



Newsletter

Contents

- Shipping Companies & Ships, Important Notice..... 1
- Obituary, GI (HK) Business World Security: Economics, Nuclear, Europe..... 2
- The Arab World, Afghanistan & Pakistan, Palestine, Asia, Thailand, Malaysia and the Malacca Straits, Somalia..... 3
- Africa, Myanmar, The Americas 4
- Nepal News..... 5 - 7
- Hong Kong News 7 - 10
- Conclusion 11



We publish this month a photograph of the **Britannia** of *Carnival Cruises*.

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

We Welcome

There are no new recruitments in the previous month.

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 775 men and 155 women on ships, a total of 930 crew and staff under management.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: REPORTING TO OUR OFFICES WHEN YOU REACH HOME

We need your help. We do not usually get told by our clients when you are coming home from ship. They do, though, expect us to have you ready to go back to work at the end of your leave. It is sometimes very difficult to do this in the timescale allotted due to the length of time it takes to get visas. We need to ask you, therefore, to tell us as soon as you get back home so that we know that you are there. Please call in to our offices and tell us you are home and do not wait till later in your leave to do so.



GI (HK) Business

We are providing security services for 32 Hong Kong Clients and have 100 security staff employed.

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

OBITUARY - SERGEANT HITMAN GURUNG 6GR

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of Sergeant Hitman Gurung, late of the MT Platoon, 6th Gurkha Rifles. Hitman was for many years a staff car driver, and in that capacity he drove two Commanding Officers in Hong Kong and Brunei. He worked for many years in Hong Kong, at times for our Company. He was a member of the Committee of the 6th Gurkha Rifles Association Hong Kong Branch, and for almost all of our annual reunions took responsibility for organising the event, preparing the decorations and gifts, acting as MC during the evening and recording the occasion on disc. He was tireless and indefatigable in doing his duty to the Regiment, and none could match his devotion to his paltan. He died in Nepal in February after being taken ill on an adventure training expedition. He leaves a family, to whom we send our deepest condolences. We have lost a dear friend and a most loyal comrade.

World Security

Economics

The problems in Greece remain unresolved and so a threat to the Eurozone. The left wing Greek party, Syriza, which is now in government is facing off against the European Union, the European central bank and the IMF. There remains the possibility of a catastrophic default. The Chinese economy seems to be slowing, but the US is picking up speed, and interest rates affecting the dollar may soon rise.

Nuclear

The Israeli Prime Minister and the American Republican Party are attempting to derail the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme, which are coming to an end. There is no news of the North Korean nuclear programme.

Europe

The ceasefire agreed between Russia and the Ukraine at Minsk seems to be holding and heavy weapons have been reported moving back from border areas in eastern Ukraine. Ukrainian forces suffered a battering around several key Ukrainian cities before the ceasefire took hold. Ukraine is bankrupt. The situation remains highly dangerous.

The Arab World

The Iraqi armed forces are attacking the Islamic State (ISIS) at Tikrit, in Iraq, while the air war against ISIS in Iraq and Syria continues. The civil war in Syria continues month. In Yemen, the Government has fled the capital, Sana'a, and is holding out in Aden against Shia Muslim Houthi rebels. Most foreign countries have closed their embassies. Libya remains in a state of civil war between Islamic militants based in the old capital, Tripoli, in the west and the remnants of the democratically elected government and the old military based in Benghazi in the east. ISIS is now established in Libya, and European governments are fearful that ISIS will infiltrate terrorists across the Mediterranean into Malta and Italy.



Residents welcome a relative who is part of Hashd al-Shaabi in the town of al-Alam, where Iraqi troops drove out Isis on Mar 10.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Afghanistan remains highly dangerous, though it seems that peace feelers are being made by the government towards the Taliban, which continues to carry out attacks and holds much of the country. Pakistani forces continue operations in the Northwest Frontier border against Islamic militants.

Palestine

There are no developments this month.

Asia

There is no news of the conflicting maritime claims of China and its neighbours this month. Occasional terrorist acts continue to occur in Muslim areas of western China's Xinjiang province and in the southern Philippines.



Thailand's former Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra

Thailand, Malaysia and the Malacca Straits

The Thai military continues to run the country and has announced that it will prosecute the previous Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra. The Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand, near the Malaysian border, continues. In Malaysia, ex-Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, leader of opposition People's Justice Party, lost his appeal against conviction for sodomy in what most observers regard as a politically motivated trial, and will spend the next five years in jail.

Somalia

There are no new reports of piracy at present. Fighting continues in the country between the government and its foreign allies and Islamic militant al-Shabaab fighters.

Africa

Islamic militants Boko Haram have pledged allegiance to ISIS and continue to attack towns and villages in Nigeria's northern provinces and neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. The security situations in Burkino Faso, the Central African Republic, Mali and South Sudan remain disturbed. The outbreak of Ebola Virus in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea continues to be gradually brought under control. Liberia has closed its quarantine facilities and infection rates are dropping.

Myanmar

Myanmar has been disturbed by violence in Shan State around the town of Kokang on the north east border with China, where a warlord of Chinese extraction, Peng Jiasheng, whose forces are involved in the drug trade, attacked government military forces despite ongoing peace talks with all ethnic armies that aim to end decades of struggle. His the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) seeks to regain control of the area before the peace talks end. China has become involved as refugees have fled across the border and shelling has crossed the frontier. At Letpadan, in central Myanmar 140 km north of Yangon, police cracked down on students protesting against a new law centralizing aspects of education. 127 were detained.

The Americas

There is little news of a security note this month. The US has labelled the government of Venezuela a threat to American security and has imposed sanctions on some individuals there.



Civilians displaced by fighting between the Burma Army and Kokang rebels in Lashio, Shan State, February 2015.



A Turkish Airlines jet skidded off a slippery runway Wednesday while landing in dense fog at Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Nepal News

Turkish Airlines' Near Miss Creates Big Problem At Kathmandu's Tiny Airport

4 Mar, KATHMANDU - Turkish Airlines has the first slot for landing at the Kathmandu airport, just after 6 a.m. In winter, this often means long hours circling over the hills south of the Kathmandu Valley and waiting for dense fog to lift. Wednesday wasn't any different. About 6 a.m. local time, Flight TK726 crossed from India to Nepal and the pilot advised passengers that fog over the airport meant a 90-minute delay. But not to worry, he said, there was plenty of fuel.

About 7:15 a.m., the Airbus A330 with 224 passengers attempted a landing but had to abort. The plane circled and then came in again. This time, passengers say the plane hit the ground hard, its nose bouncing up and down as it veered off the runway. The front landing gear collapsed and the plane came to a stop, its nose resting on the rain-soaked, grassy earth.

"The front of the plane started bumping up and down violently," said Stratos Tavoulareas, a senior energy adviser at the International Financial Corp., who

was sitting in business class. "Then I realized we were off the runway and we came to a violent stop."

The plane was evacuated safely. Flight attendants even allowed people to take off their carry-on baggage. Airport and army personnel had already surrounded the plane to escort passengers to the terminal.

In many countries, this would have been the end of the story. But Tribhuvan International Airport is Nepal's only international airport. It's a small airport — with only one runway and nine parking bays — and it's bursting at the seams. On a normal day, it can barely cope with dozens of international and scores of national flights. A weather delay causes hourlong stack-ups in the skies. But the aftershocks from Wednesday's crash-landing highlight Nepal's crumbling infrastructure.

The airport was immediately closed to all but helicopter traffic. Flight TK726 has been sitting all day — nose down, tail up — right near the arrival terminal, with one wing just close enough to the runway to block the safe landing or takeoff of

any other large aircraft. Thousands of passengers (for full disclosure, that also includes my husband) have either had their flights canceled or, if already in the air, been rerouted to Delhi and Lucknow in India and Dhaka in Bangladesh for an undetermined period that could last days. The U.S. Embassy sent out an advisory emphasizing that Nepal is essentially cut off from the rest of the world.

A central problem: The airport has no cranes, large winches or heavy equipment to move the plane.

An emergency meeting identified two large bulldozers belonging to the department of roads. Kathmandu has been in a massive road-widening spree, and bulldozers are not in short supply. But the airport cargo gate was too narrow for the bulldozers, so they slowly made their way to the southern end to knock down a security wall and gain access to the runway. Then Turkish Airlines officials told airport officials that no bulldozer could touch their plane.

As of late afternoon, Plan B involved flying in a repair kit — a Catch-22 when you don't have a workable runway. (It's not clear whether they considered a more DIY option: In the 1950s, King Mahendra had his porters carry his cars on their shoulders from the Indian border to Kathmandu.)

Living in Kathmandu, my son and I have become addicted to FlightRadar-24, an app that shows you air traffic anywhere in the world in real time. We're focused on our little section of Himalayan valley.

It's a tricky and steep landing into Kathmandu's airport. Pilots receive special training and the radar system is old, with black spots. Only two companies, Qatar and Korean Air, have satellite GPS, which allows for a more gradual landing. Kathmandu is both a tourist hub and a supplier of migrant labor to the Middle East, and every year, the number of international flights increases. With a husband working in Dhaka and traveling the region, Lucas

and I always check on his arrivals and departures. For more than a year now, checking Turkish Airlines — whose delays have become legendary among the community of people who commute around the region — has become a wake-up ritual at home.

Today was no different. At 7:44 a.m., I checked Turkish Airlines' status. It read: "Landed." Omitted was the "crash."

Google launches virtual tour of Nepal's Everest region for armchair tourists

13 Mar, Kathmandu - Google launched a virtual tour of Nepal's Everest region on Thursday, allowing armchair tourists a rare glimpse of life in one of the toughest and most inaccessible places on earth, home to the world's highest mountain.

The Street View project takes viewers into the heart of the stunning Sagarmatha National Park, where icy blue rivers run below snow-capped peaks, monks play music and yak-herders navigate precipitous stone-strewn trails.

Armed with two single-lens tripod cameras and a 15-lens custom-built "Trekker" unit designed for backpacks, teams travelled on foot to capture more than 45,000 panoramic images of the remote eastern Himalayan villages inhabited by the ethnic Sherpa community.

Google worked on the project with Kathmandu-based start-up Story Cycle and Nepalese climber Apa Sherpa, who scaled Mount Everest a record 21 times before he retired from climbing and set up an educational charity.

"Everyone in the world knows Mount Everest but very few people know how hard life is in these villages," said Apa Sherpa, who was forced to drop out of school at 12 and work as a porter after his father died.

"Thanks to Google Street View, everyone can see these villages and understand that people here need help. Hopefully we can then raise funds to build more schools and hospitals for them."



Members of the Google Street View project sit with the camera used to capture project footage in Nepal's Khumbu region. Google's Street View virtual tour of the rugged Everest region follows sky-high trails and suspension bridges.

Nepal's Sherpa community, who have long laboured as guides and porters on mountaineering expeditions, hope the project will promote the region and raise funds to improve access to education, offering future generations a way out of the high-risk climbing industry.

"Googlers, Story Cycle employees and Apa Sherpa spent about 11 days on the move last March, using the tripod cameras and fisheye lenses to shoot inside monasteries, schools, clinics," said Raleigh Seamster, program manager for Google Earth Outreach.

"We used the Trekker unit to capture outdoor imagery."

Apa Sherpa, now 55, first climbed the 8848-metre high peak as a porter, and described the feat as "a dream that had never been mine".

"My dream is that one day, young kids in Nepal won't have to risk working on the mountain as porters or guides, they will be able to get an education and build better lives for themselves," Sherpa said.

Sixteen Nepalese guides, including 14

members of the Sherpa community, died last April in an avalanche, marking the deadliest accident to hit the world's highest peak. Nepal's Sherpa community, who have long laboured as guides and porters on mountaineering expeditions, hope the project will promote the region and raise funds to improve access to education, offering future generations a way out of the high-risk climbing industry.

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Preserving Nepal's soul

13 Mar, KATHMANDU - In Nepal, the US Embassy has invested \$1.9m for the implementation of projects ranging from the restoration of the 17th century Patan Darbar to the preservation of a remote Sherpa monastery near Mt Everest.

The first funding in Nepal was for the restoration of Kal Bhairab Shrine in 2003, since then 17 projects have been supported mainly in Kathmandu Valley.



United States have been investing heavily in heritage conservation of Nepal



Protesters clash with police during the rally against parallel trading in Yuen Long.

Hong Kong News

The 2015-16 Budget

26 Feb - Financial Secretary John Tsang announced this financial year's budget. The handouts are substantial. He's dishing out HK\$34 billion - nearly doubling the sweeteners for this year. From a public point of view, people should be pleased. The middle-class should be delighted with the reduction in salaries tax, to be capped at HK\$20,000, and the increase in child allowance from HK\$70,000 to HK\$100,000. The grass-roots should be happy too. Except for the better-off tenants paying extra rents in public housing, others will continue to have a month's rent waived. Dole recipients will receive two extra months of assistance. Even the most unlikely sector businesses affected by the Occupy movement will get a token share of relief in terms of license fees.

Locals battle anti-mainland protesters

1 Mar - Violence erupted in Yuen Long over the cross-border shopping business - the worst violence yet over the issue that saw police using pepper spray six times and arresting 33 people. Hundreds of protesters led by radical groups Civic Passion and Hong Kong Indigenous clashed with people backing the parallel trading business during a series of rallies. By 10.30pm, dozens of protesters remained in the protest zones. Besides the pepper-spraying action, police were in the fray with batons as the rally turned ugly in the afternoon. The 33 people arrested, whose ages ranged from 13 to 74, were accused on possessing offensive weapons, assaults on police and others and indecent assault.

Five police officers were injured. Hong Kong Indigenous protesters clad in blue and Civic Passion members in yellow, who were kitted out with masks and helmets, want the cancellation of multiple entry permits for mainlanders. Yuen Long residents made up the majority of people opposing them. "Recover Yuen Long" was the most serious of three rounds of protest over the past four weeks that also took in Tuen Mun and Sha Tin. Yesterday's action started at 3.30pm at Long Ping Station and was declared over at 4pm in Sau Fu Street. The radical groups then began to move, but chaos soon replaced an orderly dispersal.

HK trails way behind Singapore for quality of life

5 Mar - Political and social instability are among the main reasons Hong Kong's quality of life is way below that of rival Singapore, a survey by consulting firm Mercer shows.

Hong Kong placed 70th in this year's ranking - up one place from 2014 but way behind Singapore, which is 26th.

Connie Leung Sze-man, a team-leading consultant for Mercer Hong Kong, noted that the SAR's score has not varied much for three years.

"Hong Kong and Singapore are quite similar for most of the categories," she added.

But Singapore is "obviously doing much better than Hong Kong in terms of internal stability in the political and social environment."

Hong Kong people may be more outspoken politically, she said, and the instability "is not serious. But it's not as stable as Singapore."

If political instability persisted for a prolonged period, she added, "we'll really

need to pay more attention to it."

Hong Kong's levels of air pollution, traffic congestion and the quality of its medical and health services also let it down in comparison to Singapore.

Targeting mainlanders ... young and old

8 Mar - More than 100 protesters vented their anger at mainlanders - and anyone carrying luggage, including locals - at a shopping mall in Tuen Mun.

As anti-parallel trading sentiments grew into anti-mainlander fury, protesters also tried to stop border-bound buses from leaving.

Four people - three men and one woman aged between 13 and 21 - were arrested. Tensions cooled down at about 7.30pm, but some protesters gathered at Tsim Sha Tsui near the Clock Tower at about 9.45pm.

Harbour City shut down one of its main entrances, and protesters were still milling around Nathan Road, Mody Road, Humphreys Avenue and Carnarvon Road late last night. More arrests were made.

The protesters gathered at the V City shopping mall in Tuen Mun in the late afternoon. They called for the cancellation of the multiple-entry permit scheme and an end to parallel trading.

At about 5.45pm, they started chanting: "Combat parallel trade and smuggling."

They later arrived at a bus stop for the B3X Shenzhen Bay port service - located at the junction of Heung Sze Wui Road and Tuen Hop Road - to try to block the bus with metal barricades.

One little girl screamed and wailed in fear as she and her trolley-pushing mother were confronted in the street outside the mall. In another ugly scene, protesters kicked over packs of diapers carried by a mainland woman. They shouted at her: "Back to China! Back to China!"

A young male protester ran off after kicking goods belonging to a mainland man. The victim said: "Aren't all young people, Hongkongers and mainlanders, brothers?"



Protesters attempted to block buses to the border.

"Shouldn't there be no conflict between brothers? We don't come from Shenzhen to trigger chaos, right? I use the money I earn only to buy something for my kids." An elderly shopper, surnamed Zhang, said: "My things were kicked [by protesters]. I came to buy shoes and rice. "I am not a parallel goods trader. We came to Hong Kong because we thought it was safe. We may not come again." At least one Hong Kong shopper was also verbally abused by the protesters, even though he insisted he was carrying items for a local karaoke session. It was the fourth Sunday of rallies against parallel traders and came two days after Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying reiterated he had discussed the issue with Beijing officials.

Call for referendum to break reform impasse

13 Mar - A civil referendum should be held on the government's political reform package after it is released next month, the University of Hong Kong's chief pollster proposed. And pan-democrat lawmakers, Public Opinion Programme head Robert Chung Ting-yiu said, should not insist on vetoing

the package if more than two-thirds of those polled support it.

Chung said a referendum would solve the impasse and promote the spirit of democracy in Hong Kong.

Pan-democrat legislators have vowed to veto political reform based on the framework decided by the National People's Congress Standing Committee on August 31.

"But if we hold a civil referendum, lawmakers could take it as a reference," Chung said.

He added the process would be meaningful only if the pan-democrats recognize the results.

But Secretary for Justice Rimsky Yuen Kwok-keung thumbed down the idea "because a referendum has no legal basis and no place in Hong Kong."

Yuen added: "Under the Basic Law, there is no provision for a referendum. And Hong Kong is a special administrative region, therefore, there is no legal basis for us to have a referendum."

But if it is a survey, the government might consider it, Yuen said.

More for retirees in home loan plan

13 Mar - Retirees will be allowed to

take out bank loans against their life insurance coverage to pay for living expenses through enhancements in the reverse mortgage scheme proposed by the Hong Kong Mortgage Corporation.

In the past, only people aged 55 or above were allowed to pledge their homes as collateral for the purpose of receiving regular payments from lenders.

Its enhancements offer higher monthly and lump-sum payouts, the corporation said yesterday.

The loans have an annualized interest rate of prime minus 2.5 percent, which equals to 2.75 percent.

For instance, a 60-year-old who applies for the scheme using both home and insurance can get HK\$3,520 a month during his lifetime per HK\$1 million of property value and HK\$1 million of cash surrender value.

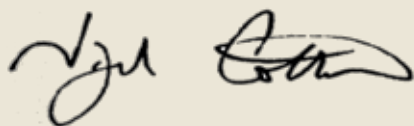
The amount is 76 percent higher than the current scheme of HK\$2,000 in monthly payments if a 60-year-old applies using only a home. One can choose a payment term of 10, 15 and 20 years, or a lifetime. After the payment term expires, the borrower or his inheritors can choose to repay the outstanding loan, lest the lender sells the unit.



Pollster Robert Chung's proposal to hold a referendum on the government's political reform package fails to win support.

Conclusion

We last month erroneously sent you greetings for the Year of the ram. Apologies! We wish you instead happiness and success in the Year of the Goat!



Nigel Collett
Managing Director

