



Newsletter

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We publish this month a photograph of the MS Boudicca of Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines .

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

During this month I was in Nepal visiting BGOS's new office, and was very glad to see that they had settled in and were functioning smoothly in the new location. While I was there, I had the pleasure of meeting Ms Kerstin Marschhausen, the auditor whom Columbia Cruise Services had sent to examine our work. Her advice was much appreciated and I am glad to report that she was content with what she saw. Now that MLC 2006 is in full swing, we shall be getting more and more audit inspections from our clients in future, I am sure.

I was only in Nepal for three nights this time, so we were unable to hold our usual gathering of crew on leave. We shall do so again next year.

I then travelled to Myanmar, where one of our two agent partners, Unisuccess, has sadly announced that it is ceasing business. We are now seeking an agency that can take over the crew that are managed by them, and I shall send details of what we decide as soon as we have them. I also visited our old partner, Humanpower, and interviewed some men and women for SSG posts for NCL. It is good to see some recruiting starting again there to add to our recruitment in Nepal and India.

We Welcome

Norwegian Cruise Lines

Thomas Jaimon
Jitendra Pratap Singh

Columbia Ship Management

Revati Thapa

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.

Survey

We have been grateful to those of you who responded to our survey on training schools. Your comments were very valuable and we were most grateful. Thank you. We shall be sending our own audit team consisting firstly of BGOS Directors to follow these up with the schools over the next few months.



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

There is little news about the world's economy at the moment.

Nuclear

There are no new developments at the moment.

Europe

Tensions on the border between Ukraine and Russia remain high. Both Russia and NATO have reinforced their border areas and the military situation in the East of Europe is tenser than it has been since the end of the Cold war. Turkey, stung by European criticism of its actions since the recent attempted coup, has threatened to open the gates to Syrian and other refugees they had partially closed some months back.

The Middle East and the Arab World

The Syrian regime of Assad and the Ba'ath party and its ally Russia are now using maximum force to destroy rebel held areas of Aleppo, causing huge civilian casualties.

Conflict has not yet ended in Libya and Yemen.



Tensions between Russia and Nato have escalated in recent months

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.



Al-Shabaab fighters

Palestine

There is little news currently in Gaza or the West Bank.

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. China's insurgency problems in the Muslim areas of far-western Xinjiang province and in Tibet continue.



Uighur Muslims in Turpan County, Xinjiang. Authorities have clamped down on symbols of Islam such as beards and the veil

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. More fighting broke out in Rakhine Province when Muslim guerrillas attacked Government posts near the border with Bangladesh. Army reaction has led to the uprooting of a large number of people in the area.



Myanmar government troops board a military helicopter in Muse township in Myanmar's northern Shan state near the border with China.

The Malacca Straits

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

India

Kashmir remains disturbed.

The Americas

Fidel Castro, the ex-revolutionary leader of Cuba, died. Donald Trump won the presidency of the United States. Problems remain in Venezuela, where the government's disastrous policies have led to impoverishment of the people and civil unrest. The Government of Columbia and the FARC rebels have signed a second agreement to end the civil war, following the rejection of the first in a referendum.



President-elect Donald Trump pumps his fist during an election night rally in New York, New York, US



SENTRY DUTY: After retiring from the Nepal Army, Dhan Singh Dhama worked in Afghanistan 2004-2015 as a security guard for an American contractor. He wanted to go back to Kabul, but is stuck in Kathmandu (overleaf) even after the ban on Nepalis working in Afghanistan was lifted last month.

Nepal News

Who guards the guards?

18 Nov- Dhan Singh Dhama could have been at his duty station as a security guard in Afghanistan by now, but a four-month ban on Nepalis working in the war-torn country delayed his plan.

After the death of 13 Nepalis guarding the Canadian Embassy in a terrorist attack in Kabul in June, the government prohibited Nepalis from going to Afghanistan. Dhama was stuck in Kathmandu, and rues: "If it were not for the ban, I would have earned Rs 600,000 by now. I lost three months' salary," he said.

But one month after the ban was lifted, the 50-year-old ex-soldier is still waiting because he is being given the runaround by his recruiter. He is not sure if and when he will leave Nepal.

Dhama has worked as a guard in Afghanistan before, and is a vocal critic of what he says was a senseless ban. "Are Nepalis not dying in the countries where they are allowed to go? Are their bodies not returning in caskets from Malaysia and the Gulf where there is no war?" he asks. "So why does our government stop

us from working in Afghanistan?"

Dhama first went to Afghanistan in 2004, two years after retiring from the Nepal Army as a second-class warrant officer. He spent his gratuity to find a job in Afghanistan. For the next 11 years, he guarded the American Embassy in Kabul and assisted the US-led military forces in Helmand on behalf of a security contractor.

Dhama saw plenty of violence and bloodshed – watching some of his colleagues die in front of him. But he wasn't afraid, and the pay was good.

When he retired from the Nepal Army, he just had an ancestral house in remote Darchula district in the far-western mountains. He now owns a two-storey building in a housing colony in Kathmandu.

"I risked my life for money, but tell me one place where there is no risk?" he asks. "It was risky during the Maoist war here, and I was nearly killed many times."

Dhama was previously recruited by

DynCrop International, a private American military contractor. He returned home in December last year, and again applied for a job through another company, the British-owned Aegis Defence Services.

But the ban came in the way, making his departure uncertain. Buddhi Gurung of the EMP Nepal, a local agent of the British company Aegis, says at least 70 Nepalis were in the final stage of going to Afghanistan when the ban was announced.

Since 2011, Aegis has hired 865 Nepalis retired from the British, Indian, Nepal armies and Singapore police. It is still seeking 200 extra guards through EMP Nepal. Aegis, DynCrop and all other private contractors filled in for the gap left by Nepalis during the ban by recruiting guards from India and Kenya.

In July, the government sent a fact-finding team to Afghanistan to decide whether the country was too risky for its citizens and to recommend safety measures. The Labour Ministry lifted the ban last month on the basis of the team's recommendation.

But it is still not easy for Nepalis to go to Afghanistan because of a new government requirement that private contractors have to submit a copy of their agreement papers with original employers before recruiting guards from Nepal.

For example, if the DynCrop needs to recruit ex-Gurkha soldiers to guard the American Embassy in Kabul, it has to send a copy of its agreement with the United States government to Nepal's Department of Foreign Employment.

Prabha Shrestha, joint secretary at the Labour Ministry who led the fact-finding mission to Afghanistan, explains: "It is to ensure accountability if an attack like the one at the Canadian Embassy occurs again. If we know what is there in the actual contract paper, we know whom to hold accountable."

After the Kabul attack, Sabre International that had hired Nepali guards to protect the Canadian Embassy, was accused of not providing adequate compensation and not bearing medical expenses of the wounded Nepalis. Members of Nepal's Parliament slammed the Canadian government for trying to wriggle out of its responsibility to help the victims' families.

Although well-intentioned, the requirement has meant that Nepali guards find it difficult to go to Afghanistan even if the ban has been lifted. Private contractors are unwilling to disclose their agreement with foreign embassies in Kabul.

"It is a hurdle," admits SB Ghising of Stevand Gurkha Overseas, the local representative of DynCorp. "We are ready to submit a copy of our agreement with the American contractor, which reveals salary scales, insurance amounts and safety measures. But the contractor will probably not disclose its agreement with the American government."

Because of this restriction, the contractors that recruit Nepali guards for UN agencies, American and British



Solar cell sites in Nepal. Despite having abundant water and sun, the country desperately struggles with energy generation and many Nepalese remain energy insecure.

embassies, and provide better salaries, insurances and facilities have not taken anyone from Nepal even after the lifting of the ban. Only 165 Nepalis have got labour permits to work in Afghanistan as guards, plumbers, electricians and cooks after the ban ended.

"This is what happens when unnecessary restrictions are imposed on the legal way of migration," says Padam Upadhyay of Universal Connection, the representative of IDG Security that hires guards for UN agencies. "More restrictions just increase the number of people going illegally."

Iraq was banned in 2004 after the massacre of 12 Nepalis by a terrorist group, but Nepali workers are still going to Baghdad. After Syria and Libya were banned, Nepalis have virtually stopped going there not because of the violence, but because there are no jobs.

Another uncertainty is America's role in Afghanistan under President Trump, who initially called for the withdrawal of the US forces from the region. But lately, he has approved Obama's plan to retain 9,800 troops there. So Afghanistan will attract more Nepalis in future. Experts say the best way to protect Nepali migrants from being extorted and exploited on en route or in Afghanistan is to facilitate their work by simplifying the recruitment process and easing restrictions.

Nepal is diversifying its renewable energy mix

24 Nov- More than 30 per cent of Nepalese have never used electricity. The other 70 per cent live with blackouts that can extend up to 16 hours a day during the winters, or are using solar panels to light their houses.

On paper, though, Nepal should be energy rich. It has 2 per cent of the world's water resources and is the second most water-rich country in the world. It also has more than 300 days of sunshine in a year. Unfortunately neither hydropower nor solar power has been effectively harnessed to provide the majority of its population with electricity, much less to power industrial growth.

Nepal was an early mover on hydropower, and installed a 500 Kilowatt (KW) hydropower project in the small town of Pharping – 20 kilometres south of the Kathmandu valley – with support from Britain in 1911. This was just 29 years after the first hydropower project was installed in Wisconsin, in the US, and one year before China built its first hydropower project.

Since then, though, Nepal has only harnessed 680 MW of its estimated 40,000 MW hydropower potential capacity (actual capacity is 83,000 MW, but much of it is technically and economically not feasible to harness).

Amrit Lal Nakarmi, a professor at the Centre for Energy Studies at the Institute of Engineering, said this was because the “politicians are providing a Hobson’s choice — a situation in which there is only one real choice offered – by saying that economic prosperity is only possible by developing big hydropower projects and selling energy to neighbouring countries. But they have always ignored tapping other renewable resources like solar, wind.” As a result, the country has been able to produce only about 15 MW from solar power and about 20 KW from wind in the last two decades.

Meanwhile, while the sun shines brightly all year and the rivers flow fast, diesel filled oil tankers provide the fuel to power generators in cities that produce almost as much electricity as the hydropower plants produce. Nepal spends more than NPR 100 billion (USD 1 billion) to import petroleum products from India.

“This is a self-created mess and nobody is going to solve it,” said Dipak Gyawali, a water resources expert and former water resources minister of Nepal, “until they manage to forget the big hydropower projects, and dreams of exporting electricity.”

The problem is that such large projects require a great deal of investment. “Hydropower is the biggest source of energy now, and will be in the future as well, but with efficient and cheaper solar and other renewable technologies available, there is no need to wait to reach out to those without electricity access,” said Govinda Raj Pokharel, former vice-chair of the National Planning Commission who once headed the country’s alternative energy centre.

He also emphasised that a significant number of such people are not connected to the grid, and thus would not be able to access the electricity generated by hydropower projects, even if they came up overnight.



What would Trump presidency mean for Nepal?

10 Nov-Nov 10, 2016- As a candidate, President-elect Donald Trump threatened to upend the international order by withdrawing from international trade agreements; by building wall on the border with Mexico to stop the flow of immigrants, while deporting millions of illegal migrants en masse; and slashing US financial commitment to security alliance in the Atlantic and Pacific, while forcing NATO members and Japan and Korea to pay more’ to maintain current US defense posture. This also suggests that a Trump Administration will be less keen to dole out the foreign aid to Least Developed and Developing Countries.

Given Washington’s limited strategic interest in Kathmandu, there may not be any immediate impact on US relations with Nepal but certainly there could be a trickledown effect on US-Nepal ties should Trump live up to his electoral promises of focusing on America’s problems while ignoring much of the rest of the world. This would mean that a Trump Administration would generally become inward looking, a trend that started in Europe with rightwing resurgence and culminated with UK’s Brexit vote on June 23-prior to Trump victory.

“If Trump pursues his stated foreign policies, it could have signification effect on the world order,” said Dinesh Bhattarai, former ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva and former foreign policy advisor to late PM Sushil Koirala.

US’s relative disengagement from global issues may also mean that countries with little strategic value may be put very low on US foreign policy priority. Nepal is

already feeling the impact of similar rightwing surge in Europe. Denmark’s rightwing government decided to close it embassy in Nepal by the end of 2017 and is subsequently ending its development support.

So could this result in removal of US preferential trade treatment for countries like Nepal, including reduction in development assistance that Washington provides through USAID and Millennium Corporation Challenge?

“We are still working for President Obama and his administration. He serves as President until January 20, 2017. Until then, it wouldn’t be appropriate to speculate on the policy initiatives of the next administration,” said Ineke Stoneham, spokesperson at the US Embassy in Kathmandu, in an email statement.

The Obama Administration had earmarked \$106.6 million for Nepal for this year. The \$130 million that the US committed at the June 2015 donor conference for reconstruction has already been provided, according to embassy officials.

“It is necessary that we invest in our infrastructure, stop sending foreign aid to countries that hate us and use that money to rebuild our tunnels, roads, bridges and schools—and nobody can do that better than me,” said Trump in June.

Trump has proposed massive tax cut plan to reboot American economy. To finance his plan, Trump has proposed to cut 1 percent of all non-defence spending, including foreign aid “below previous year’s total each year,” according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (CBPP), an American think tank that analyses the impact of federal and state government budget policies.

“While this may sound modest, the cumulative cut would be very substantial. By the tenth year (2026), non-defense appropriations would be about 29 percent below current levels, after accounting for inflation,” wrote Richard Kogan and David Reich, senior fellows at the CBPP, in September this year.

Riding on the Trump wave, the Republicans now control both houses of US Congress, which means there may be very little Congressional opposition to reducing non-defence budget, including foreign aid.



Hong Kong News

Hong Kong's disqualified localist pair vow to appeal and seek injunction to stop their Legco seats being declared vacant

16 Nov- The two elected localists disqualified by a Hong Kong court over the way they took their oaths of office last month have vowed to appeal against the decision and seek an injunction to stop the government declaring their seats empty.

The pro-independence pair, Sixtus Baggio Leung Chung-hang and Yau Wai-ching, from the group Youngspiration, said the legal battle could cost them up to HK\$5 million, but they would try to raise the money through crowd-funding among supporters. They said their efforts would be worth it as they were "defending Hong Kong's civilised systems".

According to the High Court ruling handed down on Tuesday, Leung and Yau's directly-elected seats in the Legislative Council were effectively vacated on October 12 when the pair swore allegiance to the "Hong Kong nation" instead of to Hong Kong as part of China.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying said the government was studying the

judgment before deciding on follow-up action, which would depend on whether Baggio Leung and Yau appealed.

"We are studying what follow-up action to take. Everything needs to be done in accordance with the law, including whether the two of them, or even other people, have satisfied the swearing-in requirements under Basic Law Article 104," the chief executive said.

It was understood the government would officially announce within three weeks that the seats were vacant, and by-elections would be held within six months.

But Baggio Leung said his legal team would aim at applying for an appeal and an injunction by Wednesday to stop that happening.

"We wanted to stop the government officially vacating our seats and preparing for a by-election ... If our seats are vacated, our appeal will become academic, so an injunction is necessary," he said.

Despite their disqualification, legal experts suggested the Youngspiration pair should still be allowed to contest any coming by-election, in which the pan-democratic and pro-establishment camps in the legislature will be vying for

the two seats.

But Baggio Leung dropped a strong hint on Tuesday that Youngspiration would not be fielding anyone in the race.

"We don't think the by-election would be legal or just, so why take part in it when you know that its results could be easily overturned at any time?" he said. He also warned of more protests in the future, as the localist camp would not give up on their political ideas.

"I want to tell my supporters that this is just the beginning, not the end. When our enemies declare war on us, we can only fight back with all we have," he said. "Our enemies are the Beijing and Hong Kong governments, and those who betrayed our systems."

Yau said she had written to the British government complaining about Beijing's recent intervention in interpreting the Basic Law to determine what constitutes an acceptable oath.

"Because Britain and China signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration in the early 1980s, now when China is destroying Hong Kong's core values the other side should be concerned," she said.

Home-built plane home safe

14 Nov- Hong Kong's first home-built plane Inspiration is back after 78 days of flying around the world to spread the Lion Rock spirit.

The plane landed in Hong Kong from Macau at 10.45am yesterday. Pilot Hank Cheng flew across Victoria Harbour twice in a cloudy sky before arriving to find his cheering family waiting at the airport.

The RV-8 single-engine aircraft, registered as B-KOO, had been to 45 airports in 20 countries on the 49,650-kilometer journey - including Malaysia, Australia, Jordan, Pakistan and Thailand.

The trip kicked off on August 28. Cheng often flew with aviation engineer Gary Tat, who provided maintenance support, as well as with other friends.

"I'm thrilled to be back in Hong Kong, but at the same time feeling a bit empty."

These were the first words Cheng, a Cathay Pacific Airways pilot and father of two, told an upbeat crowd of supporters after landing.

"It has been eight years, but now everything seems to have ended.

"A part of me wished to continue the journey but another part asked me to return home to look after my family."

Cheng said it was his family's support that kept him going throughout the trip, saying he spent a lot of time on video-chatting with his wife and kids every day. He often felt homesick and sent home more than 200 postcards during the trip.

Cheng's wife, Simone Pang So-ching, recalled she gave Cheng a surprise by bringing their daughter, Cheng Yui-yee, 8, and son, Cheng Yui-leung, 6, to Chiang Mai in Thailand to meet him. "The first surprise came when he saw me at the apron, and then he saw the kids at the arrival hall, that's the second surprise," she told The Standard.

"He was so happy he almost couldn't breathe."

Engineer Tat said teamwork and a common passion for aviation made the trip a success.

Like B-KOO's Lion Rock livery on its tail, the trip has overcome multiple difficulties, echoing the Lion Rock spirit, Cheng said. "To take the plane around the world is to show people what we've

done in Hong Kong," he said.

Construction of the HK\$1.5 million plane by the team and local students took about seven years. It was the first home-built aircraft certified to fly under Hong Kong registration.

The plane will be stored at a hanger until a decision is made on its destiny. It is expected to inspire others with its educational value, while it could carry students and poor families into the skies.

Cheng said the most memorable part of the trip was the days spent in South Pacific Islands as the places were exotic eye-openers, while the most challenging journey was a 15-hour flight from Hawaii to California, a distance of 3,800km.

A team of more than 10 engineers alerted Cheng to any weather uncertainties and applied for necessary permits along the way. He referred to the team as "an inevitable part of the journey."

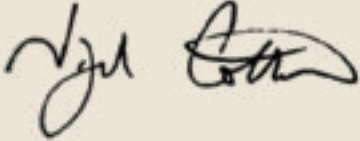
Cheung will resume his pilot duties on Saturday. "I miss my home. Tonight I can finally sleep in my bed - what I've been waiting for so long," said an exhausted Cheng, heading home with his family.



Pilot Hank Cheng on his home-made plane at Hong Kong International Airport.

Conclusion

The Christmas season is nearly upon us, so I wish you all and your families a very early but very heartfelt 'Happy Christmas'!



Nigel Collett
Managing Director



A pleasure meeting with Ms Kerstin Marschhausen, the auditor from Columbia Cruise Services.



Merry Christmas!