

JUN 2026

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Vietnam and Norway celebrate 55 years of diplomatic ties

COMMUNITY:

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BENEATH THE SURFACE:

Saving the Philippines' dying reefs

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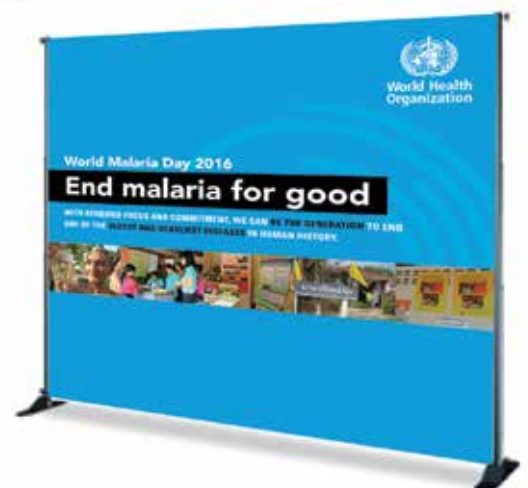
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How Sweden started a Thai movement

I attended The Wood Solution Thailand Forum in Bangkok on 2 June expecting to learn about forestry, timber construction and climate solutions. Instead, I found myself reflecting on something else entirely.

Sweden.

Not Sweden as a country, but Sweden as a way of working.

The forum brought together forest owners, researchers, architects, manufacturers, investors, government agencies and community organizations from across Thailand. There were discussions about sustainable forestry, engineered wood products, rural development and low-carbon construction.

But what struck me most was not what was being discussed. It was how it had come about.

This initiative did not begin with a Swedish solution looking for a Thai problem.

It began several years ago with a few people having an idea, then did some studies, stakeholder mapping, workshops, consultations and endless conversations. Swedish organizations helped bring people together, funded research, facilitated dialogue and encouraged cooperation across sectors that rarely speak to one another.

To a Dane, it sounds seriously exhausting. We Danes are often impatient. We like quick decisions, quick results and practical action. Sometimes we even pride ourselves on it.

The Swedish approach is different. There is another meeting. Another report. Another consultation. Another effort to ensure that everyone has been heard.

Watching this process from the outside, it can occasionally feel painfully slow. Yet sitting in that conference room in Bangkok, I suddenly understood what all those meetings had been building towards.

What I witnessed was no longer a Swedish project. It was a Thai movement.

The speakers were overwhelmingly Thai. The main

language was Thai. The opportunities being discussed were Thai opportunities. The challenges were Thai challenges. The future being imagined belonged to Thailand.

The Swedish role had become almost invisible. Perhaps that is the highest achievement of all.

The purpose was never to create dependency on Swedish expertise. The purpose was to create the conditions for Thai stakeholders to discover their own possibilities and work together to realise them.

That is a much harder task than simply exporting technology or knowledge.

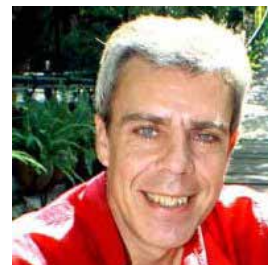
If Thailand succeeds in building a modern sustainable timber industry in the years ahead, the most important Swedish contribution will surely not be a particular innovation or technical solution. It will simply be that Sweden helped the right people meet each other.

In an age when many international projects are expected to deliver visible results within a year or two, there is something refreshing about a process measured in decades rather than months.

Forests take years to grow.

Apparently, so do the relationships needed to build an industry around them.

The Wood Solution Thailand Forum demonstrated convincingly that Sweden understands this better than most.



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

ScandAsia

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Malaysia appoints new ambassador to Finland



Malaysia has appointed Datuk S.S.Amarjit Singh as the country's new ambassador to Finland.

The appointment was among 15 diplomatic postings presented by Ibrahim Sultan Iskandar, King of Malaysia, during a ceremony at Istana Negara in Kuala Lumpur on 18 May.

The ceremony also included

appointments for Malaysian envoys to countries including Japan, Singapore, Laos, Ireland and New Zealand.

In a separate event, the Malaysian king also received credentials from seven newly appointed foreign envoys to Malaysia, including representatives from Sri Lanka, Morocco and Panama.

Vietnam and Norway celebrate 55 years of diplomatic ties

More than five decades after Norway became one of the first Western European countries to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam during the war years, the two countries are now expanding cooperation around green growth and sustainable development.

The relationship was celebrated during Norway's National Day reception in Hanoi, marking both Norway's 212th National Day and 55 years of diplomatic ties between the two nations.

Among those attending were Vietnamese Deputy Foreign Minister Le Thi Thu Hang and Norwegian Ambassador to Vietnam Hilde Solbakken, along with diplomats, business representatives and international partners.

Speaking at the event, Deputy Minister Le Thi Thu Hang said Vietnam highly values Norway's long-term contributions to the country's development, including support for reconstruction, poverty reduction, education and healthcare.

She said the relationship is now



gaining new strategic importance as both countries seek closer cooperation on climate change, green shipping, renewable energy and sustainable maritime industries.

A newly signed Green Strategic Partnership between Vietnam and Norway was highlighted as a major milestone. The agreement is expected to open new opportunities in renewable energy, circular economy projects, environmental protection and green transition initiatives.

Vietnam also encouraged Norwegian companies and investors to

expand their presence in the country, particularly in sectors where Norway has strong expertise, including maritime industries, clean energy and marine governance.

Ambassador Hilde Solbakken said Norway's relationship with Vietnam has developed from wartime solidarity into a modern partnership built on trust, mutual respect and shared interests.

She also described the new green partnership as an important framework for future cooperation between governments, businesses and investors in both countries.

Swedish universities seek stronger ties with Hong Kong

A new bridge between Sweden and Hong Kong may be taking shape in science and innovation.

During an official visit to Sweden, Hong Kong's Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry, Sun Dong, said leading Swedish universities were eager to deepen cooperation with Hong Kong in areas such as life sciences, biotechnology and artificial intelligence.

Among the institutions visited were KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Karolinska Institutet and Uppsala University.

Sun Dong said he was impressed by the strong interest from Swedish universities, researchers and companies in working with Hong Kong.



The discussions focused on life sciences, digitalisation, AI in medicine and new energy solutions – all areas where both Sweden and Hong Kong see major growth potential.

The Hong Kong minister also

said Swedish start-ups and companies were looking at Hong Kong as a gateway to mainland China and as a place to raise international funding for global expansion

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Despite cuts, Sweden sends humanitarian aid to Myanmar

Sweden will allocate 2.7 billion SEK in humanitarian aid this year to support people in 25 conflict-affected countries, including Myanmar.

The funding will go toward basic needs such as food, shelter, medicine and clean water. Other recipient countries include Sudan, Yemen and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The move comes as Sweden reduces funding for longer-term development programmes across

Africa, Asia and Latin America. Aid to Africa alone has been cut by 36%.

According to Development Minister Benjamin Dousa, Sweden cannot replace funding gaps left by larger donors and will instead prioritise urgent humanitarian support and Ukraine.

The new shift in Sweden's foreign aid policy comes after talks in September 2025, where Sweden was set to face out aid to Myanmar in order to reallocate funds to support Ukraine.



Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce announces new board



Thai-Norwegian Chamber of Commerce has announced its newly elected Board of Directors for 2026/27.

Kristine Anvik Leach from Jotun Thailand was appointed president of the chamber for the next two years.

The board includes representatives from several Norwegian and Thai-linked businesses operating in

Thailand, including Yara Thailand, Aibel Thailand, Seven Peaks Software and Siam Legal International.

Founded in 1996, the chamber works to strengthen trade and investment ties between Norway and Thailand through business events, networking and cooperation with Thai authorities and the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

According to the chamber, membership currently stands at around 50 companies and organizations.

Taiwan president pops in on Copenhagen Democracy Summit

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te addressed the Copenhagen Democracy Summit 2026 by video on 12 May, calling for democracies to unite against growing authoritarian pressure.

Speaking at the summit in Copenhagen, President Lai said democracies cannot “stand on the sidelines” as authoritarian regimes increase military intimidation, cyber-attacks and economic coercion. He said Taiwan stands on the frontline of defending democratic values in the Indo-Pacific region.

The Taiwanese president highlighted Taiwan’s semiconductor and AI industries, saying the island would

continue working with democratic partners including Europe, the US and Japan to strengthen resilient supply chains and regional stability.

The Copenhagen Democracy Summit was hosted by the Alliance of Democracies Foundation, founded by former Danish Prime Minister and former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Participants included Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and political leaders, academics and democracy advocates from Europe, North America and Asia.



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The Lost Art of Not Knowing

By Rick Kirtland, Bangkok Patana School

Those of us who grew up in the 1970s, 80s and 90s had to put in a quite unreasonable amount of effort just to get through a normal day.

We memorised dozens of phone numbers. We phoned people's houses via landlines, dealt with whoever picked up (including sinister siblings and suspicious parents), and were trained in telephone etiquette before we were teenagers. For example, I was instructed to answer the home phone by saying: "Hello, Cambridge 363XX2, how may I help you?", which I'm sure made me sound like a cross between the speaking clock and a squeaky Victorian butler. We consulted TV guides on paper, watched an extremely slim selection of shows and had to be physically present for them or missed them forever. We made arrangements to meet friends and had absolutely no

way of contacting them if plans changed or anything went wrong. (Although later we did have pagers, a device whose entire function was to tell you to go and find a different device... but the less said about that the better.)

Next came dial-up internet, with a screeching phone socket and a cable destined to trip up the entire family. Then, almost overnight it seemed, smartphones appeared and suddenly the majority of people on earth had a second brain in their pocket with the apparent answer to everything. And then, finally, AI arrived. AI does not just find the answer. It thinks, writes, decides and concludes for you and does it with complete confidence, regardless of whether it is right or not.

We now live in a world where everyone with a phone has a PhD in everything, but no one had to sit the exam.

This is not an anti-technology article

We teach children to swim not because we want them to avoid water, but because we want them to be safe and confident in it. Our children will live and work in a world shaped by AI, and we want them to use it fluently, wisely, and well. The question is not whether our children will use AI. It is whether they will have a strong enough mind underneath it to know when to trust it, when to question it, and when and how to think for themselves.

Teaching HOW to think, not just WHAT to think

The cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead said it plainly, decades before the internet existed, let alone AI: "Children must be taught how to think, not what to think." If it mattered then, in a

world of libraries, encyclopaedias, and TV evening news, it is hard to overstate how much more it matters now.

In a recent Pew Charitable Trusts article, a survey of over 130,000 young people found that 70% rated their ability to cope with challenges as medium to very low. The conclusion is both sobering and hopeful: resilience is not something children either have or don't have. It is a skill, and it can be taught. True, the figures come from the United States; however, the pressures shaping childhood today (screens, social media, AI, the vanishing of unstructured thinking time) recognise no borders.

Deep thinking is slowly dissolving. To borrow from Shakespeare, young people are inhaling instant answers 'as a cat laps milk'. A child who has never had to sit with not knowing, who has never worked through a problem with no obvious solution without an instant answer at hand, is a child whose sense of their own capability is quietly, invisibly eroding -- and with it, their sense of wellbeing. Deep thinking is not a luxury or an academic nicety; it is the very mechanism through which children build the confidence to cope.

Yes, our primary-aged children are still young. That is precisely the point. Children who

develop these skills early are more resilient, more confident, and better equipped to handle the ordinary difficulties of growing up. Our commitment to Well-Being, Learning and Global Citizenship -- and our value of being Curious -- depends on it.

What can we do together?

We will keep doing our part in school. But the most powerful thinking happens in the pause before the answer, and that pause is something parents can help protect at home. Three simple habits make a real difference:

1. *Resist the urge to rescue.* When your child asks "what should I do?", try "what do you think?" first.
2. *Model uncertainty.* Say "I'm not sure, let's think it through together" rather than just giving them the solution or reaching for your phone.
3. *Ask one more question.* When your child shares something from an AI tool, ask: "How do we know that's true?" or "what do you think about that?"

Yes, they are simple. No, they are not solutions in themselves. But when home and school pull in the same direction, these habits of mind become something quietly and powerfully transformative.

And Finally...

John Lennon, lead singer of The Beatles, once said that when his teacher asked what he wanted to be when he grew up, he wrote down "happy." His teacher told him he didn't understand the assignment. He told her she didn't understand life. He also, of course, famously said "I am the Walrus", which is a solid example of why we teach children to think for themselves.



Finland and Brunei explore closer education cooperation



Anders Adlercreutz met with Brunei's Minister of Education, Romaizah Mohd Salleh,

during a visit to the Ministry of Education in Berakas.

The meeting focused on ex-

changing views on education priorities and exploring opportunities for closer cooperation between Finland and Brunei. Both sides expressed appreciation for the dialogue and signalled interest in continued engagement.

During the visit, Adlercreutz also toured Rimba III Primary School, where he was introduced to programmes such as coding with Micro:bit, STEAM education, and special education needs initiatives.

The Finnish minister is in Brunei to attend the ASEAN-EU Ministerial Meeting, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Finnish HEI Schools to open first preschool in Myanmar

Finnish education company HEI Schools will open its first preschool in Yangon in June 2026. The launch marks the company's entry into Myanmar.

The school, HEI Schools Yangon, will be located in Yankin township and offer early education for children aged 1.5 to 6 years. The facility will have capacity for up to 100 students.

The preschool will be operated by Sideducation Ltd.. The local operator has previously run an English learning centre and is now expanding into early childhood education.

The school will follow HEI Schools' play-based learning model, developed with input from the University of Helsinki. The curriculum focuses on child development through play, interaction and guided learning.



Swedish defence company Saab expands in Thailand

Swedish defence giant Saab is expanding its presence in Thailand by seeking new local partners to produce aircraft parts and strengthen the country's defence industry.

According to Saab Thailand, the company sees major opportunities in Thailand's fast-growing defence and aerospace sectors.

"Thailand is a rapidly growing country for the defence industry and there is much opportunity for security technology," said Fredrik Lindblom, vice-president and country manager of Saab Thailand.

The expansion is linked to the Royal Thai Air Force's purchase of Gripen E/F fighter jets, where

Saab has committed to technology transfers and industrial cooperation aimed at building local capabilities in aircraft maintenance and production.

Saab plans to work with partners including Thai Aviation Industries and local SMEs to expand domestic expertise.

The Swedish company has worked with Thailand's armed forces for more than 40 years, supplying radar systems, air defence technology and Gripen fighter aircraft.

Saab says Thailand is becoming an increasingly important strategic partner as demand for defence systems continues to grow across the Asia-Pacific region.



Malaysia and Denmark unite for sulfuric acid projects

Malaysia's SumiSaujana Group has entered a collaboration with Danish firm Topsoe to explore production of sulfuric acid from industrial gas streams.

The partnership will assess potential projects in Malaysia and Indonesia, focusing on refineries and gas processing facilities. The aim is to convert sulfur-containing emissions into commercially usable sulfuric acid using specialised technology.

Under the plan, SumiSaujana will lead project development, including feasibility studies, construction and operations. Topsoe will contribute technical expertise and is expected to supply its wet gas sulfuric acid technology.

The companies said the ini-



tiative could improve resource efficiency and reduce environmental impact by turning waste streams into valuable products.

The collaboration is currently

at an early stage and depends on feasibility study results, but both parties see potential for long-term projects in Southeast Asia.



Magnus Nielsen, Director of Marine Conservation Philippines.

Coral reefs are dying along the Philippine coastline.

In Zamboanguita, a Danish organisation is trying to rebuild life beneath the sea

As coral reefs decline and fish populations shrink along the Philippine coastline, Søren and Magnus are working with local fishing communities to protect the ocean they still depend on for survival.

By Helene Sadjadi-Munk

Photo: Helene Sadjadi-Munk

Hidden behind enormous palm trees, road signs warning about crossing kangaroos, and gravel roads that seem almost impossible to navigate, there is a small folk high school-like atmosphere with one shared goal: finding ways to protect marine life while helping coastal communities survive alongside it.

On Negros Island in the Philippines lies Marine Conservation Philippines in Zamboanguita.

Here, the organisation works with coral studies and marine surveys aimed at helping researchers better understand how the ocean around the Philippine coastline is changing.

Because beneath the surface, something is happening.

Corals are struggling against rising temperatures. Fish populations are shrinking. And in many coastal communities, the ocean is still directly tied to whether families can put food on the table.

And it was exactly that development that led Danish couple Søren Knudsen and his wife Helle to establish Marine Conservation Philippines back in 2015.

You can't always do it tomorrow

Marine Conservation Philippines emerged 11 years ago from a shared passion beneath the surface.

Søren and Helle had worked as diving instructors in several countries for many years when they began noticing the same patterns again and again.

"When you make your hobby your profession as a diving instructor, you get a very direct understanding of what is happening beneath the surface," Søren explains.

"Diving almost every day for many years, often in the same places, you can't avoid noticing the changes that take place."

Over time, fish began disappearing.

Corals died.

Sharks and turtles became harder to find.

"It doesn't happen overnight, but slowly and almost unnoticed," he says.



“

When you make your hobby your profession as a diving instructor, you get a very direct understanding of what is happening beneath the surface.

”

Eventually, it became difficult for Søren and Helle to simply stand by and watch.

“It was that feeling of losing something valuable that made us want to get involved in a way where we were not just donating to Greenpeace or something else, but actually doing something ourselves.”

At around the same time, they were hit by the loss of a family member.

“That was probably what gave us the final kick in the ass and the courage to get it started. It showed us that you are not always guaranteed a ‘tomorrow’ to do the things you intend to do,” Søren says.

And when they chose Zamboangita, it was not because the area was necessarily more special than so many other places in the Philippines.

“The work we do could honestly be done almost anywhere in the Philippines,” Søren says.

But in Zamboangita, a little outside Dauin, Søren and Helle already knew both the area and the people from their years as diving instructors there.

The sabbatical year that became a life

Somewhere north of Cebu, thresher sharks swim through the deep waters surrounding the small diving island of Malapascua.

This was where Magnus Nielsen arrived in 2010 after two years at business school in Aarhus, Denmark, and a growing need to get away from studying for a while.



Rose Yucor, project manager at Proocean and Lea Roider, country program manager.

He was really only supposed to take his Divemaster certification.

Magnus was 22 years old. He had flown through Gymnasium in Esbjerg in Denmark, taken a gap year, and then started studying business economics in Aarhus. But after two years, the restlessness began to set in.

“I got a bit bored studying,” he says.

On Malapascua, he spent four months completing his diving education with Søren, who was his instructor.

At that point, Søren and Helle had had enough of island life there.

So the three of them packed their bags and travelled together towards Dumaguete and Siquijor – the small “witch island” where stories of shamans and voodoo still live on among many locals.

“To get to Siquijor, we had to pass through Dumaguete,” Magnus explains.

Along the way, they began diving around Apo Island and Dauin.

And something about Dauin stayed with him.

“There were so many fish in different sizes, turtles, and sea snakes,” Magnus says.

He grew up in a small village near Humlebæk and had travelled extensively in Thailand with his parents throughout the 1990s and 2000s. He had seen how tourism gradually changed places year by year.

But Dauin felt different.

Provincial and calm, much like back home in Humlebæk.

Close to nature, yet still near hospitals and Duma-



Part of the volunteer programme also includes lessons about fish species and coral reefs.

guete City.

And most importantly: the reefs were located directly off the coastline.

So when Søren and Helle later moved on, they left without Magnus. Magnus stayed.

In 2012, he opened his own dive centre in Dauin, and over the years he worked more and more closely with Marine Conservation Philippines on coral protection, marine protected areas, and cooperation with local communities.

But 10 years after the organisation was founded, Søren and Helle began thinking about the future.

“You can make a long-distance relationship work, but you cannot be a good leader from the other side of the world,” Søren says. For periods, he had been commuting between Denmark and the Philippines while Helle studied nursing in Copenhagen.

The question therefore became who should take over.

“It says on page one in the book about good leadership that you should be careful about hiring family and friends,” Søren says.

But Magnus had already been part of their lives for more than 15 years.

“Because we have had parallel life experiences and experience with being employers in the Philippines, it became impossible to ignore that he had a very unique set of competences.”

Magnus already knew the area, the authorities, and the fishing communities around Zamboangita. He

speaks Visaya and had, over the years, built a strong local network.

In December 2025, he officially took over the role as Director of Marine Conservation Philippines.

Søren is still involved – but now more from the sidelines.

Not just about coral reefs

Although coral reefs are a major part of the work, Marine Conservation Philippines today is about far more than life underwater.

On the grounds, volunteers rinse diving equipment after the day’s trips, while others sit bent over fish species identification charts or attend lessons about corals and biodiversity.

Along the roads, vehicles constantly move back and forth between different dive sites along the coast, where teams jump into the water to carry out surveys.

Last year alone, the organisation completed 3,351 marine surveys focusing on fish populations, coral substrates, and biodiversity.

The data is later shared with local authorities and other organisations working with marine protection in the region.

“Unfortunately, most things are declining,” Magnus says.



“

When you live here this long, it starts feeling like a responsibility. You should give something back to the country.

”



Helle and Søren shortly after moving to Denmark. “Going from 35 degrees to minus 10 became both a cultural and temperature shock in every possible way.” Private photo

But it quickly becomes clear that the work is not only about fish, corals, and sea turtles.

It is just as much about the people living along the coast.

Many small fishing communities around Negros are directly dependent on the ocean for survival, and according to Magnus, it is impossible to simply close marine areas and ask people to stop fishing overnight.

“You can’t just tell people they’re not allowed to fish when they need food for their families,” he says.

The idea behind many marine protected areas is relatively simple: if certain areas are left untouched by fishing for several years, fish populations can slowly rebuild themselves.

But that takes time.

And it requires that people have other ways of making money in the meantime.

That is one reason why Marine Conservation Philippines is now trying to launch seaweed farming projects together with local fishing associations and authorities.

Seaweed is used for products such as carrageenan – a substance found in products like toothpaste – and global demand is increasing.

According to Magnus, buyers in Cebu are already prepared to purchase the harvests if the projects succeed.

But for him, seaweed itself is not the most important thing.

“The important thing is alternative livelihoods,” he says.

The goal is to create new income opportunities for fishing communities while giving the reefs time to slowly recover.

“We’re trying to create projects that actually make sense for the communities.”

A place where people stay

26-year-old Cecilie Jepsen from Aarhus, Denmark, arrived at Marine Conservation Philippines after several months of solo travel around Southeast Asia and Oceania.

“I wanted to combine travelling with doing something meaningful,” she says.

She found the organisation online while searching for volunteer programmes focused on diving and marine conservation.

On the grounds, volunteers live together among the palm trees, share meals, and learn about coral reefs, fish species, and biodiversity.

While volunteers jump into the ocean to conduct surveys, other parts of the organisation work along the coastlines of Negros.

Among them is the collaboration with the organisation ProOcean.

“Our founder had travelled a lot in the Philippines before COVID and saw how serious the plastic pollution was,” says ProOcean country programme manager Lea Roider.



A team of employees and volunteers returning from assignments in the ocean.

“We were looking for a trusted local partner, and that’s how we got to know Søren.”

Today, cleanup teams work along the coastlines between Dumaguete and Santa Catalina, where plastic, fishing nets, and other waste are collected, sorted, and registered.

Some of the plastic is separated according to companies and packaging types before the data is later shared with authorities and used for research and environmental reports.

“Education and cleanups always go hand in hand,” Lea says.

At the same time, staff visit local schools to teach children about waste, plastic pollution, and the marine environment.

According to ProOcean, the education programmes reached nearly 7,000 children last year.

Giving something back

Magnus still runs his own dive centre alongside his work as head of Marine Conservation Philippines.

Today, the Philippines is also where his family life is rooted. His wife is Filipino, and the couple have children together.

After many years in Dauin, Magnus has also become a well-established part of the marine protection networks on Negros.

He speaks Visaya, attends meetings with local authorities and fishing communities, and over the years has

built a large local network across the island.

“When you live here this long, it starts feeling like a responsibility,” he says.

“You should give something back to the country.”

For Søren, the future is now about ensuring the organisation continues under someone who already understands both the Philippines and the work behind Marine Conservation Philippines.

And Søren continues to follow the organisation from Denmark, even though the baton has now been passed on.

“It has become bigger and wilder than we dared imagine in the beginning,” he says.

Today, the organisation consists of around 50 employees, international volunteers, scientific surveys, beach cleanups, educational programmes, and projects aimed at creating alternatives to fishing for coastal communities.

And beneath the waters around Zamboanguita, the reefs are still slowly fighting their way back.



Lukas Engström first arrived in Taiwan in 2010.
Photo Lukas Engström.

How making Youtube videos made Lukas fall in love with Taiwan

By Alexander Vittrup

When Lukas Engström first arrived in Taiwan back in 2010, it was only supposed to be for a semester. He had not chosen Taiwan himself; that decision had been made by his home university. Six months to study accounting, and then back to Sweden. That is, however, not how things turned out. Today, Lukas lives in downtown Taipei, where he runs a successful YouTube channel showcasing foreigners in Taiwan.

Initially, Taiwan brought nothing but disappointment. For a young man who grew up in the Swedish forest, the vision of a tropical Asian island nation was instead met by cold, grey cement buildings.

"It was not until I started university and was assigned a mentor to welcome me and show me around that I started to think maybe Taiwan was not so bad," Lukas remembers.



Lukas Engström is a Swedish YouTuber living in Taipei, who makes videos showcasing foreigners living in Taiwan.

“

I thought I had seen everything there was to see in Taiwan, but every day people would recommend places I had never even heard of.

”

The semester went by, and Lukas got a Taiwanese girlfriend who convinced him to move back to Taiwan after graduating in Sweden. Before he knew it, seven years had gone by, and life in Taipei had reached its breaking point. Lukas wanted to go home, so he booked a flight back to Sweden. However, by that point, Lukas had become something of a wise old man in the expat community.

An old man among newcomers

“Back then, the only foreigners coming here were exchange students. Every semester, I met a new group of friends, and every semester, I was asked the exact same questions. How do I take the bus? Where is the best place to eat?” Lukas says.

“I decided that now that I was moving back to Sweden, it would be a shame if all the knowledge I had gathered went to waste. So I started filming my everyday life and uploading the videos to YouTube to help other foreigners navigate life in Taiwan.”

Weeks went by, and Lukas kept uploading videos, putting a lot of thought into them. A big shock came after three weeks when a friend made him aware that one video had pulled in a massive number of views.

“I couldn’t believe it,” Lukas remembers. “So many people had watched that video. And most of them were Taiwanese people who were fascinated by how a foreigner lived in their country. They were recommending things for me to do and try out.”



Lukas Engström with his YouTube Silver Creator Award, received in 2021 after his channel surpassed 100,000 subscribers.



Lukas interviewing Finnish Representative in Taiwan, Lauri Raunio, as part of his collaborations with the European Trade Offices.
Photo Lukas Engström.

“
*My life is like a summer
camp. I get to travel
around and have
amazing experiences
and say that it
is my job.*
”

The recommendations piqued Lukas' curiosity, and he decided to check some of them out.

“It was crazy. I thought I had seen everything there was to see in Taiwan, but every day people would recommend places I had never even heard of.”

A whole new world

With all the new recommendations and the views piling up, Lukas made the decision to postpone the move and reschedule his flight ticket, though only for a year.

“It was like peeling back the layers of an onion. People were telling me to go to Wulai. I had been to the food market there before and didn't think much of it. However, it turns out that if you walk five minutes further down the street, you get to a tiny train station where the train will take you up the mountains to the most amazing waterfall I had ever seen. It was a whole new world that opened up for me,” he says.

After travelling all over Taiwan for a year and vlogging, Lukas once again decided to postpone the move back to Sweden, this time for another year. That year turned into two, and eventually he decided to cancel the move completely.



Lukas vlogging his visit to Wulei waterfall. Photo Lukas Engström.



Lukas is enjoying his life in Taiwan. Photo Taiwan Panorama.



Lukas's favorite place in Taiwan is Teapot Mountain, located in New Taipei's Ruifang District.

YouTube success

Lukas' YouTube journey has been a great success. He has made more than 665 videos, some of which have reached over one million views. He has built a large audience, mostly Taiwanese viewers, who tune in to see how foreigners experience their island. His large following has also caught the attention of high-profile figures.

Beyond travelling around Taiwan, Lukas also makes videos where he invites foreigners from all over the world who live in Taiwan to his home studio and talks with them about their experiences.

One day, he received an email from the Swedish Trade Office in Taipei. They had noticed his YouTube channel and wanted him to do a sit-down interview with the head of the trade office.

"I couldn't believe it. I was just a nobody travelling around with a camera. And here were legitimately important people, and they wanted to work with me. I was so nervous when I went to do that video," Lukas remembers.

Life is a summer camp

Although it all started with him wanting to leave Taiwan, Lukas is happy he stayed.

"My life is like a summer camp. I get to travel around and have amazing experiences and say that it is my job. It's incredible."

Lukas has also seen the impact his videos and practical tutorials for foreigners in Taiwan have had on his audience.

"Sometimes foreigners will come up to me on the street and tell me how one video I made taught them how to do certain things here, like getting a scooter licence, or maybe introduced them to a really cool location."

Like the mentor from his first day as an exchange student, Lukas now gets to introduce people to Taiwan and share his joy for the island with newcomers.

"I am incredibly grateful. I have settled my life in Taiwan, and I am happy to bring my viewers along on my journey here."

Despite his nerves, the video was successful, and Lukas later signed a partnership with the EU. Since then, he has interviewed the leaders of several European trade offices in Taipei.



Finnish Ambassador to China, Mikko Kinnunen, says dialogue with China remains important for Finland despite difficult discussions surrounding Russia's war in Ukraine. Photo: Freja Nanna Mogensen / ScandAsia

Inside Finland's Delicate Balancing Act with China

Finnish ambassador to China Mikko Kinnunen still sees value in talks with China despite Russia tensions – even if concrete results remain limited.

By Freja Nanna Mogensen

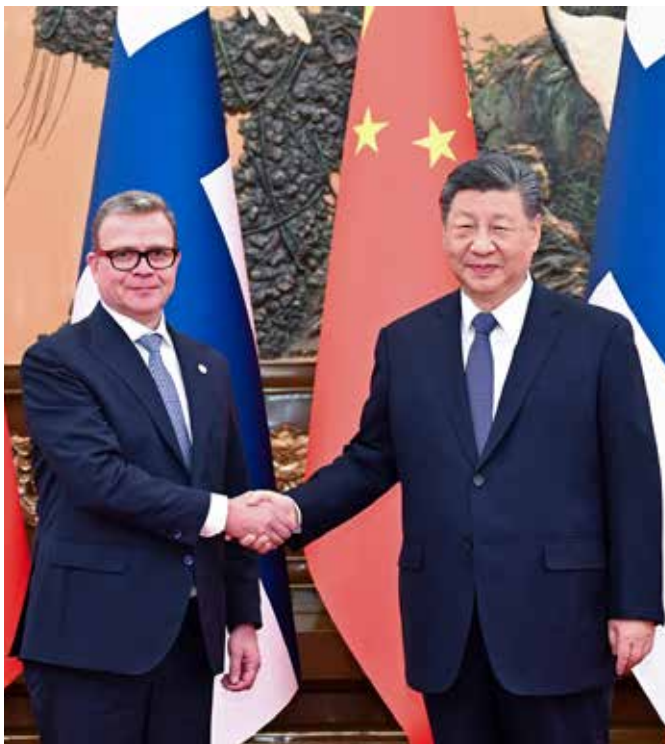
When Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo travelled to Beijing earlier this year, the trip was officially described as “fruitful”. But several months later, the results remain difficult to measure. Still, Finland's ambassador to China, Mikko Kinnunen, insists the meetings mattered. During the January visit, Prime Minister Petteri Orpo held talks with both Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang in Beijing.

“Meeting with Chinese officials or the Chinese leadership gives us the possibility to influence, or try to influence, the things that are important. Managing a relationship and achieving results is a long process,” Kinnunen told ScandAsia.

At the top of Finland's agenda was Russia's illegal war in Ukraine. According to Kinnunen, China's perceived

support for Russia's war remains “the most problematic issue in Finnish-Chinese relations”. The comments came shortly after Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen warned that China's relationship with Russia could make future trade agreements between the EU and China more difficult. Despite this, Kinnunen does not believe isolating China is realistic.

According to the ambassador, meetings between top political leaders carry particular importance in China, where high-level political relations play a bigger role than in many European countries. Finland therefore still sees value in maintaining direct contact with China's leadership, even as relations between Europe and China become increasingly strained over trade, security and Russia's war in Ukraine. “It is important to have solid, functioning rela-



Finnish Prime Minister Petteri Orpo met with Chinese President Xi Jinping during Orpo's official visit to Beijing in January 2026

tions so that you have a possibility to engage," Kinnunen said. Maintaining direct dialogue with Beijing gives Finland an opportunity to raise concerns directly about Russia, trade disputes and broader political tensions.

Carefully Choreographed Meetings

According to Kinnunen, almost everything surrounding official meetings with China's leadership is planned down to the smallest detail. "There should be no surprises," he said when describing how high-level visits are organised in Beijing. Kinnunen explained that preparations begin long before the meeting itself. "China is a big country, and the protocol is very exact. Everything is pretty planned," he said.

For high-level visits, leaders are often welcomed with formal ceremonies and military honour guards at Beijing's Great Hall of the People. When a prime minister visits China, the formal host is usually China's premier – currently Li Qiang – even if the visiting leader also meets President Xi Jinping. Inside, the meetings take place in enormous halls with long tables separating the Chinese delegation from the visiting delegation. "Big country, big rooms," Kinnunen said, explaining that the Chinese delegation sits on one side of the long table while the Finnish delegation sits opposite.

According to him, the first few minutes are carefully staged for cameras and journalists. "The press is present for about the first five minutes," he explained. During this public part of the meeting, both sides usually make polite statements about the relationship between their countries. "Basically you would say positive things. Also,

“
Meeting with Chinese officials or the Chinese leadership gives us the possibility to influence the things that are important.
”

at this point, there is a possibility to name two or three of the most important topics on your agenda," Kinnunen said. "And this is regardless of the country."

Behind Closed Doors

Once journalists leave the room, the real discussions begin. According to Kinnunen, this is where countries can raise more sensitive issues directly with China's leadership. For Finland, topics such as Russia's war in Ukraine and trade relations are among the issues discussed during high-level meetings like these. Kinnunen said Finland still considers face-to-face meetings important because they give countries an opportunity to directly raise political and economic concerns with China's leadership.

Still, despite the growing tensions surrounding Russia and broader EU-China relations, the January visit also resulted in several new agreements between Finland and China. During the visit, Finland and China signed six agreements covering areas including sustainable building and green energy. A further 11 agreements were signed between Finnish and Chinese companies. But many of the deals were Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) – broad cooperation agreements rather than concrete investments or projects.

"These agreements build a framework for cooperation, and then it is the companies that would benefit from this framework," Kinnunen said. Asked whether the January visit had created better opportunities for Finnish businesses in China, Kinnunen replied:

"At least the opportunities did not worsen."

Danes Worldwide speaks out on pension supplements: “It is a matter of discrimination”

By Alexander Vittrup

In January 2025, it was estimated that 47,000 Danish retirees were living outside Denmark. Most of them were living within Europe, but many were living outside the EU, in countries like Thailand.

However, those two groups are treated very differently. Danish retirees who decide to settle outside the EU lose access to pension supplements, and that is a clear case of discrimination, according to the Secretary General of Danes Worldwide, Michael Bach Petersen.

Only the basics

To many Danes, the idea of retiring in a warm southern country like Thailand can be appealing: to live out the rest of your days in a tropical paradise, where the climate is warmer and the lifestyle cheaper.

But even if things are cheaper in Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia, retirees must still be prepared to budget. When a Danish retiree moves outside the EU, they lose access to pension supplements, leaving them with only the basic amount of the state pension: 7,544 DKK before tax. For many, this is not enough to make the dream of spending their golden years comfortably in the tropics come true.

A problem for danes worldwide

One loud voice for change on this issue is Danes Worldwide, the organisation for Danish expats. Ensuring that Danish retirees receive equal pension benefits regardless of where in the world they live is one of the organisation's focus areas.

“It is a matter of principle,” Secretary General Michael Bach Petersen explains. “This is an obvious case of discrimination that should be fixed.”

“When two people dedicate their whole lives to the Danish workforce, each of them has earned the exact same right to a state pension. It should not matter if one decides to stay in Denmark and the other moves to, for instance, Thailand. They have earned the same rights and should be given the same pension supplement,” Michael Bach Petersen says.



Michael Bach Petersen,
the Secretary General of Danes Worldwide

A matter of principle

Independent activists fighting to make pension supplements equally accessible for all Danish retirees offer a long list of arguments for their case. Some arguments deal with finances, economic benefits, or quality of life.

However, to Danes Worldwide, this is a matter of principle.

“I think it is good that activists are highlighting those factors, and I believe it would be interesting for politicians and lawmakers to delve into them,” Michael Bach Petersen says. “Danes Worldwide acknowledges those arguments. However, our focus is on rights. To us, this is a matter of principle. It is discrimination. It is an inequality that should be corrected.”

Making things right

Danes Worldwide advocates for the rights of Danish people living abroad. Michael Bach Petersen works in close dialogue with politicians, civil servants, and the press, not just on equal pensions, but on a wide range of other topics as well.



I think it is good that activists are highlighting those factors, and I believe it would be interesting for politicians and lawmakers to delve into them



“We work hard for our members and our goals,” Michael Bach Petersen says.

Danes Worldwide has been instrumental in many political decisions concerning the rights of Danish people living abroad, as well as long-term Danish expats who have returned to Denmark.

The organisation has a long history of taking part in debates and responding to legislation that can affect Danish expats.

“We are not shy about entering debates and making our opinion heard,” Michael Bach Petersen says. “Sometimes we are the only ones speaking up, so it is important to us to speak on behalf of our members.”

Unaware politicians

According to Michael Bach Petersen, one of the biggest obstacles in the fight against unequal access to pension supplements is a general lack of awareness among politicians and lawmakers.

“I have met many politicians to whom it comes as a surprise that when retirees settle outside the EU,

they lose access to pension supplements,” Michael Bach Petersen explains. “Often, it is simply not something lawmakers think about.”

“That is why we work so hard on this. We need to spread awareness of the problem before we can solve it,” Michael Bach Petersen makes clear.

One way in which Danes Worldwide spreads awareness of its main focus areas is through activities and events focused on highlighting the challenges faced by Danes living abroad.

In 2024, Danes Worldwide hosted the event “The Global Danes’ Parliament”, where politicians and members from all around the world were invited to engage in debates on different issues. That year, debates focused on issues such as voting rights and citizenship rules, and the event led to real-life legislative change.

Another Global Danes’ Parliament event is coming up in August 2026, where it is anticipated that the debate on equal access to pension supplements will receive significant attention.

27 years together, now the pension rules force Ole to leave his wife behind

By Alexander Vittrup

Calm waves brush against the white sands of Hua Hin beach as Ole Hjørnelund Jensen sips his Singha beer under the shade of palm trees. A silver Buddha hangs on a chain around his neck, a gift from his wife, Gao, when they first came to Thailand. He has been wearing it for 27 years. This is their home. But dark clouds linger on Ole's horizon. In April this year, he had to leave her behind in Thailand while returning alone to Denmark.

Love in Aalborg

Ole met Gao at a friend's house one afternoon in Aalborg. Gao was visiting her sister, who was married to Ole's friend, and was staying with the pair when Ole stopped by for coffee.

"I almost wanna say it was love at first sight," Ole laughs. "She was the most beautiful woman I had ever laid eyes on, and she's only gotten more beautiful since."

Gao was on a tourist visa and was only permitted to stay in Denmark for a short while, but the two of them fell in love, and on 3 April 1999, they got married at Aalborg City Hall.

"It might have happened fast, but it is the best decision I have ever made," Ole says with a smile.

A man of the world

The couple lived in Aalborg, but the plan was always to move to Thailand when they grew old together.

Ole is a worldly man. He has worked as a carpenter his whole life. He has travelled across Greenland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland, and the Baltics to teach carpentry techniques. Being a carpenter is hard work, but Ole loved it.

He worked in Italy placing wooden floors on cruise ships.

"Being a carpenter can be exhausting," Ole remembers. "We would carry big rolls of lumber up ladders to where they needed to go. Sometimes they weighed upwards of 90 kilos, and no machine could get them up there, but I could."

Decades of hard work have left their mark on Ole. His knees ache and his back is in pain.

When Ole finally retired, he and Gao packed their



Ole Hjørnelund Jensen is a Danish retiree living in Hua Hin with his wife, Gao. Photo - Ole Hjørnelund Jensen. Photo: Ole Hjørnelund Jensen.

belongings and headed south to live out their lives together, but the rules surrounding Danish retirees are making things challenging.

Retirement in paradise

After staying with Gao's family in Songkhla, the couple moved to Hua Hin in 2016, where they decided to settle down.

"Hua Hin is amazing. It has everything we could ever want and need," Ole says.

Ole spends his days on the beach or going for walks, exploring every alley and side street in Hua Hin, often with Gao by his side. The couple support and take care of each other.

"I have taught her to swim," Ole laughs. "We live by the beach, so I thought she had to learn. She cooks me Danish food when I miss it. I am her chauffeur since she doesn't like to drive."



Ole and Gao are members of a Huahin kareoke group. Besides singing the group also hosts fundraisers for schools and social outreach projects in Huahin.



Ole has travelled a lot during his career as a carpenter. Today he and Gao likes to take short trips around Thailand and neighbouring countries, often to visit family members.

And then there is the couple's favourite activity: karaoke.

"We love it," Ole laughs. "We have become members of a big karaoke group here in Hua Hin. We meet once a week and sing. That's where we have all our friends."

Despite not fully speaking the language, Ole sings in Thai. He has memorised the tones and sounds, and it makes Gao happy.

The karaoke group has become a community. It includes the mayor and the chief of police in Hua Hin. The group often uses its influence to raise money for schools and hospitals in Hua Hin, something Ole thinks is important.

But even if they wanted to, the couple cannot spend their retirement full-time in Hua Hin.

“

Thailand is my home. My wife's family has become my family. But the Danish pension rules leave me no choice.

”

Held back by Denmark

According to the rules, Danish retirees living outside the EU full-time are not eligible to receive pension supplements. Therefore, Ole and Gao have been travelling back and forth between Thailand and Denmark every six months since they retired. That way, Ole remains eligible to receive the pension supplements that the couple need to stay afloat.

But this year is different. Ole had to make the journey on his own.

"Gao is 73 now. She can't travel that far for so long. This year it was only me going to Denmark. It is the first time in 27 years we have spent more than a week apart," Ole sighs.

Ole is now spending the summer in Denmark, something he had not been looking forward to. The cold makes his back pain worse. Being in Denmark means a constant, painful reminder of his long working life. But the pain is not just physical. He misses Gao.

"Thailand and Gao will always be on my mind," Ole says. "I am worried about leaving her. I know she is bothered – she has been quieter than usual recently. Luckily, she has a niece in Hua Hin who will check on her, and I have a Danish friend not far from our house, but I am worried she will be lonely."

Many Danish retirees living in Thailand decide to break the law and remain in Thailand while registering with an address in Denmark to continue receiving the pension supplements. But to Ole, this is not an option.

"I understand the people who do it, but it wouldn't sit right with me. I will not knowingly break the rules like that," he explains. "But it is hard. Thailand is my home. My wife's family has become my family. I will be alone in Denmark. I will be lonely, Gao will be lonely. But the Danish pension rules leave me no choice."

First you hit the mental wall, then the Great Wall: Danes behind one of the toughest marathons



The Huangyaguan section of the Great Wall outside Beijing hosts one of the world's toughest marathons.
Photo: Albatros Adventure

At around 34 kilometres, marathon runners normally “hit the wall”—the moment where the body begins to shut down and every step feels heavier than the last.

By Freja Nanna Mogensen

At the Great Wall Marathon in China, that is also exactly where runners are forced back onto the steep stone steps of the Great Wall itself.

“It’s where runners hit the mental wall, and then immediately face a physical wall too,” said Lars Fyhr, Race and Event Director at Danish travel company Albatros Adventure.

One of the world’s toughest marathons

On May 16, nearly 1,300 runners from over 50 countries took to the brutal course outside Beijing, including a strong contingent of Nordic participants from Denmark,

Norway, Sweden, and Finland.

The marathon, first launched by Albatros in 1999, has become internationally known for its punishing route across thousands of uneven stone steps on the Huangyaguan section of the Great Wall. According to a 2026 ranking by *Runner’s World*, the race is officially considered the world’s second toughest marathon – beaten only by the Everest Marathon in Nepal.

Participants range across all generations, from young children running the Fun Run with their parents to participants well into their late 70s tackling the shorter distances.

“

This is not a race where people chase personal records. Most want the full experience and run sensibly.

”

— *Lars Fyhr,*
Race and Event Director

The restored Jinshanling section of the Great Wall stretches through the mountains northeast of Beijing. The wall was built across several dynasties over more than 2,000 years. Photo: Freja Nanna Mogensen



Few runners quit

The race takes runners across 5,164 steps of varying height and depth, often under intense heat. While few runners actually give up, medical teams regularly treat dehydration and injuries during the event.

“Our doctors usually have to put several dehydrated runners on IV drips, and falls and scrapes are also quite common,” Lars Fyhr added.

Chinese Blue Sky Rescue teams are stationed along the wall and stand ready to carry exhausted runners down if they are unable to continue.

“This is not a race where people chase personal records. Most want the full experience and run sensibly,” he explained.

Started as a one-time event

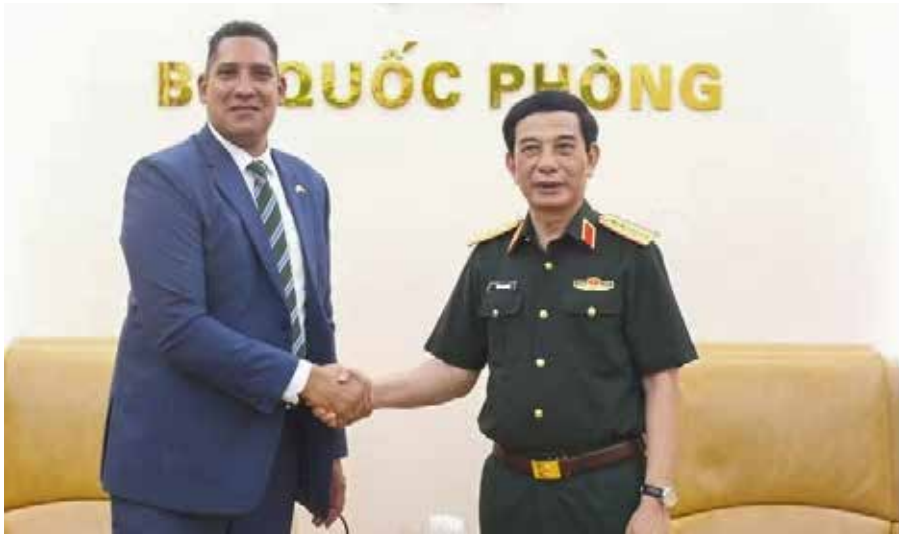
The marathon was originally created as a one-time stunt to promote China travel to Danes. Albatros founder Søren Rasmussen travelled to China in the late 1990s searching for a spectacular location and eventually chose Huangyaguan as the ideal marathon route.

Around 400 Danish runners travelled to China for the first race in 1999, with Danes making up around 95 percent of participants.

“The high number of runners made Søren realise there was probably more to it than just a one-time event, and we have organised it every year since – only interrupted by SARS in 2003 and Covid-19 between 2020 and 2023,” Lars Fyhr said.

Today, the event attracts a diverse, international crowd from all corners of the globe, though its unique Nordic roots remain a proud part of its legacy.

Vietnam wants closer defence ties with Sweden



Vietnam is seeking to strengthen defence cooperation with Sweden following high-level talks in Hanoi on May 12.

During the meeting, Vietnam's Deputy Prime Minister and Defence

Minister Phan Van Giang told Swedish Ambassador Johan Ndisi that Sweden is considered one of Vietnam's most important partners in Northern Europe.

Phan Van Giang highlighted

defence industry cooperation and telecommunications technology as key areas where the two countries are already working together, but stressed that the potential for even closer collaboration remains "substantial".

Vietnam is hoping to expand cooperation through military training, high-level exchanges, and a formal defence agreement between the two countries.

Swedish defence leaders and companies have also been invited to attend the Vietnam Defence Expo in December, where international firms will showcase military technology and equipment.

Sweden and Vietnam elevated their relationship to a Strategic Partnership in science, technology, and innovation in 2025.

Asian students in Finland face stricter residency rules under new bill

International students from outside the EU and EEA could face stricter residency requirements in Finland under a proposed new bill.

The proposal would allow authorities to revoke a student's residence permit if the person receives basic social assistance from Finland's welfare system. Under current rules, such cases are assessed individually and do not automatically lead to permit cancellation.

The Finnish government said the proposal is intended to ensure that students remain financially independent throughout their stay in the country. International students are already required to prove they can support themselves financially when



applying for study permits.

Government data showed that out of more than 37,000 monitored student permits between 2023 and 2025, only 333 involved applications for basic social assistance, and none resulted in cancellations under the existing system.

The proposal forms part of a

broader tightening of immigration policies in Finland. Additional measures under preparation reportedly include stricter financial requirements, possible language requirements, and a waiting period before students can bring family members to the country.

Several other countries, including Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, and Australia, have also recently tightened rules for international students.

For years, Finland has been regarded as a relatively affordable study destination compared with many other Western countries, though that perception may now be changing.

Danish pensioner returns to China's Great Wall Marathon for the 23rd time

At an age when many people slow down, Danish runner Henrik Brandt continues climbing the Great Wall of China.

The 67-year-old Dane recently took part in the Great Wall Marathon for the 23rd time, making him the only runner to have completed every edition of the race since it began in 1999, according to the South China Morning Post.

Held on the Huangyaguan section of the Great Wall near Beijing, the marathon is considered one of the toughest in the world. Runners must battle more than 5,000 stone steps and steep climbs, with some sections so difficult participants have to use their hands to get up.

Brandt first joined the race more than two decades ago and has returned ever since.

"Because it was here that I finished my first marathon, I fell in love

with it and decided to come back," he said after last year's race. He has also said he hopes to continue returning well into his 70s.

More than 2,000 runners from 61 countries and regions took part in this year's event, which included a full marathon, a half marathon, and a shorter fun run along parts of the wall.

The race has become famous not only for its dramatic setting but also for its high cost. Entry fees are significantly higher than for most other marathons in China, leading some runners on Chinese social media to complain that the event is simply too expensive.

Still, the marathon continues to attract runners from around the world, many drawn by the chance to race on one of China's most iconic landmarks.



Nordisk opens first store in China



Danish outdoor company Nordisk Company A/S has opened its first retail store in China, marking a new step in its expansion into the Asian market.

The store opened on 17 April in Grand Gateway 66, Shanghai. The launch reflects the company's focus on tapping into growing demand for outdoor lifestyle products in China.

Nordisk plans to expand further, with ambitions to establish more than 100 stores across the country. The brand aims to bring Danish-designed outdoor products,

including apparel, footwear and gear, to Chinese consumers.

Founded 125 years ago, Nordisk emphasises Danish design traditions and its concept of "hygge" as part of its brand identity. The company said the China expansion is part of a long-term commitment to the market.

Nokia wins UK appeal in patent dispute with Taiwan's Acer and Asus



Finnish telecom company Nokia has won a UK court appeal in a patent dispute involving Taiwanese tech firms Acer and ASUS.

The ruling by the UK Court of Appeal blocks lawsuits filed in London by Acer and ASUS over video coding technology patents. The decision also means a planned trial in June and July will no longer take place.

The Taiwanese companies had argued that Nokia should provide an interim patent licence while the court determined fair licensing terms. However, the appeal court ruled that Nokia had already of-

fered licences on fair and reasonable terms through arbitration.

The case is part of a wider global dispute over so-called FRAND licensing terms, which are commonly used in the telecom industry for standard-essential patents. Similar legal battles have taken place in courts across Europe, China and the United States.

Before the London lawsuits were filed in 2025, Nokia had already launched related cases in the United States, Brazil, Germany and India. Chinese electronics company Hisense had also sued Nokia but settled before the appeal hearing.

Finnish Metso selected for Cambodian gold project

Finnish mining technology company Metso has secured orders worth more than €10 million to supply grinding mills for two gold projects in Australia and Cambodia.

The orders come from Australian mining company Emerald Resources and cover the Dingo Range Gold Project in Western Australia and the Memot Gold Project in Cambodia.

Metso said it will deliver large horizontal grinding mills designed for demanding gold processing operations. The deliveries also include the company's Polymer Hydrostatic Shoe Bearing system and wear lining solutions.

Emerald Resources managing director Morgan Hart said securing the equipment was an important step toward advancing both projects into production. He added that



the investments support Emerald's goal of becoming a multi-mine gold producer operating across two continents.

David Tulloch, Vice President for Minerals Asia Pacific at Metso, said the Finnish company was pleased to continue its partnership with Emer-

ald and support both the Australian and Cambodian gold projects.

Metso is headquartered in Espoo and employs close to 18,000 people globally. The company specialises in technologies and services for the mining and minerals processing industries.

Bangkok hosts Thai-Norwegian graffiti collaboration

A cross-cultural street art collaboration between Thai artist MUEBON and Norwegian stencil artist Martin Watson was recently showcased in Bangkok through the exhibition Night and Day.

The exhibition brought together two distinct artistic styles shaped by more than 20 years of friendship and creative exchange.

MUEBON's playful cartoon-inspired figures were displayed alongside Watson's layered stencil works, known for combining monochrome imagery with bursts of graffiti colour. Together, the artists explored contrasts between light and dark, chaos and calm.

The project was developed

through a long-distance collaboration between Thailand and Norway, with artworks exchanged and completed across both countries before being assembled in Bangkok.

According to Watson, Thailand provided an ideal setting for large-scale experimental installations, which are more difficult to realise in Norway due to higher costs and logistical challenges.

MUEBON is widely known for his signature black bird character, often used to reflect social themes through humour and satire, while Watson has built an international reputation for blending graffiti influences with structured stencil techniques.



Norwegian HydrogenPro restructures global operations and closes China plant

A Norwegian hydrogen equipment maker is reshaping its global production strategy as the hydrogen sector faces delays and growing financial pressure.

HydrogenPro will close its own

manufacturing facility in China and shift production to Chinese partner Longi under a new Original Equipment Manufacturer agreement, giving it access to larger and more automated production capacity.

The company says the move will reduce costs and improve efficiency, as it scales back underused capacity and seeks more flexible manufacturing arrangements.

The restructuring also includes salary freezes, layoffs and cuts in operating expenses, reflecting weaker order intake and delayed investment decisions in hydrogen projects globally.

HydrogenPro says the changes are part of a broader effort to secure financing and adapt to an increasingly competitive market dominated by large international and Chinese players.



Relief at Danish Seamen's Church in Hong Kong as permanent priest may soon be found



The Danish Seamen's Church in Hong Kong has received temporary help after Charlotte Capi Grunnet returned to Denmark.

For the past six months, she has been on leave from her position as university chaplain in Frederiks-

berg to serve at the church in Hong Kong.

As her leave could not be extended, and no applicants initially applied for the position, the church suddenly faced a difficult situation.

This has now been temporarily solved by former seamen's priest

and parish priest Frank Bjørn Christensen, who has travelled to Hong Kong together with his wife, Thilde. He will take care of the church for the next three months.

The position has since been reposted, and the church has now received six applications. That means there is now light at the end of the tunnel, and hopes are high that the church will soon be able to appoint a permanent priest.

In the meantime, the church continues its regular activities, including church services, playgroups, Danish language lessons, and ship visits. Assistant Karoline Skovbæk will remain in Hong Kong until the end of July.

Saxo launches premium trading service in Singapore

Danish trading platform Saxo has launched a new premium service tier in Singapore targeting accredited investors and active traders.

The new service, called Saxo Elite, offers clients a personal relationship manager, direct access to Saxo's trading desk and strategists, and pricing linked to trading activity. The company said the service is designed for higher-end clients trading at larger scale.

According to Saxo Singapore CEO Mahesh Sethuraman, Singapore is one of the company's most active and sophisticated markets in Asia-Pacific. The launch comes as competition intensifies among brokers targeting wealthy investors in



the city-state.

Singapore has become Saxo's operational hub in Asia-Pacific after the Danish broker closed its Hong Kong and Shanghai offices in 2024. Since then, the company has expanded its Singapore offerings with

products including fractional shares and standalone margin accounts.

At group level, Saxo reported a net profit of 73 million euros in the first half of 2025, while client assets reached a record 118 billion euros across 1.4 million clients globally.

TUI to open first The Mora hotel in Asia with Singapore launch

TUI Hotels & Resorts will open its first The Mora hotel in Asia in Singapore in September 2026. The move marks the brand's entry into the region as part of its global expansion.

The new hotel, The Mora Singapore, will be located in Labrador Nature Reserve. The property will feature 20 rooms and suites, along with a pool, indoor jacuzzi, restaurants and lounge facilities.

According to CEO Artur Gerber, Singapore was chosen for its role as a major regional travel hub. The hotel is designed to offer a quieter setting within close distance of the city centre.

The Mora brand focuses on what TUI describes as "laid-back luxury", targeting travellers seek-



ing flexible and experience-driven stays. Activities in Singapore will be offered through the TUI Musement app, including guided tours and cruises.

Following the Singapore launch, TUI plans to expand further in Southeast Asia. A second project, The Mora Munduk, is currently under development in Bali, Indonesia.

Swedish firm secures huge U.S. fashion deal: Factory is planned to open in Vietnam

Swedish recycling company Syre has signed a deal with U.S. retail giant Target to supply recycled polyester for clothing and textiles.

According to the company,

Syre will deliver 70,000 tons of recycled polyester to Target by 2030.

The agreement makes Target the third major customer for the Stockholm-based company after earlier deals with H&M and Nike.

The agreement makes Target the third major customer for the Stockholm-based company after earlier deals with H&M and Nike.

The material will come from old textiles and clothing and will be produced at Syre's planned recycling factory in Gia Lai in Vietnam.

Syre says about half of the future factory's production capacity has already been sold through agreements with customers.

The factory is expected to open by the end of 2029.

Syre was founded in 2024 and is backed by H&M and investment firms Vargas Holding and TPG Rise Climate.



Hong Kong seeks Finnish healthtech partnerships

Hong Kong is looking to strengthen cooperation with Finland in life and health technology innovation. The initiative was highlighted during a forum in Helsinki on May 13 organised by Healthtech Finland and the Finland Chamber of Commerce.

Speaking at the event, Hong Kong Secretary for Innovation, Technology and Industry Sun Dong said Finland's strengths in digital health, medical engineering, and human-centric innovation make it a natural partner for Hong Kong's expanding innovation sector.

Professor Sun highlighted Hong Kong's growing investment in health technology, including the InnoHK research clusters, which involve more than 30 universities and research institutes from 12 economies. Sixteen of the research centres



focus on health technologies such as AI-assisted diagnostics, regenerative medicine, and biomedical robotics.

Hong Kong is also developing the Hetao Shenzhen-Hong Kong Science and Technology Innovation Co-operation Zone and the San Tin Technopole to support research, manufacturing, and com-

mercialisation in the health-tech sector. According to Professor Sun, the projects aim to connect Hong Kong's research strengths with the wider Chinese market, including the Greater Bay Area.

The Hong Kong government has introduced several funding schemes to attract international talent and investment. These include a HK\$3 billion research support scheme and a HK\$10 billion industry-oriented innovation fund targeting strategic sectors, including life and health technology.

Professor Sun said Hong Kong welcomes Finnish and Nordic companies looking to expand into Asia through research partnerships, clinical trials, and commercial cooperation. He also participated in a similar event in Sweden the previous day.

Sweden joins major Philippine infrastructure push

Sweden is expanding its involvement in the Philippines through new investments, grants, and infrastructure cooperation linked to the Luzon Economic Corridor (LEC).

In May, Sweden joined the expanded LEC partnership together with Australia, Denmark, France, Italy, South Korea, and the United Kingdom.

The corridor initiative was launched in 2024 by the Philippines, the United States, and Japan to improve transport, logistics, energy, and digital infrastructure across the Subic-Clark-Manila-Batangas growth area.



Speaking during an LEC reception in Makati, the Embassy of Sweden in Manila said Sweden sees its participation as only the beginning.

Sweden has committed a

74-million-peso grant through state-owned development financier Swedfund. The funding will support feasibility studies for signalling systems and operations linked to a planned freight railway connecting Subic, Clark, Manila, and Batangas.

According to the embassy, Sweden is also exploring future cooperation in energy efficiency, public transportation, grid development, connectivity, and responsible mining technologies.

Around 40 to 50 Swedish companies are already operating in the Philippines, and Swedish officials said many remain interested in expanding further in the country.

Royal Danish Embassy publishes 'Nature Plan for the Royal Danish Embassy in Thailand'

The Royal Danish Embassy in Thailand recently celebrated the launch of the publication *Nature Plan for the Royal Danish Embassy* in Thailand during a small event at the embassy in Bangkok.

The book was produced by Scandinavian Publishing Co., Ltd. in cooperation with the embassy.

The publication presents the embassy's efforts to document and protect biodiversity within the embassy compound, highlighting plant and animal species found in the embassy garden and explaining the environmental thinking behind the initiative.

Among those attending the launch were the book's two main



authors, Martin Schneekloth and Tobias Nuppenau Lentz.

The publication reflects the embassy's growing focus on sustain-

ability, biodiversity, and circular economy principles as part of Denmark's broader environmental engagement in Thailand.

Chinese pianist receives new music award in Copenhagen



Thunderous applause filled the Tivoli Concert Hall as Chinese piano star Lang Lang received the first-ever Daphne Music Award in Copenhagen on May 14.

The new international award was created by the Danish Research Foundation to honour artists who combine musical excellence with efforts to make classical music accessible to wider audiences.

Speaking ahead of the ceremony, Lang Lang said he was proud to receive the award in Denmark.

"It is very meaningful for me to come back to Denmark, meet local audiences and musicians, and exchange ideas through music," he said.

During the gala concert, Lang Lang performed together with the Tivoli Copenhagen Philharmonic. It marked his first performance in Denmark in 11 years.

China's ambassador to Denmark, Wang Xuefeng, described the event as an important moment for cultural ties between the two countries.

"Through his poetic and infectious performances, he brings together Eastern melodies and Western musical traditions," the ambassador said.

Lang Lang also highlighted how music can unite people across cultures.

"Music can help remove barriers of race, culture and even ideology," he said.

Swedish House Mafia confirmed for first Tomorrowland Thailand



Swedish electronic music trio Swedish House Mafia has been confirmed as one of the first headline acts for Tomorrowland Thailand 2026.

It will be the first time Axwell, Steve Angello and Sebastian Ingrosso perform together as Swedish House Mafia in Thailand.

The announcement was re-

portedly confirmed by Axwell during an appearance on One World Radio following his set at Tomorrowland Winter.

The festival will take place from December 11 to 13 at Wisdom Valley in Chonburi and marks the first Asian edition of the globally known Belgian festival brand Tomorrowland.

Tomorrowland Thailand 2026 will run under the new “Conscien- cia” theme, which is expected to connect the Thailand, Belgium and Brazil editions of the festival through 2027.

Organisers have also said that tickets for the Thailand debut edition are already sold out.

Danish ambassador supports Indonesia’s anti-obesity campaign

Sten Frimodt Nielsen joined Indonesian officials in Jakarta on 7 May to support efforts to tackle rising obesity rates in Indonesia.

Speaking at a World Obesity Day 2026 talk show, the Danish ambassador said obesity has become an increasingly serious global health challenge. He stressed that addressing the issue requires strong public leadership, support from the health sector, and greater public awareness.

The ambassador also highlighted the importance of reducing stigma surrounding obesity through better education and public support systems.

The event was hosted alongside Indonesia’s Health Ministry



and attended by Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin, who called for healthy living to become a popular lifestyle movement in Indonesia.

Indonesia is currently increas-

ing public health campaigns promoting healthier eating habits, nutritional labeling, and regular exercise as part of its broader anti-obesity efforts.



Youngest Dane ever: Regine Mai reaches summit of Mount Everest

Regine Mai reached the summit of Mount Everest on May 20, becoming the youngest Dane ever to climb the world's highest mountain. Photo: Instagram / Urth Adventures

At 5:07 AM on May 20, 24-year-old Danish climber Regine Mai stood on top of Mount Everest – 8,848.86 meters above sea level.

With the summit on Wednesday, she became the youngest Dane ever to climb the world's highest mountain.

"I am beyond proud," she wrote in an Instagram post after the extreme expedition.

Helicopter escape before the final summit push

But the road to the top was anything but easy.

During the expedition, harsh weather conditions at Everest Base Camp led Regine Mai and her guide, Jakob Urth, to take a helicopter down to Namche Bazaar to recover

before the final summit push.

For a few days, the focus shifted from frozen camp meals and altitude exhaustion to giant burgers, proper sleep and recovery at a lower altitude.

"Best decision ever," she wrote on Instagram.

"Absolute dreamteam"

Shortly afterwards, the team headed back toward Everest for the final and most brutal climb to the summit.

On Instagram, Regine described the expedition team – consisting of herself, guide Jakob Urth, and sherpas Ngima Sherpa and Phurba Nurbo Sherpa – as an "absolute dreamteam".

Before the summit push, Regine had brought letters from family and friends all the way to basecamp.

There, she spent time reading the messages while mentally preparing for the overnight climb to the top of the world.



More stories from the Everest expedition to come

Even though the summit has now been conquered, the adventure is far from over.

Regine Mai says on Instagram, that she will share much more from the Everest journey in the coming weeks.

But right now, the priorities are simple: "Rest, food, shower."

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