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COMMENT: Why strikes decline *

There was a period, back in the 1970s, when ongoing strikes seldom fell below 300 a month. I was working at the time as a journalist for the UK's leading IR journal. It was my habit to take quotes from Shakespeare as news headlines and one day I chose "Winter of Discontent". Then Prime Minister Callaghan's speechwriter took it up and I had my one minute of fame.

But the time when Britain was notorious for its levels of industrial unrest is now a distant memory. The number of ongoing stoppages due to industrial disputes in June 2017 was just 11. The last time it reached 30 per month was in July 2006, or climbed above one hundred a month was in February 1988.

Contrary to popular myth, widescale industrial disputes in the UK were not confined to the immediate pre-Thatcher years of the 1970s and had been a feature of labour relations back to the 1920's general strike and beyond. In fact, strike statistics paint a very different picture of British history as it faced major crises. For instance, in the month leading up to Prime Minister Churchill's "on the beaches" speech when the country was at its military low point during the Second World War, there were 105 work stoppages in progress. During the D Day landings in France there were 127 stoppages in progress and during the October 1962 Cuban missile crisis – when the world lay on the brink of a nuclear war – the number of UK stoppages was 264.

Major political, fiscal or military events seem to have only a vague connection to the course of labour relations. The national interest has no relevance whatsoever to the pursuit of collective self-interest by trade unions. A corporate financial crisis may actually be the trigger for strike action – ironically further weakening a company that is struggling to survive. Alternatively, a company faced with inflated wage rates they have perhaps been forced to inherit can also use the age-old device of inciting a strike to reduce bulging payrolls. This could be especially the case in the transport sector – commuters having no alternative but to struggle on – whilst unions, and not management, will conveniently take the blame for curtailed transport services.

The decline of strike activity in the private sector over the last 30 years clearly originates from Margaret Thatcher's workplace legislation of the 1980s, which outlawed secondary action and required majority votes to support strike action. But the academic literature has since abounded with conflicting theories about why disputes have remained at such a low ebb for so long. One theory concerns low worker morale, another that a layer of shop stewards had become bureaucratised since the 1980s and divorced from workers' day-to-day experiences. Yet another theory is that the pursuit of wage demands has always been associated with collective bargaining, thus a decline in bargaining will inevitably reduce the use of such pressure tactics.

But there are also many other social undercurrents in operation too. There is, for instance, an increasing emphasis upon individualism throughout modern British society. Moreover, trade unions have themselves responded to this trend by focusing on legal advisory services for individual members pursuing their particular problems.

However, what we are experiencing amounts to no more than a parody of peace. If we tap into the mindset of union activists, we will see that the fundamental causes of strike action have never gone away. As they see it, the strength of "will" amongst workers has been discouraged and constrained by more precarious job contracts, the uncertainty of new contracted-out roles, and – probably most of all – mounting credit card balances and mortgage commitments. There are also now more ways to vent dissatisfaction through HR open-door policies, works councils, and grievance procedures. Militant unions will always be around to put ideology before ideas, but in recent times the broad population has been progressively forced by immediate, pressing circumstance to adopt a path that is ever more pragmatic, cautious, and stoical.

AUSTRALIA: Heydon fallout continues

The Employment Minister Michaelia Cash is seeking legislation to prevent the proposed merger of the Construction, Forestry, Mining, and Energy Union with the Maritime Union of Australia. This would produce a much larger militant body that, in the government's view, could have a stranglehold on the national economy.

Ever since the Heydon Royal Commission exposed the level of corruption across the trade union movement, the national government's concern has turned to the way that unions can be bribed by rogue employers or hold employers to ransom by threats and extortion. The merger vote is not likely to be held until December. Until then Minister Cash is drumming up support from leading employers and state governments to block its path. In doing so, however, she runs the danger of a challenge from the UN's International Labour Organisation to the placing of fundamental limitations on freedom of association.

Meanwhile, in a related move, both houses of Parliament have now passed the Fair Work Amendment (Corrupting Benefits) Act. This prohibits the giving of corrupt benefits to union officials dishonestly to influence them; receiving or soliciting corrupt benefits dishonestly with the intention that the receipt of the benefit will influence the union official; and making a prohibited cash or in-kind payment to unions or union officials (except for prescribed categories of permissible payment).

A threshold for incidental gifts, travel, or hospitality has, however, been set at $420 (US$332). Nevertheless, there is a requirement for strict disclosure where unions or management receive benefits as a consequence of a so-called “non-greenfield enterprise agreement”. The penalties for infringing the Act can amount to $5.25 million (US$4.15M) for companies and 2 to 10 years’ imprisonment for individuals (plus fines).

GLOBAL: Quantifying health risks

One of the most important concerns for HR professionals is employee absence, yet employers are generally prevented by the law from knowing the medical conditions their employees suffer. This makes it very difficult to carry out wellness improvement programmes across the workforce. Helping employees to avoid the highest risks facing them would be mutually beneficial, but without specific data about health conditions it is necessary to assess risks – and therefore develop prevention strategies – from general statistical health data. But what do these show?

One approach is to express risk in terms of mortality and relative to a fairly common health threat – alcohol abuse. Alcohol directly kills 3.3 million people globally each year. Surprisingly, many mortality risks are below this level, e.g. cholera, which used to be a major killer, now presents only a 5% risk relative to our comparator worldwide. Other lower risk factors are childbirth (9%), accidents at work (11%), flu (12%), malaria (13%), homicide (14%), AIDS/HIV (30%), road accidents (38%), TB (55%), work-related diseases (58%), and inhalation of particulate matter (environmental pollution) (90%). Much bigger problems worldwide are inhalation of cooking fuels and fumes (130%), cancer (293%) and premature death from coronary heart disease (536%).

It can therefore be seen that the focus on employee wellness programmes should be on improving the environment, reducing alcohol intake, eliminating smoking, a better diet, and, above all, introducing exercise regimes. The benefit of a gym subscription and encouragement to keep up attendance is probably the best way to reduce employee absence and enhance workplace performance. The cost of a personal trainer is also generally not that high and should be considered for key executives.

GLOBAL: BEPS – nightmare in waiting

It sounds rather obscure and only the concern of finance departments, but the OECD’s Multilateral Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) convention has significant relevance for HR professionals.

The convention has been signed by 66 countries and is already implemented in many European countries. It is an attempt to stop multinational companies artificially shifting profits from high tax locations such as the USA to low or no-tax locations like Bulgaria or Cyprus. It also seeks to stop them exploiting double taxation agreements in a way they were not intended.

The main concern about this measure for HR is the issue of representation. In future, a “permanent” representative employee or agent will be regarded as such not just if they sign contracts, but additionally or alternatively if they take any significant role in the implementation of the contract. Avoidance of making an appointment of a representative can also not be achieved by dividing up construction projects.

Another aspect of the BEPS project is the exchange between tax authorities in participating countries of data on multinational enterprises. This data not only includes profits, assets, and taxes paid - but also the number of employees in an enterprise. It is therefore essential that HR departments work closely with finance and other departments on the future trends in employment at different global locations in order to reduce possible exposure to tax audits.

GLOBAL: Do minimum wages matter?

It is often claimed that the introduction of minimum wages and any increases beyond the general level of consumer price inflation can have a significant detrimental effect on jobs, and contribute to the inflation of higher wage and salary rates.

In 2009, researchers David Neumark and William Wascher, writing in a Wall Street Journal article, argued that the then recent increase in the federal minimum wage would destroy approximately 300,000 jobs; in the event, there was no evidence that this actually happened. Although minimum wages can adversely affect employment in some sectors such as retailing and hospitality, there is considerable evidence to suggest that if they are set at a level above welfare benefits they can help induce unemployed people to seek work. However, in some countries the minimum wage is so far below the subsistence level that their only purpose may be as an element in the formula to set pensions and welfare payments. Also, many less well-developed countries have such a large informal economy that an official pay safety net has little relevance for the vast majority of lower skilled workers.

Evidence that changes in the minimum wage could have a knock-on effect to pay levels in general has just arisen in Hungary. Average gross monthly earnings in Hungary increased by 14.4% to HUF 297,300 (US$1,156) over the year to June 2017. The increase was largely due to the increase in the gross minimum wage of 15% for unskilled workers and 25% for skilled workers earlier this year, in exchange for a 5% cut in payroll taxes. The minimum wage for unskilled workers will rise a further 8% as of 2018 and the wage for skilled workers by 12%, in return for a further 2 percentage-point reduction in payroll tax.

The impact of minimum wage changes is often taken into account too by those involved in collective bargaining; such changes can also squeeze both differentials and pay relativities. The raising of minimum negotiated rates to the level of the statutory minimum wage can lead higher paid groups to seek to maintain their relative pay levels. The extent to which this happens is well illustrated in Germany. A national minimum wage was introduced in Germany in January 2015. According to the Federal Statistical

Office (Destatis), this led to a reduction in the spread of negotiated pay levels within agreements by 5.7%. Yet, taking the period from December 2014 to June 2017 the difference between the highest and lowest earnings groups in collective wage agreements decreased overall by only 0.2%.

Why does the minimum wage seem to have had such a huge impact in Hungary and so little in Germany? This is clearly because the initial wage set in Germany – at 8.50 euros an hour – was roughly in line with the lowest rates paid in most collective agreements. Over a short period, adjustments took place and relativities went back to their pre-existing levels. However, in Hungary the increase was so extreme that it had a huge and immediate knock-on effect to all groups. It raised expectations and employers were suddenly under pressure to maintain their pay structures. Outside a recessionary period, supply and demand and other competitive market forces tend to drive up the wage rates of most workers to levels considerably above the current minimum wage.

So what if minimum wages were reduced or removed? What impact might that have on general levels of pay? There is little evidence from around the world about this, but in coming months all eyes will be on the US State of Missouri – which has decided to prevent any city or county from introducing a higher minimum wage than the federal rate of US$7.70 an hour. This will mean that St Louis had to repeal its $10 an hour rate with effect from the 28th of August 2017. Curiously for a US politician, Missouri Governor Eric Greitens (who refused to sign the order) has predicted that "it will kill jobs, and despite what you hear from liberals, it will take money out of people's pockets."

NEW ZEALAND: Pay defines skill

The heavily revised skilled migrant system agreed earlier this year has now come into operation. For the first time, salary will be treated as the principal indicator of skill level and the "Appendix 6" list of skilled occupations is being rescinded. To be classified as a skilled migrant someone will have to be paid at least or above $23.49 (US$16.94) gross per hour, with a higher category having a threshold of $35.24 (US$25.42) per hour. Bonus points will also be given for salaries paid at or above $46.98 (US$33.89) gross per hour. Additionally, points will be awarded for skilled work experience and the points available for post-graduate degrees have been increased to 70, with an addition of 30 points for those aged 30–39.

Applicants who qualify under the criteria set for health, character, English language capability and selection points, but do not meet requirements for holding appropriate skilled work or a higher degree gained in New Zealand, may still apply for a 1-year 'job search visa' to enable them to find regular skilled employment in the country. The first selection will be on Wednesday, the 6th of September 2017 and the minimum threshold for consideration will be 160 points.

RUSSIA: Distant consequences

A trade embargo against Russia, already in place since the annexation of Crimea in 2014, has now been further reinforced by a new set of sanctions agreed by the US President. But do such measures really have the impact on the politicians they are meant to target – or are there other unintended consequences?

All the evidence suggests that the international embargo has already had the greatest impact upon Russia's general population. Back in the chaotic days when the USSR collapsed, 33.5% of the Russian population lived below Russia's desperately low subsistence rate. This was much worse than under the previous communist regime. Gradually over the period until 2012 – and in spite of the world's worst post-war recession – the proportion gradually fell to 10.7% of the population. However, as the first embargo took effect things began to deteriorate and last year the proportion reached 13.5%. We estimate this has climbed further this year to 15.7%.

For those above the poverty line things were little better, with average earnings as a percentage of the subsistence rate falling 12.3% from 2012 to 2016. Wage arrears have also been climbing. Recent figures are not available - but according to the press agency TASS, during a single month between September and October last year the size of the arrears pot grew by 3.6%.

Now the new sanctions are likely to bite further still, especially in Russia's key energy sector where all foreign investors will face US punishment if they invest significantly in extraction or pipeline projects. I doubt if US legislators gave even the slightest thought to the more than 20 million Russians struggling to survive on barely enough to eat, especially as the coming winter approaches?

SLOVAKIA: Implausible outcomes

Economists are struggling to work out what is happening to the EU's eastern member states. Economic growth has accelerated this year to reach 5.7% year-on-year in Romania and several countries such as the Czech Republic. Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia are not far behind. But are we seeing the eventual pay off from past investments following EU succession or are there deeper forces at work?

Romania's success may be short lived as it arises from a temporary government fiscal stimulus, whilst Poland has been busy lowering its retirement age (in spite of demographic trends) whilst giving incentives to have larger families. In the short-term, it is clearly planning to live off the cheap labour it can now attract via its more open border with Ukraine. Hungary is following its dangerous habit of driving up salaries to increase demand and hoping that it can dodge the inflationary punishment that is sure to follow..

In the Czech Republic the national minimum wage will increase next January by 10.9% to 12,200 crowns (US$550) per month. This will fulfill the government's aim of increasing the rate to 40% of average gross pay levels in the economy as a whole. However, it is highly inflationary and may end the country's current position of having the lowest unemployment rate in the European Union – at just 3% in May 2017.

Only in Slovakia does there appear to be any genuine prospect for sustained growth – but that is only if we believe its official figures.

The job vacancy in Slovakia rate in Q1 2017 stood at 1%, which represented 18,780 jobs, whilst unemployment in May 2017 fell to a 25-year low at 7.3%. Yet Slovakian statistics are difficult to interpret as definitions have changed since its last record low in 2008, and it defines unemployment in any case in two different ways – all jobseekers and those immediately able to start work. There is also a great deal of political pressure on the Slovakian government from the European Commission and European Central Bank (it is in the Eurozone) because its unemployment rate for those without more than basic school education was 29.4% in 2016 – worse than even Greece (26.2%) and far worse than the EU average of 15.1%. But to remove such workers out of the unemployment statistics it would be necessary to either classify them as not available for work, secure them real employment or find a purely paper statistical destination that might convince EU officials. Curiously enough employment over the year to June 2017 officially grew most in three sectors where low skilled jobs are most prevalent – motor repair (+9.2%), hospitality (+9%), and food and beverage services (+7.7%).

Another curious feature of the Slovak economy is pay inflation. Officially the gross average monthly pay grew in industry over the year to June 2017 by 8%, but by a mighty 11% in transport and storage. Yet, without explanation, the official figures record a decline in gross monthly pay of 4.7% in information in telecoms over the same period. 3.7% of the decline was registered in the first six months of 2017. It is most doubtful that at a time of ostensible growth, one of a country's key sectors – that normally drives growth – should be experiencing a significant average pay cut.

But when we look at "real changes" (taking into account price inflation), the certain errors in the figures begin to show through. Over the year to June the official HICP inflation rate grew by 1%. This should mean that on average "real pay" declined by 1% during that period. But, in fact, real pay was recorded to grow by 2.7% relative to the actual average pay increase in food and beverages. This has to be a major error.

So what is happening in the Slovak economy? Obviously the statistics are not recording the true situation, and this may be due to sloppy figures, political pressures, or both. It used to be Greece and Portugal that fabricated their statistics, now perhaps they have a new partner in crime.

Pay, Tax and Benefit Trends

CAMBODIA: The Labour Ministry has announced that a new law will be introduced by the end of this year to establish a comprehensive minimum wage covering all sectors of the economy. Currently Cambodia's minimum wage of $153 a month only applies to the garment industry. Labour Minister Ith Sam Heng has confirmed that the wage will be adjusted each year and also warned trade unions that any objections or public protests against the rate set by the government-appointed National Minimum Wage Council will result in "hefty fines".

CROATIA: In June 2017, average gross monthly earnings in the Republic of Croatia were 8,082 kuna (US$1,286). Average net monthly earnings were 6,005 kuna (US$955).

DENMARK: The Danish government has decided to extend from 5 to 7 years the period during which a highly skilled foreign worker can pay reduced tax under the "Research Tax Scheme". However, the flat-rate tax is being increased from 25% to 27%. Foreign workers will still have to make social contributions at a rate of 8% and the scheme does not apply if the employee concerned has earned taxable income in Denmark outside the scheme in the last 10 years. It does not also apply to foreign entrepreneurs who wish to move their businesses to Denmark.

SOUTH AFRICA: The South African trade union Solidarity and four other unions have agreed a three-year wage deal with the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation of South Africa, covering engineering workers across the country. This will generate a 7% wage increase this year, 6.75% in 2018, and 6.5% in 2019.

UK: It is now clear that the UK government is quietly dropping many of its proposals to further regulate top executive pay in publicly quoted companies. The principal reform - that is now unlikely to go ahead - is the facility for a binding vote on remuneration issues at any AGM. This would have gone beyond the current practice of subjecting remuneration policy to a simple vote every three years.

Other Global HR News in Brief

AUSTRIA: Companies in the trade sector should now prepare for the implementation of the new sectoral agreement on the 1st of December 2017. The agreement requires the reclassification of employees into different occupational groups, and hence salary groups. Retail salesmen, for instance, will soon earn a minimum gross monthly salary of €1,600 (US$1,909). Failure to act could lead to employee claims and fines of between €1,000 (US$1,193) to €50,000 (US$59,648) per employee.

CHINA: The uptake of labour displacing technologies is now well advanced in South Korea, Singapore, Japan, and Germany, where there are more than 300 multipurpose industrial robots (MIR) per 10,000 manufacturing employees. However, China is catching up fast with more than twice the volume of shipments last year than its competitors. It is also aiming to increase its domestic production of MIRs to 100,000 by 2020.

CYPRUS: Following extensive discussions over the past 16 years, the Cyprus House of Representatives has finally voted for activation of an amended General Health Scheme Law (Law 74(I)/2017). This is designed to introduce a comprehensive and well-funded national health service into the country. It will be financed, according to proportions of qualifying recipient incomes, by the 1st of March 2020 as follows: employees and pensioners (2.65%), employers (2.9%), self-employed (3.9%), and the government (2.65%). Reduced contributions will apply from the 1st of March 2019. The ambitious scheme will seek to incorporate all doctors in private practice and will set a maximum quota for general practitioners of 2,500 patients per physician.

IRISH REPUBLIC: The Labour Court has reached its decision in a high profile, unfair dismissal case [DHL Express (Ireland) v Michael Coughlan (Case No UDD1738) (Ireland) v Michael Coughlan (Case No UDD1738)] and awarded a former DHL employee compensation of €72,042 (US$85,990). The case involved an employee who had worked for 11 years as a driver. He received written warnings for two road accidents in which he was involved. A few years later he was involved in a third accident. The employee was summarily dismissed. However, both the Workplace Relations Commission and, on appeal, the Labour Court agreed that the company's decision lacked proportionality and underlined the importance of conducting disciplinary procedures with caution, considering all the facts and circumstances prior to deciding a final course of action.

JAPAN: The Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has put forward a budget for 2018 totaling 31.4 trillion yen (US$286bn). This represents a 2.4% rise on fiscal year 2017. US$2.6bn is to be set aside to promote labour reforms such as the planned cap on working hours and measures to improve the pay, terms and conditions of "non-regular workers". The Ministry is also seeking 140bn yen (US$1.2bn) to train and employ teachers to cater for an additional 90,000 nursery school places. Improving female participation in the labour market is now seen as critical to overcome the impact of the aging population and the aim is to raise public nursery provision by 220,000 over the next three years.

NEPAL: A new Labour Act has been approved at the first reading before the national parliament. This seeks to satisfy both employer and union concerns about the current legal framework. In future, employees who lawfully strike will be able to do so on half pay, whilst bilateral talks take place. If the dispute cannot be resolved the government will form a tribunal, whose decision will be final. No employee may be fired without cause and work performance may be the reason for termination, but only if performance does not improve after three successive assessments.

PHILIPPINES: Chinese nationals may now apply for landing visas at the Bureau of Immigration (BI) for an initial authorised stay of 30 days and an extension up to a maximum period of six months in Philippines. This new policy will be implemented at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila and eight other international airports, including Clark in Pampanga, Mactan in Cebu, and Kalibo in Aklan, and seaports in Manila, Puerto Princesa in Palawan, Subic in Zambales, Laoag in Locos Norte, and Caticlan in Central Philippines.

RUSSIA: It is curious that Russia, one of the states most ready to invade personal privacy, also regulates the transfer of privacy to other countries providing a "sufficient level" of protection for personnel data. That is perhaps why two of the latest additions to the Russian privacy regulator's approved list seem so incongruous (with number of outstanding UN human rights concerns in parenthesis) – Costa Rica (227) and Kazakhstan (314). However, Russia (346) has itself only a marginally more awful human rights record than countries the European Union (EU) considers safe – such as France (307) and Hungary (306). It is also only slightly better than the USA (315). Yet the EU country with the highest negative human rights rating in Europe from UN reports is not Russia, but Sweden (362).

RUSSIA: The Russian government is one of the few around the world to be openly addressing the impact of automation on jobs. At a recent economic forum in St Petersburg, the Minister of Labour and Social Protection, Maxim Topilin, underlined the necessity of seeking a reduction in the working day rather than letting automation displace labour: "Maybe in the 21st century there will be a standard – 4 hours, maybe 5, maybe 6 a day, I do not know. Perhaps, someday – two hours." At the same meeting the Deputy Chairman of the Bank of Russia, Sergey Shvetsov, predicted that Friday would become a normal day off. Moreover, "if there are three days off a week, it will open up new sectors related to the provision of services."

UAE: To coincide with the introduction of VAT on the 1st of January 2018, the Tax Procedures Law has been enacted to introduce a comprehensive new system for recording financial and commercial transactions. All companies – whether liable for UAE tax or not – will have to keep detailed records and tax-related information for 5 years and report them to the Federal Taxation Authority (FTA) in Arabic. This information will include payroll and general HR data.

UNITED KINGDOM: Yet more evidence has emerged in the last two weeks about the impact of Brexit on the UK economy. The value of Sterling has fallen further against the euro, thus raising high street prices and worsening the UK's already precarious balance of payments. The savings rate fell by 1.7% in the first quarter of 2017 and now the high street banks have confirmed that personal deposits are growing at less than the rate of consumer price inflation. Latest figures from the UK statistical agency ONS also show that there was a 9% fall in the number of immigrants during the year ending the 31st of March 2017. However, the number leaving the UK to work abroad rose by 13% in the same period; both figures indicate that the UK is becoming a less attractive place to live and work.

USA: An unemployed man has finally won his part of a class action claim against a consumer profiling agency. The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, acting on a reference from the Supreme Court, found that the plaintiff had suffered a "concrete injury" when Spokeo Inc published false information about him concerning his age, marital status, wealth, education level, profession, and employment status. It even posted a photo of someone else on his profile. In doing so they accepted that the false data had seriously damaged his chances of obtaining employment [Robins v Spokeo Inc Case 11-56843].

Dates for your diary:

September 24th 2017: Federal elections will be held in **Germany**

October 1st 2017: Burqa ban comes into force in **Austria**

January 1st 2018: **New York** paid family leave law effective

January 1st 2018: Revision of Alberta's Employment Standards Code in **Canada**

May 25th 2018: Final effective date for **EU** General Data Protection Regulations

August 20th 2018: End of Economic Adjustment (Austerity) Programme in **Greece**

January 1st 2019: Electronic identification in official documents **Bulgaria**

January 1st 2020: **Washington state** Paid family leave law comes into force

Travel Warnings

BOLIVIA: A dispute between local communities on the Island of the Sun (Isla del Sol) on Lake Titicaca could affect foreign visitors. Travel to the area should be avoided. There will also be restrictions on all vehicles between 9 am and 5 pm in La Paz on the 3rd of September 2017(Pedestrian day). A small number of taxis will have permits for emergencies and airport transfers.

BURMA/MYANMAR: Please stay vigilant as there are reports of further violence in the northern Rakhine state.

CHAD: The Chad government is closing Qatar’s embassy in its capital of N’Djamena, accusing the Gulf Arab state of trying to destabilize the central African nation via its northern neighbor Libya.

ETHIOPIA: Those currently travelling to Ethiopia should be aware that they face a high risk of civil unrest and even arbitrary detention.

GERMANY/SWITZERLAND: Deutsche Bahn has halted trains between Rastatt and Baden-Baden in southwestern Germany due to construction work. This route connecting Germany and Switzerland is expected to remain closed until October the 7th 2017.

GUATEMALA: Visitors are advised to avoid going to Guatemala due to the current deep political crisis and high levels of street crime.

INDIA: Due to the threat of insurgency, visitors are advised against non-essential travel to Manipur and the areas of Arunachal Pradesh that border with Burma/Myanmar. Floods caused by the record rainfall have also destroyed homes and halted train and flight services in Mumbai. A heavy rainfall alert has also been issued for parts of Maharashtra's neighbouring states of Goa and Gujarat.

ISRAEL: The Allenby / King Hussein Bridge border crossing will be closed due to the Eid Al Adha holiday on Friday the 1st of September 2017. It will reopen on Saturday the 2nd of September from 8am.

KENYA: Visitors are advised against all travel to the areas within 150 km of the Kenya–Somalia border, including all of Garissa and Lamu counties, areas within 50 km of the coast, from north of the city of Malindi to the Kenya–Somalia border, and areas within 100 km of the borders with South Sudan and Ethiopia, due to a risk of kidnapping, attacks and cross-border violence.

MALAYSIA: Protesters took to the streets in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur, on the 31st of August 2017. This was in support of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim minority - after renewed violence forced thousands to flee the country.

PANAMA: Santa Barbara Airlines (SBA Airlines) will start a temporary suspension of return flights from Caracas to Panama with effect from the first of September 2017.

PERU: Please exercise great caution when visiting Peru as there is a high risk of serious crime, social conflicts and violent strikes in almost all urban areas.

ROMANIA: A severe measles outbreak is still a major problem in Romania, with more than 8,900 cases reported across the country, including 33 deaths.

SINGAPORE: Please make sure your passport is in a good state of repair before arriving in Singapore or you may now be refused entry to the country if you have a damaged passport or pages missing.

TAIWAN: Taoyuan International Airport's second terminal will be closed for two years in order for renovation to take place.

UK: Members of the Rail and Maritime Transport Workers union will go on strike between 00:01am and 23:59pm on Friday, September the 1st and from 00:01am on Sunday, September the 3rd until 23:59pm on Monday, September the 4th.

VIETNAM: A total of 90,626 people have been infected by dengue since the beginning of 2017, of whom 76,848 have been hospitalised, and 24 have died. The capital city of Hanoi is ranked second nationwide after the southern metropolis of Ho Chi Minh City in terms of infections. Dengue fever causes flu-like symptoms and can result in death if it develops complications.

FedEE News

KNOWLEDGEBASE: The USA, Canada and Thailand sections are now completed. The next planned country additions will be Israel and Saudi Arabia.

EMPLOYMENT LAW PROGRAMME: The next new-style video law programme presentation focuses on the USA. It is currently being recorded and should be online by the middle of September.

ONE-TO-ONE WEBINARS: FedEE has far more online and customized services than many of our members realize. As part of your membership you and your team may be given a tour of our services through a webinar conducted by one of our legal team. Please email us at membershipservices@fedee.com to arrange your tour.

LUGGAGE TAGS: Please contact us for our attractive full-sized FedEE flag and also for our new extrasafe FedEE luggage tags. All are free of charge to member companies and their nominated users.

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