



Newsletter

Website: gurkha.com.hk

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We publish this month a photograph of the *Genting Dream of Star Cruises*. If you have pictures or postcards of your ship, please send them to us for future Newsletters.

We Welcome

Norwegian Cruise Lines
 Deepa Rana
 Shrishti Thapa
 Ratheesh Chandran Kalaparambil
 (Indian)

Carnival UK
 Man Bahadur Gurung

Universal Ship Management
 Birat Sen
 Deepesh Shahi
 Kiran Gurung
 Min Prasad Gurung
 Pradip Sunar

SHIPPING COMPANIES AND SHIPS LINKED TO

We are working with 21 shipping companies, and have 750 men and 172 women on ships, a total of 922 crew and staff under management.



My trip to Thailand and Myanmar proved a success and we have pre-selected a number of candidates for NCL to review for SSG positions. I thank Chemstar in Bangkok, and Humanpower and Theda in Yangon, for their hospitality. This was our first occasion to start recruiting Thai crew, and it is good to see that very suitable candidates can be found in Thailand.

I also visited the offices of Universal Shipmanagement in Singapore. Universal have now had a large number of Nepalese dealers working on board their three ships over the last two years, and the trial they initiated two years back has proved a great success. It was good to see so many promotions from Trainee Dealer through Inspector to Senior Inspector, and I congratulate our Dealers on their achievement. I was also very glad to meet half our crew on board the MV Aegean Paradise, and to see how well you were all working. I thank you all for looking after me while I was on board.

Universal have asked us to recruit some 20 experienced hotel crew in the housekeeping and F&B departments. We shall be doing so over the next few months.



GI (HK) Business

We are providing security services for 27 Hong Kong Clients and have 97 security staff employed.

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



Editor of Newsletter
Issac Tam

Situation in India

Several months ago, the Government of India announced changes to the way seafarers must be recruited and processed in India. From the date of implementation (and we believe this to be imminent, although there remains confusion on that point), every seafarer must be processed by a registered agency and possess a unique number that is stored on the Immigration Department's computer and which must be shown when exiting the country. This has caused much disruption in the Indian recruitment industry and we are sorry if the new arrangements have caused delay or difficulty to any of our Indian crew. Our current agent in India no longer feels able to carry on under the new regulations and so we are currently searching for a new agency to handle our crew. I shall fly to India in December to make arrangements and will let you know when we have done so.

World Security

Economics

There is no major news about the world's economy this month.

Nuclear

Tensions remain high in the Korean peninsula.

There is no news about the Iran nuclear deal, although it seems to have created an unlikely alliance between Iran's enemies, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Europe

Tension between Russia and NATO countries remains high.



Saudi Arabia leads a coalition that has attacked the Houthis in Yemen and blockaded the country

The Middle East and the Arab World

The Syrian civil war continues. ISIL has been reduced to a few areas of mostly desert.

Tension has continued in Iraq between the Arab Shia government and the Kurds, who hold an autonomous area in the north. Iraqi forces continue the pursuit of ISIL, which now holds little of the country save for desert areas.

Conflict continues in Libya. Saudi Arabia and its Gulf State allies have continued their war against Shia rebels in Yemen.

Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council have continued the blockade of Qatar.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

Violence remains frequent and deadly in Afghanistan.

The security situation in Pakistan remains under control



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.

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.

The Muslim insurgency in the southern Philippines continues.



Armored personnel carriers made their way through the vehicles of residents fleeing the Philippine city of Marawi

Palestine

There is no news this month.

Africa

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

Myanmar

Rakhine province continues to be the site of the driving out of Muslim Rohingya inhabitants. The UN secretary General and the Pope have both visited the country.



A group of Rohingya refugees after crossing the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in September

The Malacca Straits

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

India

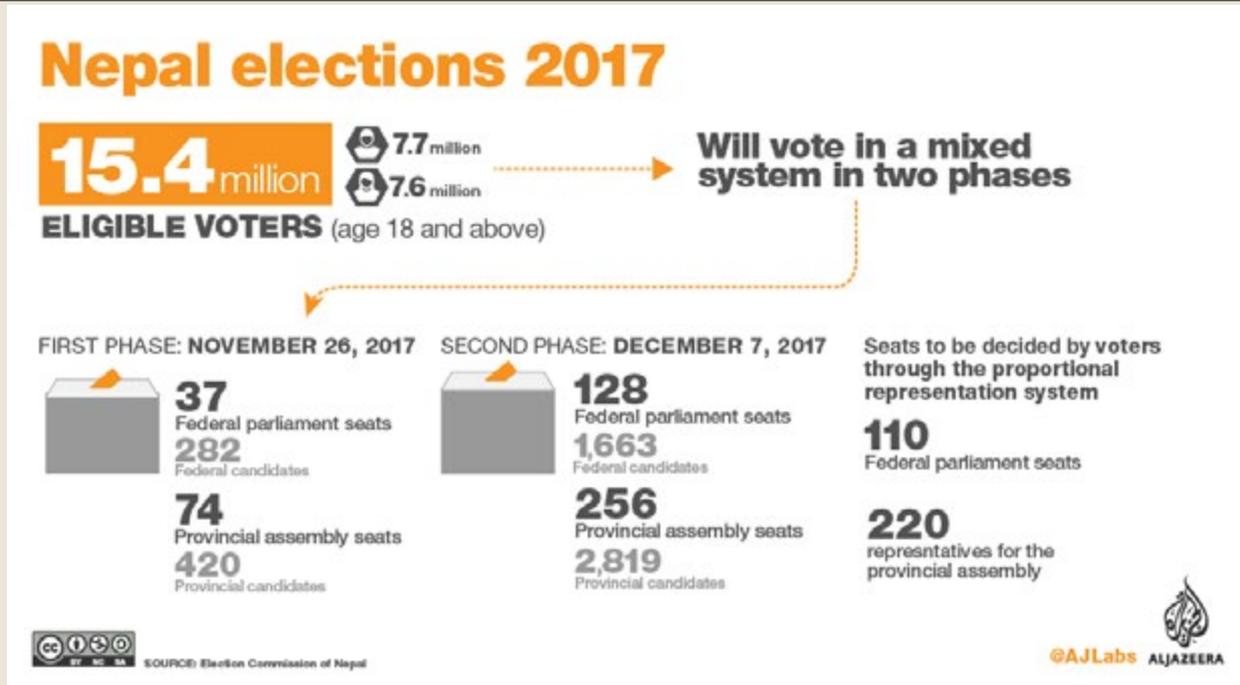
Kashmir remains disturbed.

The Americas

In Venezuela, the government of President Nicolás Maduro clings to power and the country continues its slide into destitution.



President of Nicolás Maduro



Nepal Elections 2017

Nepal News

Nepal elections: 'A significant achievement'

26 Nov- Nepalese vote in parliamentary and provincial elections to choose a new government to conclude democratic transition.

Millions of Nepalese have voted in the first phase of the parliamentary and provincial assembly elections, more than a decade after the end of Maoist rebellion.

The two-phase election will conclude on December 7, hopefully ending the Himalayan nation's long-delayed democratic transition.

The new constitution passed in 2015 declared Nepal a federal state with three levels of government: federal, provincial and local. This was intended to decentralise power from Kathmandu to the newly-created seven provinces and local government units.

Voters will elect 275 members to the House of Representatives (HoR) in a mixed system, with 60 percent of representatives chosen through a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system, while the remaining 40 percent will be elected through a Proportional Representation (PR system).

The federal parliament will be a bicameral legislature, with the 259-member National Assembly (NA) chosen by an electoral college. The HoR and NA will have almost equal powers.

It's the first parliamentary election since 1999. Voters will also choose representatives to seven provincial assemblies, for the first time since Nepal turned into a federal republic and abolished the monarchy in 2008.

Counting of votes will begin after the second phase of polling concludes on December 7. Final results may not be known until the middle of December.

One-third of the seats have been reserved for women, at all three levels of government. The PR system aims to ensure the representation of Dalits, Janajati (indigenous) groups and minorities in the governing structures.

Anurag Acharya, a political analyst based in Kathmandu, told Al Jazeera it is a "significant achievement" for Nepal, especially after years of instability and a decade-old civil war (1996-2006). People

in the southern region, or Tarai, complain of historical underrepresentation of their communities. They say the boundaries of the new states have been drawn to favour the people from the hills, who have traditionally dominated Nepal's politics.

Acharya says the grievances of marginalised groups such as Madhesis (those living in Tarai) and Tharus need to be addressed.

Despite reservation for women and marginalised groups, politicians have been reluctant in giving tickets to them.

"Women are not being fielded in direct election. It reflects the patriarchal mindset of political class," Acharya says.

"Similar is the case in regard to Dalits and Janajatis. The marginalised are only getting through the PR list," he says.

He says, however, that "the process of inclusive political leadership has started from the local elections" which were conducted in three phases between May and September this year.



Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba attending a meeting of the Security Council in Baluwatar, Kathmandu

Home ministry fails to check poll-related violence

29 Nov - Although a series of bomb blasts have taken place across the country targeting candidates contesting the provincial and parliamentary elections, the Ministry of Home Affairs has failed to check such incidents.

Ministry officials attributed the failure of the home ministry to the Cabinet reshuffle and transfer of secretaries ahead of the elections.

Former home minister Janardan Sharma and Secretary Lok Darshan Regmi, who played a lead role in formulating the security strategy for the elections, are no longer at the ministry.

While Sharma has been stripped of his portfolio, Regmi has been promoted to chief secretary.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba himself holds the home portfolio, whereas Mohan Krishna Sapkota has been named the new home secretary.

“The prime minister and home secretary

are implementing the security plan devised by someone else. So the problem lies there,” said a ministry source.”

During critical time, immediate directions are needed. But the prime minister, who is not readily accessible, holds the home portfolio.

As a result, security agencies have not been able to take swift action.”

MoHA officials warned that the security situation might worsen if the ministry continued to grapple with leadership crisis.

One person has died while scores of others have sustained injuries in bomb blasts targeting election campaigns across the country so far.

Temporary cop Binod Chaudhary succumbed to injuries that he had sustained in a bomb blast in Dang yesterday, while in another blast today Nepali Congress parliamentary candidate Narayan Bahadur Karki was injured in Udayapur.

In another incident yesterday, a bomb went off in Lagankhel, Lalitpur, near the election rally organised by the left alliance. CPN-UML Chair KP Sharma Oli was also attending the rally.

The home ministry said it was working to curb incidents of violence. “We have adopted an aggressive strategy to control election violence,” MoHA Spokesperson Narayan Sharma Duwadi told The Himalayan Times.

According to Duwadi, police have arrested around 500 persons for carrying out anti-election activities and confiscated a huge amount of explosives and weapons from across the country.

“We are reviewing our strategy to address lapses,” he said.

Although the government has not yet officially announced involvement of activists affiliated to Netra Bikram Chand-led Nepal Communist Party in the blasts, most of those arrested are members of the NCP.



Hong Kong officials have blamed the increase in poverty on an ageing population

Hong Kong News

Hong Kong: 20% of residents live in poverty

20 Nov- A record number of Hong Kong residents live in poverty, with one fifth of the population falling below the poverty line despite economic growth, according to new government figures.

The number of people living below the poverty line rose to 1.35 million in 2016, about 20% of the city's population. The number is the highest number of poor since the government began publishing statistics in 2009.

Despite opulent wealth, Hong Kong is a deeply unequal society. It is the world's most unaffordable housing market and poorer residents live in squalid conditions, with some living in "coffin homes" – rows of wooden boxes crammed into tiny flats.

The number of poor rose despite the government raising the poverty line last year. For single person households it is set at HK\$4,000 (£388). It is HK\$9,000 (£873) for a two person home and HK\$15,000 (£1,455) for a family of three. In the city's poorest district of Sham Shui Po, which is home to large numbers of recent immigrants and ethnic minorities, the poverty rate rose to nearly a quarter of the population.

Hong Kong officials blamed the increase in poverty on an ageing population, and the rate for residents over 65 was about 32%.

Social groups criticised the government for its lack of action on poverty alleviation and demanded an increase in welfare payments.

"Economic growth can not help the lower classes share in the economic achievements," said a spokesman for the Society for Community Organisation, an NGO that works with the poor. "Reflecting on the grim poverty in Hong Kong, the government's poverty alleviation measures lack strength, precision and intensity."

The group called on the government to pass laws combating age discrimination and increase welfare schemes for the elderly. The city's minimum wage is £3.35 per hour and is reviewed every two years.

The large number of poor in Hong Kong rose despite the government posting a £10.7bn surplus in the most recent fiscal year. Hong Kong's GDP per capita is ranked among the highest of any country

or territory, according to the World Bank, and exceeds the UK, Germany and Japan.

Wealth is most apparent in the city's chronically unaffordable property market. A recent analysis found that prices for parking spaces were rising faster than for flats in some parts of Hong Kong.

In a sample of three housing estates, parking bay prices rose by an average of 167% in the past six years, while flat prices increased by 52%.

"It is quite common to see parking spaces transacted at above HK\$2m in recent years, and HK\$1m is becoming the entry point for parking spaces in Hong Kong," said Alan Jin, an analyst at Mizuho Securities Asia.

"Essentially, what has happened in the parking sub-sector is pretty similar to what has happened and is still happening in the housing market. The shortage of supply is the key reason for the astronomical prices."

But speculation was another reason for the rise in prices, Jin said.

Design of new Hong Kong smart identity card revealed

29 Nov- After a three-year wait, the design of the much-anticipated new Hong Kong smart identity card was revealed on Wednesday, boasting security features to prevent counterfeiting and eliciting praise from local residents.

According to the latest Legislative Council papers submitted by the Security Bureau, the new smart ID card is pink, light blue and light green in colour, with a photo of the holder on the left and a small stereo laser image of the portrait on the right.

It will feature a new see-through window bearing the card number in the top right-hand corner. An image of the Hong Kong skyline will appear when the back of the card is examined under UV light.

The papers read: "The Immigration Department will take the opportunity to introduce a number of new state-of-the-art security features ... to ensure strong protection against photo substitution and counterfeiting."

The card will come with a hologram with wave and 3D effects and a multiple-pattern background. Other security features intended to make the card hard to fake include rainbow printing, microprinted text and ink with optically variable properties.

The next-generation smart ID card system is estimated to have cost HK\$54.6 million (US\$7 million) this financial year, of which 40 per cent went towards system development and another 40 per cent on building card replacement centres.

Hongkongers were by and large welcoming of the changes, both for aesthetic and security purposes.

Chow Wing-foon, 65, hailed the "brighter" card and described the new photo as "clearer in the new design".

Gigi Mo, 34, believed card protection would be better, adding: "It's good to upgrade the card because there are so many fake IDs nowadays."

But Veron Wong, 35, said the new design was "not very different from the old one". "It's normal to upgrade the ID card because many things need to be updated such as information and security protection," the seafood retail worker added.

About 8.8 million existing cards will be replaced starting from the fourth quarter of next year. Smart card holders will be called up to have their cards replaced in phases in accordance with the year of their birth.

The existing cards, issued between 2003 and 2007, will exceed their optimum 10-year serviceable lifespan by this year, meaning they will gradually become more susceptible to damage and malfunction.

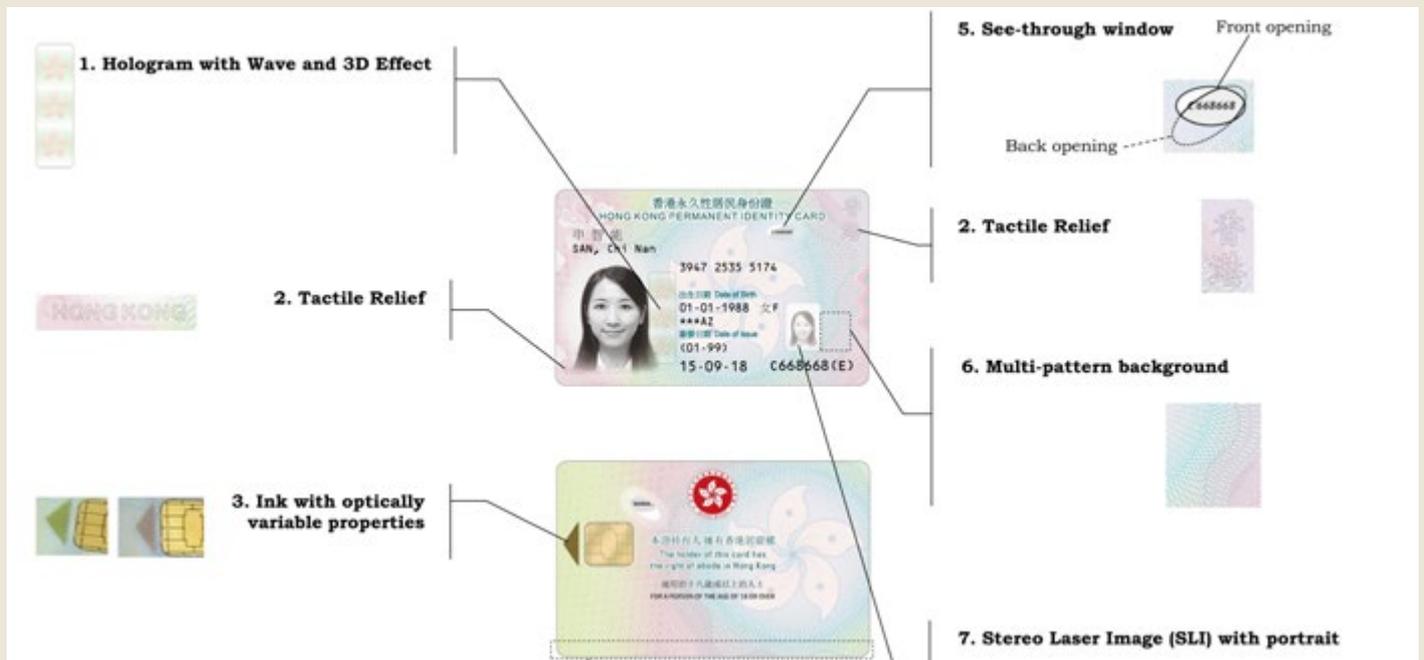
The Immigration Department will set up nine replacement centres across the city. The exercise will take four years to complete.

The new system uses built-in radio frequency identification, or RFID, transmission technology to improve security and data retrieval speeds.

The cards will support wireless technology and have expanded storage capacity for a higher-resolution photo. Fingerprint templates will be upgraded for more secure and accurate identity verification.

The durability of the cards will also be enhanced with the use of the latest card material, which will offer improved quality for text printing.

The department pledged to conduct privacy assessments through independent consultants and submit reports to the city's privacy watchdog to ensure personal information in the new system could be fully protected.



Some of the features of the new card

Nigel Collett

Nigel Collett
Managing Director

