



Newsletter

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We publish this month a photograph of AIDAbella of AIDA Cruise.

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

We Welcome

This month we have continued to prepare crew for the Tui Discovery for Columbia and have sent crew for AIDA to the Philippines for the Carnival Security Course. NCL has selected more crew in both Myanmar and Nepal and their preparation has commenced. Universal Shipmanagement has also demanded more crew for their ships operating out of Singapore, so it has been a usefully busy month.

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 732 men and 168 women on ships, a total of 900 crew and staff under management.



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.

Editor of Newsletter



Derek Lin

World Security

Economics

There is little news about the world's economy at the moment.

Nuclear

North Korea's growing nuclear threat has elicited a string verbal response from Donald Trump, President of the USA, who will visit China shortly to discuss how to handle the issue. There has been no change in the situation regarding Iran.

Europe

Bomb attacks took place in St Petersburg, Russia, which appears to have been a terrorist incident, and which resulted in the deaths of at least 12 people and the injuring of more. In London, a Muslim with a record of anti-social violence drove his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge then stabbed to death a police officer on duty outside Parliament. He was then shot dead. ISIS claimed responsibility but it appears that the man's connection with them was small, if any. Arrests followed across the country.

On 29 March, Britain gave formal notice to the European Union that it would leave that organization by March 2019. British troops have deployed to Estonia to bolster that NATO member against a Russian build up of troops across the frontier.



Two killed in Westminster 'terror' incident

The Middle East and the Arab World

Despite the ceasefire, violence continues in Syria. The civil war continues in Yemen. Russian forces have arrived in Libya to support one faction in the civil division of the country. Iraqi forces continue to move into the final areas of Mosul that are occupied by ISIS.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

The Taliban threat to the current government of Afghanistan grows. In Pakistan, however, the government seems to have gained a firmer control of terrorist violence.

Somalia

Fighting continues in Somalia between the government and its international allies and al Shabab Islamic fundamentalists. One incident of piracy was reported off Somalia.



A member of the Afghan security forces fires a rocket-propelled grenade launcher against ISIS militants in Nangarhar province on Feb. 16.

Thailand and Malaysia

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

Asia

Tensions remain in areas of the South China Sea and Sea of Japan claimed by China and many other surrounding nations. Insurgencies in southern Thailand and the southern islands of the Philippines continue. There are currently no reports of piracy in the Malacca Straits.



The captain of a Vietnamese Coast Guard vessel patrols waters near the Parcel Islands

Palestine

There have been no developments this month.

Africa

There is little news of a security interest at present. Nigeria and neighbouring countries remain at risk of Islamic terrorism. South Sudan remains dangerously violent. The waters off Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta, remain dangerous for local pirate attacks. Zimbabwe continues on its path towards bankruptcy.

Myanmar

There is no major news of security interest at present.

The Malacca Straits

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

India

There is no major news of security interest at present.



The Somali threat has been put at bay but pirates have shifted their sights elsewhere.

The Americas

Venezuela continued its slide into chaos and poverty.



Venezuela Rocked by Political Chaos



Nepal News

Mount Everest climbers enlisted for canvas bag clean-up mission

29 Mar- The government of Nepal and Everest expedition organisers have launched a clean-up operation at 21,000ft to remove rubbish left on the world's highest peak after a series of deadly avalanches.

Sherpas and other climbers have been given 10 canvas bags each capable of holding 80kg (176lbs) of waste to place at different elevations on Mount Everest.

Dambar Parajuli, president of the Expedition Operators Association of Nepal, said on Wednesday the bags had been sent to camp two, a large camping site established in 2014 after an avalanche killed 16 Nepalese guides, leading to the cancellation of the climbing season.

The following year's climbs were also axed after an earthquake-triggered avalanche swept Everest's south base camp, killing 19 people.

Veteran guide Russell Brice said the tents and supplies left by rescued climbers needed to be removed.

Once full, the bags will be winched by helicopters and flown down the mountain. Removing the sacks by air means Sherpa guides do not have to risk carrying heavy loads of waste through the treacherous Khumbu Icefall to the base camp.

It is also cheap: the operation will use helicopters that would ordinarily return empty after dumping climbing ropes on the site. "This way we hope to bring down the trash without any extra cost," Durga Dutta Dhakal, an official at the Nepal tourism department, told Reuters.

Recreational climbers will be urged to pick up any rubbish along their route, while Sherpas who carried equipment up the mountain for their clients will be paid extra – US\$2 per kg – to return with bags of trash.

Hundreds of climbers and their guides

are expected to attempt to scale the 8,850-metre (29,035ft) peak during the spring season. Climbers generally arrive in April and attempt to reach the summit in May when conditions are favourable.

Mountaineers have previously removed more than 16 tonnes of litter from Everest, but there are no estimates of how much is still on the mountain.

More than 600 people scaled the summit last year via Nepal and China. Hiking officials expect the number to swell this season as many mountaineers, whose \$11,000 (£9,000) permits received two-year extensions after the quake, are expected to return.

A group of hiking companies that sponsor climbers said it was trying to bolster coordination between teams at high camps to avoid long queues of climbers in the mountain's "death zone".

"This will reduce crowding, minimise risks and improve safety," Parajuli said.



Nepali professionals pose for a photograph during an interaction programme “Needs, Opportunities and Skill Transfers in Nepal” organised in Pathum Thani, Thailand on February 25, 2017.

Nepali professionals in Thailand to help Nepal develop

16 Mar- Thailand-based non-residential Nepali professionals have decided to render their expertise to the development process of Nepal.

Nepali professionals, academicians and business community made a conclusion that they would volunteer in a united way, amid an interaction “Needs, Opportunities and Skill Transfers in Nepal” organised in Pathum Thani, Thailand on February 25.

Nepali professionals serving at the UN and other organisations, senior academicians

and senior staff from the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and executive committee representatives of the Non-Resident Nepali Association (NRNA), Thailand were present in the programme.

The meeting was chaired by Beni Madhav Lekhak a representative belonging to the Ch Karnchang Company Limited.

The interaction has prioritised four themes to work on including management of remittance, development of renewable energy, value-added products from agro-industry and herbs and construction sectors, according to the NRNA Thailand.

The interaction also formed a nine-member working committee headed by Professor Rajendra Prasad Shrestha to review skill and knowledge transfer issues and devise the future course of actions for the same.

Lekhak, Bishwa Nath Tiwari, Gyanendra Sthapit, Anil Kumar Anal, Shobhakar Dhakal, Madan Bandhu Regmi, Khagendra Raj Dhakal and Gabo Gurung are other members of the committee.

No more fake views: Nepal tests GPS-tracking devices for Mount Everest climbs

22 Mar- Unfortunately, some people lie about topping Mount Everest. Most athletic achievements are carefully observed and documented but to date, the same hasn't held true for climbing to the top of the world's tallest mountain. It's not like anyone could actually stay there and check people's names off a list or give them a token when they reach the summit.

So at least a few people have faked it. The Nepalese government doesn't want to put up with climbing cheats and is instituting a program to stop it. During this year's two-month climbing season, which usually

starts in late March, Nepal will issue GPS-tracking devices to some climbers. It's a trial trail experiment, according to Reuters.

Durga Dutta Dhakal, an official with Nepal's Tourism Department, said the department will assess the effectiveness at the end of the season. “If this works, we'll make it mandatory for all climbers to carry the device from next year,” Dhakal said.

Here is how it will work: Climbers who return to the Everest base camp and report successful summits will be required to show photographs and provide documentation from climber liaisons who remain at the base camp. After the climbers get back to Kathmandu, the country's capital,

they will turn in their GPS-tracking units. Officials will review the GPS “breadcrumb” trail, a record of progress with times and locations, as a way to certify the climbers actually did achieve the summit.

Another potential benefit to the GPS trackers is assistance in communicating with rescue teams if climbers need assistance. Nepal gets approximately four percent of its gross domestic product from tourism and mountain climbing, according to Reuters. Both income sources suffered after numerous deaths from avalanches in 2014 and 2015. The GPS trackers may be able to simultaneously protect Everest's reputation from frauds and make climbing a little safer.



A migrant worker carries a pole at a World Cup construction site in the Qatari capital Doha.

We must all stand up to the world's richest nation and oppose its use of modern slavery

19 Mar- Life for a migrant worker under Qatar's kafala sponsorship system means living under your employer's total control over every aspect of your existence – from opening a bank account to changing jobs, and even being allowed to leave the country.

This corrupt system starts with recruitment under false pretences in their home countries and entraps them once they set foot in Qatar. Talking to workers in the squalid labour camps has brought home to me how these proud young men, who have left home to build a future, are deprived of dignity and treated in the most inhumane way. Worse, in the years that I've been visiting the camps, nothing has changed.

Hundreds of these workers succumb every year to the appalling living and working conditions, returning to their home countries in coffins, their deaths callously written off as the price of progress.

The world's richest country is spending £400m a week on the huge infrastructure programme for 2022, but paying the workers who are making it happen as little as £8 a day. There is no minimum wage, no unions are allowed and even basic protections at work are lacking for most.

Winning the World Cup bid could have been a catalyst for change in Qatar, but it has not been yet. Certainly, nothing has improved for the families of the 13 workers who died in a company labour camp fire last June, or for the 500 workers who lost all their possessions in two more labour camp fires this year. They were offered only \$50 in compensation and had to rely on charity for food, clothes and bedding.

Qatar's PR machine is still unable to hide the truth. Its government told the UN's International Labour Organisation this month that the exit permit regime for migrant workers has been repealed – a blatant lie.

Workers still have to get their employer's permission to change jobs and even to leave the country. Appeals to a government committee are being refused at a rate of five a day. Workers learn by text message if they can leave the country or not, and many have been waiting for a month for a decision. The fate of French footballer Zahir Belounis, who was trapped in Qatar for 19 months by his club's owners after a wage dispute, can befall any one of the nearly 2 million migrant workers there, at any time.

At the ILO, worker and employer delegates are keeping up the pressure on Qatar. Indeed, some multinational construction companies seeking improvement want

to negotiate with the global construction union Building and Woodworkers International. But the government won't allow even that.

Right now, countries need to stand up at the ILO and elsewhere to Qatar's financial muscle and oppose its use of modern slavery. Those that don't will be held to account.

The Qatari government has repeatedly failed to keep its pledge to reform in the years since it was awarded the World Cup. Each time I have spoken to government representatives, promises are made – but usually the same promises they made the last time we spoke.

Fifa, too, has a heavy burden of responsibility, by not making real reform a requirement for hosting its most prestigious and profitable event. Players and fans do care if the tournament is delivered on the basis of slavery, exploitation and death.

Fifa and other global sports bodies, such as the International Olympic Committee, are making human rights a requirement in future bids for major events but, right now, Qatar's migrant workers urgently need real backing from football's ultimate authority, as it strives to revive its battered reputation.



Hong Kong News

Carrie Lam wins Hong Kong chief executive election, with 777 votes

26 Mar- Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor has been elected Hong Kong's next chief executive, becoming the city's first female leader.

Lam, 59, won 777 votes from the 1,194-member Election Committee, composed mostly of Beijing loyalists. The former chief secretary beat former finance chief John Tsang Chun-wah and retired judge Woo Kwok-hing.

Lam was widely seen as Beijing's preferred candidate while Tsang was said to have lacked the central government's full trust despite his high public popularity. For Woo, winning the race was seen as mission impossible.

The election committee members cast their votes between 9am and 11am on Sunday morning at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre in Wan Chai. Most of the 326 pan-democrat members had pledged their support for the popular underdog Tsang.

The final results were:

Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor: 777
John Tsang Chun-wah: 365
Woo Kwok-hing: 21
Invalid votes: 4



Carrie Lam and her family

Escalator was going 'twice as fast': witnesses describe accident at Hong Kong shopping mall that left 18 injured

25 Mar- An escalator suddenly reversed direction at high speed in a crowded Mong Kok mall on Saturday afternoon, sending shoppers tumbling and leaving 18 injured, one of them in a serious condition.

Video footage recorded by witnesses showed that the 45-metre-long escalator – which links the fourth and eighth floors of Langham Place on Argyle Street – changed direction without warning and sped up, causing terrified shoppers to lose their balance, tumble down and pile up at the base.

In another video, some people could be heard screaming as others fell over or clung to the handrail to avoid tumbling down one of the longest escalators in Hong Kong.

Witnesses confirmed the 14 women and four men who were injured lost their balance and rolled down the escalator.

A police spokeswoman said one man suffered a head injury and was taken to Queen Elizabeth Hospital. He remained in a serious condition as of Saturday night while the rest were stable.

Langham Place is a HK\$11 billion urban renewal project which was completed in 2004.

"I was going up the escalator, and it was two times faster than normal," a woman,

who injured her leg in the accident, said.

Another woman said she saw the escalator increase speed during the incident, which lasted less than one minute.

"I heard people screaming ... the escalator was going down but the speed accelerated," the woman, who identified herself as Tina, said.

"People started to panic ... and some fell down."

She recalled that the same escalator had stopped for a few minutes earlier in the day, at about noon.

Shopper Lau Kit-ying, who was at a nearby burger shop and witnessed the chaos, also said the escalator was moving about two or three times faster than normal.

"It was so sudden that people couldn't respond in time ... more than 10 people piled up near the base of the escalator," Lau said.

She said she saw a man on the floor, bleeding.

"I'm not sure if he was conscious, but a foreign man and a few mall staff helped stop his bleeding with a first aid kit," she said.

"But most of the [injured] were young people and they stood up quickly ... I'm glad that there wasn't any elderly person involved."

Judy Chu, a manager of a nearby dessert cafe, recalled the panic following the accident. "Some people ran upwards. Some even jumped over to the escalator on the other side," she said.

Chung Chi-wai, assistant divisional officer of Tsim Sha Tsui fire station, said none of the injured suffered broken bones and all were conscious when emergency teams arrived.

Lift and Escalator Safety Advisory Committee member Charles Wong Kai-hon said it was possible that the accident was caused by a malfunction of one of the escalator's two brakes and its non-reversing mechanism.

A Langham Place spokeswoman said the escalator had passed an inspection on March 23. Annual inspections were carried out twice a year, while routine checks were done once every two weeks. She said its contractor, Otis Elevator Company (Hong Kong), had been asked to investigate the cause of the accident.

The spokeswoman added that the mall was highly concerned about the accident and would offer assistance to the injured, while fully cooperating with any government investigation.

David Chiu Chi-kin, general manager of Langham Place, said the escalator was stopped earlier in the day for about 15 minutes at 2pm for crowd control reasons. He said that the escalator accident later was not related to the service pause.



18 people were injured on an escalator at Langham Place, Mong Kok.

Conclusion

The defeat of the ISIS 'caliphate' in both Iraq and Syria seems imminent, but it is likely that their activities will now go underground. Many of their fighters come from European and Asian countries, and the return of these to their native countries is likely to give them an opportunity to indulge in acts of terrorism there. We can, sadly, expect an upsurge in outrages across the world in the coming months. It remains up to us to be vigilant and to make our ships, passengers and crew so obviously secure that there is a clear deterrent to anyone attempting to harm them.



Nigel Collett
Managing Director

