



Newsletter

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

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

This Newsletter comes to you at a particularly bleak time in world affairs. This month, the war against ISIS worsened dramatically with attacks in Paris, Egypt, Lebanon and Mali, and the destruction of a Russian passenger plane. The situation in Nepal has not improved, and the closure of the border with India continues. There is no doubt that international travel has become more risky, and I urge you all to be very careful as you transit to and from ship and in your work. Keeping alert and raising the alarm are the two practical steps we can all take if we see something suspicious.

We Welcome

Norwegian Cruise Line
 Antony Peter P. Simon
 Navamani Sadagopan
 Shashikant Purohit
 Mani Chalakkotte
 Bijumon M. Gopi

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO US

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 776 men and 157 women on ships, a total of 933 crew and staff under management.



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 little major news at present.

Nuclear

There have been no developments in the ratification of the agreement with Iran to curb its nuclear activities. There is no news on the North Korean nuclear programme.

Europe

On 13 November, France became the victim of a series of attacks in Paris by ISIS terrorists in which 130 people died. France imposed border controls and Belgium closed down much of its capital, Brussels, where the ISIS cell seems to have been based, and where one missing terrorist, Salah Abdeslam, remains at large. The attacks complicated the ongoing migrant crisis, with at least one of the terrorists alleged to have travelled backwards and forwards unimpeded as migrants from Syria. The open nature of Europe's borders was revealed and EU states are seeking now to control travel across them. Large numbers of Syrian, Iraqi, Libyan and other migrants continue to walk through Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Slovakia and Croatia heading for Germany and Sweden. Hungary, Slovakia and Poland have refused to accept migrants and Hungary has closed its borders. In Ukraine, the ceasefire agreement between the government, Russia and the eastern separatists has held but tensions are high. Russian aircraft and submarines continue to test NATO borders and Britain has been forced to reverse earlier defence cuts to re-equip vital parts of its armed forces.



Rescuers evacuate people following an attack in the 10th arrondissement of the French capital Paris. Over 150 people were killed as multiple shootings and explosions hit Paris, police said. Police also said there was a hostage crisis in the Bataclan a concert hall in the French capital.

The Arab World

Russia's involvement in Syria has caused repercussions in the West and Arab countries. On 31 October, ISIS planted a bomb that destroyed a Russian passenger plane that took off from the Egyptian holiday resort of Sharm el-Sheikh in Sinai, killing 224 people. Thousands of European tourists were then stranded at the resort for days while civil flights were blocked. Bombing of ISIS forces in Syria and Iraq by France and Russia has intensified. Britain seems poised to add bombing of ISIS in Syria to its current stance of bombing ISIS only in Iraq. Kurdish forces have taken some territory from ISIS in northern Iraq around the strategic town of Sinjar. On 24 November, Turkish planes shot down a Russian bomber that they alleged had intruded into Turkish airspace near northern Syria, leading to heightened tensions between Turkey, a NATO member, and Russia. On 12 November, ISIS suicide bombers killed over 40 Shia Muslims in south Beirut.

Libya remains chaotic. The conflict in Yemen between Sunni government, Saudi Arabian and some Gulf state forces and Shia Muslim Houthi forces continues with a growing toll of death and destruction. ISIS related terrorists carried out an attack on a bus in Tunisia killing thirteen presidential guards. .



Egyptian soldiers collect personal belongings of plane crash victims at the crash site of a passenger plane bound for St. Petersburg in Russia that crashed in Hassana, Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.



Emergency responders and residents through the site of two suicide bombings in a suburb of Beirut.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

The security situation in Pakistan has eased and most areas are peaceful, although tribal areas in the north west remain dangerous. Taliban attacks on Afghan government forces continue.

Palestine

The situation around the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem has worsened, and a number of deaths have occurred from individual murderers on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian divide. Stabbings and murders by vehicles being rammed into people have occurred in Jerusalem.

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.

Thailand and Malaysia

The Muslim insurgency in southern Thailand, near the Malaysian border, continues. Thailand has charged two suspects for the bombing of the Erwan shrine in Bangkok that killed 20 people in August. They are both Chinese Muslim Uighurs, Bilal Mohammed, also known as Adem Karadag, and Yusuf Mieraili. Both have both confessed to their roles in the blast.

Troops inspect the site of a bomb blast in Khok Pho, Thailand.



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

The first reports of piracy in the area of Somalia have occurred after a gap of two years. Two attacks took place this month on Thai and Iranian fishing boats off the Somali coast, and one of these boats was hijacked. Fighting continues in the country between the government and its foreign allies and Islamic militant al-Shabaab fighters.

Africa

On 20 November, terrorists from the ISIS-affiliated Muslim group Al-Mourabitoun attacked the Radisson Hotel in Bamako, the capital of Mali. Another local group, the Massina Liberation Front, also claimed responsibility. 22 people died. Nigerian and Cameroon forces continue to battle Islamic militants Boko Haram in their border areas. The security situation in the Central African Republic remains disturbed. The civil war in South Sudan continues. Boko Haram attacked a village in Niger killing many inhabitants.

The Americas

There is little news of a security note this month.

Myanmar

The elections held on 8 November in Myanmar resulted in a landslide victory for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) has won a landslide victory in Myanmar. This was the country's first national vote since a nominally civilian government was introduced in 2011, ending nearly 50 years of military rule. The NLD now has control of parliament and can choose the next president, although Aung San Suu Kyi is barred by the constitution from becoming President herself as she married an Englishman and her children are therefore of mixed Burmese-English parentage.



Aung San Suu Kyi accepts flowers from parliamentary staff.

India

Elections were held in the populous northern state of Bihar between October and November. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party did badly and finished third ion the state legislative assembly.



Nepal fuel crisis: 'We are really hurting now. We really are.'

Nepal News

Nepal warns of humanitarian crisis as India border blockade continues

6 Nov - Nepal is facing a humanitarian crisis due to the blockade of its border posts with India by groups opposed to the new national constitution, according to the country's deputy prime minister, Kamal Thapa.

Speaking at the UN in Geneva on Wednesday, Thapa warned that the future of Nepal's children is at stake if the blockade is not lifted.

"Lives and livelihoods of the entire population have been adversely affected," said Thapa, speaking during Nepal's universal periodic review. "Schools and hospitals have also had to bear the brunt of the current circumstances, exposing millions of children, elderly and sick persons to greater risks."

The blockade, which is now into its second month, has severely restricted the amount of fuel and essential supplies reaching the country from India. Nepal relies heavily on India for a substantial proportion of its imports.

In Kathmandu, mile-long queues for petrol twist through the capital's streets, and many residents are now using firewood to cook their food, having run out of cooking gas.

Politicians have been widely blamed for

the impasse. "It's the government's fault," said Mitthe Thapa Magar, a taxi driver who had been queuing for petrol for five days. "It has affected daily life a lot. We haven't been able to work. We are queuing here for weeks when we should be working ... No one is listening to us."

The impact of the crisis is felt even more keenly in the Terai, the country's southern plains, where the Madhesi and Tharu ethnic groups, together with political parties who oppose the new constitution, have enforced a general strike for almost three months.

Hopes of resolving the crisis were dealt a blow on Monday when police attempted to clear the blockade at the border town of Birgunj. During clashes between security personnel and demonstrators, an Indian citizen was shot dead by the police.

Laxman Lal Karna, the leader of Sadbhavana party, one of the political groups leading the demonstrations, accused the Nepal government of trying to suppress their protest by force.

"The recent incident in Birgunj shows the government doesn't want to resolve the issue by peaceful talks," Karna said. "With that incident there's no point in holding talks with the government."

The crisis is also disrupting efforts to bring

relief to survivors of the earthquakes that struck Nepal in April and May. Oxfam has called on the government of Nepal to resolve the standoff as a matter of urgency.

John Augsburger, Oxfam humanitarian programme director in Nepal, said: "The fuel crisis is narrowing the window we have to reach communities before the cold winter sets in. Temperatures frequently drop below zero in mountainous Nepal and this is going to take its toll on earthquake survivors – particularly the elderly, pregnant women and children."

The petrol shortage may have caused more casualties when an overcrowded bus fell off a mountain road in Rasuwa district, north of Kathmandu, on 3 November. Local media reports said that 36 people were killed.

Bus accidents are commonplace in Nepal, but the chief district officer of Rasuwa, Shiva Ram Gelal, said the petrol crisis had meant that rules banning passengers from travelling on the roofs of buses were no longer being enforced.

"In recent days the lack of fuel has forced buses to carry more passengers than their capacity," Gelal said. "Considering the current situation we cannot force the bus drivers to follow the law of carrying

passengers according to the seat numbers.”

Narendra Modi visits UK as BJP support is slipping in India

10 Nov - NAditya Chakraborty (Opinion, 10 November) and Pankaj Mishra (G2, 10 November) provide critical assessments of Narendra Modi's lopsided personality and politics, but they do not present the true impact of two state elections in Delhi and Bihar on Modi since he became prime minister 16 months ago. The comprehensive and crushing defeats of the ruling Bharatiya Janata party in Delhi, where the BJP won only three of the 73 seats, and in Bihar, where it won only 58 of the 273 seats, signal the decline (and even fall) of the invincible Modi.

In both these elections Modi staked everything – his own reputation as well as his party's – and took personal charge of the campaigns. In Bihar he addressed some 30 election rallies, as your Delhi correspondent Jason Burke reported (India's ruling party defeated in key regional poll, 9 November) and, according to a report on an Indian TV channel, he didn't win seats even in some of the constituencies which he addressed.

The Indian electorate, even in small towns and villages, is not as ill-informed and backward as we are told and the voters have an innate capacity to make the right choice in elections. I think this is what makes Indian democracy unique.

Members of the Nepali community in the UK will be protesting peacefully on Thursday 12 November, demanding that the Indian government immediately stop its de facto economic blockade against our landlocked country. The reason behind this blockade, it is widely believed, is the Indian government's dissatisfaction with Nepal's constitution, promulgated on 20 September, 10 years after the end of a decade-long Maoist insurgency in 2005. The Indian government claims this constitution disenfranchises the ethnic Madhesis, who live along Nepal's border with India.

While it is true that the Madhesis have grievances against the constitution, it is up to the Nepali people to resolve this issue and we would be in a better position to do so without a blockade that, following on the heels of the catastrophic earthquakes earlier this year, has further crippled the economy and led to great

human suffering. The Indian government denies imposing a blockade and claims the obstruction at the border is solely the result of agitation within Nepal. This is not true. There is ample evidence to the contrary, as observed in the go-slow at customs checkpoints, the refusal by the Indian Oil Corporation as monopoly supplier to load fuel tankers from Nepal, and reports in the Indian press quoting border security force officers saying that they have been asked to block shipments. Through this peaceful protest, which coincides with Indian prime minister Narendra Modi's visit to the UK, we want to draw the attention of the British government and the international community towards the plight of millions of Nepalese people.

The crisis centres on opposition to Nepal's new constitution, signed on 20 September. Although the charter was passed by a large majority of MPs, members of the ethnic Madhesi political parties boycotted the vote, claiming the constitution failed to guarantee them fair representation in parliament and public office.

Since August, Madhesi political parties have imposed a general strike across much of the Terai, the southern plains that run the length of Nepal's border with India. Public transport and health services have been severely disrupted and many factories and schools have been closed for months. Unicef estimates that more than 1.5 million children are out of school in the Terai region alone.



Nepalese citizens sit in temporary shelters as they queue for cooking gas in Kathmandu. The blockade of the border with India is now in its second month.

Nepal border blockade 'threatens the future of the country itself', says UN

18 Nov - Unicef has cautioned that the blockade of Nepal's border posts with India "threatens the future of the country itself".

The stark warning from the UN children's agency, which echoes sentiments expressed by Nepal's deputy prime minister, Kamal Thapa, earlier this month, follows calls by aid agencies working in the country for an urgent resolution to the crisis.

"First, there was a devastating act of nature – the earthquakes that took and damaged so many lives," said Anthony Lake, the executive director of Unicef, during a recent visit to the country. "Now, political differences among human beings are dealing new blows to the children of Nepal."

Devendra Lal Karna, a secondary school principal in Danusha district in the Terai, said some of his students were being used in the protests and demonstrations. "This whole situation will have a long-term negative impact on them," he said. "We survived the earthquake that forced us to shut schools down, then came the strike. It's been a very bad year for us."

Soon after the constitution was agreed in September, the protests were stepped up as demonstrators blocked border posts with India, including the main entry point at Birgunj, a town about 135km south of the capital, Kathmandu. The blockade has led to acute shortages of petrol, cooking gas and other essential supplies.

Oxfam has warned that its humanitarian programme will come to a complete standstill within weeks. Cecilia Keizer, the country director of Oxfam in Nepal, said:

“Hospitals have run out of essential drugs and supplies, vital social services have been disrupted and aid agencies have not been able to secure fuel to deliver relief items to prepare people for the winter in earthquake affected districts.”

Dr Swayam Prakash Pandit, the director of Bir hospital in Kathmandu, said the hospital is running low on vital drugs and oxygen cylinders. “We are managing so far but we will run out soon,” he said. “We are having to use firewood to cook food for our patients as we ran out of cooking gas.”

Nepalese politicians are becoming increasingly outspoken about what they see as India’s role in the blockade. On Sunday, the prime minister, Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli, suggested India was to blame for prolonging the blockade, describing it as “inhumane and beyond imagination” according to local media reports.

Some have accused India of siding with the Madhesi, who have close ethnic, cultural and linguistic ties with north India. India has repeatedly denied the allegations.

Ram Sharan Mahat, a former finance minister, said: “India should not use international trade as a tool to influence internal politics ... Internal problems should be resolved internally ... Nepal’s economy has been badly affected, especially at the time of post-earthquake reconstruction.”

However, efforts to rebuild have been hampered by the government’s failure to establish the national reconstruction authority, the body charged with overseeing the distribution of \$4b.1n (£2.7bn) of relief funds promised by the international community shortly after the earthquakes, which struck in April and May.

The World Food Programme has said that the distribution of food supplies to earthquake victims is 20% behind schedule due to the lack of fuel. The organisation’s two helicopters, which had previously been delivering relief materials to about 140,000 survivors at high altitude twice daily, were grounded all of last week. “We are doing our best to help survivors of the earthquake but it is very difficult,” said a spokeswoman for the UN body.

One of the earthquake survivors waiting

for relief is Hari Bahadur Bharati, who lives in the hills of Sindhupalchowk district, three hours’ drive north-east of Kathmandu. “We are having a very tough time. We have received just 15,000 rupees [£148], a few sacks of rice and a tarpaulin,” he said. “Since then no one has come to ask about our situation.”

With the onset of winter, Bharati and his family are struggling to sleep at night because of the cold. The fuel shortages have made things worse. “The current crisis has added more pain,” he said. “We are not getting cooking oil, kerosene oil and the price of food has gone sky high ... Nothing has changed since the earthquake. The level of pain and difficulty is just getting worse.”

Nepal Facing Medicine Shortages Due to Fuel Crisis, Blockade

19 Nov - Shortages of life-saving medicine because of political protests in Nepal that have blocked key roads could lead to a crisis, as hospitals have started to cut services, doctors said Thursday.

Hospitals are rescheduling surgeries by weeks, and patients are finding it difficult to get to medical facilities due to fuel shortages, said Dr. Mukti Ram Shrestha of the Nepal Medical Association, the umbrella body of doctors in the country. “If the situation of shortages continues, patients could start dying after two weeks,” Shrestha said.

Truckloads of medicine have been blocked at the main border crossing with India for the last few months by Nepal’s Madhesi ethnic protesters, he said, adding that Indian authorities were also

not allowing the shipments across even at points where there are no protests.

The traditionally marginalized Madhesi have been protesting Nepal’s new constitution, demanding to be given greater autonomy over local matters. Talks between the protesters and the government have made little progress.

India, which has close cultural ties with the group, has restricted fuel and other goods to Nepal.

Nepal imports about 60 percent of its medicine from India. The remaining locally made drugs also get most of the raw material and packaging from India.

Most of the fuel comes from India, and the restriction has led to severe shortages in Nepal. Fuel rationing has led to buses and trucks cutting down services. People travel on rooftops and taxis charge four times the normal rate.

Besides the emergency medicines, patients with long-term illnesses including high blood pressure, diabetes, kidney and heart diseases, were also having difficulty finding medicine.

“I went to 12 shops before I found 30 pills of my blood pressure medicine. I was looking for medicine to cover all winter,” said Narendra Rajbansi, 60, standing next to the row of pharmacies near Bir Hospital. “I have problems when I don’t take medication for two days in a row. I don’t know what I am going to do if this situation continues.”

“We are running out of medicine in our store, and if this continues, we will surely face a crisis,” said Yuvraj K.C., who runs a pharmacy in Kathmandu.



Nepalese people wait to buy medicines at a chemist shop in Kathmandu, Nepal.



Regina Tong, CY Leung's wife, (right) clutches her face after being slapped by her daughter Leung Chai Yan.



Leung Chai Yan, the daughter of Hong Kong Chief Executive CY Leung.

Hong Kong News

Hong Kong chief executive's daughter slaps mother in public

1 Nov - The wife of Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying has defended her eldest daughter over the latter's latest scandal, which involved the older woman being slapped twice by the younger one on camera during a night out to celebrate Halloween.

According to reports from the South China Morning Post and Apple Daily, a number of videos posted online show Ms Leung Chai Yan, 24, who was decked out in ghoulish attire and make-up, striking her mother Regina Tong twice in the face last Saturday night as she was being bundled into a taxi in the busy Lan Kwai Fong district.

It was not clear what caused the public outburst, but it is understood that the visibly drunk Ms Leung was causing a commotion on the streets before her mother appeared.

Ms Tong was seen recoiling in shock and cradling her face before attempting to get into the taxi with Ms Leung, who slapped her again and kicked her, then left in the taxi without her.

Ms Leung said to the crowd, which included reporters who had gathered at the scene around 3am on Sunday: "You know this mum is not my actual biological mum?"

But her friend quickly warned her not to

say anything more.

When asked by reporters, Ms Tong denied the slapping and quickly left the scene on her own.

But she urged the media on Monday to leave her daughter alone, saying that she was drunk and wanted to protect her friends from the crowd of reporters, and had not meant to offend anyone, reported the South China Morning Post (SCMP).

"Chai-yan is a kind-hearted girl... (She) is innocent," Ms Tong was quoted by the SCMP as saying, adding: "She needs rest." Netizens have flocked to Ms Leung's Instagram account to criticise her for being unfilial.

Ms Leung had posted on her Instagram account about 20 photos of her enjoying herself at Halloween parties before the slapping incident. Lifestyle portal Shanghaiist reported that her Facebook has been flooded with messages, and some have even demanded to know who her biological mother is.

Ms Leung, who is active on social media, has posted revealing status updates about her emotional state and confrontations with her parents.

In between light-hearted posts about her English bulldog and her idol - singer-turned-fashion designer Victoria Beckham - she also talks about her insomnia and mood swings.

Earlier on Saturday (Oct 31) at about 6.30pm, she put up a cheery post poking fun at her parents.

Then at 7.18pm, she posted that she was "feeling beyond upset" with the status: "I really wanna talk to someone."

Around two hours later, another post of her in Halloween make up appears with the status "Me be stunning. ?#STUNNAAAAH"

In August this year, she posted: "I think I should see a doctor about my clinical weirdness. Like, am I even biologically related to my siblings..??? My parents have always said they adopted me from a bin on the street. Don't think that's a joke anymore."

Ms Leung, who studied mostly in Britain and was last doing a law degree in the London School of Economics and Political Science, also has an older brother and a younger sister.

In March this year, she posted that she was held against her will in Hong Kong's Government House, where her family lives. The posts have since been deleted. She left home after alleging that her mother had abused her. Mr Leung was forced to give a press conference to deny the allegations. He also said that his daughter was getting treatment for emotional instability.

Ms Leung had told a magazine in Hong Kong earlier that she had a troubled

relationship with her parents and had suffered from depression. In an interview with HK magazine in January, she said of her relationship with her mother: "My mom and I have a complicated relationship. We're similar in the sense that we're aggressive. She expresses it outwardly, but I don't say anything." In the same interview, she also said that

as Advisor to the Chief Executive on Innovation and Technology, and Non-official Member of the Executive Council, after the ITB proposal failed to pass in the Finance Committee in LegCo in February. Lawmakers against the establishment of the ITB have been trying to delay the passing of the funding by filibustering, but their attempts were in vain as Finance Committee Chair Chan Kin-por

session on Wednesday that it was not appropriate for the Housing Authority (HA) to pay the affected households. However, the measure from the companies was based on their goodwill and kindness and did not denote responsibility for the scandal, she added. The four building companies put forward HK\$20 million to pay part of the water bills for around 29,000 affected households, and 300 other non-household properties. Each household or property is set to receive HK\$660. The amount was decided based on the most recent average water bill cost per month, times by a period of 12 months. Previously, the four building companies were told that the HA will not consider any new works tenders submitted by them for a period of between eight months to a year.

Lam said that the four companies will pay different amounts of compensation according to the number of flats they built respectively.

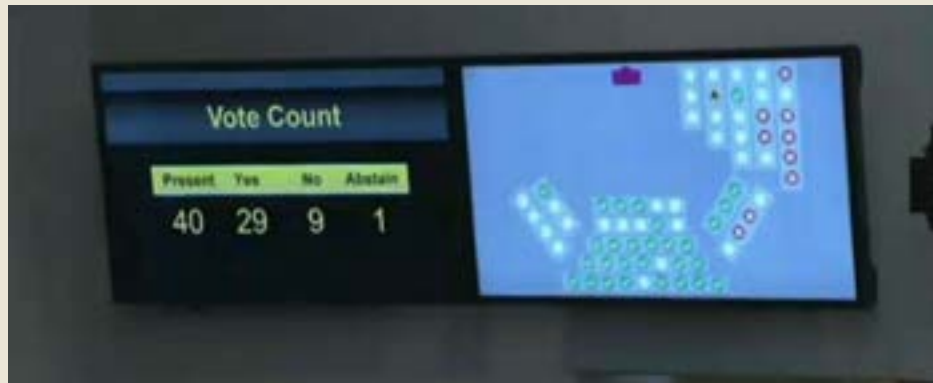
The compensation will be valid for the the next three years, Lam said. The amount included some administrative charges as well as charges by the Water Supplies Department for a slight adjustment in its system, but she added that the amount for the adjustments is small.

Lam also denied the claim that she tried to put pressure on private labs to ask them not to test lead water samples, following a local media report that suggested she had asked lawmaker Helena Wong Pik-wan to identify the private laboratories conducting water tests in July.

The report raised concerns over whether the government wanted to put pressure on the labs. But Lam said she did not recall asking the question as claimed and that it would have been asked in a casual manner if she had done so.



Carrie Lam.



29 voted to approve operational funds, while 9 opposed.

some of her social media posts have been taken too literally.

"People didn't really get the humour behind the joke [on Chai's Facebook profile about taxpayers funding her possessions]. Honestly, what kind of normal person would say 'I'm the Hong Kong princess'? I'm so shocked people believed it. When the whole thing blew up, I thought, 'What?'"

There is wide speculation as to why Leung started the altercation with her mother, but some believe there is serious familial dysfunction.

IT Bureau funding approved by Legislative Council Finance Committee

6 Nov - Funding for the Innovation and Technology Bureau (ITB) has finally been approved by the Legislative Council Finance Committee.

In a Legislative Council session on Friday twenty-six lawmakers voted in favour of the HK\$37 million application for staffing funds, while eight voted against it.

The operational funds of HK\$30 million for the ITB were approved. Nicholas Yang Wei-hsiung may officially start as a Secretary for Innovation and Technology on November 20.

The Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying welcomed the approval of the funding applications.

In March, Yang was appointed as Advisor to the Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying

terminated more than 100 amendments from Leung-Kwok-hung, Albert Chan Wai-yip and Ray Chan Chi-cheung, despite criticisms from the pan-democrat lawmakers.

A motion to set up the ITB was passed in October 2014, but the budget plan was not approved in time. The process was restarted and it was approved to be established in June 2015, but the funding was not approved until Friday.

The ITB has taken over three years to be set up. It was first proposed by Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying when he came to office in 2012. The plan involved merging the Innovation and Technology Commission and Office of the Government Chief Information Officer into one new bureau.

The bureau should be established on the 14th day after the day on which the Finance Committee approves the relevant funding applications.

Households affected by lead water get HK\$660 water bill compensation from builders

11 Nov - The four building companies responsible for constructing the public housing estates affected by the excessive lead in water scandal will pay part of the households' water bills in the future, the government has announced.

Chief Secretary Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor said after a Legislative Council

Lam said that the number of private laboratories capable of doing the tests had increased from eight to ten since the scandal was discovered.

The lead water contamination issue was first brought to light by the Democratic Party in July, after which 11 public housing estates and various schools across Hong Kong were found to have excessive lead content in their water supplies.

Hong Kong Soccer Fans Celebrate Draw With China

17 Nov - Before he boarded a flight to the Philippines on Monday for a meeting with other Asia-Pacific leaders, Hong Kong's chief executive, Leung Chun-ying, read a statement to reporters explaining the purpose of his trip. Bilateral talks. Trade agreements. More bilateral talks. Then the first question came: "Which team are you rooting for?"

Mr. Leung shifted his weight and blinked. "It's a pity," he said, "that when we arrive in Manila – we've inquired – we won't be able to watch the game."

It might have been an easy question for Mr. Leung had the game on Tuesday, a qualifier for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, not pitted his city against his country. Local media had described the match as the "Great China-Hong Kong Battle." To many fans, it was as much a political as a sporting contest. That it ended in a scoreless draw, ensuring that Hong Kong still has a slim chance to advance, was embraced by the Hong Kong side as a victory.

"The draw proved that Hong Kong wouldn't take it lying down," said Oscar Lau, a 30-year-old legal professional. "It speaks to our defiance of China both politically and athletically."

Political slogans were not allowed inside the stadium, but some Hong Kong fans brought signs printed with individual letters and combined them to display the message "Hong Kong is not China."

Outside the stadium, Sammer Wong, a 36-year-old civil servant, was holding a poster featuring the same slogan.

"This match represents a culmination of the dissent we have with China over years," he said, watching it in a nearby playground where fans had set up a screen.

In Hong Kong, a semiautonomous

Chinese territory since British colonial rule ended in 1997, resentment of China has mounted since last year, when Beijing agreed to allow a popular vote for Hong Kong's next chief executive, but only from a slate of closely vetted nominees. That set off weeks of street protests that paralyzed several sections of Hong Kong and at times erupted in clashes. Mr. Leung, who was selected in 2012 by a 1,200-member committee mostly loyal to Beijing, had adhered strictly to the Chinese government's line, showed no sympathy for the protesters and blamed, without naming names, foreign forces for exacerbating the unrest. More than a year later, political tensions have persisted.

Soccer has not been spared. When the national anthem – "March of the Volunteers" – began ringing through the stadium Tuesday evening, many of the roughly 4,000 Hong Kong fans booed, drowning out the 500 or so fans of the Chinese national team who were singing the lyrics.

This happened despite the fine FIFA imposed last month on the Hong Kong Football Association after the Hong Kong fans had booed the anthem in three previous home games. FIFA had threatened more severe penalties, such as requiring future games to be played behind closed doors, if that happened again. It was not immediately clear whether further disciplinary actions would be taken.

China's national anthem is also Hong Kong's, though an increasing number of Hong Kong people express aversion to the song, according to a poll by the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

"It's wishful thinking to say there's no politics in this game," said Billy Wong, 37,

a Hong Kong fan. "It's a manifestation of the conflict between the two places. It's a matter of our pride."

"We'd do what we can to control it, but at the end of the day, those people were voicing their opinion," he said in an interview. "It's a minority of people making a political point, it's not as if they were disrespecting another country, they're disrespecting their own country. I think FIFA will take that into account."

If the political animosities weighed on the players, it didn't show on the field Tuesday evening. After a minute of silence to mourn the victims in the Paris terrorist attacks on Friday, the stadium erupted into chants in different languages: Cantonese, spoken by most Hong Kong people, and Mandarin.

While the Hong Kong fans dominated the sound waves, the Chinese team set the pace of the game, getting more shots on goal than their Hong Kong counterparts. The first half ended with goals saved by the crossbar more often than by the goalkeeper of either team. Hong Kong reinforced its defense as China made a few last-ditch rushes upfield 10 minutes before the end of the match.

Only the top team from each of the eight groups in the qualifying rounds and the four best of the runner-up teams can advance to regional knockout games. Neither China nor Hong Kong, in Group C, has secured a place in the next round. Mr. Sutcliffe said that though it would be a "very very long shot" for Hong Kong to advance, he was pleased with Hong Kong's performance so far.

"We played a team 61 places higher than us in the rankings," he said. "We played them twice and they haven't scored a goal."



Hong Kong fans chanting slogans before the 2018 FIFA World Cup qualifying match between Hong Kong and China on Tuesday.

Conclusion

I send all of you and your families our belated greetings and our wishes for a very happy Tihar!



Nigel Collett
Managing Director

