



Newsletter

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We publish this month a photograph of the **Thomson Celebration** of Columbia Ship Management.

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

This month, I had the great pleasure of visiting Universal Shipmanagement's new ship, the Aegean Paradise, anchored at the time off Batam in Indonesia. I met many of our security crew and some of the trainee gaming crew who have been on board for just a few months. It was very good to see how well everyone was doing, and I thank all those I met for their kindness and warm welcome.

I also visited the Company's offices and heard that our crew with all three ships operated by Universal Shipmanagement are doing well. I congratulate you all on what you are achieving; very well done!

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 745 men and 168 women on ships, a total of 913 crew and staff under management.

EXIT FROM NEPAL TO MALAYSIA

I am glad to report that the difficulties between Malaysia and Nepal now seem to have ended and that there is no now problem with exiting Nepal for employment in or through Malaysia.

We Welcome

Norwegian Cruise Lines
 Krishna Kumari Gurung
 Hom Bahadur Dura
 Narmila Thapa Magar
 Vijay Kumar Gurung
 Biswa Mitra Gurung
 Dilli Raj Roshyara
 Madhu Yeshoda Ramachandran
 Gurbox Singh Sandhu

Columbia Ship Management
 Tujeni Maharjan
 Leela Maya Gurung
 Amrita Gurung
 Nira Gurung

Universal Ship Management Pvt. Ltd.

Kisan Gurung	Himal Pun
Sujan Gurung	Ankit Bahadur Karki
Bishal Gurung	Rabin Tilija Magar
Sujan Gurung	Kumar Somai
Amar Rai	Sandip Gurung
Ram Gurung	Sanjeep Rai
Buddhi Man Gurung	Ram Bahadur Roka
Vishal Gurung	Peeyush Gurung
Suchit Gurung	Bikash Gurung
Deepak Gurung	Arjun Gurung
Anim Gurung	Cham Prasad Gurung
Ramesh Sunar	Saroj Thing
Amrit Gurung	Ramesh Rana Magar
Ser Bahadur Thapa	



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.

CARNIVAL CORPORATION'S FATHOM GRANTED APPROVAL BY CUBA TO CRUISE FROM U.S. TO CUBA

Cuban approval has paved the way for Carnival Corporation through its Fathom brand to operate historic full-week sailings from the U.S. to Cuba starting in May 2016.

This announcement makes history, with Carnival Corporation becoming the first cruise company to be approved to sail from the U.S. to Cuba. Carnival will become the first cruise line to sail to Cuba in over 50 years.

World Security

Economics

There is little news at the moment in the somewhat sluggish world economy.

Nuclear

There is no further news at the moment about North Korea's nuclear programme for its continued nuclear testing.

Europe

A coordinated ISIS terrorist attack killed 35 people and wounded over 100 in the departure area of Brussels airport and the Brussels metro. Follow up police action has led to arrests and some more casualties as European authorities attempt to unravel ISIS terror networks operating across the continent.

The European Union has made an agreement with Turkey to send back refugees and migrants leaving Turkey for Greece and other countries, in exchange for the re-settlement in Europe of 75,000 Syrian refugees and free movement of Turkish nationals within the Schengen region. Whether this agreement will stick remains to be seen, but the number of migrants entering Greece has already reduced. Border controls remain in force between many countries in the Schengen area.

In Ukraine, tensions with Russia remain high.



Brussels airport could open as soon as this weekend after being damaged in the bomb attacks.

The Arab World

Russia has announced the withdrawal of its forces from Syria after its airstrikes and aid to the regime of Bashar Assad gained the government ground in the ongoing civil war. Peace negotiations are being conducted in Vienna but are not currently leading anywhere. ISIS forces have been pushed back out of the ancient city of Palmyra, much of which they had destroyed. Iraqi forces continue to battle ISIS in northern Iraq, and allied planes have continued to bomb ISIS-held areas of Syria and Iraq. ISIS bombs have again exploded in Baghdad causing many casualties.

Conflict continues in Libya, where the country is split between several factions. 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.



Some Syrian children have known nothing but war, said UN special envoy Staffan de Mistura.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Over seventy mainly Christian Pakistanis celebrating Easter in Lahore were killed and more than 341 injured by a bomb planted by Taleban terrorists. Violence continues across Afghanistan as Taliban forces slowly extend their control.

Palestine

Individual acts of violence continue to occur irregularly in Jerusalem and 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 a terrorist recently hijacked an Indonesian ship in the area.



Soldiers of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy patrol in the Spratly Islands.

Thailand and Malaysia

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

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, currently aimed at small ships and yachts, which are being boarded from fishing vessels which entangle the small craft in fishing nets then board them.

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. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains disturbed. The civil war in South Sudan continues.

The Americas

There is little news of a security nature this month. US President Obama visited Cuba.

Myanmar

Htin Kyaw, from the Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), has taken over the Presidency of Myanmar from retired General Thein Sein. Aung San Suu Kyi remains barred from office by the constitution as she had a British husband. Htin Kyaw is the first civilian President of Myanmar for over fifty years.



Aung San Suu Kyi has said she will be 'above the president' but might not have a formal position in government.

India

There is little news of a security nature this month.



Prince Harry greets the Nepalese prime minister with a traditional namaste greeting.

Nepal News

Prince Harry begins Nepal visit with tribute to earthquake survivors

19 Mar - Prince Harry has begun a five-day visit to Nepal by saying he hoped his visit would shine a spotlight on the “resolve and resilience of the Nepalese people” still recovering from the April 2015 earthquake.

Harry said he was delighted to be asked to visit a country that had captured the imagination of himself and many fellow Britons, during a Nepalese government reception.

Speaking at Saturday’s event, staged at the aptly named Yak and Yeti hotel in the capital, Kathmandu, he told the guests: “Like so many people back home, I have grown up seeing beautiful images of Nepal in books and on television.

“I am sure you hear this all the time, but your country holds a special place in the imagination for so many people around the world.”

Harry had long wanted to visit the country largely due to his admiration and respect for the Gurkha troops he served with in Afghanistan.

He was also keen to see how the country’s rebuilding effort is progressing after the earthquake and aftershocks in April last year killed almost 9,000 people and damaged almost a million houses and buildings.

The prince said: “I also know that I arrive

here in Nepal as you approach the first anniversary of the earthquakes that took so many lives and that you are working to recover from.

“I pay my respects to those who perished and hope to do what I can to shine a spotlight on the resolve and resilience of the Nepalese people. I want to show all those people around the world who want to help that this is a country open for business – so please come and visit again. “I look forward to exploring your landscapes, celebrating your culture, and I hope to make many new friends along the way.”

Harry began his tour by paying a visit to Nepal’s prime minister, Khadga Prasad Oli, and giving him a traditional namaste greeting.

Clasping his hands together and smiling, Harry performed the gesture well known across Nepal and neighbouring India.

It is an ancient Sanskrit greeting that has a number of translations, including “the spirit in me salutes the spirit in you”.

What the Nepalese Prime Minister’s Visit to China Says About the Wider Politics of Asia

24 Mar - Since K.P. Sharma Oli became the Prime Minister of Nepal in October 2015, he has made two overseas trips. The first of those, last month, was to India. The second, taking place this week, is to China.

The choice of those two countries in quick succession, and the objectives of Oli’s respective visits, may signal a subtle geopolitical shift for the, landlocked nation, which is situated between the two giant neighbors.

Nepal has traditionally been dependent on its southern neighbor India, through which around 65% of its trade passes. The Himalayan country’s crucial dependency on India was underscored late last year, when protesters from the Madhesi ethnic community — claiming that Nepal’s recently promulgated constitution discriminated against them — blocked key checkpoints and prevented the passage of essential goods from India for nearly five months.

Nepal accused the Indian government of sympathizing with the Madhesi protest and abetting the blockade, which resulted in a shortage of fuel, medicines and other vital supplies that nearly crippled the country. India has consistently denied the claim, even though it too had criticized the Nepalese constitution.

“People are still questioning the motive of our southern neighbors,” says Subhash Ghimire, editor in chief of the Republica, a Nepali daily. “The general public here is still not very convinced that India wouldn’t do something like that again.” As relations with India soured, Nepal’s northern neighbor China came to the

rescue with a deal to supply a third of the country's required petroleum. The deal signaled to Kathmandu the importance of diversifying its trade away from India.

"[The Nepal government] has been talking about opening transit to China, so that in times of crisis, like we faced the last couple of months, we can have some alternatives," Rishi Raj Adhikari, executive director of the government-run Institute of Foreign Affairs (IFA) in Kathmandu, tells TIME.

On Monday, soon after landing in Beijing, Prime Minister Oli signed a transit agreement that includes access to Chinese ports as well as the potential construction of rail links between the two countries. A subsequent joint statement released on Wednesday said a more comprehensive version of the petroleum deal is also in the works.

"At the psychological level here in Nepal I think it's a huge boost," Ghimire tells TIME. "It's a very timely visit, and the agreement definitely signifies it."

Although Oli claimed his February trip to New Delhi, days after the blockade ended, restored trust and brought bilateral relations back to normal, it was widely seen as something of a damp squib. Several agreements were signed, but most of them — as the Himalayan Times reported — were the outcome of earlier negotiations. The lack of a bilateral joint statement during the visit also raised

several question marks, with rumors that India was still not prepared to publicly endorse the Nepalese constitution as Beijing unequivocally did this week.

Even as Nepal looks northward, however, experts feel it cannot afford to spurn its southern neighbor and longtime ally.

"You have Nepal somewhat difficultly positioned, because clearly it cannot alienate either [China or India]," says Alka Acharya, director of the New Delhi-based Institute of Chinese Studies. "The Chinese have proved more than responsive to what they feel are Nepalese concerns about India."

Adhikari, the IFA director, maintains that Nepal has no intention of diluting its relationship with India through China, rather seeing itself as a "vibrant bridge" between the two. But the Indian government has long been wary of China's efforts to establish trans-Asian supply routes through its "one belt, one road" initiative — which Oli enthusiastically endorsed this Tuesday — seeing it as an effort to encroach on India's sphere of influence.

Nepal is by no means China's only foothold in South Asia, Acharya clarifies, with India's other neighbors Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka already participating in various aspects of the Chinese plan.

"Nepal's specific geopolitical location is making that extra edge," she says. "It's not as if [the Chinese] aren't pushing the same

agenda with India's other neighbors, and they're finding takers, but Nepal evokes particular resonance because of its particular complications between India and China."

Wedged between the world's two most populous nations, the prevailing notion is that Nepal is well positioned but must tread carefully going forward.

"The relationship so far with China has been that whenever something goes wrong with India then we look up to the northern neighbor," says Ghimire. "If we start playing the China card or the India card, I don't think that's going to help us." Acharya explains that "deft diplomacy" on Nepal's part must work in tandem with "bold thinking" by India and a degree of Chinese understanding of Indian concerns in the region.

"Otherwise there's going to be sulking on one side and pushing on the other," she says, "and Nepal in the end is going to feel stifled rather than liberated."

ADB revises Nepal growth forecast to 1.5 percent

31 Mar - Kathmandu, March 30 (IANS) The Asian development Bank (ADB) has brought down Nepal's economic growth outlook to 1.5 percent for the 2015-16 fiscal.

Nepal's finance ministry had projected around 2 percent economic growth for this fiscal. The Himalayan country is



China's Premier Li Keqiang, right, talks to Nepal's Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli during a signing ceremony at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 21, 2016

struggling to curb its high inflation rate that hit a record 12.1 percent.

The ADB said there was an urgent need to accelerate reconstruction and implement development programmes to prevent further slowdown in economic growth.

Launching the 'Asian Development Outlook 2016' in Kathmandu on Wednesday, the ADB said factors like slow post-earthquake reconstruction, trade and transit disruption due to months-long economic blockade and agricultural troubles owing to unfavourable monsoon contributed to the country's slow growth rate.

Micro and macro businesses and tourism and service sectors were other key areas hit hard by last year's earthquake as well as the economic blockade from last September, the bank said.

The Manila-based multinational lender also advised Nepal to speed up steps for political stability and implementation of the new constitution promulgated in September 2015 to ensure higher economic growth.

The ADB projected that Nepal will record two percent economic growth if the reconstruction pace after the April 2015 quake was accelerated.

The total cost of recovery after the quake is estimated at about \$7.1 billion (a third of the Gross Domestic Product), including about \$5.2 billion to repair buildings and infrastructure and to cover economic losses.

Development partners have since

pledged about \$4 billion in grants and concessional loans to be disbursed over five years.

On Tuesday, Nepal Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli expressed dissatisfaction over the slow pace of reconstruction.

"At this pace, it will take decades to complete reconstruction," a visibly angry prime minister said at a meeting called for speeding up reconstruction efforts.

"We will (soon) reach a point where the reconstruction would become a futile exercise because everything will be gone by then. And people will die."

The five-month embargo at the Nepal-India border points due to political unrest in the southern plains in Nepal contributed to the slow economic growth. Over 10,000 jobs were lost and hundreds of industries shut down.

The bank's outlook said that in FY2016, a sub-par monsoon will constrain agriculture growth, while an expected delay in getting reconstruction started, coupled with economic dislocation and damage to infrastructure, will curtail industry and growth of services. Accordingly, GDP growth will likely be moderately below the ADB's 2015 projection.

Inflation is expected to be much higher as price pressures mount owing to an expected drop in agricultural harvest and persistent supply bottlenecks, said the outlook, adding that larger imports combined with a more normal increase in remittances will likely push the current

account into a small deficit.

However, the growth rate is expected to pick up to 4.8 percent in 2017 through stabilisation of political climate, acceleration of reconstruction and normal monsoon that favours agricultural growth.

Won't tolerate border blockade says Nepal PM

31 Mar - Nepal Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has said the nation would not tolerate any kind of border blockade and the government would not tolerate such activities.

Oli was inaugurating the silver jubilee celebration of the Federation of Contractors' Association of Nepal in Ratnanagar of Chitwan today, reports The Himalayan Times.

The Prime Minister said in Chitwan today that the government cannot just look at Nepali people's suffering because of someone's whim."

Oli added that the government would extend deadline of infrastructure development projects by a year considering impacts of the earthquake and the border blockade last year.

He warned the contractors against any unnecessary delay.

More than 1,200 construction businesspersons have gathered in Chitwan for the function.

The Prime Minister, who recently visited India and China, said the government would maintain friendly relations with both the neighbours.



Oli says government cannot just look at Nepali people's suffering because of someone's whim.



Lawmaker Raymond Chan Chi-chuen taking over the finance committee's seat in protest.

Hong Kong News

Uproar at Legco after snap vote leads to passage of HK\$19.6 billion for Hong Kong high-speed rail link

11 Mar - The HK\$19.6 billion extra funding request for the controversial express rail link from Hong Kong to Guangdong was abruptly passed by the legislature's Finance Committee yesterday, triggering chaos inside and outside the chamber.

An angry legislator threw ink at acting committee chairman Chan Kam-lam as he out-manoeuvred pan-democratic lawmakers' efforts to stall the vote, while police had to forcibly remove protesters who had the building.

The drama erupted at around 5pm, two hours into the meeting, when Chan suddenly called for a vote on the government's request for extra money to complete the railway that will link Hong Kong to Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

Moments before the vote, newly elected Civic Party lawmaker Alvin Yeung Ngok-kiu, used a megaphone to complain that he was only given seven minutes to ask questions even though he had not participated in the funding request debates before.

"I know Mr Alvin Yeung has been returned by 160,000 voters... but while you are here [in the chamber], you have to act according to the rules of procedure," Chan told Yeung. "You don't

enjoy any privilege just because you have gained a certain number of votes."

As Yeung continued to protest, Chan called for security to remove him from the chamber, at which point, all the pan-democrats left their seats and stood around their new colleague.

When they refused to return to their seats, the acting chairman suddenly put the funding request to a vote, relying on raised hands among pro-establishment lawmakers still in their seats.

The vote was taken in the main chamber after the meeting had to be suspended three times in another room, where radical lawmaker "Long Hair" Leung Kwok-hung threw ink at Chan, forcing him to go the bathroom to clean up.

Soon after the vote, around a dozen activists from Leung's party, the League of Social Democrats, and the Land Justice League stormed into the Legislative Council's lobby.

Scuffles broke out between the activists and security guards as they tried to rush into the chamber.

"The vote is void! Shame on Chan Kam-lam!" they shouted as they grappled with security, and police were called in.

The activists remained in the legislature for around three hours before being removed by officers, who carried them out one by one without any violence.

The arguments raged on after the

meeting, over whether Chan's surprise move was in accordance with Legco rules.

Speaking to the media after the snap vote, lawmaker Cyd Ho Sau-lan, convenor of an alliance of 23 pan-democrats, apologised to the public for not being able to block the funding.

Ho accused Chan of abusing his power and described the vote as "violence in Legco". She did not rule out seeking a judicial review to overturn the decision.

The pro-establishment camp, however, insisted that Chan acted fairly and rationally, in accordance with the rules.

Veteran lawmaker Tam Yiu-chung of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong hailed Chan's "patient and careful" conduct.

"Chan repeatedly asked the pan-democrats to stop messing around and return to their seats in order to proceed with the motions," Tam said. "But sadly they kept breaking order." Tam, also an executive councillor, said the debate had been delayed too many times by the pan-democrats' filibustering.

Former Civic Party lawmaker and barrister Ronny Tong Ka-wah said it was hard to discern at this stage if there were reasonable grounds to challenge the handling of the vote in court.

Tong noted that courts had reiterated in previous legal challenges against Legco president Jasper Tsang Yok-ting's decisions to halt filibusters that they had no intention of interfering with legislative proceedings.

Forced labour common among Hong Kong's domestic helpers, study finds

14 Mar - Maria spends her short nights between exhausting shifts as a maid in a cupboard in her employers' home in Hong Kong.

"The space is so small I cannot lie straight. I have no privacy and am not allowed to use my phone to contact my family," says the single mother of two, who is in her late 20s and from a rural area in the Philippines.

Her day begins at 6am and ends at midnight.

"I work a six-day week. I am meant to get 24 hours off once a week but I am given chores in the morning and after my 7.30pm curfew. I am always hungry. I am sometimes fed leftovers, sometimes nothing. The man shouts at me and calls me 'Idiot' and 'Moron'. Once, I made a mistake and he grabbed my head and shoved me," she says.

"I am scared and cry every night. I can't leave because I owe recruitment fees to my agency, and my family needs money." One in six migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong is in forced labour, working an average of 71 hours a week, some for more than 15 hours a day, according to research by Justice Centre Hong Kong. The study, which surveyed 1,000 workers from eight countries in a dozen areas of the city, used the International Labour Organisation's indicators for forced labour adapted to the Hong Kong context. It found that 13% of those surveyed worked 15 or more hours a day and 7.7% were woken up in the night to work. Even on rest days, 35% were made to do some work and 4.5% were not given a rest day. Of those in forced labour, 14% had been trafficked and only 5.4% showed no signs of labour exploitation.

"Until now, the Hong Kong government's response to forced labour and human trafficking has largely been one of denial despite mounting international concern," says Victoria Wisniewski Otero, who co-authored the report.

"The government considers cases of abuse as rare incidences, but we have

clear evidence that labour exploitation is prevalent and, in some cases, one in six respondents in fact, bear all the markers of forced labour."

Hong Kong has one of the highest densities of migrant domestic workers in the world – 336,600, mainly women, make up 4.4% of the city's population and 10% of the workforce, providing cheap care for children and elderly people.

Most of these workers come from the Philippines and Indonesia.

In its latest Trafficking in Persons report, the US State Department said Hong Kong was a "destination, transit and source territory for men, women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour" (pdf). The government rejected these findings.

Wisniewski Otero says the authorities should bring in legislation to deal with the issue and incorporate legal definitions of forced labour and human trafficking for the purpose of forced labour into domestic law.

"Justice Centre calls on the government to prohibit human trafficking in all its forms, including for forced labour. The government must act now. It can no longer afford to sweep these problems under the carpet."

Two cases of abuse have turned the international spotlight on Hong Kong.

Last year, a Hong Kong woman, Law Wan-tung, who abused Erwiana Sulistyarningsih, then 21, from Indonesia, was sentenced to six years in jail after her conviction for assault, grievous bodily harm, criminal intimidation, and failure

to pay wages and give rest days.

Another Indonesian woman, Kartika Puspitasari, was assaulted, tortured, starved and imprisoned in her employer's home over two years from 2010. The 27-year-old escaped and her employers were sentenced to jail terms in 2013.

The government says it investigates reports of abuse and points to the convictions as proof of its commitment to foreign domestic workers, or "helpers" as it calls them.

"Hong Kong is one of the few places in the world which grants statutory labour rights and benefits, such as a weekly rest day, statutory holidays, paid annual leave etc to migrant workers, same as those enjoyed by local workers," said Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, secretary for labour and welfare, before the release of Justice Centre's report.

"Helpers are offered additional protection through the government-prescribed standard employment contract under which they can enjoy benefits like free food, free accommodation, free medical treatment and free passage to and from their home countries."

The minimum wage for migrant domestic workers is 4,210 Hong Kong dollars a month (£382). There are no maximum hours. Justice Centre found that, due to long working hours, the average hourly pay is HK\$14.32; the legal minimum for other workers is HK\$32.50.

Employment agencies can charge migrant workers 10% of their first month's salary as a placement fee. But NGOs have found that illegal and excessive fee-charging is rife.



Maria, a migrant domestic worker, looks towards Tsim Sha Shui from Central Ferry Pier on Hong Kong Island.

“Our study found that the main driver predicting whether someone would be in forced labour hinged on whether they had excessive recruitment debt,” says Wisniewski Otero. “Those with debt – equal to or in excess of 30% of their annual income – were six times more likely to be in forced labour. Clearly agencies are profiteering and regulation needs to be ramped up.”

Eni Lestari, spokeswoman for the Asian Migrants Coordinating Body, says it is common for migrants to work for six months or more in debt bondage, paying off up to HK\$21,000.

Siti, an Indonesian mother in her mid-30s, started work in the city last year but her employer pushed her into the stove and she burnt her arm.

“Though my contract was to work in one house, I had to look after three premises. I worked from 6.30am–3am and slept on the sitting-room floor. I had no day off in six months. I wasn’t given enough food, wasn’t allowed to practice my religion and wasn’t allowed out of the house by myself,” she says.

“The recruitment agency took away my passport and took two-thirds of my salary for six months because of debt. I rang my agency to ask them to help me escape. First they told me I needed to be humble and to pray, then they said they would only help me if I paid another HK\$3,000 but I had no money.”

“[Hong Kong’s rule of law], which is meant to be a shield for the workers, has been turned into a sword against them,” says Melville Boase, a lawyer who has represented domestic workers including Sulistyarningsih.

“The classic example is that their contract specifies the kind of work they do and is meant to protect them. But if they are forced to do other work and they complain, they are prosecuted for breach of condition of stay and in many cases are sent to prison.”

The “live-in requirement” for migrant domestic workers makes them vulnerable to abuse, including sexual attacks. The “two-week rule”, under which migrants must leave Hong Kong within 14 days of the end of their contract, means they have little time to pursue justice if they have been wronged. They are also not

allowed to work once terminated so they have no way of earning a living if they want to pursue a legal claim.

The UN committee against torture, which issued its third report for Hong Kong in December (pdf), is one of many human rights groups calling on the immigration department to scrap these policies.

‘Missing’ British bookseller Lee Bo returned to Hong Kong, officials say

24 Mar - A Hong Kong publisher who went missing for nearly three months is reportedly back in mainland China - a few hours after returning to Hong Kong.

Lee Bo, a British citizen, was widely believed to have been abducted and taken to mainland China late last year along with four of his colleagues.

China was accused of violating Hong Kong’s judicial independence.

The men worked for a publisher Mighty Current which sold gossip books critical of China’s leaders.

They all went missing late last year.

Mr Lee denied being kidnapped during an interview on state Chinese television.

However, his supporters believe the TV interview was done under duress.

‘Not fully released’

Mr Lee’s colleagues, Cheung Jiping, Lui Bo, Gui Minhai and Lam Wingkei, appeared on Chinese state TV in February, saying they had been detained for “illegal book trading”.

Mr Lee returned to Hong Kong on Thursday, where he asked police to drop the missing persons case on him.

On Friday morning, smiling nervously, he told journalists he would not publish books anymore, and asked them not to bother him or his family, calling for the immediate release of all five men.

He said he could travel freely between Hong Kong and the mainland, before being escorted into a car that drove him to mainland China, local media reported.

When asked if he had been taken to China by security agents, Mr Lee said “it’s not convenient for me to say”.

China expert Willy Lam, from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, told AFP news agency: “The fact of the matter is that he has not really been fully released... he needs to report back to China.”

Mr Cheung and Mr Lui returned briefly to Hong Kong earlier this month, but were also reportedly returned to the mainland as part of their bail conditions.

‘Serious breach’

Mr Lee’s disappearance from Hong Kong in December sparked an international outcry. Under Hong Kong law, Chinese police do not have jurisdiction in the territory.

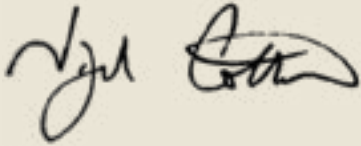
Many suspected he had been abducted because he had not taken his travel document, which is necessarily for cross-border travel, with him, and the Hong Kong authorities said they had no record of his having crossed into the mainland. The UK has said Mr Bo was probably “involuntarily removed” to China, calling it a “serious breach” of the handover treaty that undermined the principle of “One Country, Two Systems”.



Lee Bo was escorted into a car that drove him to mainland China, local media said.

Conclusion

The increased pressure upon ISIS in the Middle East will lead to more terrorist attacks on those fighting it. We can expect attacks in Europe and at US targets. We must remain vigilant. Remember, if you see anything out of the ordinary or that you think might be unusual or dangerous, report it. Don't wait. Even if you're wrong, it's better to do something than wait to be proved right or wrong, when it may be too late.



Nigel Collett
Managing Director



Shyam Bhandari earned Employee of the month for February 2016! Congratulations!