



# Tourism Scan

Vol. 1 Issue 8, April 2005

*This is a communiqué of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism*  
96,2<sup>nd</sup> District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Shatin New Territories Hong Kong SAR CHINA  
Tel.No. +852 26023669, Fax No. +852 26023649 E-mail: contours@cca.org.hk

Executive Director: L. C.D. (Ranjan) Solomon Programme and Communications: Shirley Susan

## CONTENTS

- ◆ **Russia's lax laws allow child sex tourism**
- ◆ **Tsunami shifted route of sex tourism to Brazil**
- ◆ **'More Black tour guides needed'**
- ◆ **Travel Sector steps in to make a difference**
- ◆ **Tourism – a tool for building bridges for peace**
- ◆ **An Alternative Exhibition – Behind the Smile**
- ◆ **Sewage from Mexican resorts kills coral reefs**
- ◆ **"Just a drop" delivers clean water to Tsunami Victims**
- ◆ **British Airways ex-chief speaks out on climate change**
- ◆ **Australia develops carbon-neutral travel concept**

"The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Hong Kong based coalition of Regional Ecumenical Organisations and over seventy secular and faith-based groups. It seeks to unite people around collective efforts that negate the undesirable effects of modern tourism and, in its place, institute socially responsible and ethically oriented tourism. It believes that tourism must be based on justice and sustainability for host communities and that, therefore, tourism planning and practice must be democratised. ECOT advocates respect for the protection and dignity of the human rights of women, children, indigenous peoples and workers in the tourist trade. It opposes tourism projects that create environmental devastation."

## Editorial Comment

A joint statement of concern issued by the Global Tourism Interventions Group at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Social Forum stated- *'We...declare our commitment to change the character of global tourism towards a tourism that is just and equitable for people in destinations... to working in solidarity with local community representatives, activists and researchers from various parts of the world to strengthen our struggle and develop strategies for a tourism that is equitable, people-centered, sustainable, ecologically sensible, child-friendly and gender-just'*.

In a subsequent, and equally crucial *Future Search Meeting* of ECOT leaders, the group stated that " we believe in strong inter local and inter contextual solidarity as the basis for mobilising and understanding the challenge of tourism development...we recognise the importance of connecting members and their alliances in an inter-continental web that is based on democratic and representative platforms, strategies and action.... we want to bring to the world, the voice of the people in the south and enrich the dialogue with each other and bring these elements into the process of integrating human values...We will go forward through working in solidarity with local community representatives, activists and researchers from all parts of the world to develop strategies and strengthen struggles to make tourism more equitable, gender just, ecologically sensible, child friendly and sustainable.

In the 2005 edition of the World Social Forum, tourism activists from across the world once again gathered together in Porte Alegre to strengthen our commitment to key campaigns that reflect the struggles of peoples and communities and reflect local vitality and diversity for greater global visibility of the tourism issue. We sought to bring to the centre of the tourism discourse questions of threatened environments and ecosystems, endangered species, marginalized peoples and communities, people living under oppression and occupation. We particularly espoused the cause of empowering women and children, indigenous heritage, culture and people.

ECOT continues to believe that change in the structures of oppression in the tourism sector will not come from the top. To believe that would be a pipe dream. The industry will not part with power and privilege voluntarily. At the same time well-managed and orchestrated campaigns can bring visibility to the plight of those who are victims of harmful and degrading tourism practice and policy. Evidence of an industry that responds every now and then is encouraging. We highlight examples of good business practice and social concern in this edition. These encouraging signs of responsible tourism in the travel industry must not lull us to apathy or smug satisfaction. It only establishes the need for tourism activists to push with greater fervour and intensity for governmental policy changes, heightened public consciousness and peoples' vigilance.

It is not sufficient simply to raise the slogan 'democratise tourism'. Consistent and creative forms of mobilization must be accompanied by dialogue with industry and other relevant structures to ensure that host communities –the people- will become determinants of the pathways of tourism, that they will benefit in equitable and just proportions without their integrity and dignity being violated.

L.C.D. (Ranjan) Solomon  
Executive Secretary  
April 05

### **Russia's lax laws encourage child sex tourism**

Russia is both the origin and destination for trafficking in humans for illicit sexual purposes. Reports reveal that close to 50,000 women and children were trafficked from Russia to the US in the year 2002

Lax legislation to protect children from sexual abuse is encouraging foreigners to come to Russia to sexually exploit children. A senior official in the interior ministry's criminal investigation department said that lenient laws have led foreigners from Europe and North America to come to Russia for child sex tourism. The United States, Canadian and British citizens who travel abroad with the purpose of involving minors in sexual activity face criminal charges, but the maximum sentence for luring minors into having sex without using force is four years in Russia as opposed to thirty years in the US.

In 2004, authorities detained two Russians believed to have forced young boys into prostitution, often selling their services to foreigners. The country requires more law enforcement officers specializing in human trafficking. Child traffickers and abusers must be booked and punished severely for not just physically and emotionally children but for tampering with the process of childhood into becoming a normal adult in society. This denies the basic rights of a child.

Source: 02/03/2005, [www.theherald.co.uk](http://www.theherald.co.uk)

### **Tsunami shifted route of sex tourism to Brazil**

Brazil has become the world's premier sex-tourism destination after December's devastating Indian Ocean Tsunami wreaked much of South East Asia's tourism business. The President of the Brazil's Atlantica Hotels International while speaking at the launch of a partnership between Atlantica Hotels and the World Childhood Foundation Institute of Brazil said that sex tourists turned to Brazil in greater numbers after the tsunami heavily damaged Thailand's tourism business. According to Interpol, Thailand was, until last, year the world's leading destination for sex tourists. The UN Children's Fund estimated that at least 150,000 minors are engaged in prostitution in Brazil now.

A recent congressional report concluded that the country's sex tourism relies on the collaboration of travel agencies, tourist guides, hotels, bars, restaurants, nightclubs, porter and taxi drivers. One of the legislators said that the "problem will only worsen if the country does not take drastic measures, like imprisoning tourists who are involved."

The partnership between the two institutions is to combat the sexual exploitation of minors in tourism destinations. The partnership aims at training hotel workers and sensitising guests on the subject.

Source : [www.manager.co.th](http://www.manager.co.th), 17/03/2005

### **'More Black tour guides needed'**

It is estimated that out of a total of South Africa's 8000 tour guides, only 1300 are black. The National Federation of Tourist Guides conference in Soweto held during the second week of March said that not enough is being done to promote change in the local tour-guide industry.

A status report of the federation's interim committee said it was concerned about the slow pace of transformation in the industry. It also said that although there was evidence of individuals and organizations leading the way with transformation, there is no current system to co-ordinate progress. "There is no body in which government, industry, training organisations and funding agencies can come together to encourage a cohesive approach to transformation." Also the earlier environmental affairs and tourism minister is said to have threatened to introduce a quota system to ensure greater representation of black tour guides in the tourism industry.

The chairman of the Soweto Tourism Association chairman said most of the black people in the industry worked as independent contractors employed on a freelance basis by big tour companies. He said that they do not earn a steady income. Some of the workers go for months without work. As a positive move towards improving the working conditions of the tour guides, the federation plans to unite the tour guides into one body.

Source: 10/03/2005, Business Day

### **Travel Sector steps in to make a difference**

The travel industry group The International Council of Tourism Partners (ICTP) outlined its campaign to purge poverty. In a press conference at the largest travel trade show in the world, International Tourism Exchange (ITB) which took place from the 11<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> March. The organisation committed to campaign to add the voice of the travel sector, which is the world's largest industry, to the cause of poverty alleviation.

ICTP has pledged its total support for Africa raising questions as to why Africa was chosen in particular since Africa does not have a monopoly on poverty. Also that there are regions in the world that are afflicted by poverty just as much as Africa is. According to ICTP President Geoffrey Lipman, Africa is the region of greatest relative poverty in the world with the largest number of least developed countries. It has the worst score in the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) ratings. It is slipping further behind in virtually all the critical areas- poverty, nourishment and mortality. Also Africa's workforce and intellectual motor is crippled with HIV/AIDS.

ICTP has already put in place a tangible initiative to make good on its pledge to eradicate poverty in Africa. The president said, "ICTP members will join the global community wearing a white wristband to signify solidarity for the "Make Poverty History" campaign." He also said that ICTP will give 15 percent of all its membership revenue to UN HIV/AIDS. Is the campaign an impossible dream? "No, because tourism can make a difference," said ICTP chairman, Thomas Steinemtz.

Source: e turbo news, 14/03/2005

### **Tourism – a tool for building bridges for peace**

The tourism ministry of the Palestine Authority has announced a ground-breaking tourism initiative with Israel. The Palestinian and Israeli Ministries of Tourism have signed a joint statement pledging cooperation in promoting visits to the Holy Land. The agreement seeks to assure safe and secure passage for tourists and pilgrims to visit the holy places in Israel and the Palestinian territory.

The minister of tourism in the Palestinian National Authority said the initiative was an important part of the peace process. The ministry is ready to welcome tourists and pilgrims in terms of product, infrastructure and easy access to its cities and assure all visitors of a smooth secure and safe passage to its cities: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Hebron, Nablus and Gaza. "We are waiting for the Israelis to open our cities and remove barriers to allow tourists to move freely,"

The Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) believes "Tourism is not only a generator of job opportunities and a source of foreign currency, but also a tool of building bridges of confidence and better understanding between nations." MOTA also affirms its interest to develop regional cooperation with the neighbouring countries to achieve peace, security and stability and prosperity to the people.

The tourism ministers from both Palestine and Israel have agreed to travel to Rome together to meet the Pope when his health improves sufficiently. MOTA appreciated the efforts of the Catholic Church and His Holiness Pope John Paul to encourage pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The ministry said that the speech of His Holiness at the General Conference of the Italian Bishops in May 2004 encouraging church leaders involved in pilgrimage tours to start again organizing pilgrimage to the Holy Land, had positive impacts on the increase of the number of pilgrims visiting Palestine.

In a pastoral congress held in Rome last year, the Roman Society for Pilgrimages called for a "Marshall Plan" of pilgrimage travel to rescue the economy of the Holy Land. To publicize the drive for religious tourism, a group of Italian athletes, together with Israelis and Palestinians took part in a peace marathon run between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, carrying a torch.

Source: e turbo news, 13/03/2005

### **An Alternative Exhibition – Behind the Smile**

An exhibition – Behind The Smile of photographs in London drew attention to the plight of low-paid workers in the tourism industry. The exhibition is part of the organisation, Tourism Concern's campaign to highlight the poor working conditions of hotel and resort employees in parts of the world that have been hit by terrorism and natural disasters. Incidences such as the bomb blasts in Kenya - including a suicide bomb at a hotel - and the tsunami in Asia have had a devastating effect on the lives of tourism workers who were already struggling to survive and make a decent living.

Behind The Smile is the work two leading British photojournalists, John Wright and Jenny Matthews, who took the photographs in Kenya and Thailand. Jenny Matthews, who took the photographs in Thailand, has worked for leading international development organizations including ActionAid, Christian Aid, and Oxfam. She said “My pictures show workers outside the ruins of their hotels, at the relief centre where they are living or where their homes once stood. I hope you can see the strength behind their sorrow.”

John Wright was a newspaper picture editor before going freelance and his pictures have been published all over the world. The series of pictures from Kenya that he presented in the Behind The Smile exhibition uses the device of getting his subjects to hold cards bearing a phrase from an essay on poverty by the 18th Century economist, Adam Smith.

“Adam Smith said that a rich man glories in his riches because they draw upon him the attentions of the world,” Wright explained at the opening of the exhibition. “For me his statement encapsulates the relationship between tourist and tourism worker today. We find total affirmation for our efforts at accumulating wealth when we go on holiday – waiters deliver snacks to us at the pool with good grace, despite the fact that each one costs far more than their daily wage.”

The Chairman of Tourism Concern said that the photographs are not about making tourists feel guilty but is meant to open a public debate about decency, fair trade and human rights in tourism economics. It is to raise awareness and get tour operators to consider seriously developing policies on the social responsibilities they have in the tourism trade with poor countries. He said “We want to see a percolation of tourism benefits down to the people who work in the sector.”

### **Sewage from Mexican resorts kills coral reefs**

As travellers flock in record-breaking numbers to the beaches of Quintana Roo in Mexico, an unwelcome result is the enormous increase in sewage, and not just from visitors, but also from people who have moved to the state to take good-paying jobs in the tourism industry. Quintana Roo, which is in the Yucatan Peninsula, already receives 4 million visitors per year, and the government predicts that numbers will increase to 11 million by 2025. For every tourist who visits the area, there are three Mexicans working in, or dependent on, the tourism industry, which means the coastal population could grow to 33 million in the next 21 years, making it one of the fastest growing areas in all of Latin America.

“I think we're sitting on a time bomb,” warns Charles Shaw, science director at the Centro Ecologico Akumal (CEA, for its name in Spanish). Akumal, located in the heart of the Maya Riviera: the 80-mile stretch of coast between Cancun and Tulum is the site of the region's most intensive development. The number of hotel rooms built along the Maya Riviera during the past seven years equals what was built in Cancun during the past quarter-century, and it will be the site of most of the 15,000 rooms slated for construction in the state during the next five years.

The area is situated on a very fragile limestone platform with an underground river system running below that flows toward the reef. Lack of awareness about the existence of the river system and its vital role in supplying potable water to Quintana Roo's residents has hindered efforts to protect the groundwater.

The Yucatan Peninsula's caves are home to some 38 fish and crustacean species and contain cathedral-like chambers with stalactites and stalagmites that formed during the ice ages, when a drop in sea level left them high and dry. Water samples collected during an exploratory dive in that cave system contained faecal matter, which is suspected to have come from a nearby resort. It was also found that builders of a resort under construction had punched a cement column directly into an underwater cave.

According to a coral expert at Mexico's National Autonomous University, the region's waters naturally suffer a dearth of nutrients with the slightest increase in their nutrient content can have an impact on the natural balance.

The coral expert noted that the coral reefs have suffered an increase in bacterial diseases in recent years. While this phenomenon has been linked to high water temperatures associated with global warming, he suspects that pollution also plays a role.

He emphasized "the effect pollution has on a reef is much more grave than if a ship or a hurricane were to hit it."

### **"Just a drop" delivers clean water to Tsunami Victims**

As the desperate battle to re-build homes and lives in the tsunami-stricken regions gets underway, badly needed clean water is being delivered to the victims of the tsunami – thanks to *Just a Drop*, the international travel and tourism industry charity.

A total of 100,000 bottles of spring water have been sent from UAE to South East Asia in conjunction with the Emirates Bank, Western Union Financial Services Inc., Scan - Trans Shipping and the mineral water company Santé.

"This was a brilliant example of joint co-operation that got quick results", said Just a Drop chairman and founder, Fiona Jeffery. "We are so grateful for the way that three major companies have worked together with ourselves and the UAE Red Crescent branch in Dubai to help ease the immediate problems of the victims. "Clean water is essential for life.

"Without it children are especially vulnerable to water born diseases such as diarrhoea, dysentery and cholera. This has been confirmed by health officials working in the region – it is their worst post-disaster nightmare. "It is essential that a good supply of clean drinking water is readily available for the victims in this difficult time when the immediate spotlight has gone away and the process of rebuilding and restoration is still in the early stages.

"We cannot thank all those involved in this initiative enough for their quick thinking and humanitarian actions."

She said that two cargoes of bottled water had now been delivered to logistics bases in Indonesia and Sri Lanka and distributed to those most in need will help prevent the spread of disease and keep future loss of life to the minimum."

"Our immediate re-action was to get together with a few friendly ship owners and offer free space on our ships to transport supplies," said Rohan Shetty, Managing Director, Scan -Trans Shipping Middle East. "Our colleagues join me in extending our unequivocal support for the victims."

The Red Crescent branch in Dubai has praised the work of Just a Drop and its supporting companies. Manager Mohammed Abdullah Alhaj Al Zaroni said: "The work of Just a Drop will help tremendously in these critical first months after the disaster."

Santé, under the Just a Drop banner, has now joined forces with a large number of hotel groups in Dubai to support Crossing Borders – a Cycling Challenge to raise aid for an orphanage in Battambang, Cambodia (run by Aspeca) and The Human Development Foundation in Bangkok. The fun, fund raising event will take participants through Sharjah to Fujairah with a two-night stay for two at the AL Maha Desert Resort and Spa for the cyclist raising the most amount of money.

Just a Drop, founded seven years ago by World Travel Market, the leading business exhibition for the international travel and tourism industry, has set up a separate account to receive donations and other fund raising monies in aid of the tsunami victims.

"The immediate aid is a wonderful start to our relief work in South East Asia", said Ms. Jeffery." We are now identifying specific projects in the region where we can help to provide water-related facilities such as latrines and sanitation."

Log on to [www.justadrop.org](http://www.justadrop.org) for further details on the Just a Drop Disaster Fund and how to make a donation.

Source: 22/03/2005, travelwirenews.com

### **British Airways ex-chief speaks out on climate change**

The outgoing chief executive of British Airways, Rod Eddington, has made a plea for the aviation industry to collaborate on reducing carbon dioxide emissions and cut the impact that aircraft have on climate change. Mr. Eddington said it was in the industry's own best interests to unite to develop an effective strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as promoting its past environmental achievements. If it did not, governments would view the industry as an easy target for taxes to fund environment projects. If we are to resist damaging and punitive action we need to define and promote our industry response more clearly."

During the last five years, the airline's global carbon dioxide emissions are down by 15 percent and nitrogen dioxide emissions at Heathrow are down by 16 percent. Fuel efficiency has improved by 25 per cent since 1990, according to BA's own estimates. British Airways argues that an emission trading is a more economical and environmentally effective way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions levels. The airline is currently trading emissions in a voluntary British government scheme and supports the inclusion of aviation into the European Union's emissions trading scheme from 2008.

Under the emissions trading scheme, companies that meet their energy-saving targets will get a discount from the Climate Change Levy, a tax on the business use of energy. These companies can use the scheme either to buy allowances to meet their targets, or to sell any over-achievement of these targets. Emissions trading is emerging as a key instrument in the drive to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The rationale behind emission trading is to ensure that the emission reductions take place where the cost of the reduction is lowest thus lowering the overall costs of combating climate change.

### **Australia develops carbon-neutral travel concept**

An Australian company has developed a program that allows "carbon-neutral" travelling. Greenfleet's program allows people to pay for trees to be planted to compensate for the carbon emissions that result from their travel.

For \$40, Greenfleet, a non-profit environmental organization, plants 17 native trees on the motorist's behalf as, when they grow, they will absorb the greenhouse gases that the average car produces in one year. In addition, the company's website has an online greenhouse calculator so that air travellers can work out the amount of carbon dioxide produced from their one seat on a flight and the number of trees that need to be planted to absorb those greenhouse emissions can then be calculated.

"People are going to fly or drive - of course we can't stop this. Until technology can come up with more energy efficient modes of transport, one thing we can do is to compensate for the emissions that we do make," the Greenfleet CEO said. Greenfleet has already planted 1.7 million trees across five Australian states. "Our policy is to plant the trees in areas where they're needed most, from local seed, putting back into the Australian bush what was there originally," Mr. O'Clery said.

Until themselves people assume responsibility for the faults of the tourism industry, it will remain abusive and harmful especially to those who are visited. They- the people- will most likely find they are deprived of their lands, cultures, traditions, livelihoods, and their dignity. It is, then, for tourism activists, working in concert with development thinkers and practitioners, human rights activists, and other concerned citizens mobilize the people to mount pressure on governments and the tourism industry to alter their tendency for one-dimensional profit seeking ways and root its business practices in ethics and people-centric policies.

## **Acknowledgements**

<http://www.travelwirenews.com>

<http://www.traveldailynews.com>

<http://www.theherald.co.uk>

[http:// www.manager.co.th,](http://www.manager.co.th)

Business Day

e Turbo news

Layout: Roselle Figueiredo Solomon