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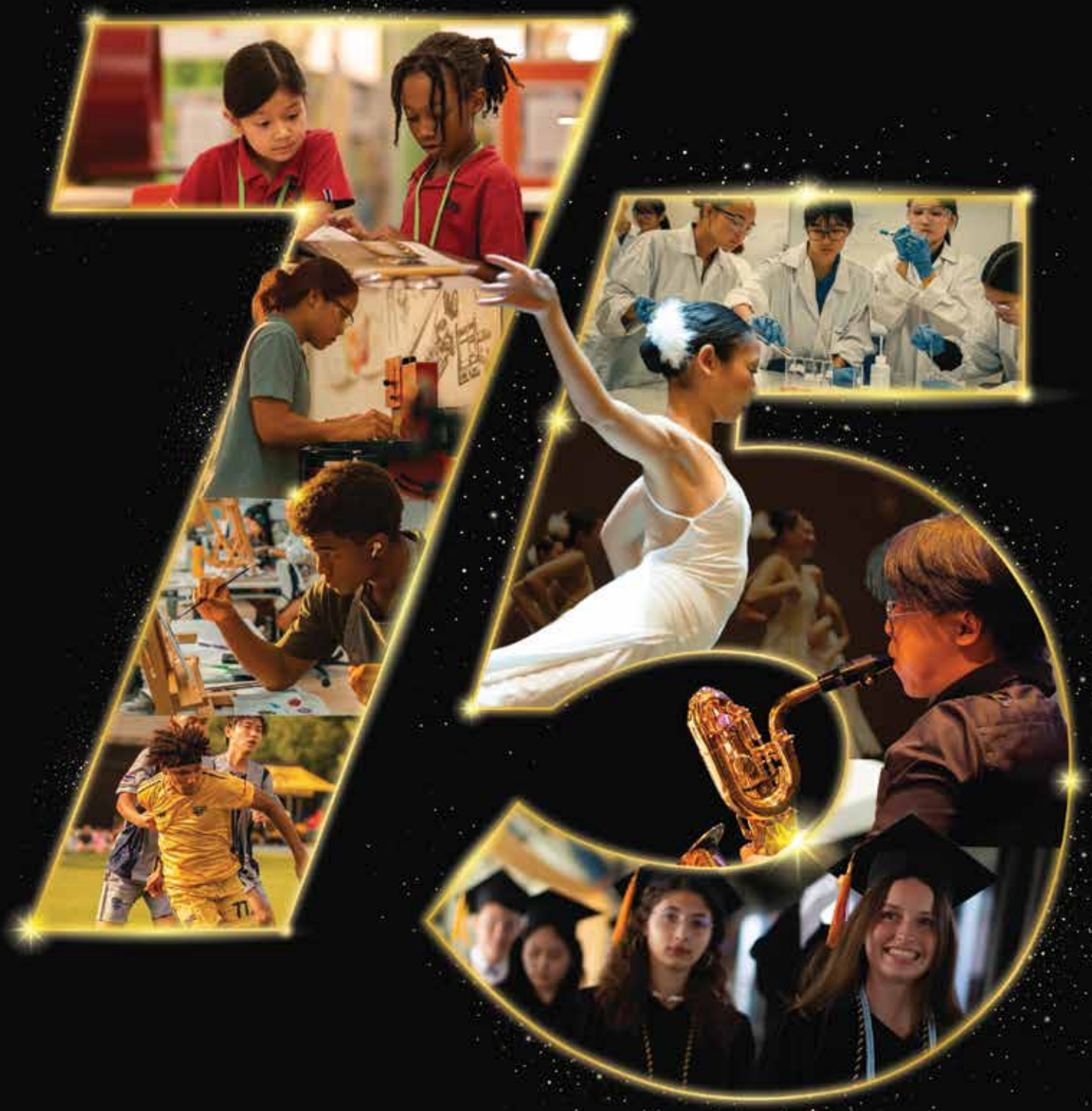
BUSINESS:
EFTA countries sign free trade agreement with Vietnam

INTERNATIONAL:
Swedish consular representatives from four countries meet in Bangkok

COMMUNITY:
Nordic education cooperation in Shanghai to continue after WorldSkills

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A sigh of relief, but Europe cannot relax

The American midterm elections on 3 November brought a welcome demonstration of the strength of American democracy. When enough voters become frustrated with those in power, the ballot box can still change the political direction of the country. Even a president determined to concentrate power in the White House can be challenged by the electorate.

That is probably the greatest relief reflected in the reactions from the Nordic countries. In Denmark, politicians across the political spectrum welcomed the Democrats' victory. Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre saw the result as an encouraging indication that American voters wanted a change of direction.

But after the initial relief comes hesitation. It is not over yet.

President Donald Trump remains in the White House for another two years. Although the Democrats have won control of both the House of Representatives and the Senate, the new Congress will not take office until January, and even then the president will retain substantial executive powers.

Indeed, some European observers fear that the worst could still be ahead. With his domestic ambitions frustrated by a hostile Congress, Trump may increasingly turn his attention to foreign policy, where presidential powers are far less constrained.

His approach to Russia's invasion of Ukraine is of particular concern. A Democratic majority in Congress may offer stronger support for Ukraine, but it does not change the president's position or his ability to shape American diplomacy.

For the Nordic countries, and for Europe as a whole, the election therefore offers reassurance without removing the underlying uncertainty.

The European Union and NATO's European members have already begun adjusting to a world in which American security guarantees and political commitments cannot be taken for granted.

With Finland and Sweden having joined NATO, all five Nordic countries now belong to the alliance. Their shared commitment to European security has never been stronger. But neither has the need for Europe to strengthen its own capabilities.

A stronger Europe does not mean a weaker NATO. On the contrary, greater European responsibility for defence would strengthen the transatlantic alliance.

For Nordic businesses and citizens in Asia, America's policies towards China, international trade and regional security will also continue to have consequences.

The midterm elections have shown that American democracy can correct its political course. That is welcome news.

But Europe cannot afford to relax whenever an American election offers hope.

The Nordic countries, together with their European partners and within NATO, must continue strengthening their ability to stand on their own feet.

Not to turn away from America, but because Europe's security, prosperity and democratic values are too important to depend on any one American president.



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

ScandAsia

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

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Aalborg University Hospital to train Vietnamese doctors under new partnership



Doctors from Vietnam's Hospital 19-8 are set to receive training in Denmark under a new partnership with Aalborg University Hospital.

The two hospitals signed a memorandum of understanding in Copenhagen on 20 October during the Vietnamese state visit to Denmark. The agreement covers short- and long-term training programmes for doctors and medical specialists from Hospital 19-8, which operates under Vietnam's Ministry of Public Security.

The cooperation also includes joint research and the exchange of medical expertise. Planned areas include molecular diagnostics for cancer screening and treatment, genome sequencing, and the use of artificial intelligence to support clinical decision-making.

Danish specialists will also assist Vietnamese doctors in designing research studies and preparing scientific papers for international publication, according to the ministry.

Vietnamese President Tô Lâm and Denmark's King Frederik X witnessed the exchange of the agreement.

The partnership was among 15 agreements announced by the Confederation of Danish Industry following the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum.

Sweden and Vietnam mark 50 years of healthcare cooperation

Sweden and Vietnam are marking 50 years of healthcare cooperation with Sweden–Vietnam Health Week 2026, held from 16 to 18 November in Hanoi, Bac Ninh and Ho Chi Minh City.

The programme brings together healthcare leaders, hospitals, researchers, universities and life science companies to explore cooperation in digital health, precision medicine, medical technology and hospital modernisation.

The partnership dates to 1976, when construction began on Vietnam–Sweden Hospital in Uong Bi, Quang Ninh province. Sweden also supported the development of the National Children's Hospital in Hanoi, which opened in 1981.

Since then, cooperation has expanded beyond hospital development to include medical research, healthcare technology and professional training.

The anniversary programme focuses on how Swedish expertise and Vietnamese experience can support improvements in healthcare access and quality as Vietnam continues to develop its health system.

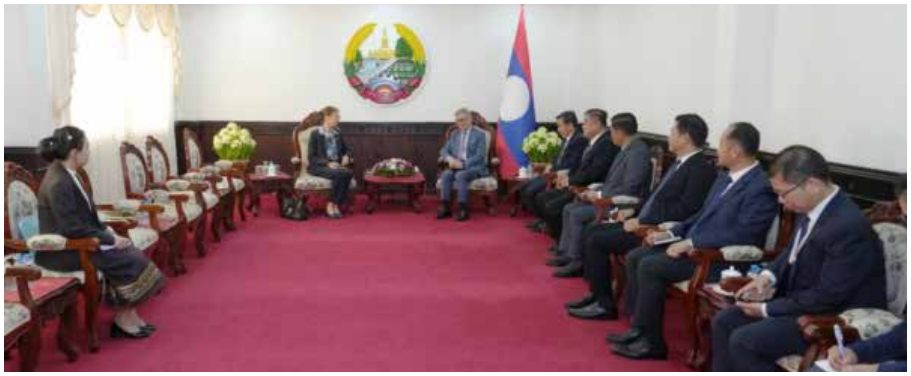


Sweden and Laos discuss investment and continued development cooperation

Swedish Ambassador Anna Hammargren met Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Thongsavanh Phomvihane in Vientiane on 26 October to discuss bilateral relations, investment and development cooperation.

According to the Lao News Agency (KPL), Thongsavanh encouraged Swedish companies to invest in Laos, particularly in clean energy and tourism, and called for closer people-to-people exchanges.

He also thanked Sweden for its development assistance through the European Union and expressed hope that Sweden and the EU would continue their support as Laos prepares to graduate from the United



Nations' Least Developed Country category at the end of 2026.

According to the Swedish Embassy in Bangkok, which handles Sweden's diplomatic relations with Laos, the discussions also covered trade, tourism and regional and international developments.

Hammargren expressed her commitment to strengthening bilateral relations and cooperation. Sweden and Laos have maintained diplomatic relations for more than six decades.



Norway eyes Philippine opportunities in offshore wind and electric ferries



Norway sees potential to expand cooperation with the Philippines in offshore wind energy, floating solar and electric ferries, Norwegian Ambassador Kristian Netland told Philippine newspaper BusinessMirror in an interview published on 28 October.

Netland highlighted opportunities for Norway to share its expertise in renewable energy and cleaner maritime transport as the Philippines seeks to strengthen energy security and reduce emissions.

Electric ferries and low-emission shipping could be particularly relevant for Metro Manila and inter-island routes. A recent Philippine delegation visit to Norway also provided an opportunity to study electric ferry systems and cleaner maritime transport.

Maritime cooperation is already an established part of bilateral relations, supported by Norwegian shipping companies and the Norwegian Training Center in Manila, which trains Filipino seafarers.

Netland also identified trade and investment opportunities in renewable energy, seafood, agriculture and environmental technology. The Philippines and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which includes Norway, have had a free trade agreement in place since 2018.

Norway also continues to support peacebuilding in Mindanao, including the decommissioning of former combatants and efforts to strengthen the participation of women and young people.

The interview highlighted potential areas for closer cooperation but announced no new investment or agreement.

Denmark–Vietnam trade grows 35 percent in first nine months of 2026

Trade between Denmark and Vietnam reached US$672.6 million in the first nine months of 2026, up 35.2 per cent year on year, as the two countries seek to expand economic and technological cooperation.

The figures were discussed at the sixth meeting of the bilateral intergovernmental committee in Copenhagen on 26 October, co-chaired by Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Finance Tran Quoc Phuong and Danish State Secretary for Trade and Investments Susanne Hyldelund.

Bilateral trade exceeded US$720 million in 2025. As of 30 September 2026, Denmark had 180 active investment projects in Vietnam, with registered capital totalling US$2.47 billion.



The meeting covered cooperation in trade, science and technology, maritime affairs, agriculture and environmental protection. Both sides also agreed to advance negotiations on a framework loan agreement to support infrastructure and strategic projects in Vietnam.

The discussions followed the elevation of Denmark–Vietnam relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during Vietnamese President Tô Lâm's state visit to Denmark in October.

Finland to require citizenship test for applicants from March 2027

Foreign nationals applying for Finnish citizenship will face a new civic knowledge test from 1 March 2027, as Finland introduces stricter requirements under amendments to its Citizenship Act.

The Finnish Immigration Service (Migri) announced on 9 October that preparations for the examination are underway. The requirement will apply to applicants aged 18 to 64 who submit their applications on or after 1 March 2027. Although the legislative changes take effect on 1 January, applications submitted in January and February will not be subject to the test.

The multiple-choice examination will assess knowledge of Finnish society, including legislation, fundamental and human rights, equality, history and culture. Applicants can take it in Finnish or Swedish.



The University of Helsinki is developing the questions and study materials, which will be available free of charge through Migri around the beginning of 2027. Initial examinations are planned in several cities, including Helsinki, Tampere, Turku and Oulu. Registration details and the examination schedule are expected by the end of 2026.

Applicants with qualifying Finnish- or Swedish-language matriculation examinations or higher education degrees completed in Finland will be exempt.

The test is part of a wider reform that has also tightened citizenship requirements concerning residence, financial resources and applicants' conduct.



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Carlsberg signs letters of intent for investment in Hue and Da Nang



Danish brewer Carlsberg has signed two letters of intent covering a planned brewery expansion in Hue and investment commitments in Da Nang for 2026–2030.

The documents were exchanged in Copenhagen on 20 October during the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum, attended by Vietnam's General Secretary and President Tô Lâm and Denmark's King Frederik X.

According to Vietnam's government, the agreement with Hue City People's Committee concerns expanding Carlsberg's brewery in Phu Bai Industrial Zone. The separate agreement with Da Nang City People's Committee outlines the company's investment commitments in the city over the next five years.

Neither announcement specifies investment amounts or a construction schedule. The documents are letters of intent, and further details about implementation have not been disclosed.

The Hue expansion would build on Carlsberg's previous investment of nearly US$90 million in Phu Bai Brewery, inaugurated in August 2025. That project increased the facility's brewing capacity by 50 per cent, making it Carlsberg's largest beer production site in Asia.

Carlsberg first invested in Vietnam in 1993. Its local portfolio includes Huda, Carlsberg and Tuborg.

IKEA turns to Douyin as it reshapes retail strategy in China

Swedish furniture retailer IKEA has opened an official flagship store on Douyin, China's popular short-video and e-commerce platform, as part of its efforts to reach consumers through new digital shopping channels.

The store, launched on 11 October 2026, offers more than 6,500 home furnishing products across 179 categories, with delivery available to customers in 301 Chinese cities.

The move is not IKEA's first venture into Chinese online retail. The company already sells through its own digital channels, Alibaba's Tmall and JD.com, where it opened a flagship store in 2025.

What makes Douyin different is its combination of entertainment



and shopping. Consumers can discover products through short videos and livestreams, allowing IKEA to reach potential customers who may not have been actively searching for furniture or home accessories.

The platform could be particularly useful for promoting smaller household products, storage solutions, decorations and other items that lend themselves to demonstrations and spontaneous purchases.

The launch also reflects a broader adjustment of IKEA's retail strategy in China. The Swedish retailer has been developing smaller store formats and strengthening its online distribution as it responds to changing shopping habits and competition in the Chinese market.

Earlier in 2026, IKEA announced plans to close seven stores in China while continuing to invest in new retail formats and digital services.

The Douyin launch gives IKEA another way to connect with Chinese consumers, although it remains to be seen whether the new channel will generate additional sales or primarily shift purchases from its existing online stores.

Danish companies expand offshore wind cooperation with Vietnam

Danish companies Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) and Semco Maritime have strengthened cooperation with Vietnamese energy businesses to support offshore wind development and expand international supply chains.

The agreements were exchanged at the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum in Copenhagen on 20 October 2026, during Vietnamese President Tô Lâm's state visit to Denmark.

CIP and Vietnam's state-owned energy group Petrovietnam signed an agreement to advance the South Central Region I offshore wind project. The companies have cooperated on the project since August 2025. With a planned capacity of approximately 1,000 MW, it forms part of Vietnam's national power development plans. Discussions between



the partners have focused on investment incentives, power purchase agreements, risk allocation, financing and implementation schedules.

In a separate agreement, Semco Maritime and PTSC Mechanical & Construction (PTSC M&C), a subsidiary of Petrovietnam Technical Services Corporation, established a strategic cooperation framework for 2026–2030. The partnership aims to combine their expertise and expand their involvement in international offshore wind substation projects.

Petrovietnam also held discussions with Danish wind turbine manufacturer Vestas on developing local supply chains and increasing Vietnamese participation in manufacturing, engineering and technical services. Vestas highlighted the importance of stable regulations and a predictable project pipeline to support long-term investment.

Volvo to cut 2,500 jobs amid pressure from China

Swedish automaker Volvo Cars plans to cut 2,500 jobs worldwide as it faces falling revenue, weaker electric-vehicle demand and intensifying competition in China.

Announced on 23 October, the cuts follow an adjusted operating loss of SEK 3.7 billion (approximately US$373 million) in the third quarter of 2026, compared with a profit of SEK 5.8 billion a year earlier.

Around 2,000 job reductions will be in Sweden. Measures will include ending consultant contracts, relying on natural staff turnover and offering voluntary exit packages. The cuts follow approximately 3,000 job reductions announced in 2025.

Volvo's revenue in China fell by almost half during the third quarter amid difficult market conditions and competition from domestic carmakers. In the United States, tariffs and weaker demand are adding pressure on sales and profit margins.



Majority-owned by China's Geely Holding, Volvo Cars also plans to reduce indirect spending and variable costs by a further SEK 5 billion by the end of 2027. The company has withdrawn its full-year sales and cash-flow guidance, citing a deteriorating market outlook.

The restructuring highlights the challenges facing European automakers as they seek to remain competitive while investing in electric vehicles and responding to changing global market conditions.



Our Platinum Year

On a quiet stretch of Ploenchit Road in 1957, long before Bangkok became the global metropolis it is today, a British woman named Rosamund Stuetzel opened the doors of a small school in the garden bungalow behind her home. There were just 28 pupils. Most were the children of expatriates. Having already sent two of her children to boarding school in Britain, Stuetzel was unwilling to do the same with her youngest daughter. Determined to keep her family together while providing a British education, she created a school of her own.

Few could have imagined that the modest experiment would become Bangkok Patana School, now Thailand's oldest British international school and one of Southeast Asia's most established educational institutions. Nearly seven decades later, the school educates more than 2,300 students from over 60 nationalities, yet remains remarkably faithful to the ideals with which it began.

The story of Bangkok Patana is, in many ways, also the story of modern Thailand.

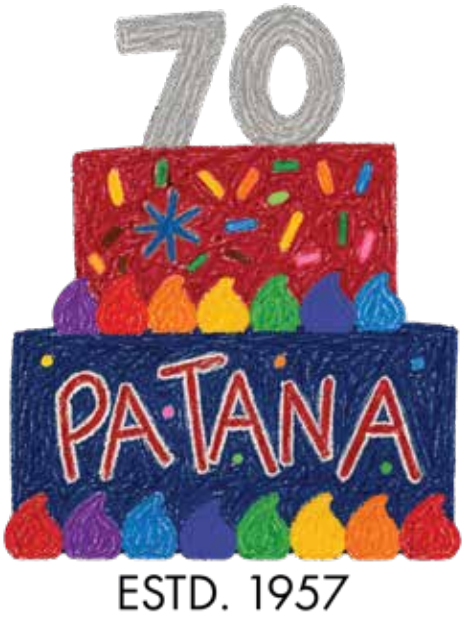
When the school opened, Bangkok was beginning to emerge onto the international stage. The decades that followed brought economic growth, increasing diplomatic influence and the arrival of multinational companies, embassies and international organisations. As Thailand changed, so too did the school, serving generations of families who arrived from around the world and made Bangkok their home.

Yet from the beginning, Bangkok Patana was never simply British.

Long before diversity became a corporate aspiration, it was already part of daily life at the school. Historical records show that by the early 1960s students represented 28 nationalities. In an era when international education was still relatively uncommon, children from vastly different backgrounds shared classrooms, playgrounds and friendships.

For many alumni, that diversity remains one of the school's defining characteristics. Former student Tim Blackburn described an environment that fostered curiosity and understanding of other cultures. "Patana was incredibly international," he recalled. "It taught tolerance, curiosity and a genuine appreciation for different cultures."

That outlook would, over time, attract visitors who reflected the school's growing place within Thailand's international community. Alongside members of the Thai Royal Family and national leaders, the school welcomed figures including Nelson Mandela, Baroness Margaret Thatcher, Queen Elizabeth II and









Prince Philip, and football legend Sir Bobby Charlton.

The institution grew through successive campuses before settling in Bang Na, where its modern grounds now include theatres, sports facilities, science centres and libraries. Yet beneath that physical expansion lies a structure that has remained largely unchanged. Bangkok Patana operates as a not-for-profit foundation, reinvesting income into educational programmes, community initiatives, staff and facilities rather than distributing profits to owners or shareholders.

Community, too, extends beyond rhetoric. The Bangkok Patana School Foundation exists not only to operate the school but also to improve the lives of children and families in need across Thailand. Charitable initiatives, alumni networks and community events have helped shape school life for decades. For many families, the school serves not only as an educational institution but also as a social anchor, helping newcomers navigate life in a foreign country while building relationships that endure across cultures and generations.

That continuity remains visible today. Marking the school's 70th anniversary, Head of School Chris Sammons reflected on its enduring foundations: community, friendship, kindness and a love of learning. His remarks echoed themes that could easily have belonged to Rosamund Stuetzel herself nearly seven decades earlier.

There is, of course, measurable success. Bangkok Patana consistently sends graduates to leading universities around the world and is recognised internationally for its educational standards. It is also the only school in Thailand to have been included in the Spear's Schools Index for six consecutive years, placing it among a select group of leading independent schools globally.

But perhaps the school's most enduring legacy lies elsewhere.

In a city transformed almost beyond recognition since 1957, Bangkok Patana remains shaped by the same conviction that inspired its founder: that education can strengthen families, build community and prepare young people not merely for examinations, but for life in an interconnected world.

The garden bungalow on Ploenchit Road has long since disappeared. The idea that began there endures. Seventy years on, Bangkok Patana has become more than a school. It is a lens through which to view the evolution of modern Thailand, and a reminder that some of the most influential institutions begin not with grand plans, but with a parent's determination to create something better for the next generation.



Royal hospitality and family ties mark Vietnamese state visit to Denmark

A sunny autumn welcome, a royal carriage procession, a state banquet and a personal connection stretching back generations marked Vietnamese President Tô Lâm's three-day state visit to Denmark from 19 to 21 October 2026. King Frederik X and Queen Mary hosted the President and his wife, Ngô Phương Ly, in a programme combining royal traditions with Danish culture, science and hospitality.

By Gregers Møller

Copenhagen greeted the Vietnamese presidential couple with sunshine on the morning of 19 October. Although temperatures were only around 10 degrees Celsius, the weather provided a pleasant autumn setting as King Frederik and Queen Mary welcomed their guests at Copenhagen Airport.

The Royal Life Guards played the Vietnamese national anthem before the King and President inspected the guard of honour. The two couples then travelled to Kastellet for a wreath-laying ceremony before continuing by horse-drawn carriage, escorted by the mounted Guard Hussars, to Amalienborg Palace.

The presidential couple stayed at Christian VII's Palace at Amalienborg during their visit.

A special connection through Prince Henrik

For King Frederik and Queen Mary, the visit had a personal dimension.

King Frederik's late father, Prince Henrik, spent the first five years of his life in Hanoi and returned to Vietnam as a young man. His memories of the country helped shape Frederik's own childhood impressions of Vietnam.

Speaking at the state banquet at Christiansborg Palace on the evening of 19 October, the King recalled how his father's stories had inspired his imagination long before he first visited Vietnam in 1997.

Frederik and Mary subsequently accompanied Queen Margrethe II and Prince Henrik on a state visit to Vietnam in 2009. They returned for an official visit in 2022, when they were still Crown Prince and Crown Princess.

In his banquet speech, the King said that he and Queen Mary had looked forward to reciprocating the warmth they had experienced during their own visits to Vietnam.

The King also presented President Tô Lâm with the Order of the Elephant, Denmark's highest royal order.

Queen Mary introduces Vietnamese First Lady to Danish culture

While the President attended political and scientific engagements, Queen Mary accompanied Ngô Phương Ly on a programme offering a closer look at Danish cultural life.

During the first day of the visit, they visited Biblioteket at Rentemestervej, a public library and cultural centre in Copenhagen, where they learned about activities for children and school classes and met local residents.

They also visited the historic Court Theatre at Christiansborg, where dancers from the Royal Danish Ballet demonstrated the distinctive Bournonville ballet tradition.

Meanwhile, King Frederik accompanied President Tô Lâm to the Niels Bohr Institute, where the visitors were introduced to Danish quantum research and shown a laboratory.

> *The visit ended with a renewal of that longstanding connection, this time with King Frederik and Queen Mary as hosts.*



Looking back at the Royal visit in November 2022. Photo : Nguyen Khanh Tuoi Tre.

The formal highlight of the first day was a state banquet hosted by the King and Queen at Christiansborg Palace. Crown Prince Christian joined the royal couple, the presidential delegation and invited Danish guests.

Lunch in a rooftop greenhouse

The following day's programme offered a more informal setting for the First Lady.

Ngô Phương Ly visited Copenhagen Contemporary, where she explored an exhibition featuring artists connected to Greenland and took part in an artistic workshop with schoolchildren.

>>



President Tô Lâm and his wife Ngô Phương Ly arrived at the Royal Palace Amalienborg in Copenhagen together with King Frederik and Queen Mary by open horse drawn carriage. Photo : Thomas Traasdahl_Ritzau Scanpix



Queen Mary later joined her for lunch at Gro Spiseri, a restaurant situated in a greenhouse on the roof of ØsterGro, an urban farm in Copenhagen's Østerbro district.

The rooftop farm grows organic vegetables, herbs and flowers, while the restaurant serves seasonal food using local produce.

For the Vietnamese First Lady, the visit offered an introduction to a small-scale Danish approach to urban farming and sustainable food production.

The presidential couple also met Vietnamese residents from Denmark, Iceland and southern Sweden at a gathering organised by the Vietnamese Embassy.

The meeting provided an opportunity to recognise the Vietnamese communities living in the Nordic countries and their contribution to relations between Vietnam and their adopted home countries.

Vietnamese music in Copenhagen

On the evening of 20 October, the Vietnamese presidential couple reciprocated the royal hospitality by hosting a cultural event and concert at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek museum in Copenhagen.

King Frederik and Queen Mary attended the event, which celebrated the 55th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Denmark and Vietnam.



Denmark was among the first Western countries to establish diplomatic relations with North Vietnam in 1971.

Today, more than 18,000 Danish citizens have Vietnamese roots, providing another important human connection between the two countries.

A final tour of Copenhagen Harbour

On the final morning of the visit, 21 October, King Frederik accompanied President Tô Lâm on a boat tour of Copenhagen Harbour.

The programme included views of the Middelgrunden offshore wind farm and Lynetteholm, the new artificial peninsula being developed to protect Copenhagen against storm surges and eventually provide space for a new urban district.

The King and President were briefed on the projects and Denmark's experience in renewable energy and climate adaptation.

After the harbour tour, the two men walked back towards Amalienborg, where King Frederik explained the history of the palace complex and its four buildings.

The visit concluded with an official farewell at Christian VII's Palace, where King Frederik and Queen Mary said goodbye to President Tô Lâm and Ngô Phương Ly before their departure from Copenhagen.

A friendship renewed

Beyond the royal ceremonies and cultural encounters, the visit also produced a significant diplomatic result.

During talks with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, Denmark and Vietnam agreed to elevate their relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

A series of agreements between Danish and Vietnamese companies was also announced, covering renewable energy, transport, healthcare, education and industrial cooperation.

ScandAsia has also covered the new strategic partnership and the individual business agreements concluded during the visit.

For the Danish Royal Family, however, the three days represented something more personal: an opportunity to welcome guests from a country that has been part of the family's history since Prince Henrik's childhood in Hanoi.

The visit ended with a renewal of that longstanding connection, this time with King Frederik and Queen Mary as hosts.

Strong Ties in Changing Times: Nordic Cooperation and Nordic Month in Malaysia



By Subateeswarran Looganaden

What happens when four Nordic countries decide that one day is simply not enough?

This October, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden are turning Nordic Day into Nordic Month: a month of business, ideas, culture and connections designed to bring the Nordic region and Malaysia a little closer together.

Behind the programme is something bigger. The four Nordic Embassies in Kuala Lumpur are strengthening the way they work together in Malaysia, building on shared values and common interests while drawing on the different expertise, networks and perspectives of each country.

Four countries. Four sets of strengths. One increasingly coordinated Nordic presence in Malaysia.

And that cooperation is already moving beyond embassy walls.

In February 2026, the Nordic Ambassadors met Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy Transition and Water Transformation Datuk Amar Sri Haji Fadillah Haji Yusof together with Nordic business representatives. The discussion focused on strengthening trade and investment in renewable energy and clean technology, aligned with Malaysia's National Energy Transition Roadmap and wider ASEAN efforts to accelerate the energy transition.

It was a reflection of growing Nordic business interest in Malaysia, but also of a broader ambition: to build partnerships that contribute to an economically strong, environmentally responsible and socially inclusive future.

Government meetings, however, are only one part of the story. Nordic cooperation in Malaysia is increasingly happening between companies, experts, universities, cultural communities and people.

From Nordic Day to Nordic Mont

For years, Nordic Day has provided a meeting point for the four Nordic countries in Malaysia, bringing together government representatives, business leaders, academics and civil society around sustainability, innovation, business and culture.

This year, one day became too small for the idea





Throughout October, the four embassies are joining forces for a month-long programme of online and in-person activities, creating more opportunities for Malaysians and Nordics to meet, exchange ideas and explore what they can do together.

Under the theme "Sustainable North", Nordic Month looks beyond the familiar image of the Nordic region to explore how Nordic cities work and how Nordic societies live.

That means smart cities and mobility, but also food and design. Digitalisation alongside culture. Technology alongside lifestyle. And sustainability not simply as an environmental ambition, but as something that increasingly shapes how cities, businesses and societies function.

> *The point is not to arrive in Penang carrying a suitcase of Nordic answers. The value lies in putting those perspectives in the same room and seeing what can grow from the conversation.*

Taking the Conversation to Penang

One of the highlights is the Nordic Smart City Roadshow, which takes the conversation beyond Kuala Lumpur to Penang, one of Southeast Asia's important centres for industry, technology and innovation.

Nordic companies and business representatives will meet Malaysian counterparts to exchange experiences around smart-city development and explore where new opportunities for collaboration might emerge.

The point is not to arrive in Penang carrying a suitcase of Nordic answers.

Nordic companies bring experience from different cities, markets and industries. Penang brings its own knowledge, priorities, challenges and ambitions. The value lies in putting those perspectives in the same room and seeing what can grow from the conversation.

Beyond October

Nordic Month is a chance to open more doors: between businesses, institutions, experts and people who might otherwise never meet.

Some of those encounters may lead to new commercial partnerships. Others may spark an exchange of knowledge, a cultural connection or simply a better understanding of each other.

That is where the real value of Nordic Month lies. Not in filling a calendar with activities, but in creating connections worth continuing after October is over.

Because ultimately, Nordic Month is only a month.

Nordic-Malaysian cooperation is the longer story.



Norway's new Ambassador to Thailand, Frode Solberg, aims to strengthen economic cooperation and trade ties between the two countries. Photo: Mille Tanya Andersen

New Norwegian Ambassador Frode Solberg on trade ties with Thailand

In an exclusive interview with ScandAsia, Norway's new ambassador to Thailand, Frode Solberg, shares his ambitions to strengthen trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.

By Mille Tanya Andersen

After more than 30 years in diplomacy, with postings in countries including the United Arab Emirates, Sweden, Austria, Germany and, most recently, South Korea, Frode Solberg was eager to return to Asia when the opportunity arose.

So, on 23 September 2026, when he assumed his duties as Norway's new ambassador to Thailand, he did so with a sense of excitement and the privilege of taking up the posting he wanted most.

"I think it's a very interesting part of the world to work in. I like the culture, I like the approach to people, I like the friendliness. It's beyond doubt. That's why I wanted to come back to Asia," he says.

Although Solberg had visited Thailand before taking

up his new position, he is still discovering life in Bangkok. What stands out to him is the city's energy, a striking contrast to life in Oslo.

"It's very different from Oslo. Much bigger, of course. And there's something happening everywhere. It's a kind of energy that really appeals to me, because I think you don't get tired in a way. It sort of gives you energy," Solberg says.

Now based in Bangkok, Solberg has a clear ambition for his new posting: to strengthen the ties between Norway and Thailand, particularly through closer economic cooperation, increased trade and investment. By the time he leaves, he hopes to see tangible progress in the relationship between the two countries.

Strengthening economic ties in a changing world

For Solberg, one of the most exciting parts of his new role is the opportunity to get to know Thailand beyond Bangkok. He is also interested in the country's position in Southeast Asia and the role it can play in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

"I'm looking forward to getting to know the country," he says. "But it's also, I think, to experience Thailand's role in Southeast Asia, an important hub in many ways."

Understanding Thailand's position in the region goes hand in hand with strengthening the relationship between the two countries, Solberg explains. He believes closer cooperation is increasingly important in a changing international landscape, where countries need reliable partners and greater stability.

"I think it's getting more and more important to understand and work together with countries and people that are the same and have the same approach as we do. We need to work together; otherwise, we won't succeed in continuing a world where rules exist and where small and big countries alike have the same possibility to raise our voice and say something."

When it comes to Norway and Thailand specifically, Solberg sees economic cooperation as one of the areas with the greatest potential for development. The two countries already have established trade relations, with Norwegian businesses operating in Thailand and Thai goods finding their way to the Norwegian market.

In 2024, bilateral trade in goods between Norway and Thailand reached approximately NOK 12.2 billion. Norway exported goods worth NOK 5.6 billion to Thailand, primarily seafood, fertilisers, wood pulp, and iron and steel products. Imports from Thailand totalled NOK 6.6 billion, including machinery, vehicles, agricultural products, and iron and steel goods. According to Norway's parliamentary trade committee, trade between the two countries has grown in recent years. (Source: Norwegian Parliament)

Against this backdrop, Solberg believes there is room to expand the existing relationship.

"I do think there is potential for closer economic cooperation. There are investments, there are companies from both sides in their respective countries, and I think if I can contribute to increasing that cooperation, that's good for Thailand and good for Norway."

A free trade agreement could open new opportunities

One development that could help advance these ambitions is the free trade agreement between Thailand and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), which includes Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and Liechtenstein.

The agreement was signed on 23 January 2025 and covers trade in goods and services, investment and other areas of economic cooperation. However, its entry into force is still pending, according to EFTA.

Solberg hopes the agreement will create new opportunities for businesses in both countries and make it easier to expand their commercial relationships.

"We have a free trade agreement that will enter into force hopefully quite soon. That will open new possibilities both ways," he says.

The agreement is expected to reduce tariffs on a significant share of Norwegian exports to Thailand. According to Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 83 per cent of Norwegian exports to Thailand are set to become tariff-free when the agreement enters into force, rising to 99.8 per cent after 15 years.

For Solberg, the aim is not simply to increase Norwegian business activity in Thailand, but to strengthen economic ties in both directions. He sees closer trade relations as a way to bring the two countries closer together more broadly, creating a stronger foundation for cooperation beyond the economic sphere.

Looking towards the next four years

Beyond trade, Solberg also sees potential for closer cooperation on green energy and climate issues. He recognises that such initiatives can take years to develop, but believes that building relationships and opening discussions now can help lay the groundwork for future progress.

Ultimately, he hopes his time in Bangkok will leave a lasting mark on the relationship between Norway and Thailand. While some developments may take longer than his diplomatic posting, he believes closer economic ties are an achievable goal.

"We have flights between our countries every day. There are lots of tourists travelling between the two countries. We have steady trade relations. But I think there's room for more. So that's going to be one of my main objectives over the next years."

For Solberg, success will mean leaving Thailand with a stronger economic partnership than the one he inherited. He hopes that, by the end of his posting, the two countries will have moved beyond their existing trade relations towards a closer and more diversified partnership.

As he puts it, there is already a good foundation to build on. The challenge now is to turn that potential into tangible results.



Agneta's World

Agneta de Bekassy

From Global Finance to Global Fashion – Bangkok takes centre stage

A major international gathering took place in Bangkok from October 12 to 18, when the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) held their annual meetings at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center.

Thailand hosted the meetings for the first time since 1991. Thirty-five years later, the country once again had an opportunity to present itself as an economic and financial hub in Asia.

The official theme was "Thailand's New Horizons: Empowering People, Building Resilience." The meetings brought together thousands of participants from around the world, including finance ministers, government officials, representatives of international organisations, economists, academics, civil society representatives and members of the media.

The discussions focused on the global economy, while extensive security arrangements were put in place to accommodate the many international delegations attending.

Alongside this important international gathering, a special initiative was launched to showcase Thai culture on the world stage. Designers from all 92 participating countries were invited to take part.

Each designer was given the opportunity to create a garment using black Thai silk, incorporating fabric from their own country to produce a unique fusion of Thai and international design.

The choice of black Thai silk carried deep symbolic meaning. Black was selected as a mark of respect and mourning, honouring the much-loved Queen Sirikit, the Queen Mother, as well as Princess Bajrakitiyabha.

The project was therefore not only a celebration of international fashion and creativity, but also a tribute

to the Thai Royal Family and the country's rich cultural heritage.

Representing Sweden was one of the country's most beloved and respected designers, Göran Alfredsson.

For many years, Göran has dressed women from the Swedish Royal Family, as well as prominent figures in Stockholm society and Swedish government ministers. His atelier, THALIA, located in Östermalm, Stockholm, has for decades been a destination for women seeking something truly special for weddings, royal banquets and the Nobel festivities.

With his longstanding reputation for exquisite craftsmanship and timeless elegance, Göran was a natural choice to represent Sweden in this international celebration of fashion, culture and Thai silk.

Göran has also participated in THE THAI SILK WAY, a special annual fashion show organised by Khun Edward Kitti, President of the Association of Thai Silk and Culture Promotions and organiser of the annual "Celebration of Silk – Thai Silk Road to the World" fashion event. The event has grown into a major celebration of Thai silk and international fashion.

Khun Edward is a Thai fashion and modelling industry professional. Having grown up in Singapore and the United States, he returned to Thailand in the 1990s. With extensive experience in the modelling industry, he is a well-respected figure in Asia.

Göran's participation in the project was particularly fitting, as he speaks Thai fluently and has maintained a close relationship with Thailand, visiting the country frequently over the years. His genuine appreciation of Thai culture and craftsmanship adds another dimension to his involvement in this international initiative.



> *Each designer was given the opportunity to create a garment using black Thai silk, incorporating fabric from their own country to produce a unique fusion of Thai and international design.*

At 1.30 p.m. on Monday, October 12, guests began arriving at The Living Hall on the third floor of Siam Paragon.

Khun Edward Kitti and his team welcomed a large gathering of ambassadors and their partners, along with many other distinguished guests. Sweden's Ambassador, H.E. Anna Hammargren, attended with her husband, Henrik.

Of the 92 garments exhibited across two floors, six selected creations were brought to life on live models. Before the fashion presentation began, guests were treated to a performance of traditional Thai dance.

The dancers wore costumes designed by Khun Theeraphan Wannarat, Thailand's 2019 National Artist in Visual Arts (Fashion Design), and presented by the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles.

As a global landmark, Siam Paragon is committed to presenting the best of Thailand to the world. Alongside its world-class shopping and lifestyle experiences, it provides a space where Thai heritage, creativity and global experiences come together to create lasting impressions for visitors.

Through this initiative, Siam Paragon also helps showcase Bangkok and Thailand as global destinations rich in culture, creativity and distinctive charm.

It is hardly surprising that a trip to Thailand often features high on people's wish lists. Name something you cannot find in Thailand – snow, for example. Yet, over the past few days, many of us here have experienced hail. And that is no small thing. Thailand is a country that never ceases to surprise!

Lars became obsessed with Beijing locals' stories

Outside, tourists and electric scooters squeeze through the narrow hutong alleyways of Beijing's old Dashilar neighbourhood.

By Freja Nanna Mogensen





Inside a small, tucked-away shop packed with old maps, archive photos and dusty newspapers, Danish historian Lars Ulrik Thom is trying to explain China in a completely different way.

Not through giant skyscrapers. Not through politics. And not through huge numbers.

Instead, he wants people to understand China through forgotten streets, old newspaper stories and conversations with elderly Beijing locals.

So many numbers

For nearly 20 years, Beijing Postcards has explored Beijing's history through archival research and local storytelling.

"We collect old photos and maps of Beijing, and then we interview old Beijing locals," Lars says.

The idea is not to tell the story of China through big numbers or sweeping clichés.

"Everything is so big. So many people, so many cars, so many numbers. But those numbers can be very hard to relate to," he says.

Instead, the goal is to help people connect with the city through details and personal stories. That is also why Beijing Postcards focuses almost entirely on Beijing rather than trying to explain all of China.

Not satisfied with just happy customers

Lars first arrived in China in 1996 while travelling with a friend.

What was meant to be a temporary stay eventually turned into decades.

He studied Chinese, later worked as a tour guide and gradually became interested in the gap between how China describes itself and how it is often described abroad.

Over time, however, he became frustrated with how superficial many tours felt.



"As a guide, the most important thing is happy customers," he says.

"And there's nothing wrong with that. But I really wanted to understand things more deeply."

According to Lars, many tours focused on quick impressions rather than genuine curiosity about Chinese history and society.

"I felt like I couldn't really dig properly into the history," he says.

"I wanted to go much deeper."

Not the China many foreigners expect

Lars Ulrik Thom believes many international conversations about China become trapped in extremes, either fascination or fear, without leaving much room for ordinary human stories.

"I often feel there are two parallel histories," he says.

"There's the Chinese version and the Western version, and they almost never overlap."

Despite assumptions many foreigners may have about censorship in China, Lars says many locals are surprisingly open to sharing their experiences.

"People are actually very willing to share their stories," he says.

"Of course, we don't ask them to criticise the government. We ask them about their lives in China through the years."

Some of these stories eventually become public walks, exhibitions or research projects. Others become another piece in what Lars describes as a giant puzzle: understanding Beijing from as many different angles as possible.

"It's a passion project," he says, adding that the deeper they research a subject, the more aware they become of how complex it really is.

Running through the history – literally



Beijing Postcards attracts a mix of expats, diplomats, students, tourists and Chinese visitors curious about Beijing's history from a different perspective.

The project organises themed walks exploring subjects ranging from the Forbidden City and the Boxer Rebellion to women's history, old newspapers, opium dens and the transformation of Beijing during the 20th century.

Two popular tours are History of the Hutong and A Crash Course to the Forbidden City.

Beijing Postcards also occasionally organises historical runs through the city, allowing participants to experience its history while moving through the places where it unfolded.

"Moving ignites your brain," Lars explains.

"When we try to understand something, the physicality of it should not be ignored."

Building a community around Beijing's history

Beyond its walks, Beijing Postcards hosts movie nights, book clubs, archive exhibitions and talks on subjects ranging from old Beijing newspapers and women's history to the Boxer Rebellion and the transformation of the city's hutongs.

Its small shop in Dashilar also serves as a public history hub, where visitors can browse old maps, historical photographs and souvenirs inspired by Beijing's past.



Noon found her own way in Sweden

Somsong "Noon" Saraban left her childhood home in Nong Khai when she was only 13. She had no idea that Sweden would one day become the place she called home. Her journey has taken many twists and turns, but along the way, she has repeatedly made the same choice: when life stops challenging her, it is time to learn something new.

By Disraporn "Dao" Yatprom

When Noon talks about her life in Sweden, it does not sound like the result of a carefully laid-out plan. Her path from northeastern Thailand to Scandinavia has instead been shaped by decisions made whenever something no longer felt right.

She left home young. She walked away from a promising first job when formal degrees began to count more than proven ability. She moved into the golf business despite considering the sport a waste of land. She moved to Sweden for a relationship, but later ended it when they realized they wanted different futures. Years later, when she felt she had learned everything her restaurant job could teach her, she returned to school—this time studying hotel management entirely in Swedish.

Today, after more than two decades in Sweden, Noon has a Swedish husband, Peter, two sons, Melvin and Luke, and a thriving career in the hotel industry. Sweden, she says without hesitation, is home.

Leaving Home at 13

Noon was born into a family of eight children in Nong Khai province. Her father passed away when she was only two, and Noon was the seventh child. She attended local primary school until, at age 13, she moved to Samut Prakan near Bangkok to live with her eldest sister and help care for her four-year-old nephew.

There was another, more personal reason why the young Noon was ready to leave. Her mother was receiving attention from men, and Noon felt hurt and jealous. In the mind of a 13-year-old girl, it became a question of whether her mother still loved her. Today, Noon sees it differently. Her relationship with her mother is strong, and she knows her childhood feelings belonged to a young girl trying to make sense of an adult world.

Life with her older sister was strict. Freedom was limited, curfew was strictly enforced, and dating was out of the question. After lower secondary school, Noon followed her sister's advice and studied accounting and Chinese for two years.

Her first job was with Hi-Tech Apparel. Although young, Noon was quickly entrusted with responsibilities well beyond routine bookkeeping. She became assistant head of the packing department, managed suppliers, and led major projects.

"They could see that I had potential and could take responsibility for big projects," she recalls.



Then the company began recruiting university graduates for supervisory roles. Noon found herself judged not on what she could accomplish, but on what she lacked: a bachelor's degree. After nearly three years, the work lost its appeal, and she left. At another firm, her vocational diploma resulted in an offer to manage the photocopy machine. Knowing she was capable of far more, she declined.

Then a friend suggested she work as a golf caddie.

The Woman Who Disliked Golf

Her friend mentioned that the income was good and that foreign customers would help improve her English. Noon applied, but instead of hiring her as a caddie, Eastern Star Country Club & Resort offered her a role as a receptionist collecting green fees.

The irony was clear: Noon was strongly anti-golf. She viewed it as a pointless sport that occupied vast areas of land at a time when so many lacked housing. But when an instructor offered free lessons to staff, Noon decided to try it.

"It was actually fun!" she admits.

Golf changed her life in another way. One regular customer was a Swedish man in Thailand on a temporary assignment. Noon was 23 and had little experience with foreigners, worrying she might be taken advantage of. He, on his first trip to Thailand, held similar concerns.

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However, he was polite and invited her to dinner. Noon took a chance. They enjoyed each other's company, she practiced her English, and they soon traveled together to Phuket, Hua Hin, and Chiang Mai. When he returned to Sweden, they stayed in touch by email. He promised to visit Thailand again in two months.

Two weeks later, he was back.

He asked Noon to come to Sweden. Noon brought him to meet her older sister to ask for permission, and her visa application was approved without difficulty. Having never traveled abroad, the 23-year-old boarded a plane alone.

Finding Her Feet

The early days were tough. Noon felt lonely and homesick, but she gradually adapted and committed to learning the language. When her initial visa expired, she returned temporarily to Thailand to stay with her mother and study English. Back in Sweden, she secured the necessary residency paperwork, enrolled in Swedish language classes, and found a job as a cashier at a Thai restaurant.

As Sweden felt increasingly familiar, Noon and her partner realized their goals were diverging. Despite their age difference, the core issue was their vision for the future. Noon wanted children and a settled life in Sweden; he envisioned a freer life in Thailand. They ultimately decided to separate.

His reaction revealed a side of Swedish culture Noon grew to deeply respect: when one person no longer wants to remain in a relationship, the other may be hurt, but ultimately respects the decision and the individual's right to choose their path.

Looking for Someone Serious

Noon remained single for nearly four years while continuing her restaurant work. A friend suggested online dating. Noon decided to try, stating her criteria clearly: a serious relationship with a kind, stably employed man with no children.

Then she received a message from Peter inviting her to dinner.

Before their date, Peter conducted a bit of light reconnaissance. He sent a friend into the Thai restaurant where Noon worked. The friend asked for a menu and sat observing Noon without ordering a thing.

When Noon met Peter, she was initially underwhelmed. He was exceptionally tall and quiet, almost overly gentle. She briefly questioned whether he was assertive enough. But as they talked, her impression shifted. She appreciated his respect, his intellect, and the way his thinking challenged hers.

"I realized this man could take care of me—for the rest of my life."

Starting a Family

Noon moved into Peter's home, where they still live today. After nearly two years together, Noon raised the topic of children. She was 31 and wanted her first child before 35. Peter agreed, but his job required extensive travel. He asked for time to transition into



> *Do what you are best at and what you enjoy most. Then you will be happy with it, and the result will be excellent. And never stop developing yourself.*

a role that kept him local, wanting to be fully present during the pregnancy. They also chose to postpone their wedding so their future child could be in the wedding photographs.

Noon was 32 when Melvin was born. Two years later came Luke, as Noon wanted Melvin to have a sibling to share life with.

After 15 years together, Noon says she and Peter have never had a fight serious enough to make either consider separation. She attributes this to mutual respect, strong communication, and personal freedom.

One of Noon's deliberate choices was not insisting her sons learn Thai. While she recognized the benefits of bilingualism, Noon was working hard to master Swedish and wanted the family to share one common language at home. Swedish became the household language, which accelerated Noon's own fluency.

Starting Again in Swedish

After raising her young children, Noon wanted a new professional challenge. Peter suggested hotel management—a sector where her hospitality background would shine in a larger, dynamic environment. She enrolled in a one-year hotel course, setting a clear boundary: she did not want to work in housekeeping.

"Not because cleaning is low-status," she explains, "but because I wanted a job where I was forced to use Swedish every single day."

Out of 21 students, Noon was the only Thai national. She thrived in the interactive environment and proved her fluency during three-hour written exams in Swedish, ultimately earning an A in every subject.

She completed her internship at Quality Hotel Winn near her home, balancing work with her sons' school schedules. Six weeks into the eight-week internship, the general manager offered her a permanent position.

Noon later moved to Quality Hotel 11 as Breakfast and Conference Supervisor, eventually stepping into the role of Culture Ambassador—a position focused on employee engagement, internal communication, and workplace culture.

A Place Called Home

When asked how much of her Thai heritage shapes her work, Noon says it happens naturally. She associates Thai culture with warmth, friendliness, and a strong work ethic. In over 20 years in Sweden, she has felt welcomed and values the country's equal workplace protections and fair standards.

Ask Noon today where home is, and the answer is immediate: Sweden. Her immediate family is there, and she and Peter plan to spend their retirement traveling Europe in a motorhome once their sons are independent.

Reflecting on her journey, Noon views her choices as an ongoing lesson in self-reliance.

"My life is mine. My body is mine," she says. "Do what you are best at and what you enjoy most. You will be happy, the results will be excellent, and you will never stop growing."

Topsoe and Petrovietnam expand green energy cooperation



Topsoe has signed a new co-operation agreement with Vietnam's PetroVietnam Fertilizer and Chemicals Corporation (PVFCCo–Phú Mỹ) to expand their longstanding partnership into low-carbon energy and advanced chemical technologies.

Signed in Copenhagen on 19 October 2026, the agreement was exchanged at the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum the following day during Vietnamese President Tô Lâm's state visit, attended by King Frederik X.

The agreement builds on more than two decades of cooperation. Topsoe supplied the ammonia production technology for the Phú Mỹ Fertilizer Plant in southern Vietnam, and the companies have since worked together on operations and technical improvements.

According to PVFCCo, the plant's ammonia production unit has achieved 678 consecutive days of operation and received three operational excellence certificates from Topsoe.

Under the new agreement, the companies will explore more efficient production methods, energy recovery and emissions reduction. They will also evaluate technologies for low-carbon ammonia and green hydrogen, alongside technical cooperation and staff training.

The partnership supports PVFCCo's plans to diversify beyond traditional fertiliser production into higher-value chemicals and cleaner energy. No investment value or project timetable has been announced.

Vietnam and Finland discuss data centres and green infrastructure

Vietnam and Finland have discussed opportunities for Finnish companies to support Vietnam's development of data centres, artificial intelligence facilities and sustainable infrastructure.

During a meeting in Hanoi on 15 October, Vietnamese Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade Nguyễn Việt Sơn told Finnish Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Ville Tavio that Vietnam was interested in reliable, low-emission electricity supplies that could meet the growing energy demands of data centres and AI facilities.

The discussions also covered potential financing through Finnvera, Finland's official export credit agency. Finnish representatives highlighted the importance of stable and predictable electricity prices in attracting investment.



In a separate meeting, Tavio and representatives from Nokia Vietnam, Vaisala, Finnvera, Finnpartnership and Miltton Group met Deputy Minister of Construction Nguyễn Tường Văn to discuss smart transport, digitalisation, green cities, aviation, maritime transport and infrastructure financing.

The Finnish delegation presented technologies aimed at reducing construction time and costs. Văn said his ministry was ready to facilitate contacts between Finnish companies and Vietnamese businesses, including through conferences and workshops.

The meetings identified potential areas for cooperation, but no new contracts or financing agreements were announced.

Myanmar survivor files war crimes complaint in Denmark

A Myanmar woman living in Denmark has filed a criminal complaint against members of Myanmar's military leadership, asking Danish authorities to investigate alleged war crimes in Chin State.

Filed in Copenhagen on 26 October, the complaint concerns alleged killings, the burning of homes and the forced displacement of civilians. According to The Diplomat, the woman, whose identity has been withheld for security reasons, witnessed the destruction of homes in her village and lost family members and friends to military-linked violence.

The allegations have not been established in court. Danish authorities must assess the evidence and decide whether to pursue the case.

The complaint invokes Danish legislation that came into force in 2025, criminalising war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. According to the woman's lawyer, Eddie Omar Rosenberg Khawaja, the law provides a potential route for Danish authorities to examine alleged crimes committed abroad.

Myanmar Action Group Denmark and Chin Community Denmark are supporting the case by helping identify survivors and gather evidence in Denmark.

Myanmar has been embroiled in conflict since the military seized power in a February 2021 coup. The complaint adds to international



efforts to seek accountability for alleged abuses, as domestic avenues for justice remain severely constrained.

The filing does not mean a criminal investigation or prosecution has begun.

Sweden and Singapore explore cooperation on AI-powered 6G technology

Sweden and Singapore are exploring closer cooperation in next-generation telecommunications, with Ericsson and universities in both countries expected to collaborate on positioning technology using artificial intelligence (AI) and 6G networks.

Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam announced the proposed cooperation during a speech at Stockholm's Royal Palace on 19 October. The initiative involves Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson, KTH Royal Institute of Technology in Sweden and Nanyang Technological University in Singapore.

Tharman also said the two governments planned to conclude a



joint declaration covering emerging technologies, including quantum technology. The declaration had not yet been confirmed as signed.

Cooperation is also being explored in the energy sector. Singapore's Energy Market Authority and Sweden's Ministry of Climate and Enterprise are examining options for low-carbon electricity generation through the direct combustion of ammonia. Tharman described the proposal as a potential world first if found feasible, but it remains under investigation.

In education, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy will strengthen partnerships with KTH and the Stockholm School of Economics, creating opportunities for research collaboration and academic exchanges.

The announcements were made during Tharman's state visit to Sweden, which marked 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Swedish consular representatives from four countries meet in Bangkok

Swedish honorary consuls and consular assistants from Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar met in Bangkok on 8–9 October 2026 for a conference on consular support for Swedish citizens abroad.

Hosted by the Swedish embassy in Bangkok, the two-day meeting also included the head of the Swedish Office in Taiwan. Participants shared experiences, discussed day-to-day consular work and explored ways to strengthen cooperation in assisting Swedish citizens.



The embassy highlighted the honorary consuls' role in supporting Swedish residents and travellers, as well as maintaining connections with local communities. Their responsibilities also include promoting trade and cultural exchange.

Honorary consuls have also assisted the embassy in organising advance voting for Swedish elections in their respective areas.

Sweden's consular network across the region helps Swedish citizens access information and assistance while abroad. The honorary consuls and consular assistants work under the guidance of the Swedish embassy, supporting people who live in or travel through their areas of responsibility.

Nokia and Vietnam discuss cooperation on secure 5G networks



Vietnam's Minister of Public Security, Lương Tam Quang, has discussed potential co-operation with Nokia on private 5G networks, artificial intelligence and secure communications.

Quang met Nokia's Asia-Pacific head, Andrew Cope, in Hanoi on 15 October. According to Voice of Vietnam, he invited the Finnish company to explore dedicated 5G networks for security forces operating at locations and events with specific security requirements.

The discussions also covered resilient telecommunications infrastructure to maintain communications during emergencies and natural disasters. Quang highlighted Nokia's experience in communications systems for public safety, railways and airports.

He also proposed cooperation in research, technology transfer and training in advanced 5G, 6G, AI and cybersecurity. This could include specialist training and exchanges to help ministry personnel develop and operate new technologies.

Cope said Nokia was willing to share its experience, introduce solutions suited to the ministry's needs and explore joint research opportunities.

The meeting focused on potential areas of cooperation. No contract, investment amount or deployment timetable was announced.

Vietnam and Norway explore trade and investment opportunities

Vietnam's Ambassador to Norway, Le Thi Thu, met representatives of Oslo Chamber of Commerce / ICC Norway to discuss strengthening trade and investment ties between the two countries.

The meeting, held on 26 October, also included First Secretary Tran Thi Khanh Tra. According to the chamber, several of its members already operate in Vietnam, while Norwegian business interest in the country is growing, particularly in aquaculture and the circular economy.

The discussions followed the signing of a free trade agreement between Vietnam and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), comprising Norway, Iceland, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Norway and Iceland signed the agreement with Vietnam on 18 October.

The agreement is expected to improve market access, reduce trade barriers and provide a stronger framework for commercial cooperation once it enters into force.

Oslo Chamber of Commerce / ICC Norway said it would continue dialogue and support closer cooperation between Norwegian and Vietnamese businesses.



Vietnam Airlines signs cooperation agreements with SAS and Copenhagen Airport

Vietnam Airlines has signed cooperation agreements with Scandinavian airline SAS and Copenhagen Airport to strengthen air links between Vietnam and the Nordic region.

The memorandums of understanding were exchanged at the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum in Copenhagen on 20 October, during Vietnamese President Tô Lâm's state visit to Denmark.

The agreement with SAS covers potential cooperation in codeshare flights, frequent flyer programmes, cargo services, distribution systems and corporate customers. The airlines will also share market information and explore further business opportunities.

Under the agreement with Copenhagen Airport, the partners will explore market development and ways to improve airport operations. Additional direct routes and increased flight frequencies may be considered, depending on passenger demand and commercial viability. However, no new routes or launch dates have been confirmed.



Vietnam Airlines already operates a direct service between Ho Chi Minh City and Copenhagen, launched in December 2025.

The airline also signed an agreement with the Confederation of Danish Industry to strengthen business ties and explore commercial opportunities with Danish companies. All three partnerships were among 15 agreements announced at the forum.

Finland takes business mission to Indonesia and Vietnam

Finland has taken a business delegation to Indonesia and Vietnam to strengthen trade relations and explore opportunities in digital technology, energy, healthcare and sustainable infrastructure.

Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Ville Tavio led the Team Finland mission to Indonesia from 12 to 14 October and Vietnam on 15 and 16 October. The delegation included Finnish companies seeking commercial partnerships and opportunities to introduce their technologies to Southeast Asian markets.

In Jakarta, the programme focused on bilateral trade, Indonesia's



efforts to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the EU–Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Finnish companies also explored opportunities linked to Indonesia's investments in digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, smart energy systems and healthcare.

In Hanoi, discussions focused on digital infrastructure, data centres, sustainable energy, circular economy solutions and smart cities. Tavio also met representatives from Vietnamese ministries and businesses.

Vietnam is Finland's largest trading partner in Southeast Asia, according to Finland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The mission aimed to build on existing trade relations and strengthen practical cooperation between Finnish and Southeast Asian companies.

Vietnam's new ambassador to Sweden seeks closer business and community ties



Vietnam's new ambassador to Sweden, Pham Thi Kim Hoa, has pledged to strengthen cooperation in business, technology, education and culture, while encouraging the Vietnamese community to play a greater role in relations between the two countries.

Hoa presented her credentials to King Carl XVI Gustaf at the Royal Palace in Stockholm on 15 October 2026, formally beginning her diplomatic mission. The King welcomed her appointment and expressed hope that bilateral cooperation would continue to deepen.

According to the Vietnam News Agency, Hoa thanked Sweden for its longstanding support for Vietnam and pledged to strengthen contacts between government agencies, businesses, universities and research institutions.

She also highlighted the Vietnamese community in Sweden, which numbers more than 22,000 people, as an important link between the two countries. She said she would promote cultural and people-to-people exchanges and encourage the community to contribute to closer bilateral relations.

Her appointment comes as Sweden and Vietnam seek to expand cooperation in science, technology and innovation. The two countries established a Strategic Partnership in Science, Technology and Innovation in June 2025, providing a framework for closer collaboration in these fields.

Sweden was the first Western country to establish diplomatic relations with Vietnam, on 11 January 1969. Relations have since expanded to include commercial, scientific and educational cooperation.

Thai ambassador visits Aalborg organisation supporting vulnerable women

Thailand's ambassador to Denmark, Suphanvasa Chotikajan Tang, visited Reden Aalborg on 27 September to learn about its work supporting women in vulnerable situations.

During the visit, she met the organisation's director, Jeanette Dam Kaastrup, and Thai cultural employee Pattinee Frederiksen. Reden Aalborg maintains close ties with the local Thai community.

The visit was part of a wider



programme of embassy activities in Aalborg, including mobile consular services for Thai nationals in the city and surrounding areas. The team assisted 56 people, handling 27 passport applications, eight cases involving notarial services and civil registration, and 21 consular consultations.

The ambassador also attended the opening of Thai Kultur Festival 2026, which featured Thai music, classical dance, cultural performances and stalls selling food and other products.

Thailand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported on the visit on 26 October.

Finland and Singapore expand cooperation in AI and quantum technology

Finland and Singapore have agreed to strengthen cooperation in artificial intelligence, quantum technologies and digital infrastructure, with a focus on research, commercial partnerships and international standards.

The commitment was outlined in a joint statement issued on 13 October following a meeting in Singapore between Finnish Foreign Minister Elina Valtonen and Singaporean Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan.

Both countries plan to expand research partnerships and commercial cooperation while working together internationally to promote AI safety, transparency and common standards. Singapore contributes experience in AI governance, while Finland brings expertise in secure digital infrastructure and advanced technologies.



The statement builds on a 2022 memorandum of understanding on quantum technology involving Singapore's National Quantum Office, Finland's VTT Technical Research Centre, IQM and CSC IT Center for Science.

It also refers to a bilateral health-sector memorandum signed in 2026, covering medical research, health technology and artificial intelligence. Both countries further expressed support for research into open AI models and closer cooperation in international forums.

The statement sets out a broader commitment to collaboration but does not announce new investments, specific projects or implementation deadlines.

LEGO signs education cooperation agreement with Hanoi

The LEGO Group has signed an education cooperation agreement with Hanoi's People's Committee as part of efforts to strengthen Danish-Vietnamese business and institutional ties.

The agreement was among 15 partnerships announced by the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) during the Vietnamese state visit to Denmark. The documents were exchanged at Industriens Hus in Copenhagen on 20 October, during the Vietnam–Denmark Business Forum.

DI identifies education as the



focus of the LEGO agreement but has not provided details about specific projects, funding or an implementation schedule.

LEGO was also among six Danish companies participating in a roundtable with Vietnamese President Tô Lâm and Denmark's King Frederik X during the forum.

The company already supports educational initiatives in Vietnam. In April 2025, LEGO reported that its partnership with the National Centre for Special Education had distributed more than 2,500 LEGO Braille Bricks toolkits to educational institutions. It has also supported the Build the Change programme in primary schools and community spaces in Binh Duong province.

However, no details have been released indicating whether these existing initiatives are connected to the new Hanoi agreement.

Nordic education cooperation in Shanghai to continue after WorldSkills



Nordic consulates in Shanghai will continue discussions on vocational education and lifelong learning through March 2027, following their joint exhibition at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026.

In an update published on 21 October, the Danish Embassy in China said several thousand people had visited the Nordic Circle pavilion. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden jointly presented their approaches to practical skills and adapting to a changing labour market.

Supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, the initiative brought together education organisations and professionals to exchange experiences and explore opportunities for international cooperation.

Visitors to the pavilion could take a virtual bicycle ride through Copenhagen using VR headsets, answer questions about the Nordic countries and watch videos from their national Skills organisations.

Official visitors included Denmark's Ambassador to China, Michael Starbæk Christensen, Finnish Education Minister Anders Adlercreutz and Faroese Education and Culture Minister Bárður á Lakjuni.

SkillsDenmark also took part in a Nordic panel discussion on lifelong learning. Its deputy chair, Michael Boas Pedersen, shared Danish experiences in continuing education and vocational training.

WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 took place from 22 to 27 September. The embassy's update did not specify the dates or topics of the remaining discussions.

Vietravel and Denmark's NTA sign tourism cooperation agreement

Vietnamese travel company Vietravel Tourism and Danish tour operator Nordic Travel Associates (NTA) have signed a cooperation agreement covering strategy and tourism product development.

The agreement was among several cooperation documents exchanged in Copenhagen on 20 October, witnessed by Vietnam's General Secretary and President Tô Lâm and Denmark's King Frederik X, according to Vietnam's government news portal.

The agreement identifies strategy and product development as the main areas of cooperation but does not specify destinations, travel packages or a timetable for launching new products.



Copenhagen-based NTA works with travel businesses across the Nordic region and Asia, with offices, branches or sales teams in countries including Norway, Sweden, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

The company specialises in tailor-made trips to Northern Europe for leisure and corporate clients. Its destinations include Scandinavia, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Baltic states.

The partnership brings together Vietravel's experience in the Vietnamese tourism market and NTA's network across Nordic and Asian destinations, potentially creating opportunities for closer cooperation in travel product development.

Swedish man wanted over alleged cyber fraud arrested in Koh Samui

A Swedish national wanted in connection with an alleged cyber fraud case in Sweden has been arrested on the Thai island of Koh Samui.

Thai immigration police arrested the man following a request from Swedish authorities. He is suspected of involvement in a fraud scheme in which remote-access software was allegedly used to steal more than six million Swedish kronor.

The case reportedly involves AnyDesk, a software application that allows users to access computers remotely. Such tools can be used legitimately but may also be exploited by criminals to gain access to victims' devices and financial information.



The man is being held pending extradition proceedings, according to the report.

The arrest highlights cooperation between Thai and Swedish authorities in cases involving alleged financial crime across national borders. Thailand is home to a substantial international expatriate community, including Swedish residents and visitors.

The allegations against the man have not been established as facts in court. Further details about the charges and the extradition process have not been confirmed in this report.

Hong Kong suspends poultry imports from Danish municipality after bird flu outbreak



Hong Kong has suspended imports of poultry meat and products, including eggs, from Lolland Municipality in Denmark following an outbreak of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza.

The suspension took effect on 27 October, according to China's Xinhua News Agency, citing Hong Kong's Centre for Food Safety (CFS).

The food safety authority, which operates under Hong Kong's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, instructed the trade to halt imports from the affected Danish municipality as a precautionary measure to protect public health.

A CFS spokesperson said the decision followed notifications from the Danish Veterinary and Food Administration and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) concerning H5N1 outbreaks in Lolland and Jackson County in Minnesota, United States.

The centre has contacted Danish and US authorities and will continue monitoring updates from the relevant authorities and WOAH.

The suspension applies to poultry products originating from the affected area. The announcement does not establish that Danish poultry products already available in Hong Kong pose a health risk.

Hong Kong authorities have not announced when the restrictions might be lifted.

Vietnamese community launches áo dài association in Finland



The Vietnamese community in Finland has launched a traditional dress association to bring generations together and introduce Finnish residents to Vietnamese culture through the áo dài.

The Vietnamese Ao Dai Association in Finland was launched in Helsinki on 24 October, with support from the Vietnamese Embassy.

Gina Tran, speaking on behalf of the founders, said the association aims to connect áo dài enthusiasts and strengthen community ties, according to The World and Vietnam Report.

Vietnamese Ambassador Nguyen Hoang Dieu Tam attended the launch, which featured áo dài presentations and cultural performances. She highlighted the traditional dress's role in maintaining connections with Vietnam and passing cultural heritage on to younger generations.

The association aims to create opportunities for people in Finland to learn about and experience Vietnamese culture through the áo dài, a garment widely regarded as a symbol of Vietnamese identity.

Swedish healthtech company Encare partners with Thailand's National Cancer Institute

Swedish healthtech company Encare AB has signed an agreement with Thailand's National Cancer Institute to introduce a system aimed at improving surgical care and patient recovery, marking the company's entry into the Thai market.

The Bangkok-based specialist oncology hospital, which operates under Thailand's Ministry of Public Health, will be Encare's first hospital partner in the country. The initial collaboration will focus on colorectal surgery and the implementation of Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) guidelines, which aim to reduce complications and shorten hospital stays through evidence-based care before and after operations.

Encare will provide its ERAS Interactive Audit System, enabling medical teams to monitor compliance with recommended procedures, track patient outcomes and compare results with those of other hospitals. The hospital's colorectal surgery team will also take part in an implementation programme and work towards ERAS Qualification, awarded by the international ERAS Society following independent assessment.

The agreement, announced on 13 October 2026, expands Encare's presence in Asia-Pacific, where it works with 22 hospitals across 11 countries. Its regional partners include Tan Tock Seng Hospital in Singapore, Gleneagles Hospital Johor in Malaysia and FV Hospital in Vietnam.



Headquartered in Sweden, Encare is the commercial partner of the ERAS Society and supports the implementation of evidence-based surgical care in hospitals worldwide. The company reports working with more than 140 hospitals in over 30 countries.

The Thai collaboration could eventually expand to other surgical specialties, although no further areas have been confirmed.

Norwegian ambassador urges local solutions to Philippine waste challenges

Norwegian Ambassador Kristian Netland called for recycling solutions tailored to Philippine conditions at a conference in Makati on 22 October, attended by 180 participants.

The Norwegian Embassy organised the event in partnership with the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Innovation Norway and the Philippines Norway Business Council. Government officials, businesses and experts discussed ways to improve waste collection and recycling.

Netland said Norway could share its experience but stressed that Norwegian models needed to be adapted to local conditions. Solutions must make both environmental and economic sense.

Representatives from Norwegian companies TOMRA, DNV, ORKEL, INFRAMAR and Hoppsann Technology presented technologies and approaches including plastic recovery, waste baling and bottle-to-bottle recycling. Discussions also covered deposit return systems, which encourage consumers to return used beverage containers for a refund.

Philippine Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna said his department would help Norwegian companies connect with local authorities and potential pilot partners, according to the Philippine



News Agency.

Netland also outlined a proposed university pilot project for a deposit return system, tentatively scheduled for early 2027. However, GIZ said the project remained under development and depended on a successful assessment of the potential partner.

Finnish F1 driver Valtteri Bottas cycles 420 km from Malaysia to Singapore

Finnish Formula 1 driver Valtteri Bottas took an unconventional route between two Grand Prix races in Southeast Asia, cycling nearly 420 kilometres from Malaysia to Singapore.

The 37-year-old Cadillac driver spent four days riding through Malaysian countryside, plantations and jungle roads after the race at Sepang, arriving in Singapore on 7 October ahead of the Singapore Grand Prix.

The journey was longer than his originally planned 350 kilometres. Along the way, Bottas encountered



snakes, lizards and dogs, and cycled through parts of the jungle after dark.

An enthusiastic endurance cyclist, Bottas said the trip allowed him to experience a different side of Malaysia. He also praised the friendliness and encouragement of local people.

"I'm really glad I did it because I saw pretty much the whole of Malaysia in a few days," Bottas told reporters after arriving in Singapore.

Bottas shared updates from the journey on social media, attracting attention from fans. He completed the ride in time for the Singapore Grand Prix, held from 9 to 11 October.

Norway brings its folklore to Manila book fair

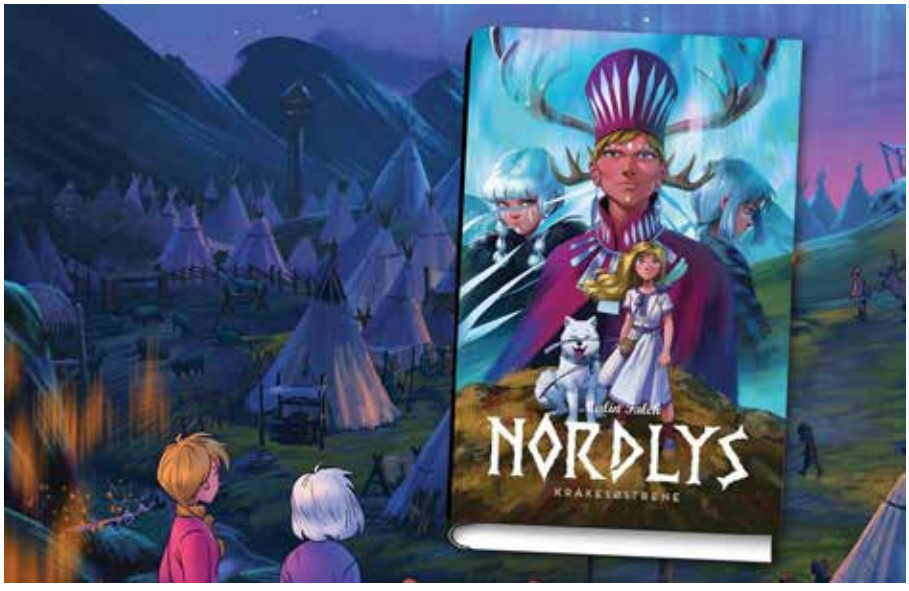
Norwegian literature and folklore took centre stage at the Manila International Book Fair, where illustrator and author Malin Falch presented her fantasy graphic novel series ***Nordlys***.

The event also marked the first public engagement in the Philippines by Norway's new ambassador, Kristian Netland.

Falch's ***Nordlys***, known internationally as ***Northern Lights***, draws inspiration from Norwegian folklore and mythology. The series combines fantasy storytelling with Nordic landscapes and supernatural elements, introducing international readers to stories rooted in Norway's cultural traditions.

The series has reportedly sold more than 300,000 copies worldwide, reflecting the growing international audience for illustrated fantasy literature from the Nordic region.

The appearance forms part of Norway's cultural engagement



in the Philippines, where literary events provide opportunities to introduce Norwegian authors and stories to local audiences.

For Norway, cultural diplomacy offers a way to build connections beyond traditional political and economic relations. Literature and storytelling can also introduce younger readers to Nordic culture and mythology.

The book fair appearance comes as Norway continues to maintain diplomatic and cultural ties with the Philippines through its embassy in Manila.

EFTA countries sign free trade agreement with Vietnam, opening market access for Nordic exporters



Norway and Iceland have joined Switzerland and Liechtenstein in signing a free trade agreement with Vietnam, creating new opportunities for Nordic exporters through lower tariffs and improved market access. Norwegian seafood producers, particularly those exporting salmon and mackerel, are among the expected beneficiaries.

The agreement between Vietnam and the four members of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was signed in Hanoi on 18 October 2026, following negotiations that began in 2012. It establishes a preferential trade framework with Vietnam for the four countries, complementing the European Union's separate free trade agreement with Vietnam, which entered into force in August 2020.

According to Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, approximately half of Norwegian goods exports to Vietnam will become tariff-free when the agreement enters into force. Within seven years, more than 98 per cent will be covered by zero tariffs. The agreement has been signed but remains subject to approval procedures in the participating countries.

Norwegian seafood among the main beneficiaries

Seafood is one of the sectors expected to gain from the new arrangements. Vietnam currently imposes import duties of up to 15 per cent on Norwegian salmon and mackerel. Under the agreement, tariffs on salmon will be eliminated when it enters into force, while those on mackerel will be phased out over three years.

Norwegian Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy Marianne Sivertsen Næss said the agreement would give Norwegian seafood exporters trading conditions comparable to those of important competitors and create opportunities to increase exports to Vietnam.

Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide welcomed the agreement as a way to diversify the country's international trade relationships. "In a more unpredictable world, Norway needs to diversify its trade relations," he said.

Bilateral trade in goods between Norway and Vietnam amounted to approximately NOK 19 billion in 2025, according to the Norwegian government.

Opportunities for Icelandic businesses

Iceland also expects improved access to Vietnam's market, particularly for seafood. Bilateral goods trade exceeded ISK 10 billion in 2025, according to Iceland's Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Icelandic exports amounted to approximately ISK 452 million, consisting mainly of seafood, particularly mackerel. Imports from Vietnam reached almost ISK 9.8 billion, primarily electronics, footwear and clothing.

Icelandic Foreign Minister Þorgerður Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, who signed the agreement in Hanoi, met Vietnamese Foreign Minister Lê Hoài Trung on 18 October to discuss closer cooperation in trade, investment and energy infrastructure. She said Icelandic businesses had high expectations for the opportunities created by the agreement.

Beyond tariffs, the agreement covers trade in services, investment, intellectual property, government procurement, technical barriers to trade and sustainable development. Norwegian business organisation SMB Norge also pointed to potential opportunities for smaller companies in machinery, industrial products, chemicals, food production, technology and services.

Total trade between EFTA's four member countries and Vietnam reached approximately EUR 4.8 billion in 2025, according to EFTA.

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