, the Youth Sport Trust and leading practitioners on PE Scholar emphasises that competition can be hugely beneficial—when it is thoughtfully designed and developmentally appropriate. As the Youth Sport

Trust states, “competition should inspire, not intimidate, and help young people to develop the life skills they need to thrive.”

At Bangkok Patana last term, our 7 – 10 year old students participated in their annual Swimming Gala, an opportunity for classes to support one another as they aim to win awards such as Overall Winners, Most Organised Class and the Tiger Spirit Award. The races were a carefully blended mix of traditional swimming events and fun challenges such as Titanic, the Sky Ball Relay, and the crowd favourite - the Teacher Chariot Race. The rationale behind these combined

events mirrors the guidance from PE Scholar (2024), which recommends that “competitive experiences in primary schools should provide multiple measures of success, ensuring every child can feel a sense of achievement.”

As the children entered the poolside arena, they were met with supportive waves and cheers from parents and teachers. For some students, those quickened heartbeats were filled with excitement; for others, the nerves were real and understandable, the same kind of nerves they might experience in the future at a job interview, giving a presentation in Year 13, or

stepping into an unfamiliar situation for the first time. The Youth Sport Trust highlights that learning to navigate these emotions is “an essential part of emotional literacy and confidence-building,” helping children to become more resilient later in life.

Patana Primary Sport provides one of the earliest and most accessible arenas for children to practise these life skills. Whether they are in a race, waiting for their relay turn or cheering their friends from the sidelines, they are learning to manage emotions, make decisions under pressure and communicate with others. UK Sport refers to these as “life readiness skills developed through meaningful sport experiences.”

Crucially, competition helps children understand that they won't always win, and that is not something to avoid. Learning to cope with disappointment, to reflect on what went well and what could be improved and to try again with a better plan, is one of the most valuable outcomes of competitive sport at the primary level.

If competition is removed entirely, we risk removing these

teachable moments. When it is managed thoughtfully, we unlock some of the most powerful learning experiences school sport can offer.

While competition is valuable, the research is clear, competition does not automatically create positive experiences. UK Sport emphasises that adults play a key role in shaping how children interpret competitive situations: “The behaviour of coaches, teachers and parents has a profound impact on whether a child's experience of competition is positive and motivating.” Children need adults who guide them, explain the purpose of competition and help them navigate the emotions associated with winning and losing. With the right support, they learn to value teamwork, effort and sportsmanship over simply touching the wall first.

This is why at Bangkok Patana our Tiger Spirit Award plays such an important role. Success is measured not only by race outcomes but by teamwork, perseverance, support for classmates and personal progress - values echoed in Youth Sport Trust frameworks that highlight “re-



warding character and personal bests alongside performance outcomes.”

Competition in primary sport is not about pressure or producing champions. It is about providing children with structured, age-appropriate opportunities to challenge themselves and grow. This is reflected in the wide range of competitive experiences offered at Bangkok Patana from the fun and celebratory carousel style Sports Days in Foundation Stage 2 to Year 2, to the more competitive formats seen in Key Stage 2. Older students also have opportunities to represent the Primary school at events such as the Friendly Bangkok Games and the competitive FOBISIA Games.

When competition is taught, supported and celebrated with care, it becomes one of the most valuable elements of a child's physical education journey helping them develop skills and character traits that extend far beyond the pool, the pitch or the playground.

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# Norway and Philippines strengthen police cooperation



The Royal Norwegian Embassy in Manila hosted a three-day visit by the Norwegian National Police Directorate to strengthen cooperation with the Philippine National Police, the embassy states in a press release.

The delegation, led by Lars Erik Alfheim, met with Philippine police officials in Quezon City. Discussions focused on joint efforts to combat cybercrime, including online sexual abuse and exploitation of children.

According to Christian Halaas

Lyster, cooperation between the two countries remains key to addressing these crimes. Norwegian authorities continue to support Philippine law enforcement through the Nordic Police Liaison Office.

The visit also included talks on finalising a memorandum of understanding between the two police forces. The agreement aims to strengthen information sharing and joint investigations between Norway and the Philippines.

The Norwegian delegation further met with officials from the Department of Justice and visited the Philippine National Police Academy. The programme included discussions on legal frameworks, training, and leadership in modern policing.

# Nordic embassies join forces to help citizens in trouble in Bangkok

A growing number of foreigners are falling through the cracks in Bangkok. Now, Nordic diplomats and aid workers are stepping in.

The Bangkok Community Help Foundation has met with representatives from the Embassy of Denmark in Thailand, alongside colleagues from Sweden, Norway, and Finland, to address the increasing challenges faced by Nordic nationals in Thailand, The Embassy of Denmark in Thailand reports.

The meeting focused on how to strengthen cooperation to ensure that vulnerable citizens receive structured support and, when needed, can return home safely and with dignity.

According to the foundation, more foreign travelers and expatri-



ates in Bangkok are ending up in difficult situations. This has created a growing need for coordinated assistance between embassies and local organizations.

At the same time, global developments are adding pressure. Ongoing conflict in the Middle East

has left some individuals stranded in Thailand, unable to travel onward or return home.

By improving dialogue and collaboration, the Nordic embassies and partners hope to build more sustainable support systems for those in need.

# Expert warns: Indonesia struggles to match Denmark and Finland on corruption cases

Indonesia’s way of calculating corruption losses – meaning how much money the state has lost due to corruption – is falling behind countries like Denmark and Finland, and it could have serious consequences in court.

That is the warning from Indonesian legal scholar Fransiscus Nanga Roka in a new opinion piece published by Opinion Nigeria.

“Numbers are supposed to be the truth when it comes to corruption trials. In Indonesia, they too frequently tell a story that has been decided.”

He says the amount of money the state is said to have lost is often unclear and not properly checked.



In some cases, he argues, the figures may even be shaped to fit the prosecution’s case.

“Rather than evidence forming

the case, the case forms the evidence,” he says.

Roka warns that wrong numbers can lead to harsher sentences, and defendants often can’t check the data.

Countries like Denmark and Finland are highlighted as examples of stricter legal standards

In Denmark and Finland, courts don’t just accept a number. Prosecutors must show exactly how much money was lost, and prove it with real documents and data.

“Their methods get tested and challenged,” Roka says.

Experts must explain their calculations in detail, and the defence can then challenge them.



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Nearly two metres tall, Elias Dolah has become a commanding presence in defence for both club and country. Photo by Supakit Wisetanuphong

# Elias Dolah came to Thailand for a holiday. Today he plays for the national football team

A visit to family in southern Thailand changed the course of Swedish-born defender Elias Dolah's life. Eleven years later, he plays for the Thai national team and has built a life far from the small village outside Lund where he grew up.

By Helene Sadjadi-Munk

**B**angkok moves fast. Motorbikes squeeze between cars. Taxis honk. People rush past cafés and food stalls.

In the middle of it all is Elias Dolah. Calm. Almost unmoved by the pace around him.

People recognise him. Several stop to say hello as they pass. A quick greeting here. A short conversation there. Colleagues from football. Someone who knows his fiancée. And his fiancée herself. Familiar faces appearing in the middle of the Bangkok rush.

It says something about him.

Yusef Elias Dolah, who just goes by Elias, is not loud or attention-seeking. But people seem to gravitate towards him. He greets everyone with the same easy smile before continuing on his way.

"I actually feel like Bangkok goes a bit too fast for me," he says quietly.

"My fiancée, Dorothy, grew up in Phuket, and I can definitely see myself living there one day."

The two met in Bangkok about six years ago at a birthday party through mutual friends.

"We clicked immediately," Dolah says.

She even gave him a nickname that some fans now use when they recognise him.

"She calls me 'P Jak', which means big giant," he says with a smile.

For now, however, the 32-year-old defender is firmly rooted in Thai football. Nearly two metres tall, he has become a recognisable figure on the national team and in the Thai League. He currently plays on loan at BG Pathum United from Buriram United.

But the road here began far away from Thailand.

## Growing up Swedish

Elias Dolah was born near Lund in southern Sweden.

His father is Thai, originally from the three southern provinces where many people identify as Malay Muslims. His name, Yusef Elias, itself comes from the Quran.

Yet Elias' childhood felt unmistakably Swedish.

"I grew up in a small village outside Lund. All my friends were Swedish. That shapes you."

He grew up with an older brother and an older sister in a household where family routines mattered and where time together was important.

In modern life, he says, it is easy to lose those small traditions that keep a family close. In his home, his father made sure that did not happen.

"My dad always said dinner together was important. You could not miss dinner."

In that way, his father also carried parts of his own background into the household, not through strict rules, but through small things – traditions, culture, and the values he had brought with him from southern Thailand.

"He never enforced religion on us. But he brought culture with him."

And growing up between cultures sometimes left questions.

"My siblings and I would sometimes wonder a bit who we were," Dolah says.

"It can be difficult to find your identity when you grow up between places."

Sport eventually became the space where identity felt simple.



“

*It can be difficult to find your identity when you grow up between places.*

”



“I played everything when I was young. Football, floorball, badminton, table tennis. Even hockey in the winter, when the local lake froze.”

Music also filled his teenage years.

“I played bass in a band from when I was about 15 until I moved to Thailand at 20. My brother played saxophone. The band was with friends I had known since childhood.”

But football slowly began to take centre stage.

After finishing school, he joined Lund’s team in Sweden’s third division. The level was semi-professional, which meant football alone could not pay the bills.

“So I worked as a substitute teacher at the high school I had gone to,” he says.

“And I also worked in the village grocery store.”

At the same time, he was applying for university. One programme in particular caught his attention.

“I applied to become a fire engineer.”

He pauses for a moment when he says it.

“And I’m so happy I didn’t get accepted.”

He ended up number ten on the waiting list. Looking back, he believes that rejection changed everything.

## The decisive envelope

While still under contract with Lund, Dolah travelled to Thailand with his father to visit family.

At the time, he still had a year left on his contract in Sweden and had no plan to leave Europe for good. The trip was simply meant as a visit.

During the stay, his father suggested that he try training with a local club in southern Thailand.

After a few days, the club owner came to meet him.

“He said he really liked me and wanted me to come back and play for him.”

Then came the moment Dolah still remembers clearly.

“He gave me an envelope with 50,000 baht in cash.”

For a young player who had been juggling football with substitute teaching and supermarket shifts in Sweden, the offer felt surreal.

“I was still on holiday but I thought: okay, let’s go.”

He returned to Sweden to finish his contract with Lund. But the idea had already taken hold.

The following year, at just 20 years old, he moved to Thailand.

## Injuries, loss and resilience

The move to Thailand did not lead to instant success.

In his first season, he played only seven matches before suffering a serious knee injury.

“I slid into the goal post and had multiple injuries in my knee.”

The injury kept him out for more than a year, and injuries have continued to test him throughout his career.

Most recently, he spent months recovering from a torn Achilles tendon. For a footballer, that kind of waiting can be mentally exhausting.

“It was kind of depressing. You see your teammates play, and you just want to play yourself – but something is stopping you.”

Determined to recover, he searched for help wherever he could find it. At one point, that search even took him to Lebanon to work with a specialist.

“I flew to Beirut to see a guy who works with fascia in the muscles. We did very strange exercises, but it helped,” he says.

The trip became memorable for another reason as well.

“While I was there, Israel bombed Beirut. I could hear drones flying overhead.”

But the hardest moment of his career had nothing to do with football.

Two years ago, his mother passed away after battling cancer.



*Euro Songkran 2026 with football academy members.  
Photo: Euro Football Center Bangkok*



At the time, Dolah was playing for Bali United and travelling with the team. He was in Hong Kong for a match when his sister called.

“She told me I had to come home immediately.”

He flew from Hong Kong to Copenhagen and then took a taxi across the Øresund Bridge to Sweden, telling the driver to go as fast as possible.

He arrived during the day. Later that night, his mother passed away.

“It almost felt like she was waiting for me to come home.”

During this period, football became one of the few places where his mind could briefly rest.

“When you’re playing football, it’s a relief. You forget what you’re struggling with.”

## Building something beyond football

More than a decade after arriving, Thailand has gradually become home.

When Elias Dolah first came to the country, the goal was clear:

“My dream was always to play for the national team.”

In the early days, he stayed in a hotel that overlooked the stadium. From his room, he could see the pitch.

“I remember thinking: one day I want to play there.”

Today, he has represented Thailand internationally for several years. Looking back, he still finds it difficult to fully grasp how far the journey has taken him.

“Thailand has given me so much – things I couldn’t even imagine ten years ago. I’m super grateful for my journey.”

Much of that journey has been tied to Buriram United, one of Thailand’s most successful football clubs. The team has won the Thai League multiple times and regularly competes in the AFC Champions League.

The club is led by a former national politician who is widely respected in Buriram for helping develop the city.

Inside the club, the relationship with the leadership feels almost familial.

“We actually call him ‘dad’ at the club,” Dolah says with a smile.

While Dolah’s playing career continues, he has also begun to think about what comes after football. A few years ago, he helped start a football academy in Bangkok together with two partners.

“I co-founded a football academy three years ago. We have about 150 kids now.”

The project grew out of a realisation that Dolah could not change everything happening in the world, but he could try to make a difference in his own surroundings.

“When I was younger, I followed the news a lot. But I realised it didn’t give me anything. The world is so weird,” he says.

“I try to protect my peace. What I can’t control, I won’t bother too much about. I try to do what I can around me.”

One way of doing that is the academy.

“Some pay and some are on scholarships because many kids here need opportunities.”

For Dolah, the contrast with Scandinavia is noticeable. Growing up in Sweden, organised sport was everywhere, supported by schools, clubs, and public funding.

“Here it’s different. Kids need opportunities.”

At the same time, he is preparing for new national team matches and working on launching a gym project in Bangkok.

Yet when he thinks about the future, the picture is relatively simple:

Football for as long as the body allows.

## Time with family.

And perhaps one day, a quieter life closer to the sea. Maybe in Phuket, where Dorothy grew up.

# From tech start-ups to NordCham Philippines: Axel Fries is its new Executive Director

By Joakim Persson

Photos: NordCham Philippines

Filipino-Swede Axel Fries has taken over as NordCham Philippines' new Executive Director, keen on leading the chamber to new heights while not getting ahead of himself. And while being the new kid on the block within NordCham, Axel is no stranger to the Philippines, having spent time there since his childhood years and, more recently, after making it his permanent address, working in finance for a startup investment firm.

With his mother being Filipino, the family used to celebrate every Christmas in the country together with her relatives.

Later, while his parents lived full time in the Philippines, Axel studied and earned a Bachelor of Science in the U.S. at Davidson College in North Carolina.

"I ended up at Davidson College on a tennis scholarship. I had a fantastic four years there, combining high-level tennis with studies at an institution with a strong academic reputation."

Following his studies, Axel went on to work at a couple of tech startups there from 2019 to 2024.





“I also came to visit the Philippines more often during that time than in the past, and it really became a second home for me. After living in the U.S. for a while and being away from my family a lot, I decided I wanted to try something new and test my luck in the Philippines. I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I came here or how long I would stay, or whether I would find a job. But I ended up staying,” begins Axel.

“After a few different jobs, I eventually found my way to NordCham. When the position first became vacant in the summer of 2024, I had already committed myself to another job. But when they reached out to me some eight months later, I felt like I was in a better position to commit to the offer. Once I had learned more about the role and its operations, it sounded like a great opportunity,” relates the new ED, who joined in May 2025.

In his new role, Axel is dedicated to excellence, as NordCham strives to be the leading organisation representing and empowering Nordic-Philippine businesses, currently with around 120 members and operations focused on Manila.

“Just under half of the members are originally Nordic, while the rest either have Nordic employees or Nordic clients. It’s a wide mix of industries and sectors, which allows for a broad and diverse network with many different connections,” Axel explains.

“I think it makes for a very interesting chamber to be part of; there are many different types of activities and things that we organise, but primarily it’s about having a diverse group of members, which is a huge benefit for us,” he adds.

The Nordic collaboration also seems to run

“  
*One main thing is working with our members and government agencies to improve the ease of doing business and reduce bureaucracy.*  
 ”

smoothly in the Philippines, despite the countries having different cultures and ways of doing things. Axel, however, has observed the opposite:

“I still see a lot of similarities between all of the Nordics. As far as I have experienced, especially when it comes to the board as well as chamber engagement, people from the various Nordic countries tend to get along very well and are able to understand and relate to each other.”

“And I think they like being considered ‘Nordic’ in terms of branding. They see that as a positive thing, rather than wanting to represent just Denmark or Norway, for example,” he adds.

The AGM also saw the board expand to seven members, he notes.

“This is great because now we have representatives from all the Nordic countries, except Iceland. We are also incredibly excited to have welcomed the Embassy of Ukraine as an honorary member. Since the Nordic countries are very supportive of Ukraine, we want to do the same. Their embassy opened a little over a year ago in Manila, and part of what they are looking to do is increase trade and help Ukrainian businesses enter the Philippine market.”

There is also the “New Nordics,” where the Baltic countries are gradually expanding their presence in Asia.

“We met with a delegation from Lithuania, from the Vilnius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, that visited Manila last year. They have also joined as a member, so we are a resource here for them as well.”





For networking, the January 2026 inaugural ‘Skål Social’ has already proven to be successful, particularly as an attractive option for newly arrived members and other Nordic professionals looking to engage with the community.

“There wasn’t really much out there before, and the idea is to offer something in an after-work style where people can simply show up. We have partnered with a local bar.”

“This was something that came out of common feedback from many of our members. A lot of them enjoy being part of the Nordic community and NordCham, but many networking events tend to be more formal, with an agenda or sector focus. There wasn’t really a casual way to network.”

In one of the annual events, the Joint Economic Briefing, NordCham members gain access to insights on the Philippines’ economic, political, and financial outlook to help align their strategies. In 2026, the economic trajectory for the year and beyond was in focus.

The NordCham board is also very active, the ED notes:

“We have two working groups, the maritime committee and the sustainability committee. Both are key areas for the Nordics and are conducted jointly with other chambers of commerce stakeholders.”

As for goals and focus areas, Axel sees his first year at the helm as a learning period:

“I’m not setting overly ambitious goals or specific achievements just yet because I feel I need to get to know our members better and understand what we need to do to support them.”

“One main thing, however, which both I and the board feel strongly about, is working with our members and government agencies to improve the ease of doing business here. There is still a lot of bureaucracy and red tape.”

“And there are other challenges involved in doing business in the Philippines. As a Nordic company, you want to make sure you are doing things the right way. That can create additional challenges, because often the easy way is not the right way,” Axel explains.

He describes this as an important initiative that NordCham is working on, although not too many details can be disclosed at this stage.

For the Philippines, one of the key drivers of growth is legislative reform, such as the recently enacted CREATE MORE Act, which reduces corporate income tax to as low as 20%, clarifies VAT rules, and supports hybrid work for tech firms, aiming to make the country more competitive with Vietnam and Thailand.

Axel also confirms that NordCham has observed



increasing pressure on the government to improve these aspects, particularly with stronger regional competition.

“Increasing FDI is incredibly important for the Philippine government. They want to encourage more companies to come here. They have also adjusted policies, for example in real estate and foreign ownership, where legislation has become more favourable. This is why they are open to working with us to improve the ease of doing business. They want to make it attractive for companies to come in and continue investing,” he says.

As for business consultancy, such as market entry and research, NordCham no longer offers such services directly but instead refers companies to partner members that provide this support.

“We act as a connector rather than providing the services ourselves.”

Nordic investments into the Philippines are clearly on the rise, with the “Nordic model” of sustainability and high-tech maritime solutions in strong demand. One example is Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP), described as “arguably the most significant Nordic investment in decades.” The offshore wind project is also a pioneer under the 100% foreign ownership rule, utilising the Philippines’ Green Lane initiative.

The Green Lane allows local government units

and national agencies to act simultaneously rather than sequentially, reducing permit processing time significantly.

From Finland, firms are increasingly entering the smart city and waste-to-energy sectors, with Business Tampere and other Finnish trade bodies among them.

“I met with representatives from Business Tampere last year when they visited twice. They believe there is business to be made here.”

Swedish companies appear to agree. According to the 2025 Business Climate Survey for Swedish companies in the Philippines, they maintain a positive outlook, driven by strong economic fundamentals, rapid industrial development, and key infrastructure initiatives, despite ongoing challenges such as bureaucracy.

“All businesses should know that NordCham Philippines is here to support Nordic companies. The reason we are Nordic is that it allows us to have a larger chamber with greater influence. So if you are part of a company looking to enter the Philippines, or already operating here and facing challenges where you need support, that is what we are here for. Join us and work together with others from the Nordics to grow your business and help improve the business landscape in the Philippines,” Axel concludes.

Read the full version of this article at [scandasia.com](https://scandasia.com)

# With Filipino roots and a Danish upbringing, Sophia found her path in New York's green fashion

Sophia Lanawan sits in her office in Copenhagen. Her voice, warm and reflective, carries easily over the phone.

By Helene Sadjadi-Munk

There is a calmness to her words, but underneath, you can hear the thread of determination that has carried her through years of new beginnings.

"I sometimes feel I can divide my life into two parts," she says.

"The years growing up at home, and everything that started after gymnasium."

That "everything" began when she left Denmark to be an au pair in the U.S. Right after school, she moved to New York, where weekends were spent helping at a small fashion show. This sparked an interest she hadn't fully realized until then.

A personal ad looking for a husband  
Sophia is 26, and her roots stretch between Denmark and the Philippines.

Her mother was born in the Philippines and moved to Lendum in North Jutland, Denmark, with Sophia before she turned one, joining her father through a family reunification.

Growing up in Lendum, going to school in Sindal, and later at Hjørring Gymnasium, Sophia says life felt ordinary, like any other childhood in North Jutland.

But her mother's journey began decades earlier:

"My mother came to Denmark because my aunt, who lived here, placed a personal ad in a newspaper on my mother's behalf in the 1990s. This was long before Tinder. My mother received twelve letters. She tells that story often," Sophia says, laughing.

Her father's response to the ad sparked a three-year exchange, with a few visits before they married in 1999.

Her mother moved to Denmark in 2000, bringing baby Sophia with her, along with memories, including the dress she wore the first time she met Sophia's father at the airport, which Sophia still holds on to.

### Hands-on fashion experience

At the fashion show in New York, Sophia learned the mechanics behind a runway: setting up the space, organizing events, and assisting with model auditions.

"It was hands-on, and I loved it. That's when I knew I wanted to do this for real."

Returning to Denmark in 2020, Sophia enrolled in a fashion program in Herning, a small town far from New York's busy life. The contrast was stark.

"Initially, I was a bit down about not being in New York, but I stayed focused because I really wanted this education," she says.

"And in retrospect, it was fine. Being in Herning after international experiences created a hunger in me, a desire to explore more."

For her internships, she was determined to leave Denmark. The first internship took her to Amsterdam, and her final internship brought her to the Philippines, at Vogue Philippines, as an editorial production and fashion intern.

"It was incredible," she says. "I was handling photo-shoots, logistics, printing decks, hanging clothes."

She rented her own small condo near Vogue, with only a family friend from her mother's childhood picking her up at the airport. She had to learn to commute and navigate the city by herself.

"That's when I truly felt my Filipino side emerge."

Sophia didn't speak Tagalog at first, and navigating daily life became a personal challenge. She rented her own small condo near Vogue, with only a family friend from her mother's childhood picking her up at the airport. She had to learn to commute and navigate the city by herself.

So when she eventually came back to Denmark, she began taking Tagalog lessons every Saturday, continuing a journey of self-discovery she started abroad.

"I started to understand my mother in a new way and realized there was so much I didn't know about her. It sparked a hunger to learn more about Filipino culture," she says.

For Sophia, understanding her identity became intertwined with understanding the people and places connected to it.

### Fair fashion

Now, Sophia works at Global Fashion Agenda in Copenhagen as a Digital Communications Coordinator, managing storytelling and digital content for projects that aim to create meaningful change in the fashion industry.

"Sustainability has always been part of my life. Since



*I sometimes feel I can divide my life into two parts, the years growing up at home, and everything that started after gymnasium.*



my teenage years, I've been into second-hand fashion," she says.

Her education, internships, and job have shown her how social responsibility, ethical production, and environmental concerns all connect.

"It's not about being unable to buy or produce, but about doing it fairly, and understanding what that really means," she says.

This approach shapes her daily decisions, combining creativity, responsibility, and impact.

### Home and heritage

Sophia's connection to her Filipino heritage continues to shape her perspective, even from Denmark. She doesn't plan to move to the Philippines for now, realizing that cultural ties and language practice can coexist with her professional life.

"I still want to return to practice the language and daily life, but I see there are many ways to nurture my connection without living in Manila," she says.

"But you never know," she adds.

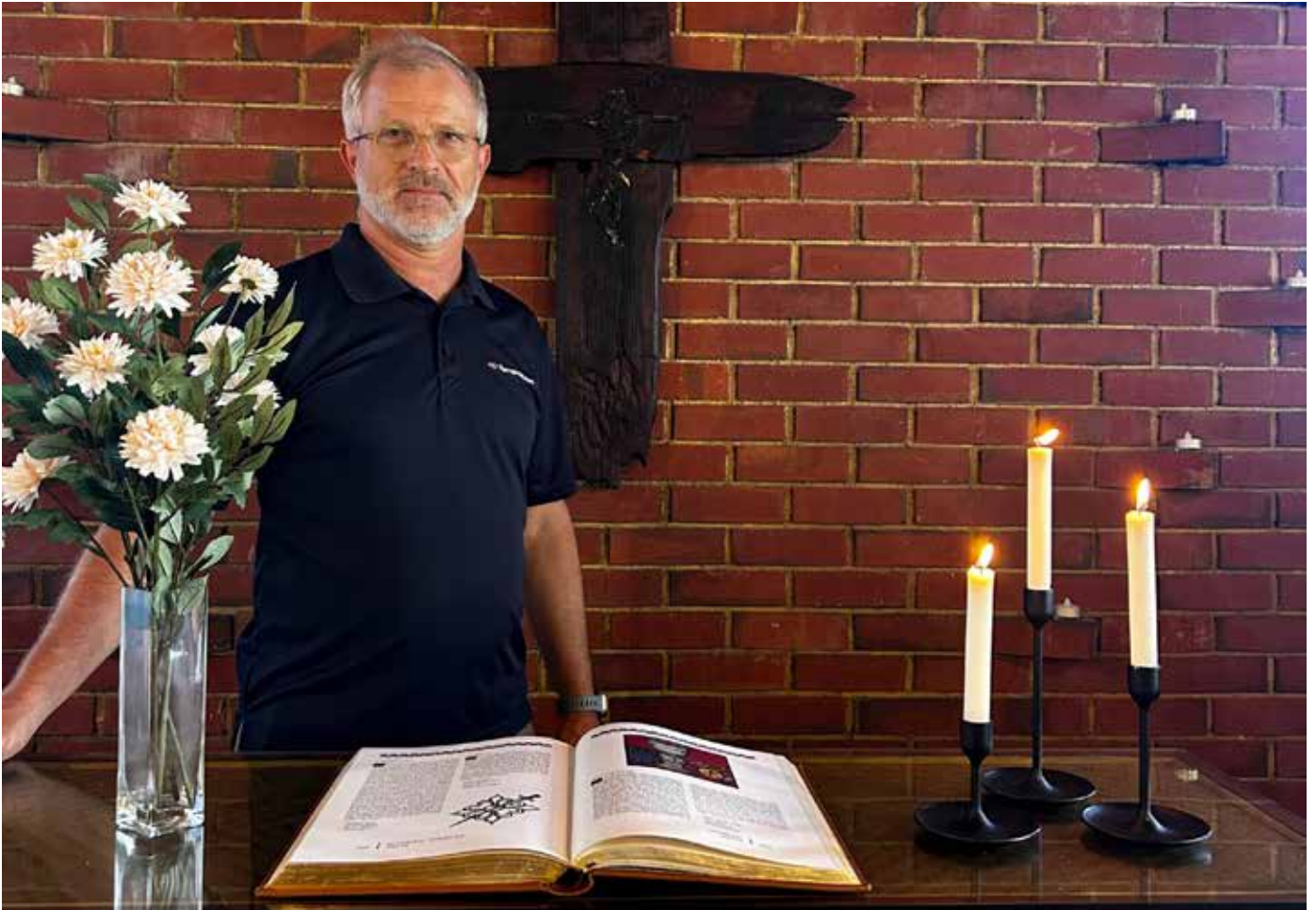
Her mother now enjoys sharing these experiences, recognizing how Sophia's curiosity has grown from what might have been a gap in her early upbringing.

The journey that began with struggling to understand her mother's words has grown into a life where her two worlds, Denmark and the Philippines, meet and inform each other. Language, culture, work, and values intertwine, forming a tapestry that is uniquely hers.

Each Saturday Tagalog lesson, each sustainable project, each story she tells becomes another thread, weaving a bridge between past and present.

Between curiosity and action.

Between home and heritage.



# Norwegian priest, Sjur Askjer; “We came to make a home for Norwegians”

On a hilltop overlooking containers and cranes at Singapore’s southern harbour stands a bright white, two-story building with a brick roof. Two flagpoles rise in front of the house. One carries the horizontal red and white stripes with stars, Bendera Singapura. From the other flies the red, blue, and white cross.

By Alexander Vittrup

This is the Norwegian Sjømannskirke, where priest Sjur Askjer works to help keep the Norwegian community together.

Even as a boy growing up in a small village in Telemark on Norway's southern coast, Sjur felt a calling to help people.

"There was a man on my street who was dealing with alcoholism, and as a kid, I thought maybe he could use a friend," Sjur remembers.

Sjur grew up in a religious family in a free church. However, as he got older, the strict churchgoing and rules did not appeal to him. His faith in God did not waver, and from a young age, he felt a calling in life.

"Being concerned about people, and wanting to help, combined with my strong faith that God is there and loves us, makes it very obvious to me to be a priest."

Sjur studied at the University of Oslo and graduated from Menighetsfakultetet. He spent formative years of his career working at a rehabilitation center for drug addiction before becoming the parish priest in his hometown of Tønsberg.

## Calling for the world

As a boy in Tønsberg, Sjur would often sneak away to his "secret" spot on a hilltop, where he could lie in the grass, watch planes fly by, and wonder what it would be like to be on board one.

"I was quite the dreamer back then," Sjur laughs.

That desire for travel followed him into adult life. After his time as a parish priest in Norway, Sjur and his family packed up their belongings and joined Sjømannskirken.

That decision has taken them all over the world, from Sydney to Dubai to Rio de Janeiro and, as of September 2024, to Singapore, where he now serves as Port Chaplain and priest to the Norwegian community.

## More than a priest

In his role in Singapore, Sjur has had to adapt to new challenges. Sjømannskirken is, in principle, a church and performs the same rituals as any other church: baptisms, confirmations, weddings, and funerals. However, for much of the Norwegian expat community in Singapore, it also serves as a cultural hub where people can come together.

"We are much more than a church. We are a community center. People come for many reasons. Many wish to stay in touch with Norwegian culture and meet fellow Norwegians. Making that possible is a very important part of my job," Sjur says.

Sjur takes on many roles in the expat community, often quite different from those of a typical priest in Norway. Instead of leading church services every Sunday, he might be up on a Tuesday at noon making waffles for



*We came here to make a home for Norwegians in Singapore, to provide an oasis of community for travelers.*



social events and clubs. Instead of meeting people in a church office, he meets them at their workplaces or in their homes.

For Sjur, the religious aspect remains important, though less in a traditional Bible-study sense.

"I meet people in their daily lives. I meet people who are in crisis or going through struggles, as we all do at times. I am a trusted ear when they need someone who isn't their spouse, coworker, or close friend. I believe Christianity teaches us kindness, humility, and community. That is what I wish to share with people," Sjur says.

## Life in Singapore

Sjur is enjoying life in Singapore with his wife. The weather suits him, and he appreciates being able to wear shorts year-round. He also enjoys meeting people from many different backgrounds.

Singapore's expat community is shaped by people who move to the island for career opportunities and often stay only a few years. While there is a high turnover, Sjur and Sjømannskirken provide a place where Norwegians can stay connected to their roots.

On a typical day, Sjur and his wife might take their bikes and ride through Singapore's many connected parks. Both love nature. They might stop at one of the city's many hawker centres for dinner, followed by a visit to a jazz bar for a beer and live music.

"We came here to make a home for Norwegians in Singapore, to provide an oasis of community for travelers, and to help people in the best way we could. In the process, I think we have made a home for ourselves too."



*"There is a Norwegian guy in Vang Vieng, Arne. He usually sits there and wait for customers by the road – the old school type," a traveller said. The description turned out to be accurate.*

# Looking for Arne? Forget Google. Try the streets of Vang Vieng

Travellers pass by on scooters and on foot while Arne watches the street from his usual spot just inside the entrance of what used to be Nam Song Garden Guesthouse.

*By Freja Nanna Mogensen*

*Photo: Freja Nanna Mogensen*

The 73-year-old Norwegian sits shirtless on a worn wooden chair by the roadside in Vang Vieng's backpacker quarter near the Nam Song River. His beard is long and grey-blond, and his toenails are painted a dark blue.

A little further down the street, his wife is busy building a colourful stone wall along the roadside in the afternoon heat while motorbikes buzz past.

Arne lights another cigarette and greets people as they pass. Smoke drifts lazily into the warm air as he talks.

"Where are you going?" he asks a man in motorcycle gear.

The man explains that he forgot his sunscreen in a bag he left at one of the lagoons outside town. Arne quickly begins explaining that sunscreen is not really necessary anyway.

## "People are so serious in Norway"

Arne came to Laos from Norway around 2003 and has stayed ever since. He has been part of the town for more than two decades.

"I'm not into fancy cars and big houses," he says with a laugh. Life in Laos suits him better, he explains.

"Everything is cheap here, and people smile. In Norway, people are always so serious."

Arne shrugs.

"I don't really fit in back in Norway," he says with a laugh. "I'm a clown."

During the conversation, his partner occasionally walks over from further down the street, where she is working on the wall. She interrupts now and then before returning to her work.

## Nam Song Garden then and now

Behind him lies Nam Song Garden. A light breeze moves through the trees, rustling the leaves above the garden.

For years, Arne and his wife ran Nam Song Garden Guesthouse, a small riverside retreat where travellers could stay among trees and bamboo.

Since the pandemic, the place has changed. Today, it mainly functions as a small garden bar where visitors come for a drink and watch the sun set behind the limestone mountains surrounding Vang Vieng.





*The small wooden lodges where travellers once stayed are still standing in the garden. Their bamboo walls and wooden terraces now look a little worn after years of tropical weather, but they remain part of the place's slightly chaotic charm.*



The garden itself is a curious place. It is filled with objects Arne has collected over the years – decorations, instruments that guests are free to play, and all kinds of odd items scattered around the yard. Arne describes it as something like a small 1960s and 70s museum.

Musical instruments are another of his hobbies. Visitors are welcome to try them when they stop by the garden bar, including a 65-year-old piano standing among the tables.

Near the entrance, jars of local honey are displayed in a basket attached to a lion statue for passing tourists.

"I glued the basket to the lion so people wouldn't just walk off with it," he says.

Tourists also come for small practical help. Arne assists travellers in repairing bags, shoes and clothes.



*The old car is part of Nam Song Garden where guests can sit and enjoy the sunset over the garden and surrounding mountains.*



*If you order something to drink, the system is usually simple and polite self-service.*



*Arne's Garden from the outside from the street.*

## Arne has not completely let go of Norway

When asked how he spends his time, Arne chuckles.

"I collect old classic motorbikes," he says, pointing around the garden where several stand between tables, plants and decorations.

At one point, one of his roosters jumps onto a parked motorbike nearby. It flaps its wings, crows loudly and, moments later, leaves its mark on the seat.

Arne barely reacts.

He also keeps up with life back home through the radio and often listens to P2.

Despite living in Laos for more than two decades, Arne has not completely let go of Norway. He still has family there. His two children – a son and a daughter –

live in Norway, and his daughter has three children of her own. In June, he plans to visit Stavanger to see them.

Arne remains seated on his wooden chair by the roadside, smoking cigarettes and chatting with people who pass.

It seems like just another ordinary afternoon in Vang Vieng. And if you are looking for him, there is still only one way to find him.

Try the streets of Vang Vieng.



Agneta's  
World

*Agneta de Bekassy*

# Swedish journalist Malou von Sivers shares stories from a life of global interviews

Meet Malou von Sivers, the woman who, despite her gentle demeanor and soft manner, has conducted many of the most exceptional and challenging interviews with some of the most influential and well-known figures of our time.





“  
*Despite her gentle demeanor and soft manner, she has conducted many of the most exceptional and challenging interviews.*  
”

Malou was born in January 1953 in Stockholm. She is a very well-known journalist, television host and author. As a young woman, she decided to become a travel guide in Greece. She sang in clubs in Athens and met a lot of interesting people.

After a few years, she felt it was time to change direction, and in 1976 she applied to journalism school and was accepted.

After completing her education, she got a job at Expressen and Aftonbladet, where she remained for ten years. After those ten years, she was offered a job by Bonniers to become editor-in-chief of the popular magazine Elle. During this time, the expression “the beauty with the brain” was coined.

Malou was married, and still is, to her husband Sten Haage. She had one child and was expecting their second. At that time, it was not easy to keep a job while pregnant, and she was asked to quit her job. Malou then turned to the union’s lawyer and managed to reach a settlement, as it was unlawful.

A week later, a man called her and offered her the opportunity to help launch a TV channel while she was in the middle of her pregnancy. It was TV4, the very first major commercial channel, that had taken notice of Malou.

This resulted in the highly appreciated program “Nyhets Morgon” (News Morning), where Malou and her colleague Bengt Magnusson took viewers into the studio every early morning for seven years. For Malou, this meant getting up at three o’clock in the morning. She would never have managed it without a husband

who supported her one hundred percent. She herself barely got more than two hours of sleep before it was time to get up again and pick up the children from Dagens (daycare).

As if this were not enough, Malou also traveled the world to meet and interview people who left their mark on our time. To mention just a few examples, we can begin with Nelson Mandela, whom she managed to interview during his final tour as president. She had, of course, been allocated a certain time for the interview, but who would dare or want to interrupt a South African president who had spent twenty-seven years in prison?

That interview received tremendous attention.

Another world-famous person Malou, after much effort, managed to secure an interview with was the Swedish film director Ingmar Bergman. Ingmar was known for refusing interviews, but together with the actor Erland Josephson, a close friend who played many main roles in his films, Malou succeeded in creating an interview that became a conversation between two men speaking about life, love and death. At the time, Ingmar had lost his great love, Ingrid.

It is somehow amusing to note the demands Ingmar is said to have had before the interview. He wanted to be picked up in a limousine for the drive to the recording studio, and there had to be blackcurrant juice and Brägo biscuits available, while Erland felt that a whisky and the subway would do just fine.





Malou recalls that Ingmar was both angry and nervous when they met. He was said to be something of a control freak and had difficulty letting someone else take the helm.

Ingmar, with his nine children, spoke about the grief he felt after the death of his youthful love Ingrid, and he also addressed the idea of his own death during the interview.

That interview received attention at the Cannes Film Festival, and when Ingmar passed away in 1999, Malou and Erland sat together and watched it again.

The interview with Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi, who for a long time was a symbol of the pro-democracy movement and was kept under house arrest for many years, became another highly publicized interview. Securing a meeting with her was akin to a risky adventure.

Malou and her team met a courier in Bangkok who, with skill and cunning, managed to bring them together for an interview, an assignment that was anything but easy to accomplish.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Aung San, who is seen as a national hero who helped Burma, today Myanmar, gain independence. She was born on June 19, 1945, in Rangoon.

She studied at the University of Oxford, where she earned several degrees, including in Politics, Economics

and Philosophy. For many years she lived abroad and married her husband Michael Aris in 1972, an academic and historian focusing on Tibetan culture and history.

Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest in July 1989 and spent many years in detention between 1989 and 2010 under the military regime in Myanmar. She was not even allowed to travel to the United Kingdom to say a final farewell to her husband.

When Malou had finally succeeded in securing the interview, a new problem arose. How would she get the recording out of the country without it being confiscated? She had been given a secure, though rather unusual, tip on how to proceed. The best method, she was told, was to buy sanitary pads and hide the recording inside one of them, and even wear it during departure.

With her heart in her throat, she approached security control. They searched and patted her down thoroughly, but fortunately did not go as far as checking her underwear.

It is hardly surprising that the interview also received a great deal of attention.

Malou also had the opportunity to interview Yoko Ono, the widow of John Lennon, at her residence, The Dakota in New York. In Malou's eyes, Yoko Ono was a wise and warm woman, quite different from how she had often been portrayed in the press.

For 16 years, Malou hosted the morning program "Malou efter tio" (Malou after 10 am), where she frequently interviewed politicians and party leaders, including Ebba Busch and Olena Zelenska, the wife of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

One could easily write an entire book about what this skilled and dynamic woman has accomplished. In recent years, however, she has written and published several books herself. Many of her novels focus on family relationships and human psychology. Her debut novel "Mitt hjärtas oro" (The Unrest of My Heart) is the first in a trilogy, followed by "Olycksbarnet" (The Unfortunate Son) and "En ska bort" (One Must Go). The latter is set to be adapted into a film.

As I come to the end of my account of Malou, it is worth mentioning that she has received prestigious awards such as "Kristallen" (The Crystal) and "Stora Journalistpriset" (The Big Journalist Award), and has also been a popular host on "Sommar i P1" (Summer in P1).

One cannot help but wonder if there is anything this remarkable woman cannot do.

If you would like to listen to her interview with Ingmar Bergman and Erland Josephson, it is available on YouTube, as well as her popular podcasts.

I had the pleasure of getting to know Malou when she visited her brother, who has lived in Bangkok for a couple of years. Malou joined our "Book Circle" and talked to us about her latest book. It was a very fun and informative evening. Now we hope that Malou will soon return to Bangkok again.

You are warmly welcome back!

# Obesity crisis in Bangkok: Every second resident affected as Danish solution rolls out

If you walk the streets of Bangkok, statistics suggest that every second person you pass may be overweight.

A new health initiative in Bangkok is aiming to tackle rising obesity rates through a collaboration between the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the Royal Danish Embassy in Bangkok and Novo Nordisk, according to Bangkok Post.

The project, “Benchakitti Park for Better Health”, was officially launched on March 30.

The new recreational area at Benchakitti Park includes outdoor



strength-training equipment inspired by the “Cities for Better Health” site at Spor 10 in Copenhagen.

The initiative aims to encourage physical activity and help prevent obesity and related diseases in urban areas, and is part of a broader effort to improve public health as more than 45% of Thailand’s population is overweight or obese, with rates reaching around 58% in Bangkok.

“Benchakitti Park for Better Health is a concrete step towards making healthy living part of everyday life for people in Bangkok,” Bangkok governor Chadchart Sittipunt said, as cited by Bangkok Post.

# Novo Nordisk expands in China while betting on AI

Novo Nordisk has entered a strategic partnership with OpenAI to boost drug discovery and development. The collaboration will allow the company to analyse massive datasets at a scale previously not possible, with the aim of bringing new treatments to market faster.

The partnership spans research, manufacturing, supply chain and commercial operations, with pilot projects already underway and full integration planned by the end of 2026. The move comes as Novo Nordisk restructures its business, cutting costs and slowing hiring, while facing growing competition in key markets such as China.

At the same time, the company



is increasing its presence in China, where many new job openings focus on sales roles for obesity and diabetes drugs. The AI push builds on

Novo Nordisk’s existing digital efforts, including internal AI tools and partnerships with major technology companies.

# Norway and Vietnam team up on green projects together



Norway and Vietnam have signed a “Green Strategic Partnership” aimed at boosting cooperation on climate and sustainable industries, the Norwegian Embassy in Vietnam said in a press release. The agreement focuses on areas such as renewable energy, ocean industries and the circular economy, and is expected to create new opportunities for companies in both countries.

Norway already has experience in green shipping and energy, which it now aims to bring into closer cooperation with Vietnam. The deal also marks 55 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

# SISU Auto partners with Malaysia’s Cendana Auto

Malaysian company Cendana Auto has entered a strategic partnership with Finnish vehicle manufacturer SISU Auto to strengthen defence industry capabilities in Malaysia.

The collaboration focuses on joint technology development, engineering, and localisation of defence vehicle platforms. It aims to build in-country capabilities across research, manufacturing, and lifecycle support.

As part of the agreement, both companies will co-develop advanced vehicle platforms, including right-hand drive configurations suited for regional needs. The partnership also includes structured technology transfer and the development of local intellectual property.

Cendana Auto plans to ex-



pand its facilities to support local assembly and manufacturing, while strengthening Malaysia’s domestic supply chain. The initiative also involves training programmes to develop local talent, including students

and veterans.

SISU Auto highlighted technology and knowledge transfer as key to ensuring long-term sustainability and operational readiness of the vehicle fleet in Malaysia.

# Swedish giant raises billions as Asia attracts investors

The Swedish investment company EQT AB has raised \$15.6 billion to invest in companies across Asia. The largest fund of its kind in the region right now, according to Channel News Asia.

According to EQT's Asia chief, Jean Salata, the region is becoming more attractive because companies are changing fast and new opportunities are opening up, he said to the media.

At the same time, many investors are moving money away from



the US due to high prices and global uncertainty — and instead looking to Asia.

EQT has already used the new fund to make its first deal: buying Japanese elevator company Fujitec and taking it private.

The company has invested about \$35 billion in Asia since 1997 and says countries like Japan and India are especially important right now.

This new fund is also about 40% bigger than EQT's previous Asia fund.

# Kempower: Malaysia's EV boom must shift focus

Finland-based Kempower says Malaysia's growing EV charging network should prioritise utilisation over rapid expansion. The company points to Southeast Asia as a key growth region for electric mobility.

Kempower states that long-term success for charge point operators depends on how often chargers are used, not just how many are installed. The company notes that poorly performing sites are often linked to weak location planning and inconsistent user experience rather than lack of demand.

Drawing on experience from markets like Norway, Kempower says EV drivers tend to prioritise convenience over charging speed. Locations that allow drivers to shop or take breaks while charging are seen as more attractive than sites focused only on fast charging.

The company is promoting a modular and data-driven approach

to charger deployment. This allows operators to scale infrastructure gradually based on real demand, improving efficiency and return on investment.

Kempower currently has around 260 charging points de-

ployed in Malaysia through partners including ChargeEV, DC Handal and Gentari. The company says stronger public and private sector collaboration will be key to building a more reliable EV charging network in the country.



# Women key to lasting peace, Norway and Philippines agree



At the residence of the Royal Norwegian Embassy, officials from Norway and the Philippines met to push a clear point: peace lasts longer when women are part of it.

The forum, held in partnership with the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity, focused on the Women,

Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. It brought together government representatives and peacebuilders to discuss how to turn policy into real impact.

Norwegian Ambassador Christian Halaas Lyster stressed that including women is no longer optional.

“Peace is more durable, more legitimate and more resilient when

women are included,” he said.

For Norway, this is a core part of its international work. The country has long supported peace efforts in the Philippines, including as a facilitator in negotiations.

The Philippines, in turn, is moving from policy to action. Presidential Adviser Carlito G. Galvez Jr. said the WPS agenda is now being implemented on the ground.

“The agenda is no longer just an aspiration,” he noted.

Women have played key roles in local peace efforts in the Philippines for decades, often outside formal systems. Now, both countries are working to ensure they are included at all levels.

Global data continues to show the gap. Women remain underrepresented in peace negotiations, despite evidence that agreements last longer when they are involved.

# Denmark showcases culture at EU Culture Street event in Hangzhou

Denmark in China took part in the EU Culture Street 2026 event in Hangzhou. The annual event celebrates European culture across Chinese cities and draws large public audiences.

Organised by the European Union, this year’s edition attracted more than 25,000 visitors. The event brought together European countries to present culture, traditions, and lifestyle to Chinese audiences.

At the Danish booth, visitors were introduced to Danish culture through interactive activities. Guests



could take part in a quiz on sustainability and everyday life in Denmark, as well as try a virtual reality cycling experience showcasing Danish landscapes.

Danish products were also featured, with butter cookies from Kjeldsens and chocolate milk drinks from Cocio offered as prizes. The organisers said the event provided an opportunity to engage directly with visitors and promote Danish culture in China.

# SwedCham strengthens European business presence in Indonesia

The Swedish Chamber of Commerce in Indonesia has joined both the EUIndonesia Business Network (EIBN) and the International Business Chamber (IBC), marking a step up in its role within the country's business and policy landscape, SwedCham reports.

The move places SwedCham alongside key European and international chambers at a time when Indonesia is pushing forward with major reforms in energy transition, digital development, and industrial growth.



Through the memberships, Swedish companies gain stronger access to policy dialogue and business support platforms aimed at improving trade and investment

conditions between Europe and Indonesia.

According to SwedCham, the goal is to better represent Swedish industry interests in Indonesia while supporting closer cooperation between European businesses and Indonesian authorities.

The EIBN focuses on facilitating trade and providing market insights for European companies, while the IBC serves as a platform for dialogue between international chambers and government stakeholders in Indonesia.

# Thailand plans to make it easier for foreigners to start a business

Thailand is planning a major reform to make it easier and faster for foreign companies to do business in the country.

At the centre of the plan is a new “super licence” system that would allow companies to apply for multiple permits through a single process, instead of going through several ministries and agencies one by one.

Under current rules, restrictions under the Foreign Business Act often force companies to set up complex ownership structures to operate legally. A unified licensing system is intended to reduce the need for these arrangements and make market entry more straightforward.

The government aims to introduce parts of the system within 180 days, while the full legal reform is expected to take about a year.

The changes will be introduced



gradually, meaning some approvals may become faster before the full legal framework is in place.

Visa and work permit rules are also part of the overhaul.

These processes currently affect how quickly companies can bring in foreign managers and skilled

workers. Streamlining approvals would make it easier to set up and run regional operations from Thailand.

The push comes as Thailand faces slower economic growth, with forecasts for 2026 between 1.2 and 1.6%, down from 2.4% in 2025.

# Thai-Norwegian actress Yaya Sperbund married in traditional ceremony

Thai-Norwegian actress Urasaya Sperbund, widely known as Yaya, has married Thai-Austrian actor Nadech Kugimiya. The couple shared photos

from their wedding ceremony held in Khon Kaen Province, Nadech's hometown. The wedding comes after the couple got together over a decade ago in 2011.

Both actors appeared in traditional Thai attire during the ceremony, which was attended by family members and close friends. The wedding took place on 17 April, shortly after the Songkran holiday period.

Yaya Sperbund was born in 1993 in Pattaya to a Thai mother and a Norwegian father, Sigurd Sperbund.

Yaya is one of Thailand's most prominent actresses, known for major TV dramas such as "Duang Jai Akkanee", "Game Rai Game Rak", "Kleun Cheewit", and "The Crown Princess". She has also starred in films including "Brother of the Year", "Fast and Feel Love" and "Love You to Debt".



# Telenor sued over Myanmar data leak: "We could not play Russian roulette"

More than 1,253 people are now suing Norwegian telecom giant Telenor over claims it shared sensitive user data with Myanmar's military junta, according to Reuters.

The lawsuit, filed in Norway by the Justice and Accountability Initiative, alleges that phone data from political opponents was handed over following the military coup in Myanmar in 2021, when the army seized power and removed the elected government.

The case centres on events following the Myanmar coup d'état 2021, when the military seized power and removed the elected government.

According to the lawsuit, call logs and location data were handed



over and used to track critics of the military junta.

One of the cases involves activist Aung Thu, who said the data was used in his re-arrest and later trial.

"I am hoping for justice, not just for myself, but for all the people of Myanmar," he told Reuters.

Another case cited is that of

Phoe Zeya Thaw, a politician and hip hop artist who was executed in 2022.

Telenor has rejected the allegations and says it was forced to comply with the military authorities.

"Telenor Myanmar had no real options. We could not play Russian roulette with the lives of our employees," the company said to Reuters, adding that the unit in Myanmar was operating in a war zone.

The company also said it believes the lawsuit is unlikely to succeed.

Telenor exited Myanmar in March 2022 after selling its operations following pressure from the military authorities.

The lawsuit is seeking €9,000 in compensation per affected customer.

# Finnish-inspired preschool opens in Singapore

A new Finnish-inspired preschool has launched in Singapore, bringing Nordic early childhood education principles to the country. HEI Schools Singapore is developed in partnership with HEI Schools Global.

The programme is based on the Finnish education model, known for its focus on wellbeing, play-based learning and student-centred teaching. It was developed in collaboration with the University of Helsinki and co-founded by Lasse Lipponen.

The preschool offers education for children aged 18 months to six years. It emphasises creativity, critical thinking and emotional development, rather than early academic performance.

Founder Jayne Nadarajoo said the approach supports different



learning styles and prepares children for diverse school systems. A specialised programme also provides tailored support for neurodivergent learners.

HEI Schools Singapore said the model aims to equip children with skills for lifelong learning and adaptation in both local and international education environments.

# Young Vietnamese artists shine in decade-long Danish creativity initiative

Creativity and climate awareness took center stage in Hanoi on April 2 as the Dan-

ish Embassy celebrated the 10-year journey of its art competition, "Denmark in Your Eyes".

The event featured an awards ceremony and an exhibition under the theme "Living Green".

The competition encourages young talents to think critically, express themselves freely, and explore pressing global issues such as climate change and sustainable development.

Over the past decade, more than 130,000 artworks have showcased the next generation's creativity, determination, and ambition to build a greener, more livable future.

The Danish Embassy emphasized its pride in supporting young artists across Vietnam.



# Danish director brings “The Liar” to Hong Kong

Danish director Tua Biering is bringing a new theatre production to Hong Kong in collaboration with local actor Tai Yin Chan. The performance, titled “The Liar”, explores themes of truth, misinformation and audience perception.

The production will premiere at Tai Kwun as part of the Asia-Europe Cultural Festival. The project is supported by cultural cooperation between Denmark and China.

“The Liar” is designed as an



interactive performance where the audience plays an active role in deciding what to believe. The show focuses on how easily narratives can be shaped and accepted in what creators describe as a “post-truth” environment.

The collaboration also reflects ongoing international work by Hong Kong artists abroad. Tai Yin Chan, who is now based in the UK, returns to the stage through this project while continuing his international acting career.

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# Thaiboy Digital teams up with Sweden’s Bladee on new single



Thai artist Thanapat Bunleang who goes by Thaiboy Digital has released a new single titled “Irish Tears” together with Swedish artist Bladee.

The track is the third single from Thaiboy Digital’s upcoming album “Paradise”, created in collaboration with Swedish production group swedm®. The project brings together artists from Sweden’s electronic underground scene.

A music video for the song was filmed in Thailand. It shows the two artists moving through beach locations, reflecting the track’s more introspective tone.

Thaiboy Digital was born in Khon Kaen, Thailand, before moving to Sweden as a teenager. He later became part of the Stockholm-based Drain Gang collective alongside Bladee, Ecco2k and producer Whitearmor.



## Singapore buyer pays triple for rare Olympic medal at Danish auction

A rare Olympic medal sold in Denmark for DKK 900,000 has now been handed over to its new owner from Singapore who travelled across the world to collect it in person, according to a press release.

The medal, awarded at the first modern Olympic Games in 1896, is considered one of the most historic pieces of Olympic memorabilia ever sold.

The buyer, Singapore-based entrepreneur Clyde Lee, made the journey to Denmark following an intense international bidding process.

The medal was auctioned by the Danish auction house Bruun Rasmussen, where it sold for three times its estimated price.

Lee said he felt a strong personal connection to the object.

"I don't see myself as the own-



er, but as a custodian of the history it represents," he said during the handover.

As the father of two teenage fencers, Lee said the medal holds special meaning and plans to display it in Singapore to inspire young athletes, highlighting the dedication behind extraordinary achievements.

The medal dates back to the

first modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, where 241 athletes from 14 nations competed.

According to the auction house, items of this kind are extremely rare, and it is unusual for buyers to travel in person to collect them.

The sale highlights the growing international interest in Nordic cultural and historical objects – including from buyers in Asia.

It is rare for buyers to attend handovers in person, said Christian Grundtvig of Bruun Rasmussen.

"From the moment we first examined and assessed the medal, to generating significant international attention, achieving a strong auction result, and finally having the pleasure of handing it over to a very happy buyer – it has been truly extraordinary," Grundtvig added.

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