



# Newsletter

## Contents

- The Last Month in Brief, Shipping Companies ..... 1
- GI (HK) Business, World Security: Economics, Nuclear, Europe ..... 2
- The Arab World, Afghanistan & Pakistan, Palestine, Asia ..... 3
- Thailand and Malaysia, The Malacca Straits, Somalia, Africa, The Americas, Myanmar, India ..... 4
- Nepal News..... 5 - 7
- Hong Kong News ..... 7 - 9
- Conclusion ..... 10



We publish this month a photograph of the Norwegian Escape of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings.

If you have pictures or postcards of your ship, please send them in to us for future Newsletters.

## We Welcome

### Norwegian Cruise Lines

Laxman Gurung  
Alexander Antony Jabamalai

### Columbia Cruise Services

Amrit Gurung  
Hira Bahadur Ghimire  
Chandra Bahadur Gurung  
Urmila Lama Moktan  
Shila Thapa Magar  
Amisha Thapa  
Anuja Nakarmi  
Rembo Darlami Magar

### Universal Ship Management

Shambhu Thapa Magar  
Deepak Gurung  
Amol Gurung  
Ash Bahadur B.K.  
Ashok Kumar Nepali  
Som Bahadur Gurung  
Ravi Ale

## SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 750 men and 170 women on ships, a total of 920 crew and staff under management.

I travelled to Europe this month to visit the offices of many of our clients. In England, I visited Carnival (United Kingdom) (Cunard and P&O) and Disney. In Germany, I visited Carnival Maritime (AIDA) in Hamburg and AIDA's headquarters in Rostock and Columbia Cruise Services in Hamburg. I was delighted to find that you all had established a fine reputation with all the managers I met and that, as a result, there will be more vacancies coming our way in the months to come. Thank you and well done!

Particularly interesting news was that Columbia have acquired a contract to manage the Ocean Gala, which the Swedish Government has hired to anchor off the coast to house families of migrants. We shall be sending crew to help man the ship later in the year.

AIDA has asked us for the first time to provide some female Guards, so we shall be working on that project soon.

## Pools and Leave

My visits gave me an understanding that the cruise industry is moving to a system of holding a small number of selected and trained crew in country of origin to enable vacancies to be filled on time.



## GI (HK) Business

We are providing security services for 28 Hong Kong Clients and have 104 security staff employed.

Our employment agency placement service found 0 Bodyguard/Driver post position over the last month.

The background to this move is that the increased complexity of preparation for employment at sea is causing delays and so undermanning on ships. The combination of MLC & STCW requirements, increased training demanded by shipping companies, growing national government processing provisions and increased embassy scrutiny of visa applications is making it very difficult to get crew to ship on time. What used to take 6 weeks on initial employment now takes 3-4 months. Visa applications that used to take 4-5 days now take 2-3 weeks.

This means that we are being asked more and more to hold 2-3 crew who are already trained and maybe even have visas and who are ready to join ship. It also means that any crew whose length of leave does not permit the renewal of certificates or the application for visas may have to be replaced from the pool and wait for the next vacancy.

So it will be even more important that you report to the office immediately you return home as if you delay doing so and we run out of time to fill the vacancy, we may have to send someone from the client's pool.

## World Security

### Economics

The problems with Greek debt have again been given a temporary solution but no debt relief has been granted. That, and the possibility that Britain may leave the European Union after the referendum in the UK on 23 June, is beginning to cause economic worries in Europe.

### Nuclear

North Korea's nuclear programme continues to cause diplomatic exchanges and worries internationally.

### Europe

The crisis over migrant immigration has eased as the agreement reached between Germany and Turkey to return migrants has reduced the flow of people. However, it is unlikely that the European Union will be able to give Turkey what it has demanded in compensation, so this agreement may collapse, and numbers would then again rise. Many migrants have been drowned in recent weeks attempting to cross the Mediterranean to Europe.

In Ukraine, tensions with Russia remain high.



Image shows possible preparations for North Korea nuclear test

## The Arab World

Peace negotiations have so far failed to end the Syrian civil war and violence has continued. It now appears that Russia has not withdrawn all of its troops from the country. Areas under the control of ISIS, particularly Fallujah and Mosul, are being attacked by Iraqi government, Shia militia and Kurdish forces. However, ISIS has launched attacks aimed at increasing its holdings of land in Syria along the Turkish border.

Conflict has not yet ended in Libya or Yemen.



Kerry says Russia is committed to limiting Syrian government's ability to fly over civilian areas

## Afghanistan and Pakistan

The security situation in Afghanistan remains grave. Pakistan has not suffered largescale attacks by Islamic militants recently but remains unsafe.

## Palestine

There is little new currently in Gaza or the West Bank.

## Asia

Tension continues in the areas of the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, which are all claimed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia, and in the Sea of Japan around islands claimed by China, Japan and South Korea. China's insurgency problems in the Muslim areas of far-western Xinjiang province and in Tibet continue. The Black Flag Movement, an ISIS-linked group, continues Muslim terrorism in Mindanao in the southern Philippines, and terrorist recently hijacked an Indonesian ship in the area. The new president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, has threatened to carry out extra-judicial killings of criminals and of journalists he has branded as 'corrupt'.



A view of the city of Sansha on Woody Island, part of the disputed Paracel chain of islands, where China is promoting tourism.

## Thailand and Malaysia

The Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand, near the Malaysian border, continues.

## The Malacca Straits

There is no news this month of piracy in the area.

## Somalia

There have been no more reports of Somali piracy. Fighting continues in the country between the government and its foreign allies and Islamic militant al-Shabaab fighters.

## Africa

Nigerian forces continue to battle Islamic terrorists Boko Haram in the north of the country. Some of the girls kidnapped over a year ago by Boko Haram have escaped but most remain enslaved. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains disturbed.



Internally Displaced Children in Bangui, Central African Republic.

## Myanmar

There is no news of a security nature this month.

## India

There is little news of a security nature this month.

## The Americas

Venezuela continues its slide towards bankruptcy and civil disorder. In Brazil, moves continue to impeach the president, Dilma Rouseff amid an economic crisis in the country.



Women shout slogans during a protest against Brazil's interim President Michel Temer and in support of suspended President Dilma Rouseff on Paulista Avenue in Sao Paulo, Brazil, on May 17.



Women in Bhramarpura, a town in Nepal populated mainly by women. Most of the town's men have migrated in search of work.

## Nepal News

### Where the streets have no men: the Nepalese town where women hold sway

**3 May-** At first glance, Bhramarpura's dusty, sun-seared streets look like many others in southern Nepal. But there is a conspicuous difference. Nearly everyone making the wheels of this small town turn – selling groceries, carrying grain or pumping water – is female. There is hardly a young man in sight. Years of migration, fuelled by hope of providing a better life for their families, have drained Bhramarpura of working-age fathers, brothers and sons. Practically every household has at least one male family member working overseas, leaving boys and elderly men as the few remaining males in a town run by women.

In a male-dominated country where women are largely confined to household chores, or certain tasks in the fields, Bhramarpura is a notable exception, with women assuming duties usually reserved for men. They are the backbone of the community, and its public representatives.

The outflow of men and the influx of remittances have given Bhramarpura a local reputation for wealth, relatively speaking. But while poverty here may be less severe than in neighbouring villages, privilege comes at a cost.

Taradevi Sah, 36, has seen her husband only twice in six years since he left for Kuwait.

"It's painful," she says, sitting on a rug on a porch among a dozen other women, and an equal number of children. "But it's less painful than poverty. Him sending money takes some of the pain away."

The women of Bhramarpura are used to paying for that money with loneliness.

"It is a cause of sorrow that newly wedded husbands have to leave their wives," says Madhu Thakur, a community health worker. "There are problems. But problems would be bigger if there were no money here."

Nepal is among the latest countries in south Asia to be transformed by mass migration of low-skilled workers, mainly to countries in the Gulf. The country's south is leading the trend. Mahottari district, in which Bhramarpura lies, is the second-largest source of migrants, according to the government.

An estimated 1,500 Nepalese leave the country daily, not counting those who go to India, who are not registered because a long-standing bilateral agreement between the governments of India and Nepal means they do not need work permits. The remittances they send home

make up almost one-third of Nepal's gross domestic product. Since 2006, about 2.6 million Nepalese have gone abroad to work – one in 10 of the entire population.

In Bhramarpura, nearly one in four people migrate. Out of 13,000 inhabitants, about 3,000 are working abroad, according to the town secretary, Ram Paradath Thakur.

The visible gender bias has fed another reputation, one locals say is unfair: that Bhramarpura is promiscuous. The rumour has been reinforced by the plethora of children in the town, despite most husbands living overseas.

Binod Kumar Sah, a health worker who moved here recently, relayed an acerbic saying among neighbouring villages that: "In Bhramarpura, a child is conceived over the phone."

Bijay Shah, 25, worked in Saudi Arabia for five years before marrying. He continued to work abroad but decided to return home five years later because he worried his wife might have an affair, he says.

There is some male presence in Bhramarpura. Groups of young men lounge in the shade around the main square, but almost all were on leave from Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, where they work in construction or the services industry.

Nepalese migrants are often exploited by overseas employers, as well as recruitment agencies in Nepal, which deceive them about wages and conditions. Still, in a country where unemployment is as high as 46%, remittances help families pay for healthcare and education, and invest in land.

But new money often feeds new lifestyles, says Madhu Thakur. Many of the migrants, she says, return with alcohol or drug addictions, while at home, older boys who refuse to obey their mothers sometimes spend their fathers' wages on alcohol or pills.

Large-scale migration not only profoundly changes the social fabric of communities, it can also undermine long-term development.

"[Migration] has deepened the consumption-driven economy in Nepal, where goods are not produced but consumed, and where jobs are not created," says Jeevan Sharma, a Nepalese migration expert at the University of Edinburgh.

"Agriculture has suffered, as there is less labour available, and there has been a tendency to leave the land barren," he says.

Like their husbands abroad, women left behind are vulnerable to exploitation, too. Sunaina Devi, an elderly woman with a granddaughter on her lap, recalls how a man from a different village had tried to "dishonour" her before a male neighbour had intervened.

"I didn't know what to do. If my husband had been here, he would have known what to do," she says.

She and other women in Bhramarpura accuse corrupt officials of taking advantage of them, and banks of demanding bribes before releasing remittances from their husbands.

"We can't protest like men can," Devi says.

"I was very aware [of the corruption]. It made me angry," says Madhu Thakur's



These couples both decided that a life together is worth more than a migrant's income. Madhu Thakur and Bhadesh are the couple in the centre..

husband, Bhadesh. In Saudi Arabia, he says, he earned only 600 riyals (£110) a month, working 12 hours a day, six days a week. "But how can we oppose? I worked, my whole family ate."

Now, he and Madhu are among the few couples who have concluded that a life together is worth more than a migrant's income.

After three years in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Bhadesh decided his salary – part of which he spent on sending his 11-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter to school – was not enough incentive to be separated from them.

"I make less money now, but at least I'm with my family," Bhadesh says, serving energy drinks from a fridge in the small convenience store he bought when he

returned last year.

"We have decided to celebrate with what we earn," Madhu says. "I would have done anything to stop him from going again."

### Flowers and femidoms: Nepal wedding website offers contraception advice

4 May- A website offering wedding services while providing advice on family planning and reproductive health was launched in Nepal last week in an attempt to increase low rates of contraceptive use.

The Newlywed website, launched by Marie Stopes International on Thursday, lists local companies that provide bridal wear, caterers, flowers, honeymoon ideas and other services for the big day. A mobile app allows people to book appointments with vendors.



A Nepalese bride and groom during a wedding ceremony at a Hindu temple..

But alongside is a section, with the deliberately provocative title of SEXploration, that offers information on family planning and sexual health.

Anyone who registers for the website will receive pop-up messages with family planning advice.

The site is geared towards Nepal's urban youth, specifically in the capital, Kathmandu, who are more technically savvy. Mobile coverage in Nepal is more than 90%.

"We hope it will be the Yellow Pages for wedding planning, with sex education running through it," said Anjana KC, a project manager at Marie Stopes Nepal.

"We didn't just want to have a website with [family planning] information. We didn't think people were going to just go on there to learn. We have lists of vendors for wedding planning and we have information on sex, family planning, pregnancy, abortion and our services embedded in it."

According to government figures (pdf), 25% of people who want to use contraceptives are unable to access services. UN figures, published this year, show that about 52% of married or cohabiting women aged between 15 and 49 use some form of family planning in Nepal; the average rate across Asia is 68%.

Last year, the government published a five-year proposal to scale up family planning services in an attempt to reduce fertility rates and cut maternal and infant deaths.

Nepal is also attempting to raise the age of marriage. The country has one of the highest rates of child marriage in south-east Asia. The government has increased the legal age for marriage to 20, and abolished a clause that allowed early marriage if parents consented. But the average age a girl gets married is still around 17.

Marie Stopes said newlyweds often have little or no knowledge of family planning, or the contraceptives available, and rarely talk about it with their partners

when they are planning their wedding. Many rely on information from family and friends, and myths abound about contraceptives, including that if a man uses a condom it will make him infertile.

The website and app are the second phase of Marie Stopes's newlyweds project. The first phase, rolled out in Kathmandu and nearby Kavrepalanchok district, included wedding preparation classes, which mixed dancing and games with guidance on family planning and sexual health. It also provided a space for couples to talk to each other about their life together. "Planning a wedding is so chaotic, they [couples] don't think beyond that," said KC.

Soni Baidar Rajbhandari, 27, and her husband, Raj Kumar, 32, attended classes in Kathmandu.

"In Nepal, our families are very conservative, but if we have good communication, we can cope with every problem. We're not planning to have children right now; maybe after a few years. We're learning what kind of contraception is good for us," said Soni.

But pressure from parents to have children sooner can be difficult to deal with. "Immediately after marriage they want their grandsons," she said. "They are pretty disappointed when we say no," added Raj. "We do say we will do it, but we need time."

### **Nepalese woman breaks own record to climb Everest a seventh time**

**20 May-** A Nepalese woman has climbed Mount Everest for a record seventh time.

Lhakpa Sherpa, 42, who works in a 7-Eleven shop in Connecticut in the US, reached the summit of the 8,850-metre peak from the Tibetan side on Friday, said Rajiv Shrestha, of 7 Summits Adventure, the company that organised her expedition.

She has broken her own record for the most summits of the world's highest mountain by a woman, Shrestha said.

Sherpa was accompanied to the top by a Nepalese guide. Three hours later, eight members of a Russian team and eight

guides climbed the same northern route, Shrestha said.

Sherpa, one of 11 children, was born in eastern Sankhuwasabha district, where the world's fifth-highest mountain, Makalu, is located.

Two Sherpa climbers share between them the record of 21 ascents of Everest, the most number of climbs by men.

More than 330 people climbed Everest from the Nepalese side this month. Expeditions had been forced off the world's tallest peak by an earthquake last year that killed at least 18 people at base camp.

About 9,000 people were killed across Nepal when the 7.8-magnitude quake struck, in the worst natural disaster in the country's recorded history.



Lhakpa Sherpa, who has now climbed Everest seven times.



## Hong Kong News

### Answers demanded over collapse of green roof at Hong Kong City University

**20 May**-Hong Kong's education minister demanded a full report from City University after a giant, green rooftop at its Kowloon Tong campus collapsed without warning yesterday, injuring three people in a hall that was filled with hundreds of students taking an exam just a few days ago.

The university set up a three-member committee to investigate what went wrong at its sports centre after Secretary for Education Ng Hak-kim ordered "a very detailed, comprehensive and urgent investigation of the whole thing".

Experts believed the collapsed rooftop, covering an area of 1400 sq meters, with newly-added green pitch last year, was attributed to overloading as the rooftop with a loading capacity of 73 kilograms per square metre, was about at least five times less than structurally capable of holding vegetation of at least 300 to 400 kilograms per sq metre.

The legality of the green structures' addition is also put into question as the university admitted that they did not submit any buildings plans of the structures to the Buildings Department

for approval. But Cheng Ka-hing, the department's senior building surveyor said any alterations that affect the building's structure required the owner to submit the relevant buildings plans to the department.

"It's not illegal", insisted Wong Ka-yu, the university's director of campus development and facilities. "We've done the green rooftops all according to the building regulations. There's no need for a formal submission."

The collapse happened around 2.30 pm yesterday at Chan Tai Ho Multi-Purpose Hall, located on the fifth floor of the Hu Fa Kuang Sports Centre with over 20 years of history, as five to six caterers were preparing for a dinner event to be held today.

"Initial investigation showed that there was water leakage inside the hall. We were told that water was showering down from the roof," a source familiar with the investigation said.

"The caterers immediately ran out of the hall to seek help. Shortly security guards arrived. The roof collapsed and the air force pushed two of the security guards to the floor."

Two men and a woman were injured. Both men, aged 55 and 57, were security guards. They were sent to Caritas Medical Centre in Sham Shui Po and in a stable condition while the woman suffered a shock.

In addition to the collapsed roof at the sports centre, the university has also shut down a green rooftop at Wei Hing Theatre as an "emergency measure" because both structures are similar.

Herman Hu Shao-ming, chairman of the university's council, said inspections will be conducted at buildings with green rooftops on campus.

"First of all, we will check green gardens rooftops, as many of our buildings have 20 to 30 years of history already," said Hu, after visiting the injured in Caritas Medical Centre.

"We have always had regular maintenance and inspection. Now we will see if there are any spots requiring more detailed checkup," said Hu.



Green roofs, at present introduced to four buildings on campus, are part of a green initiative advocated by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying when he was a council chairman in 2008.

The committee, comprising vice-presidents Sunny Lee Wai-kwong and Professor Horace Ip Ho-shing, and chief-of-staff Professor Paul Lam Kwan-sing, is expected to deliver a report to the Education Bureau within two weeks. The committee will also include a structural engineering expert and two student representatives.

### **Misdirected energy: Hong Kong City University roof collapse highlights danger of adding vegetation to existing roofs**

**23 May** - The giant rooftop that collapsed at a City University sports centre and left three injured has highlighted the potential threat of adding rooftop vegetation, a novel way to fight the heat-island effect, to old buildings.

The accident, which could have injured hundreds of people originally scheduled to attend a dinner event on Saturday night, also called into question the lack of government supervision of this kind of rooftop vegetation, which is promoted by the Environment Bureau.

At the City University, the vegetation was understood to have been added last year

to the top of Chan Tai Ho Multi-purpose Hall, which was completed back in the 1990s.

While the roof was not designed to hold anything substantial – as indicated in the building plan submitted to the government in 1989 – vegetation that would have required a roof five times stronger was nonetheless planted last year, as part of the university's pledge to go green.

"The figures showed that the rooftop was not supposed to hold a lot of [vegetation]," said Vincent Ho Kui-yip of the Institute of Surveyors.

Ho said the current building regulations relied heavily on owners' own initiative in submitting a plan for approval if they altered a building's structure. But the Buildings Department would never know if owners skipped this procedure. He said the department should remind owners to resubmit plans for new structures.

Professor Jim Chi-yung, an expert on urban soil science and a staunch advocate of green roofs, said it would be "very risky" to install a green roof on a structure – especially an existing one – that did not meet loading capacity standards.

"The roof must be able to take the weight

of the dead loads of soil, vegetation and drainage as well as the life loads, which include people walking on it," Jim said. "The load-bearing capacity must be bigger than the sum of the dead load and life loads."

He added that the drainage design for a green roof could be an Achilles heel, as it was often not done properly. Poor drainage could lead to water gathering on the roof, leading to dangerously high loading which could jeopardise the roof structure.

But experts asked the public not to panic over the environmentally friendly measure.

"It is already an accepted practice around the world," said Leung Man-kit of the Green Building Council's policy and research committee.

City University said on its website that the green roof top "could achieve an energy saving of about 60 kWh/sq m per year, a reduction in CO2 emissions of about 3.2 tonnes per year, [equivalent] to planting 137 trees".

The Buildings Department could not confirm whether a new plan was submitted before the university added the rooftop vegetation. The university said on Friday night that the contractor had made proper assessments.



The roof had been covered with grass

# Conclusion

I would like to pass on to you how proud I was to hear such good comments on your work from all the cruise lines I visited this year, and thank you for that. Well done to you all and keep it up!



**Nigel Collett**  
**Managing Director**

