



Newsletter

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We publish this month a photograph of the Adonia of *P&O Cruises*.

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

We Welcome

The Christmas season is upon us, which sadly nowadays seems to be a time when terrorists may seek maximum publicity for atrocities involving the largest number of people. Please keep your eyes and ears wide open and keep safe yourselves and those you protect.

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 733 men and 168 women on ships, a total of 901 crew and staff under management.





GI (HK) Business

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

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

Editor of Newsletter



Derek Lin

World Security

Economics

The election of President-elect Trump has given the world's stock markets and the US Dollar a boost this month. We will need more time to assess the long term economic consequences of his planned boost to the US economy and his possible conflicts with trading partners like China. Italian banks threaten another Euro crisis. Italy has been forced to bail out one of its major banks, Monte dei Paschi di Siena, which had failed EU stress tests. Under EU rules, the bail out will cause millions of ordinary citizens to lose money and will lead to political problems for the Italian state.

Nuclear

There are no new developments at the moment.

Europe

Tensions on the border between Ukraine and Russia remain high. Tensions between Russia and NATO, and with the Europe Union, are growing. Russia appears to have made cyber interference in the electoral and political affairs of other states a new form of warfare. Recent Russian attacks have been made on the US election, on Britain and on Germany. The Russian ambassador to Turkey was shot and killed by a policeman objecting to Russia's policies in Syria at a speech he was giving in Ankara, Turkey's capital on 19 December.

Italy's Prime Minister, Matteo Renzi, resigned after losing a referendum he had called to approve his plans to reorganize Italy's constitution, plunging Italy back into political crisis and spoiling hopes of future government ability to stimulate the country's sluggish economy, which has not grown since the 1990s and is massively in debt. Anti-EU parties in Italy will take advantage of the situation.



President Putin carries red roses as he leads tributes at ceremony for Russian ambassador

The Middle East and the Arab World

The Syrian regime of President Assad and its ally Russia have retaken Aleppo after causing massive civilian casualties in air and ground bombardments leading western governments to accuse Russia and Assad of crimes against humanity.

Conflict has not yet ended in Libya and Yemen.

President-elect Trump has stated that he intend to back out of the nuclear agreement brokered by President Obama, Europe and China with Iran and will impose more sanctions. The collapse of this agreement will lead to the Iranians restarting their nuclear programme and so may lead to violence internationally if the US and its ally Israel seek to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities. Any US withdrawal will also cause conflict with Europe, Russia and China, which are also part of the agreement and wish it to continue.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

The security situation in Afghanistan remains grave.

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.



Some people in Aleppo were out celebrating the departure of the last of the rebels

Thailand and Malaysia

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

Asia

Tension continues in both the South China Sea and the Sea of Japan around islands claimed by China. Despite earlier promises that it would not militarise its newly built facilities on the Spratly Islands, aerial photography has revealed that China has installed missile systems there. China seized an American underwater drone in the area but has since handed it back. China's insurgency problems in the Muslim areas of far-western Xinjiang province and in Tibet continue.

President-elect Trump's telephone conversation with the president of Taiwan and his public querying of the One China policy upon which US-China relations have been based for over 50 years has alarmed and enraged China, which treats Taiwan as a red line.



A satellite image shot in November provided by Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative

Palestine

There is little news currently in Gaza or the West Bank. The Trump-designated US ambassador has announced that he will place the US Embassy in Jerusalem, which is not internationally recognized as Israel's capital and is disputed with the Palestinians. His pro-Israel stance indicates that he will not be seen as an impartial broker in any peace talks and the issue will cause problems in Palestine.

Africa

Nigerian forces continue to attack Boko Haram Islamic terrorists in the north of the country. Civil conflict continues in South Sudan.

Myanmar

Fighting is raging in the Shan State between the army and several local militia who have refused to sign the peace deal brokered by Aung San Suu Kyi, and in between Muslim guerrillas and the Army, leading to many civilian casualties and disruption.



Myanmar residents displaced by military conflicts back home seek shelter at a camp established in the border town of Mang-hai, Southwest China's Yunnan Province.

The Malacca Straits

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

India

Kashmir remains disturbed. The withdrawal of India's 1000 and 500 Rupee notes has caused widespread difficulty.

The Americas

Problems remain in Venezuela, where the government's disastrous policies have led to impoverishment of the people and civil unrest. The Government's withdrawal of bank notes in 100 Bolivar denomination has caused hardship and protests.



People wait to withdraw money from an ATM in Caracas, Venezuela, on Dec. 19, 2016.



File photo of Nepal's former King Gyanendra.

Nepal News

Nepal's ex-king warns of 'intolerable' attacks on unity

22 Dec- KATHMANDU: Nepal's former king has warned that national unity is under attack, making a rare public statement after protests sparked by proposed changes to new federal borders.

Gyanendra Shah, the last king of Nepal, was deposed eight years ago following a Maoist revolution and has since largely refrained from public comment on the country's fractious politics.

He broke his silence with a statement late on Wednesday in which he warned of growing divisions between the communities that inhabit the southern plains and the central hill areas of the Himalayan country over suggested changes to internal borders.

"Social harmony among Nepali people is waning and efforts are being made to break the bonds of unity between the plains, the hills and the mountains," Shah said in a statement.

Shah accused "temporary powers" who

he said were "gaining strength under the influence of outside forces" of creating these divisions.

He did not say who he was referring to, but neighbouring India has made clear its displeasure over the federal borders laid out in Nepal's new constitution, which many believe will disadvantage communities living in the plains with close cultural ties to India.

Gyanendra stepped down from the throne in June 2008 after parliament voted to abolish Nepal's 240-year-old Hindu monarchy, transforming the country into a secular republic.

Commentators said the former king, whose reign was not popular, was likely using the current period of political instability in Nepal to reassert his authority.

"As the country faces political instability and protests on federal issues, the former king has taken a chance to show that he is active," said Lok Raj Baral, chairman of the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Studies.

"It is (due to) the weakness of the political leadership that the regressive forces want to raise their heads right now."

Nepal's lawmakers began work on a new national constitution after the abolition of the monarchy and it was finally passed in September 2015 on a wave of national solidarity following a deadly earthquake.

But the new federal borders proved highly controversial and led to violent protests in the south in which more than 50 people were killed.

The proposed amendments are intended to address that, but some opposition parties are opposing them, arguing that they will create a divide between communities living in the hills and the plains.

The government has not yet tabled the amendments in parliament and it is doubtful that they have enough support to garner a two-thirds majority needed to pass the proposed legislation into law.

Nepal, India to introduce open skies policy

22 Dec- KATHMANDU: Officials of Nepal and India have agreed to adopt the open skies policy in their aviation sectors.

A meeting of the joint secretary-level delegations held in New Delhi on Tuesday and Wednesday concluded with such an agreement, according to the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation.

During the meeting, the Indian side had proposed Nepal to revise the policy, upon which Nepal agreed.

But, Nepal maintained that airport infrastructures should be properly developed for the same.

The neighbours also agreed to carry out flights on the basis of third country code share.

The Indian side had proposed to introduce the code share system in domestic flights as well, but Nepal said the issue should be finalised only after consultation with private airline companies here.

Meanwhile, India agreed to turn B345 and G335 air routes into two-way ones.

Likewise, India agreed to fix the Himalaya-2 route from Bagdoghra to Imphal via Guwahati and Silchar.

The two sides have also agreed to hold next rounds of discussions in February 2017 to discuss various technical issues including air routes and entry points.

Nepal and India have also agreed to sign a letter of agreement to help each other in search and rescue efforts at times of crashes and disappearance of aircraft.

Nepal's Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Joint-Secretary Suresh Acharya and India's Civil Aviation Ministry's counterpart Arun Kumar had signed the agreement.



Sydney optometrist Shaun Chang and his team of volunteers have been returning to remote Sherpa communities in the Everest region every year since 2013 to fit local children with donated glasses.

Aussie optometrists giving the gift of sight to Nepal's Sherpa children

23 Dec- For thousands of years, the Sherpa people of Nepal have been navigating the icy slopes of the world's tallest and most formidable mountains. And while their eyes have guided countless adventurers safely up and down the slopes of Everest, they have recently been noticing that many Sherpa children are having issues with their eyesight at school.

At least that's what Sydney optometrist Shaun Chang learned when he stopped by the Kunde Hospital while trekking in the area back in 2013.

"The doctor there asked what I did back in Australia and I said I was an optometrist. He showed me this room with bags of donated glasses and optometry equipment," Chang tells SBS. "He said, 'We have kids that can't see the board at school but we don't know how to test them for nearsightedness, can you help us?'"

Sifting through the equipment, Chang found they didn't have everything necessary to perform the correct tests, nor did he have enough time to teach the staff how to do them.

Instead, he flew home and set up the Eyes4Everest charity, and a year and a half later, he was back in the remote Sherpa communities. But this time, two other optometrists were in tow.

children - in two and half days," he says, "it was busy, my average day is about 12 to 14 patients."

"Many Sherpa children had vision issues when reading, but what we found wasn't necessarily much nearsightedness, but a lot of children with astigmatism which can contribute to eye strain," Chang explains.

"As part of my eye examination I like to look at visual inspection skills and we were finding that in a lot of Sherpa kids, their eyes were designed to look far away not up close. This could explain why some children were getting headaches at school."

Although Chang and his team were able to give donated glasses to many children, they were disappointed to find that they didn't have enough time to see many more people who travelled hours in some cases, to use their services.

As a result, the team - which has since expanded to eight optometrists - returned earlier this year and visited three Sherpa villages along the Everest base-camp trekking route under the leadership of optometrist Joe Wang.

He tells SBS that examined 200 children at the Himalayan School in the village Namche Bazaar over two days before moving on to service a very different group of students in the village of Dingboche

"We saw 150 patients - 132 of which were



The children at this school hold up the glasses they were given.

“We also visited a monastery where the monks had told our guide that they had trouble reading,” Wang says, “As you can imagine, they spend a lot of time studying scripture so we provided a number of glasses there as well.”

Wang explains that healthcare can be difficult for the Sherpa people to access as many of the communities in the Everest region are remote and “due to difficult terrain, all transport either goes on foot or by expensive helicopter flights when the weather allows.”

This also means that for the team travelling from Australia, much of their time is spent making their way to and from the villages, limiting the number of days they can spend actually conducting examinations. In both of these aspects of their volunteer work however, they have enjoyed the overwhelming support of local Sherpa people and guides.

“We’ve only come so far because we’ve had the help and support of the Sherpa people, if they weren’t on board we wouldn’t have gotten anywhere,” Chang says.

While conducting examinations on both visits, Sherpa guides fluent in English volunteered to provide translation and help out with the eye testing.

“They’re very selfless people, you hear about Sherpa people rescuing trekkers and climbers, well they also make sure that

they get the children seen first, followed by the women and elderly before the men, they have a lot of character,” Chang says.

He also recalls how a child with albinism and one whose malnutrition growing up had left her with very limiting sight, were brought forward by the community as priority patients.

“When you find that patient who you know glasses are going to make the world of difference to, that makes it worth it,” Chang says.

Wang adds that this is particularly true when it comes to young children. “If they have trouble reading they don’t do very well at school because their learning system is heavily dependent on good vision,” he says.

“So by virtue of allowing them to read comfortably and clearly, we can potentially change the outlook of a child’s whole life.”

It isn’t just the glasses that help. Wang says their eye exams have also helped identify other underlying health concerns, as was the case with one Sherpa man with diabetes.

“Diabetes is a disease that affects your blood vessels and there are blood vessels on the retina at the back of the eye that we can see as we conduct an eye examination,” Wang explains.

“We were able to tell this person that

his diabetes was not well controlled and needs to be better looked after, something that will potentially save him from more severe issues down the track.”

Going forward, Chang wants his charity to collaborate even more closely with the local Sherpa people and says that “ultimately, Eyes4Everest has to continue and be championed by both Nepalese and Sherpa people because it stands to benefit them.”

“Eventually we want to contract as many Nepalese and Sherpa people as we can. As of next year we will be employing Nepalese optometrists to come along with the Australian volunteers, and expand to other regions in Nepal such as Annapurna,” he says.

Over the three volunteer trips they have made to date, Eyes4Everest has prescribed and dispensed 253 pairs of glasses, which the children between the ages of three and 18 have received free of charge.

While the birth of his daughter meant Chang wasn’t able to attend this year’s trip, he hopes to lead an even bigger team back to the region to continue their work in late 2017.



Hong Kong News

Hong Kong in shock as Chief Executive CY Leung decides not to seek re-election

10 Dec- Hong Kong's embattled leader on Friday left the city stunned and threw next year's chief executive election wide open by announcing that he would not seek a second term to spare his family "unbearable pressure".

Eyes were glued to television screens and mouths hung open in shock as a grim-faced Leung Chun-ying told Hong Kong that he was calling it quits in a hastily arranged press conference at 3.30pm, an hour after the government gave the media a heads-up.

"If I run my family will suffer unbearable pressure due to my electioneering ... I must protect them," he said, upending every expectation that his re-election bid for March was a done deal.

It is understood that Leung, who said he had pondered over the decision for several days, made up his mind on Thursday after consulting Beijing. That same night, he was seen at Prince of Wales Hospital in Sha Tin, where his often troubled daughter, Leung Chai-yan, was said to be receiving treatment for an unspecified ailment.

A source familiar with Beijing's thinking said Leung's daughter's condition was one of the key factors that prompted the unexpected – almost unbelievable – move, but it was not the only cause.

"Mr Leung is a good candidate for the next chief executive and he always puts the interests of Hong Kong and the country as top priority," the source said. "He had discussed with the central government the best way forward for Hong Kong. The central government has also considered how the situation in Hong Kong will develop if Leung governs Hong Kong for another five years."

The chief executive, considered a highly polarising figure who has struggled to overcome his constantly low popularity ratings, was at pains to clarify that his decision was not due to any lack of endorsement from Beijing.

"[The central government] has always supported me and said I have done a good job," he said.

Beijing backed that claim in a statement issued shortly after the announcement, with the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office saying it deeply regretted Leung's decision.

"Mr Leung has steadfastly implemented

the 'one country, two systems' formula and the Basic Law since taking up office, and has made important contributions in defending national sovereignty and security," the office said. Beijing had always fully affirmed Leung's work, it added.

Media reports that office director Wang Guangya had met Leung to persuade him not to seek re-election were denied by the source.

New World Development chairman Henry Cheng Kar-shun, one of Leung's influential supporters, said he believed the chief executive's decision had nothing to do with Beijing.

Ray Yep Kin-man, a political scientist at City University, said the announcement, which came two days ahead of polls for the Election Committee, might be due to Beijing's intention to sway the election of the 1,200-member body that will pick the next chief executive.

"Beijing is worried about the uncertainty if pan-democrats win 300 seats in the committee and another 200 candidates who oppose Leung are returned," Yep said. "With Leung's decision not to run, the 'Anyone But CY' campaign will lose its momentum."

All attention has now shifted to who stands a higher chance to take up the top job with Leung out of the picture.

"I hope to let all friends who have the intention of running know the latest situation as soon as possible, as whether they will run depends on whether I seek re-election," Leung said.

A government source said that appeared to point to Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, who has been tipped as a strong possible candidate, although she has repeatedly denied it.

Lam did not respond to media questions Friday while a spokesman for Financial Secretary John Tsang Chun-wah, another widely tipped candidate, said he understood and respected Leung's decision.

The pan-democratic camp reacted with excitement that its arch-enemy was no longer in the leadership race, but also vowed to "remain vigilant".

Legislative Council president Andrew Leung Kwan-yuen blamed Leung for his "zero-sum game" approach in handling the opposition.

Liberal Party stalwart James Tien Pei-chun, one of Leung's fiercest critics, said Beijing had heeded the people's wishes and signalled the need to build harmony.

Launch date set for Hong Kong MTR's new South Island Line

05 Dec- The new MTR extension linking the southern part of Hong Kong Island to Admiralty will open on December 28, according to the corporation's senior officials.

Announcing the launch date yesterday, MTR Corporation chief executive Lincoln Leong Kwok-kuen said he hoped the new line would enhance development of the southern districts and boost convenience for commuters.

"With the opening of the South Island Line, MTR's railway service will reach all 18 districts of Hong Kong. Passengers can enjoy more seamless and convenient journeys as they travel to different corners of the city," he said during a tour of the expanded Admiralty station.

The stop also serves as an interchange station for several other lines.

"We chose December 28 because it is between two big holidays and all schools will be closed. We [expect] passenger traffic to be less than that of normal weekdays," Leong added.

The HK\$16.5 billion line, operated with driverless three-carriage trains, will run from South Horizons in Ap Lei Chau to Admiralty via new stations at Lei Tung, Wong Chuk Hang and Ocean Park. It is expected to serve some 170,000 people per day.

The frequency of train services during peak periods will be about three minutes per train. To cater for the expected increase in passenger numbers, the train service during non-peak hours on the

Island Line will be increased by 72 trips a week from Mondays to Thursdays, and on the Kwun Tong line by 26 trips on Sundays.

The expanded Admiralty station will include 17 additional escalators and five new lifts. Increasing the gross floor area from the current 30,000 square metres to 65,000 square metres, resulted in an extra three levels for the station.

"To make it easier for passengers to find their way to the South Island Line platforms, directional signs in green will be displayed prominently," operations director Adi Lau Tin-shing said, adding that more staff would be deployed for crowd control.

Philco Wong Nai-keung, MTR Corp's projects director, said the budget overrun of the Admiralty expansion was revised from HK\$1.3 billion to HK\$850 million, bringing the total cost of the upgrade to HK\$4.2 billion.

The fare for the four-minute journey from Admiralty to Ocean Park will be HK\$5.30, while that for the 11-minute journey to South Horizons will be HK\$6.70.

An open day on December 24 will allow the public to view the four new stations and the Admiralty extension.

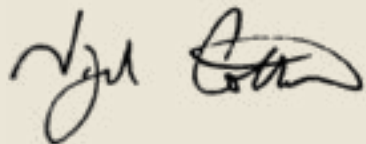
Separately, in a paper to the Legislative Council, the government is seeking extra funding of about HK\$850 million for advance railway works on the Sha Tin to Central link, bumping up costs to HK\$7.1 billion. This was compounded by the increased extension cost of Admiralty station – which is also part of the link – from unfavourable ground conditions and design changes.



Train approaches Wong Chuk Hang station during media preview.

Conclusion

From all of us here in GIMS and BGOS, we wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and we send you our wishes for a safe and prosperous 2017!



Nigel Collett
Managing Director



Happy New Year!