



# Newsletter

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We publish this month a photograph of the ***Diamond Princess*** of Princess Cruises.

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

The New Year has opened well with the news that Columbia Ship Management has asked us to help Thomson Cruises man a new ship later in the year and has decided to add female Guards to our crew.

## STCW RENEWAL

Most of you will be aware that the STCW 95 convention was amended in Manila in 2010, and that STCW certification will now need to be renewed every five years. The amendment is enforceable from 31 December 2016, so we need to prepare so that anyone who is on board then is already re-certified if this is necessary. That means that we shall need to ensure that everyone going to sea after about 30 April 2016 has an up-to-date or renewed certificate. Our offices will be checking our records to ensure that we re-arrange training while you are on leave.

That makes it important that you report back to our offices immediately you get home. If you delay this, we and if your certificates will not be in date after 31 December 2016, shall not be able to get you back to ship and you will lose your vacancy until you re-train.

Some of our clients have stated that they will pay for this training, others have not. Our offices will tell you which of you will need to re-qualify at your own expense.

## SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 777 men and 161 women on ships, a total of 938 crew and staff under management.

## We Welcome

### Norwegian Cruise Lines

Usha Gurung

Anju Gurung

Ranjit Valsala Prabhakaran

Joseph P. Lonappan

Rajesh Simon

Denny George

Durga Lal



## 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.

# World Security

## Economics

There is growing concern about the world economy. The deceleration in the Chinese economy is affecting all its suppliers, especially Australia and Brazil. The oil glut has reduced the price of oil to, occasionally, under US\$30 a barrel (it was up to US\$120 a barrel at its peak), badly affecting the economies of Brazil, Venezuela, Russia, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. This has been exacerbated by the end of sanctions against Iran, which is now selling oil again. Europe remains in the doldrums and India seems to have lost momentum. The US Federal Reserve has, for the time being, decided to keep interest rates on hold.



If any other major economy grew by nearly 7% a year, it would be seen as a triumph. In China, it is being seen as more evidence of deep problems.

## Nuclear

Ratification of the agreement with Iran to curb its nuclear activities has been completed and sanctions have been lifted by the UN. North Korea tested a nuclear device and claimed that it was a hydrogen bomb, although this has yet to be confirmed.

## Europe

Large numbers of migrants from North Africa and the Middle East continue to flow through Greece into Europe. Many EU states have closed their borders and are being forced to go back on earlier liberal policies towards migrants. Fences and political divisions are appearing inside the EU and across Europe. Free travel between EU states under the Schengen Agreement is now seriously at risk. The migrant issue was made worse when crowd of North African and Middle eastern young men set upon women in Sweden, Finland and Germany (in Berlin and Cologne) at the Christmas and New Year celebrations, sexually assaulting them and in some cases raping them. In Ukraine, tensions with Russia remain high. A British inquiry found that Russia, and probably its President, Vladimir Putin, were responsible for the murder of Alexander Litvinenko, a Russian dissident, in London in 2006.

## The Arab World

Relations between Russia and Turkey remain tense after Turkey shot down a Russian aircraft the month before. Russia is expanding its airstrikes and the size of its forces in Syria, where the forces of the Assad regime are reconquering areas hitherto lost to rebels. Iraqi forces continue to battle ISIS in northern Iraq, and allied planes have continued to bomb ISIS-held areas of Syria and Iraq.

For a short while, it seemed that a UN-sponsored peace agreement was holding in Libya, but the old government faction in Tripoli has now turned it down. Tunisia has been rocked by street violence following the suicide of a young man who was protesting against the lack of economic progress. On 14 January 14, Ridha Yahyaoui electrocuted himself and for two days protests in solidarity with him spread to the towns of Siliana, Kairouan, and Sidi Bouzid. The demonstrations spread to sixteen governorates and eventually to the capital Tunis. On 16 January 16, the government declared a curfew. The war in Yemen between the Sunni government, Saudi Arabian and some Gulf state forces on one side and Shia Muslim Houthi rebels backed by Iran continues. The political situation in Egypt remains tense, with the government carrying out heavily repressive policies against opposition and particularly the Muslim Brotherhood.

Protesters throw rocks at police as teargas is fired in Kasserine, Tunisia. The country's youth joblessness rate is 30%.



## Afghanistan and Pakistan

Taliban suicide bombers attacked Afghan TV's station in Kabul. Violence in the rest of the country is endemic. Pakistan has continued to work to control its terrorist threat, but this month the Union of Pakistani Taliban, or Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, attacked the Bacha Khan University campus in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing twenty-one students.

## Palestine

Low levels of violence occur irregularly in Jerusalem and the West Bank. Palestinian terrorists have begun a particularly unpleasant campaign of stabbing Israeli women and some Israeli settlers are attacking Palestinians.

## Asia

There has been no change in tensions concerning the Spratly and Paracel Islands in the South China Sea, all claimed by China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia, or in the dispute over the islands in the Sea of Japan 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.

Pag-asa island, part of the disputed Spratly group of islands in the South China Sea, is claimed by both the Philippines and China. It's the only inhabited island in the Spratlys.



## Thailand and Malaysia

The Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand, near the Malaysian border, continues. Najib Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, has been cleared by the country's Attorney General of corruption; the Government claims that the Saudi Arabian royal family gave him over US\$680 million to fight the Malaysian general election. Moves to unseat Najib have failed.



The Financial Times believes the events that have transpired this week point to a growing sense that Datuk Seri Najib Razak has been a disastrous prime minister.

## The Malacca Straits

Small scale piracy continues to be a cause of concern in the Malacca Straits and nearby areas of the South China Sea.

## Somalia

There have been reports that Somali pirates have taken to working as escorts for fishing boats rather than attacking them. Fighting continues in the country between the government and its foreign allies and Islamic militant al-Shabaab fighters.

## Africa

Nigerian forces continue to battle Boko Haram in the north of the country. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains disturbed. The civil war in South Sudan continues.

## The Americas

There has been widespread unrest in Haiti during the election of a President to succeed Michel Martelly. The two-man election race was postponed indefinitely after the opposition candidate Jude Celestin refused to participate over alleged fraud. This sparked anti-government protests and violence and threats of a coup. The Organisation of American States (OAS) is sending a delegation to broker a compromise. Puerto Rico, an American territory in the Caribbean, has declared that it is effectively bankrupt as it owes US\$72 billion.

## Myanmar

There is little news of a security nature this month.

## India

There is little news of a security nature this month.



Barpak, close to the epicentre, is a traditional Gurkha recruiting spot and was almost totally flattened by the earthquake. Eight months on the homes of many former soldiers are still destroyed.

## Nepal News

### Old Gurkhas endure homeless winter after Nepal earthquake devastation

4 Jan - More than a thousand British Army Gurkha veterans and widows are enduring winter in tents and makeshift shelters eight months after their homes were destroyed in Nepal's massive earthquake, a military charity is warning. Entire villages in areas that traditionally provided the backbone of the renowned Gurkha brigade were flattened by April's quake and a crippling trade blockade has since slowed efforts to rebuild.

The 7.8 magnitude earthquake and aftershocks destroyed the homes of 1,129 veterans or their widows and badly damaged the homes of another 1,000. Veterans, many of whom are in their 80s or 90s and already frail, are now living under tarpaulins or in makeshift corrugated iron shelters as temperatures drop below freezing.

April's earthquake was the most powerful to strike Nepal since 1934. An estimated 8,900 people were killed and over 22,000 injured. Over 600,000 homes were destroyed and three million were displaced.

Eight months on, a blockade along the southern border by Indian-backed ethnic groups who are protesting a new constitution has stopped fuel and

building supplies entering the country. Prices have soared and reconstruction has been hampered.

Areas of Gorkha and Lamjung, which are traditional recruiting grounds for the British Army, were particularly badly hit.

Lt Col Steve Whitlock, Nepal field director for the Gurkha Welfare Trust, said: "I went up to the very north of Gorkha and there wasn't a permanent house standing in the entire village. When you are looking down the valleys you can only see bright corrugated iron of new shelters.

"In the evening it dips below freezing and some of the high areas will end up with snow."

The charity gives pensions to more than 6,000 former Gurkhas or widows and medical care to 25,000. It had hoped to begin an extensive rebuilding programme in October, but the blockade which began a month earlier has slowed efforts. Diesel, cement and timber have become scarce and their prices have soared. There are also widespread shortages of medicine and cooking gas.

Lt Col Whitlock said: "We have had trouble on the ground getting fuel and there are no new raw materials coming into Nepal at all."

He said: "Unfortunately, for as long as the border blockade remains unresolved, we

will suffer a significant impact on the rate of our reconstruction work."

An emergency appeal by the trust has raised £4 million since the earthquake, but the soaring cost of building materials is rapidly consuming the funds.

Dharamsing Tamang, an 80-year-old former rifleman who fought in Malaya and Borneo, lost his rented home and was forced to live under plastic sheeting next to a pigsty after the earthquake.

He said: "We heard a big noise and everything was shaking. We grabbed at the pillars in our room and ran outside but the building stayed standing. We were scared so we slept in the local monastery for a week after that. When we returned, it was during the second earthquake on 12 May that I fell and cut my head while leaving the collapsing room."

The trust treated his injuries, but his home was destroyed. He said: "We had to sleep under plastic, next to a pigsty. It was a very hard time."

Shersing Gurung, a 97-year-old veteran, has been forced to take refuge in a cattle shed after his house collapsed. He said: "When the earthquake struck, I was sleeping in the courtyard. I felt the ground shaking and heard walls collapsing but couldn't find the strength to move. Luckily my daughter dragged

me to safety.”

### Strain on Nepal faultline risks another earthquake in Kathmandu, study finds

**12 Jan** - A major tremor could hit Nepal's Gorkha district within years rather than the centuries that usually pass between quakes, say researchers.

A massive underground faultline that ruptured last year, causing a killer earthquake in Nepal, is still under tremendous strain underneath Kathmandu, a study said on Monday.

This meant another major tremor could happen in an area home to more than 1 million people within years or decades rather than the centuries that typically elapse between quakes, researchers wrote in the journal *Nature Geoscience*.

Lead author John Elliott of Oxford University said the rupture, shooting upward through the faultline from deep below, stopped abruptly 11km (6.8 miles) beneath the Nepalese capital, leaving an unbroken upper portion nearer the surface.

High-resolution satellite images revealed “only a small amount of the earthquake reached the surface”, he said in a press statement.

The unbroken upper part of the fault, added Elliott, “is continuously building up more pressure over time”.

“As this part of the fault is nearer the surface, the future rupture of this upper portion has the potential for a much greater impact on Kathmandu if it were to break in one go in a similar-sized event to that of April 2015,” he said.

Nepal rests on a major faultline between two tectonic plates. One bears India and pushes north and east at a rate of about

2cm (0.8 inches) per year against the other, which carries Europe and Asia.

This process created the Himalaya mountain range and causes earthquakes when strain built up along the fault gives way periodically, thrusting the overlying landmass up and outward.

The study is the latest to warn of the risk of another major quake around Nepal's Gorkha district, near the epicentre of a 7.8-magnitude tremor on 25 April – the worst in Nepal in more than 80 years. It was followed on May 12 by a 7.3-strong aftershock.

A study in the same journal warned just five months ago that last year's tremors had only partially relieved stress on the length of the faultline, and said chances for a big tremor were as high as before.

The twin quakes killed more than 8,700 people, triggered landslides and destroyed 500,000 homes, leaving hundreds of thousands in need of food, clean water and shelter.

“Unfortunately, there is no way of predicting precisely when another earthquake will take place,” Elliot said.

“It's simply a case of countries and cities making sure they are well prepared for when it does happen.”

Nepal's government has estimated the cost of recovery at over \$6.6 billion over the next five years, equivalent to one third of its gross domestic product, and has so far received donor pledges worth \$4.4 billion.

Nepal says the disaster destroyed more than 500,000 houses and pushed 700,000 more people to poverty. Already one in four of the country's 28 million people lives on a daily income of less than \$1.25.

### Nepal votes to amend constitution in bid to resolve months-long stand-off with protesters

**24 Jan** - Nepal's parliament has voted to amend the country's new constitution in a bid to resolve a months-long dispute with ethnic minority protesters demanding more political representation.

“I announce that the Nepal constitution first amendment bill has been passed with a two-thirds majority in favour,” said speaker Onsari Gharti Magar as MPs thumped their desks in agreement.

More than 50 people have been killed in clashes between police and people protesting against the constitution introduced in September, which demonstrators said left them politically marginalised.

Demonstrators from the Madhesi ethnic minority, mainly from Nepal's southern plains, have led a months-long blockade of a key border crossing, causing a crippling shortage of fuel and other vital supplies across the landlocked country.

In an effort to end the deadlock, parties last month tabled a bill to amend the constitution and increase the Madhesi presence in government bodies through proportional representation.

But Madhesis say the bill is incomplete and does not address their main demand to revise the federal state borders laid out in the charter that will limit their representation in parliament.

Madhesi lawmakers walked out of parliament in protest before the bill was passed late Saturday with 461 votes in favour of the amendments.

Seven voted against it, and the remaining 128 MPs were either not present or part of



A woman is taken to her home after treatment in Bhaktapur near Kathmandu, Nepal, after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake shook Nepal's capital last year.

the walkout.

"We are the protesters, our objections should be included in this [bill]. But no-one sought advice from us," said Sarbendra Nath Shukla of the Tarai Madhes Democratic Party.

"The amendments do not address our demands," Mr Shukla told MPs before the walkout.

The new bill promises Madhesis, as well as members of other marginalised or impoverished communities, higher representation in government bodies on the basis of proportional inclusion.

It also potentially enhances their electoral representation by making population the main criteria for drawing up constituencies — a move which will likely generate more seats for MPs in the densely-populated southern plains that are home to most Madhesis.

But protesting parties said the amendments were insufficient since they do not include a commitment to revise internal federal borders.

The constitution, the first drawn up by elected representatives, was meant to cement peace and bolster Nepal's transformation to a democratic republic after decades of political instability and a 10-year Maoist insurgency.

But several rounds of talks between the Government and the protesting parties had failed to reach an agreement.

### **Nepal: Political Unrest Mars Progress on New Constitution**

**27 Jan** - Months of protests over the new constitution in Nepal's southern region caused more than 50 deaths and halted the flow of essential goods and medicines into the country, Human Rights Watch said in its World Report 2016. Rescue and relief efforts following devastating earthquakes in April and May were slow to get off the ground, and the blockade on supplies led to a further crisis in the delivery of aid to earthquake victims.

In the 659-page World Report 2016, its 26th edition, Human Rights Watch reviews human rights practices in more than 90 countries. In his introductory essay, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that the spread of terrorist attacks beyond the Middle East and the huge flows of refugees spawned by repression and conflict led many governments to curtail rights in misguided efforts to

protect their security. At the same time, authoritarian governments throughout the world, fearful of peaceful dissent that is often magnified by social media, embarked on the most intense crackdown on independent groups in recent times.

Two back-to-back earthquakes in Nepal killed or injured tens of thousands and left millions displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance. Vulnerable communities, including people with disabilities, women, and children, remained at particular risk. In spite of many promises, the government remained unable to establish a reconstruction authority to disburse funds and rehabilitation supplies.

"The Nepali government received more than US\$4 billion for earthquake assistance, but the victims have yet to benefit from a single one of those dollars," said Brad Adams, Asia director. "It is unacceptable that the political leadership has left citizens without critical assistance and instead squabbled over petty politics."

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquakes, Nepal's political parties managed to agree on a long-stalled constitution. While the constitution has some important equal protection and affirmative action clauses and recognizes the right to third gender identity, many ethnic groups, particularly along Nepal's southern and far-western belts, said they felt excluded. Members of these groups declared strikes, blocked roads, and, in many cases, shut down normal daily activities for weeks at a stretch.

Some of these protests turned violent. In September, an estimated 45 people, including nine policemen, were killed. In some districts, the government responded by deploying the army, and in others by instituting curfews. Most of the protester deaths were attributed to excessive use of force by the security forces.

The ongoing protests led to an effective blockade of trade and transit from India, leading to shortages in the supply of goods including essential fuel and medicines. Instead of negotiating with the protesters, the Nepali government accused the Indian government of imposing an economic sanction on Nepal, which India denied.

Human Rights Watch noted that the new constitution does not fully address the statelessness problem faced by over 4 million people in the country and instead creates further burdens for children born to a Nepali mother and foreign father.

"Nepal has had years to discuss and prepare a constitution which would address the expectations of all its communities, including its sizeable stateless population," said Adams. "Instead, the main political parties simply used the distraction of the humanitarian crisis to pass a constitution which has ended up deeply hurting many of its citizens and deepened the humanitarian crisis."

Human Rights Watch noted that the country has yet to take steps towards accountability for crimes committed by all sides during the country's 10-year civil war, which ended in 2006.



Nepal's lawmakers vote on amendments to the country's new constitution on January 23, 2016.



Chinese police are suspected of entering Hong Kong to abduct Lee Bo, one of five missing booksellers.

## Hong Kong News

### Wife of missing Hong Kong publisher says she met him in secret in China

**24 Jan** - The wife of one of the five missing Hong Kong booksellers has told police she has been able to visit him at a “secret location” on the mainland.

In a new twist in the saga, the Hong Kong police announced it had been contacted by Choi Ka-ping, the wife of Lee Bo, one of the five missing men, claiming to have visited her husband in an unnamed guesthouse across the border.

The announcement, made at 2am local time, states that Lee’s wife said she told them he “was healthy and in good spirits, and said that he was assisting in an investigation in the capacity of a witness”.

Lee Bo, 65, a British citizen, went missing from Hong Kong on 30 December, and entered the Chinese mainland without using his travel documents. Since then, he has released a number of letters and faxes, claiming to have gone to Hong Kong “by his own means” and asking Hong Kong police to “stop investigating his case”.

However, the border authorities have no record of his leaving Hong Kong and the case that has raised suspicion that Chinese law enforcement officials may have abducted him from Hong Kong

territory.

The five missing men work for the Hong Kong-based publishing house *Mighty Currents*, known for books that are highly critical of the Chinese Communist Party.

The police statement, revealing that the Hong Kong authorities had been kept in the dark about the arrangements for the visit, has sparked fury among local activists.

“This is entirely unacceptable”, said Fernando Cheung, a pro-democracy MP, “up to now the whole handling of the Lee Bo fiasco is being conducted through unofficial means, bypassing the Hong Kong authorities, and Lee Bo seems to be releasing messages under the gun”, he said.

“The British government should speak out strongly about the whole fiasco and demand to meet with Chinese officials and secure the safety of Lee Bo immediately.”

Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia director at Amnesty International, joined calls for the Hong Kong government to stand up to Beijing.

“If the Hong Kong government tolerates the methods of the mainland’s political police, whose hallmark is to operate outside of the law through enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions,

forced confessions and torture, then Hong Kong will cease to be Hong Kong”, said Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia director at Amnesty International.

Hong Kong police said they are continuing to investigate Lee’s case and had again asked police in Guangdong province, over the mainland border, to assist in arranging a meeting with Lee.

Last week, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV showed a tearful Gui Minhui, the co-owner of *Mighty Currents*, who disappeared from Thailand in October, making a televised confession to a hit-and-run case in the city of Ningbo in 2003. There is still no news from the three other missing booksellers, who were last seen in Shenzhen in October, where they went to visit their wives.

### In Hong Kong, Frost Chasers Seek the Thrill of the Chill

**26 Jan** - HAs blizzards and ice storms pummel cities from New York to Hangzhou, Hong Kong—a place where residents rarely need to break out the fleece—is thrilling over its own extreme-weather phenomenon: frost.

A cold front across east Asia has brought thousands of Hong Kong frost-hunters to the city’s peaks during recent nights. The chill-seekers are hoping to see ice-rimmed leaves, sleet or even snow—many for the first time ever.

So large were the crowds one recent night that hikers lined up to frost-gaze from Hong Kong Island's famous Victoria Peak, and police closed off access to 3,140-foot Tai Mo Shan, the city's tallest mountain, after the congestion on the road got so bad that emergency vehicles couldn't get through.

"This was totally worth it!" said high-school student Jack Wong, 17 years old, who was huddled by a gas stove eating instant noodles in the freezing rain around 5 a.m. Sunday, not far from the Tai Mo Shan peak. Mr. Wong, who says



he has never seen snow, had hiked with five friends for two hours to experience the maximum chill at the summit. "Look at my jacket, it's covered in ice," he said. Welcome to polar vortex à la Hong Kong, where the most frigid weather is usually found in over-chilled shopping malls in the summer. Temperatures in the subtropical city average 77 degrees Fahrenheit or higher from May to October, and generally stay above 59 degrees in January, according to the Hong Kong Observatory.

That means native Hong Kongers rarely get a chance to see frost, which forms only when the temperature on the ground goes below freezing. Snow, which requires moist air at near- or freezing temperatures, is even rarer, having last occurred in 1975, according to the observatory.

A dip in the mercury that would barely register in colder climes can cause a flurry of excitement in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Observatory issued a cold-weather warning—which includes an admonition not to light fires indoors—when temperatures hit the low 50s at the end of last week, and a frost warning

on Saturday. Amateur weather-watcher group Hong Kong Weather Information Center posted on its Facebook page even colder forecasts for Hong Kong from a bevy of global meteorological sites. The city's biggest English-language newspaper, the South China Morning Post, speculated on the possibility of an "ice storm" hitting the city.

At Tai Mo Shan, literally "big foggy mountain" in Cantonese, a line of cars inched up the winding road to the peak, bumper to bumper, in the wee hours of Sunday morning. Normally the journey

takes about 15 minutes from base to peak, but many drivers gave up and turned back after hours of idling, while groups of bundled-up frost-chasers trudged past armed with walking poles, reflective blankets and photography equipment.

Not everyone came prepared for cold and ice: Some hikers were making the trek in Nike running shoes, while others tried to ride bicycles up the frozen slope. The road was so slick that people unused

to walking on icy streets fell flat on their backs. At one particularly slippery uphill stretch, several hikers resorted to crawling forward on all fours. Many descending the mountain slid down the hill on their bottoms, cheered on by friends.

Crowds thinned toward the top, as the winds strengthened and the road became icier. Near the summit, the headlamps and flashlights of hikers shone against a panorama of orange city lights. Some frost hounds had pitched tents to spend the night.

Though there was no snow, freezing rain meant large amounts of slushy ice—as well as plenty of frost, enveloping everything from tree branches to road signs and car license plates.

Frankie Fong, a 27-year-old electronic technician, drew a crowd by building a tiny snowman with the ice on the road, using mini M&Ms for eyes.

"I am so excited right now, I never thought in my lifetime I would be able to build a snowman in Hong Kong," said Mr. Fong, lying on his side next to his frozen creation as passersby snapped photos.

Ming Wong, 30, a real-estate worker who was climbing with five other members of Hong Kong Weather Information Center, said he was only "half-half" in terms of satisfaction, because he had hoped to see snow or sleet, which is made when raindrops freeze before hitting the ground.

The lack of sleet was partially alleviated by Mr. Wong's first experience of freezing rain, which is made when rain freezes upon impact with the cold ground.



A firefighter helps a hiker on icy ground at Tai Mo Shan in Hong Kong.

Mr. Wong said the group found the temperature “unexpectedly low,” with a reading on their thermometer of minus 4.9 degrees Celsius, or 23 degrees Fahrenheit, at 4:43 a.m.

“We all felt very excited, because the seasonal forecast told us this winter is warmer than normal, and suddenly this intensive cold surge formed around east Asia,” said Mr. Wong.

The Hong Kong Observatory said it recorded a temperature of 3.3 degrees Celsius, or 38 degrees Fahrenheit, at its headquarters early Sunday, the lowest in 59 years. By Sunday afternoon, Hong Kong officials were begging frost-watchers to stay home, after logging dozens of cases of hypothermia on Tai Mo Shan, and more than 100 people stranded on various peaks.

“I want to use this chance to ask Hong Kong people not to go up to the mountains,” said Wong Ka-wing, an acting division commander in the Hong Kong fire department, in a televised interview.

Still, snow remained elusive, though videos showing specks floating in the air in locations around Hong Kong proliferated online. The Hong Kong Observatory said that the most residents could expect from the skies are “small ice pellets,” though that, too, seemed elusive as the sun came out and warmed temperatures by a few degrees on Monday and Tuesday.

### **Hong Kong University students behaved ‘like they were on drugs’ says Arthur Li**

**28 Jan** - The embattled chairman of the University of Hong Kong’s governing council yesterday accused students of behaving like they were on drugs when they besieged a meeting he was holding on Tuesday, and openly blamed pan-democrat politicians for manipulating them.

Two days after Professor Arthur Li Kwok-cheung and other council members were trapped for hours by hundreds of students demanding a review of the governing body’s structure, the former education secretary called a press conference to hit out at them.

“Sadly, this small number of students are rather like someone who’s taken drugs, who’s been poisoned by drugs,” Li said.

“And they’ve been manipulated.”

He named the Civic Party as the culprit, saying it had “poisoned” the students’ minds and was responsible for political interference. To back his allegations, Li noted that Civic Party heavyweight Audrey Eu Yuet-mee was there at the Tuesday siege – which she promptly denied.

Li was also suspicious about the participation of HKU student leader Yvonne Leung Lai-kwok, who had worked as Civic Party lawmaker Alan Leong Kah-kit’s intern. And he pointed at the presence of radical lawmaker “Long Hair” Leung Kwok-hung’s assistant and other pan-democrats at the rowdy protest.

Those he blamed were outraged. The students denied being controlled by any politician and said Li had “impaired mutual trust”. The Civic Party denied involvement and demanded Li apologise to students and alumni.

Li, dubbed “King Arthur” and “Tsar” by critics who see him as a heavy-handed agent planted at HKU by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, said he did not believe there had been political interference in the running of the university through pro-Beijing newspapers. They had broken the news about pro-democracy law professor Johannes Chan Man-mun being shortlisted for a pro-vice-chancellor’s post at HKU, and published a series of articles attacking him.

Chan’s appointment was eventually rejected by the council, putting some students and alumni on the warpath as

they felt pro-establishment members of the governing body had victimised the liberal scholar.

Vice chancellor Professor Peter Mathieson, who was previously seen as sympathetic to the students’ grievances, continued with the harder line he has taken since Tuesday night.

He said he did not know which parties were at the protest because he did not understand much Cantonese, but he asked people to trust Li’s judgment.

Li accused student union president Billy Fung Jing-en, who also sits on the council, of inciting a “riot” by sending a “false message” by phone to protesters that the council had declined to start a review into university governance when members had unanimously agreed to go ahead with it.

“[Fung] is a liar. He gave the undertaking of confidentiality and he immediately broke it,” Li said.

Noting that protesters wanted the review panel to be set up immediately, Li said it would take time to search for internationally renowned scholars to join.

Mathieson said police were investigating Tuesday’s siege and the university had provided them with closed-circuit television images of a damaged door at their request.

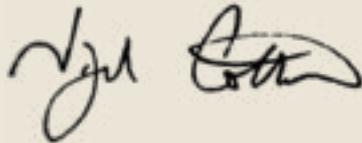
Mathieson, who earlier condemned the siege as “mob rule”, said he felt his life was at risk on Tuesday night – a feeling he had not experienced even during the chaotic and much bigger Occupy protests.



Arthur Li (right) addressing the press on Thursday.

# Conclusion

At the start of 2016, I send you all my warm greetings and best wishes for a very prosperous and happy New Year!



**Nigel Collett**  
Managing Director

