



# Tourism Scan

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*9/1 Rattanakosin Rd., T. Watget Muang Chiangmai 50000 Thailand*

*Tel/fax. No. +66 53 240026. E-mail: contours@ecotonline.org*

**Executive Director: Ranjan Solomon**

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"The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiang Mai; Thailand 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."

The claim by the UK Government that it uncovered and foiled a terror plot will have a significant impact on tourism across the world. London Heathrow, one of the world's busiest airports, suffered massive congestion as many airlines called off short-haul flights to Britain on Thursday. Between 400,000 and half a million travellers were affected and it is estimated that it could take days or even weeks to reach normalcy.

Muslim groups in Britain reacted with speed and scepticism after British police hinted that Islamists were behind the alleged terrorist plot to blow up US-bound flights. Indeed, there have been growing doubts within the international community about the authenticity of the claims of those who point the finger at the Muslims and the suggestion that they the Muslims are alone in sponsoring acts of terrorism. George Bush roundly condemned 'these Islamic fascists' without so much as having found the evidence to substantiate his suspicions. There are questions that are persistently now asked by thinking political analysts. People want to know if these claims are sinister plots by the US and UK governments geared to justify the war on terrorism which is something of a losing battle. And, does the war on terrorism have a sufficiently moral base? Or is it a pretext for governments involved in it to arrogate upon themselves the means to control the resources of the world, no matter the cost. And above all, why does resistance to oppression always amount to terrorism?

It is over six decades since Hiroshima and Nagasaki happened, and the Holocaust- two tragic events in our not-so-distant history that created terror and destroyed millions of lives. Could it be that humankind has learned nothing from history? Could it be that despite knowing everything about the horrors of war, those who design and control politics would rather resolve differences through violence and terror rather than peaceful dialogue. Or worse, that there is benefit in war and armaments?

The war on terror has created a chasm between people around the world. The divisions are mostly between of different religious traditions. Muslims are especially wary of their neighbours of different faiths and vice versa. In countries which once knew communal harmony and religious co-existence, people suddenly find themselves guarding themselves against the very people with whom they had lives in peace and concord for generations.

Among its various goals, and in the ultimate analysis, ECOT believes that tourism is a spiritual question and seeks to advance a paradigm of tourism where the quest for spirituality is carried out through encounters between people of varying traditions – cultural, religious, and social and from which stems the real truth about our world and its natural environs. In that sense, tourism should emerge as way of forging peace through human encounters that enable people to meet and discover reality. Tourism is then a way of building understanding and community at all levels of society. Indeed, it is a potentially powerful force for peace and it stands to destroy this potential if it remains one more instrument of war and division by ignoring this potential.

In as much as we speak about and aspire to achieve the ideal of a common humanity, we must also seek justice, respect for human rights, and political solutions not military ones. The choice before tourism activists has never been as stark and clear as it is now. We have no option but to stand on the side of justice as the foundation for a lasting and just peace.

Ranjan Solomon

*What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy? (Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948), "Non-Violence in Peace and War")*

## **Tourism and terrorism: Muslims sceptical of airline terror plot**

*MSNBC*

Muslim groups in Britain reacted with skepticism after British police hinted that Islamists were behind an alleged major terrorist plot to blow up US-bound flights. Deputy Commissioner Paul Stephenson, from London's Metropolitan Police, stressed that the plot concerned "people who might masquerade within a community behind certain faiths".

The term "community" is often used in Britain to refer to people from the country's minority faiths and ethnic groups, particularly the 1.65 million Muslims who account for 2.8 percent of Britain's 60 million-strong population. The majority of the 24 people arrested over the airplane plot were understood to be of Pakistani origin, Britain's domestic Press Association news agency said, citing unnamed senior police sources. The Muslim Council of Britain, the main umbrella group, told AFP that some Muslims would be fearful of a potential backlash against the community. "All right-thinking people must support the police in the intelligence-led actions they take to foil plots," said MCB spokesman Inayat Bunglawala." However, there will also be a sense of unease about how the arrests may be used by some far-right groups and others to portray once again British Muslims as a community as a huge reservoir of potential terrorists. "There's weariness about what will follow." Urging caution, he added: "We have seen similar high-profile raids in the past where people have been arrested only to be released without charge." The huge June 2 police raid on a house in east London, suspected to have been a chemical weapons factory, failed to produce any evidence of terrorist activity, prompting anger from some Muslims in Britain. Khurshid Ahmed, a member of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) in Birmingham -- Britain's second city where some of the arrests took place -- said he was relieved that the attack had been foiled. "The response here is one of shock that we still find young people actively involved in activities which we would condemn as a society and also a sense of relief that a possible attack has been thwarted," he told BBC radio. Fahad Ansari, of the less moderate Islamic Human Rights Commission, said there would be "cynicism" from many Muslims about the police's anti-terror operation. "Over the last few years we have seen many high profile raids like this plastered over the press to terrify the public. "It has been hit and miss on too many occasions. It is causing a lot of mass hysteria." He suggested the raids could have been timed to take the heat off Prime Minister Tony Blair's government over its stance on the war between Israel and the Hezbollah militia in Lebanon. Blair is in "denial" and "has to realise that there was a relationship" between British foreign policy - - from Iraq to Afghanistan and the Middle East -- and the July 2005 London bombings, Ansari said. London Mayor Ken Livingstone warned against blaming Britain's Muslim community as a whole for the alleged terror plot. "Only a united London can help defeat terrorism, which means that all London's communities have their part to play," he said. In the deadliest terrorist attack on British soil, four British Islamist suicide bombers killed themselves and 52 others on London's transport network on July 7, 2005. The Met Police's Stephenson had stressed that the police operation was "not about communities: this is about criminals". Some Muslim groups have complained that members of the faith have been unfairly targeted in the years since the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

## **Resurgence of violence raises concerns pertaining to tourism in Sri Lanka**

*By Satish G. | eTN Asia*

Following a slump in tourists arrivals over the last two months in Sri Lanka, it is being felt that a failure to convince travellers may hamper island's economy, where tourism plays a crucial role. The increasing violence between the government troops and Tamil Tiger rebels, and a bomb blast in Colombo city are among incidents, which are resulting in apprehension for the tourism industry.

The Indian Ocean nation garnered 55354 visitors in July, 2.5 percent lower over the corresponding month last year.

K Gnanaratnam, director statistics of the Sri Lanka Tourist Board, said the prevalent security situation is causing a drop in tourism arrivals.

Sri Lanka's traditional markets of United Kingdom and Germany continued to under perform, despite periodic promotional campaigns to lure beach travellers. Sun worshippers from Germany dropped 13.5 percent to 3,897, while the UK declined 7.4 percent to 10,134 visitors during the month of July, the board said.

On the positive side, there was an 18.1 percent growth in Indian traffic to 10,870 in July, mainly due to airfare discounts and shopping bargains in Colombo city.

The cumulative arrivals for the seven months to July rose 13.4 percent to 352,556 and Gnanaratnam said the island is still hopeful of enticing 600,000 visitors this year. Visitor arrivals in 2005 fell three percent to 549,308 as fewer Europeans came to the island-nation, following the tsunami.

According to local media, tourism is the third biggest foreign exchange earner, bringing in Rs. 184.7 million till May this year, with an average tourist staying 10 days and spending little over US\$72 a day, according to Central Bank figures. "We have a target to raise the daily tourist spend per person to 80 dollars by the end of this year, but that will now depend on the country's security situation," said Gnanaratnam.

According to Bloomberg, arrivals fell for the first time this year in June and bookings have declined at Aitken Spence & Co. and John Keells Holdings Ltd., the island's two largest hoteliers. "Our occupancy and earnings are down 10 percent from last year and that is not good as 2005 was post-tsunami," J.M.S. Brito, managing director, Aitken Spence, said. "There are no real bookings coming through as the perception is bleak in the current scenario."

## **UN gets tough on child sex tourism**

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is hoping to stamp out child sex tourism in Sri Lanka by providing the Sri Lanka Tourist Board with financial and technical support.

"Sri Lanka is the first country in south Asia with a national action plan to combat child sex tourism," said Yasmin Ali Haque, senior program coordinator for the campaign. "A child who is a victim of sexual abuse suffers serious, lifelong or even life-threatening consequences."

The two-year national action plan under the country's tourism board is aimed at stopping child exploitation. The campaign is targeted at visitors, children and adolescents, hoteliers, journalists, families and community leaders.

"As the first country in the region to have such an action plan, Sri Lanka has a unique opportunity to lead the way for other countries in the region," added Haque.

The UN has estimated thousands of Sri Lankan children are drawn into prostitution every year, the majority of them boys. Locals, as well as tourists who offer money and a chance to travel exploit them.

The most vulnerable are those from poor and marginalized communities who have little supervision from their families. "Some are won just by offers of clothes, pens, sweets and food."

Added Mihiri Fernando, spokeswoman for the project, "We are also raising awareness of the problem among three-wheeler taxi drivers. There is a hotline to call and report cases of child sex tourism."

The projected 600,000 foreign tourists who are expected to visit Sri Lanka this year will be reminded of the punishment for sexual exploitation which is imprisonment of up to 20 years. Tourists will be reminded through mass media campaigns and messages via radio, TV, videos, billboards, posters, car-stickers, flyers and printed materials.

The UN International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates 1.8 million children globally are exploited in the multi-billion dollar commercial sex industry, which includes child sex tourism.

## **Tourists rescue boat migrants in Tenerife**

Tourists sunning themselves in the Canary Islands came to the rescue of 88 immigrants from Africa whose canoe-shaped fishing boat grounded on a beach in Tenerife. They were given first aid by holidaymakers and locals who took some of the most severely dehydrated to hospitals near the town of Granadilla in their cars.

"It was totally spontaneous," a local police officer, Javier Melián, told El País newspaper. "Every immigrant must have had four or five people looking after them. The beach was full of tourists." Tourists sunning themselves in the Canary Islands came to the rescue of 88 immigrants from Africa whose canoe-shaped fishing boat grounded on a beach in Tenerife. They were given first aid by holidaymakers and locals who took some of the most severely dehydrated to hospitals near the town of Granadilla in their cars. "It was totally spontaneous," a local police officer, Javier Melián, told El País newspaper. "Every immigrant must have had four or five people looking after them. The beach was full of tourists." Foreign sunbathers, especially Germans, were among those who helped while Red Cross units and the local police made their way to the beach on the southern coast of Tenerife. The tourists helped the immigrants wade through the last few metres of water on to the beach, gave them water to drink, dry clothes and held towels over them to keep them in the shade. Several children were among those who had to be looked after until the Red Cross arrived. "We handed out surgical gloves to people in case the

immigrants had illnesses, but they didn't really care about that," Mr Melián said. "I was especially impressed by the young people, who gave them their things and helped, even though they could not understand a word they said." The sight of desperate developing world immigrants turning up on the beaches where Europeans routinely visit to sunbathe is becoming increasingly common in the Canary Islands. Spain says some 11,000 people, mainly sub-Saharan Africans, have arrived in the Canary Islands so far this year. Hundreds of people are thought to have died on the perilous crossing since new routes from distant Mauritania and Senegal opened up at the end of last year. Last week alone four dead immigrants were found in two of the vessels that reached the islands, which lie in the Atlantic some 100 miles off north-west Africa. Other vessels, usually carrying between 50 and 100 people, are believed to have sunk without trace on the voyage north along the coast of Africa and west to the Canary Islands. One boat that got lost was eventually washed up, four months later, on the shores of Barbados, on the other side of the Atlantic. Eleven petrified corpses of would-be immigrants, thought to be from Senegal, were found on board. The flow of African fishing boats carrying immigrants to the Canary Islands continued yesterday with two more arriving in Tenerife with 160 people. One of the vessels, with 84 people on board, was already half-sunk when Spanish rescue services reached it. Some 200 immigrants reached the island on Sunday. The European Union has pledged to help control the flow of immigrants, sending patrol boats and spotter planes to the Canary Islands. The Africans are, however, only a tiny proportion of the total number of immigrants coming to Spain. Last year some 650,000 foreigners travelled to Spain, whose booming economy needs manual labourers. Most were Latin Americans who arrived on tourist visas and then stayed. A further 650,000 were given residency permits last year as the government called an amnesty for illegal immigrants with job contracts.

## **FAA says law favors Hawaiian Airlines over American Samoa governor**

*By Nelson Alcantara*

HONOLULU (eTN) -- Alleging that Hawaiian Airlines overcharges and subjects locals to discrimination and ethnic harassment, American Samoa Governor Togiola Tulafono tried but warned by the Federal Aviation Agency against implementing his executive order demanding Hawaii-based Hawaiian Airlines to withdraw from its Honolulu-Pago pago route.

Barring Hawaiian Airlines would mean a violation of federal law, FAA told the American Samoa governor in letter sent last week, according to a published report.

Ronnie Simpson, the FAA's manager for the airports district office in Honolulu, in the letter to Governor Tulafono wrote, "To prevent or impede an air carrier's service at an airport is also inconsistent with the airport operator's contractual grant to provide reasonable and not unjustly discriminatory access to the airport."

"Hawaiian is well acquainted with the laws and regulations under which it operates, and the FAA's letter is consistent with our view of the situation," Hawaiian Airlines spokesperson Keoni Wagner told the Associated Press. He added that the airline will continue its American Samoa-Honolulu service.

Governor Tulafono insisted via a weekend radio address that American Samoa controls its borders, and government approval is needed to clear any flights in or out of the territory only to be rebuffed by lawyer Jeff Waller, who issued a legal opinion this week that while the governor would have the authority to set aside a foreign corporation's permit under American Samoan law, the U.S. Constitution requires the supremacy of federal law, AP reported.

Waller reportedly said in his legal opinion that the Hawaiian Airlines' right to fly is granted by the FAA, not the territorial government, and that federal laws and regulations are extensive and pre-empt "any state or territorial law concerning air carriers."

## **Mount Nelson Hotel Leads the Way in Environmental Management by Using Earthworms to Compost its Waste**

LONDON, August 1-- The Mount Nelson Hotel in Cape Town became home to thousands of hungry new guests last month with the establishment of an on-site worm farm, or vermiculture, to process leftover food and other organic matter. As well as being a novel new way to dispose of waste, the end-product, called vermicast, is rich in nutrients and will be used by the gardening team as a fertiliser and soil conditioner for the nine acre garden.

The Mount Nelson's well fed worms are currently munching on 200 kilograms of scraps from the breakfast buffet and famous afternoon tea - 20% of the hotel's usable organic waste. It is hoped that by next year all of the hotel's organic waste will be processed in this way. Already the worms have started to produce liquid fertiliser for the pot plants in the hotel's conservatory and lounge.

Each day's organic waste is separated by the hotel's night support chef, Samkelo Tumtumana, who delivers it to the farm. The trainee worm farmer, Shaun Gibbons, then feeds the waste to the earthworms, who are housed in a custom designed farm built out of recycled crates.

The hotel developed its worm farm with the help of Mary Murphy, an environmental activist, and Roger Jaques, a botanist, environmental scientist, landscape architect and vermiculturalist; who call their company FullCycle.

"Waste is a huge problem. It winds up in landfills and ends up polluting our groundwater and generating greenhouse gases responsible for climate change," says Murphy. "In nature, there is no such thing as waste - the waste products from one organism provide the matter and energy for other organisms. We have ignored this basic principle in the design of our urban spaces.

"Earthworms are amazing creatures. They are able to process their own weight in food waste everyday, turning it into the finest soil conditioner. They do not harbour any bacteria or viruses harmful to humans, and are completely free of parasites. They eat harmful organisms and excrete masses of beneficial organisms in their droppings, known as worm casts.

"They modify their environment by processing and aerating the waste, thereby preventing the decay process from turning 'bad' - anaerobic decomposition. This helps prevent the formation of carbon dioxide and methane, and keeps carbon and nitrogen bound in the soil in forms that are available to plants".

Earthworms are able to convert in a matter of days what would otherwise be a putrid, foul-smelling mass of food waste into earthworm compost. Another product produced by this process is 'worm tea', the liquid that drains from the worm casts and makes an exceptional liquid fertiliser.

Source: [www.mountnelson.co.za](http://www.mountnelson.co.za)

## **Global hotel chain's claims of responsible development are a 'greenwash', says pressure group**

The tourism-watchdog Tourism Concern has accused Hilton Hotels Corporation and Hilton International of short changing local communities and habitat destruction, despite its claims to be clean and green.

The accusations will be made in a hard-hitting speech delivered by Tourism Concern's CEO Tricia Barnett to a conference on Corporate Social Responsibility and tourism held in Singapore to be held on 25<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July.

Too often, argues Tourism Concern, CSR is used as an opportunity for companies operating in tourism to make shareholders and the public believe that the companies operate ethically and with integrity. Tourism Concern is using the Hilton Hotels Corporation and Hilton International as an example to prove its case that, whatever CSR policies are published, unless they are integrated fully into the business operation, they are meaningless. Hilton International states that they advocate socially and environmentally responsible business practice throughout their global operations. They also claim their aim is to bring positive benefit to the societies in which they operate through..... environmental management and community involvement.

However, two cases where the communities of tropical islands feel abused by Hilton's practices would suggest otherwise. Bimini in the Bahamas and Mandhoo island in the Maldives are, says Tourism Concern, likely to be the tip of the corporate iceberg. Tourism, purported to be the world's biggest industry, is rapacious and cares little for anything other than growth.

*Source: Tourism Concern: <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk>*

## **Passenger Files Suit against Cruise Line for Sexual Assault**

A thirty-five year old woman from California has filed a lawsuit against a Miami based cruise line. Ms. Laurie Dishman, of Sacramento, California, went on a cruise to the Mexican Riviera aboard Royal Caribbean's Vision of the Seas on February 19, 2006. During the cruise, a security guard employed by the cruise line entered her cabin and sexually assaulted and battered her, according to Ms. Dishman.

According to Ms. Dishman, she left the cruise ship on February 22, 2006 and reported the crime to the FBI in Long Beach, California, where the cruise ship is based. Ms. Dishman was informed by the FBI that the Department of Justice ("DOJ") declined the case for prosecution on February 26, 2006. This was the same day that the cruise ship returned to port, and before a serious investigation could be started. To date, the cruise line will not provide her with the name, address, nationality, or current whereabouts of the crew member. The cruise line has also withheld copies of her shipboard medical records and information about whether the crew member has HIV/AIDS or other diseases, Ms. Dishman alleges. Ms. Dishman is attempting to re-open the criminal investigation and obtain justice. "I have been supported by my loyal friends and loving family. My Senator and Congresswoman have also helped me," stated Ms. Dishman. "I am also thankful to members of the International Cruise Victims organization ("ICV"), who have assisted me." The ICV is a grass roots victims advocacy organization created by the families of crime victims on cruise ships.

Currently pending before Congress is H.R. 5707, the "Cruise Line Accurate Safety Statistics Act" ("CLASS" Act). The "CLASS" Act will help ensure safety for cruise passengers and justice for crime victims on cruise ships.

*Information regarding the ICV and the "CLASS" Act can be found at <http://www.internationalcruisevictims.org/>*

## **Has Bali lost its “paradise island” tag?**

*By Satish G. | eTN Asia*

Earthquake, bombings, SARS, the Avian Bird Flu – it’s not an easy when such dreadful list haunts the nation with one calamity following one after the other. Tourism in Indonesia has been victim of several such incidents over the past few years.

The image of Bali as a “paradise island” and “island of the gods” is wholly inappropriate under the current circumstances, says a report in Jakarta Post.

“These romanticized, utopian views were created long ago by pioneering visitors who saw the island’s “virginity,” characterized by an un-spoilt natural environment, exotic culture and rich tradition. With bombings in October 2002 and 2005, security and health problems (including rumours of the spread of SARS and, most recently, avian flu), as well as environmental and social degradation, it is indeed difficult to continue branding Bali as a safe haven for tourists and a top holiday destination,” it says.

An industry professional says visitors have started to abandon Bali for other destinations in Malaysia, Thailand, Fiji and other interesting places in the Pacific islands. The same report refers to Bali Hotels Association, Chairman Michael Burchett saying there has been a crucial demographic shift in Bali’s tourist market. Currently, the market is experiencing a rise in tourists from Taiwan and Russia, with fewer Australian and Japanese guests.

As per the information available, Bali tourist arrivals have fallen 19.8 percent for the first half of 2006, from 114,829 per month last year to 92,096 this year.

“The majority of our new guests spend less time and money, reflecting the changing market. Bali has not recovered yet,” reportedly said Burchett. “The industry is facing a dire financial situation, as are the people of Bali in general.”

## **Caribbean media to weigh in on faith tourism strategy**

A major focus at the forthcoming Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism (CMEx) in St. Lucia is the call to Caribbean tourism authorities to have the faith to aggressively pursue travelers who place a premium on their spiritual heritage, organizers announced Thursday.

The region's destinations have a lot to offer spiritually-minded travelers, said 12 media, tourism and youth delegates who debated the issue at the earlier CMEx in San Juan this year.

They believe that in the midst of international chaos, the Caribbean should position itself as a refuge for those seeking to grow and explore spirituality given the region's rich history, spiritual heritage and Christian foundation, a release from Counterpart International said Thursday.

"It was mooted that proper spiritual development leads to harmony with oneself and the environment in terms of promoting order, which is what people are attracted to ... people will come and be renewed," said British Virgin Islands journalist Angela Burns Piper, who collated the points made by her colleagues.

"We also suggested that this branding mechanism can be unique to the Caribbean," she added.

Burns Piper said the group proposed branding the region as a "spiritual oasis" where God's laws are followed, people are good stewards of the environment, and morality and peace among the people prevail.

While delegates agree that faith tourism is viable, they acknowledged that a "balancing act" is needed. Though the region has strong Christian roots, some expressed concern that a marketing strategy focused solely on the region's Christian heritage may alienate those who would be drawn to but are unaware of the regions Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Rastafarian faiths, for example. "There should be sensitivity to people of other faiths, but that doesn't mean you should hide who you are. We recognize there are varying faiths, but common to the Caribbean is Christianity."

*Source: Counterpart International*

## **Acknowledgements**

- Counterpart International
- Satish G. | eTN Asia
- <http://www.internationalcruisevictims.org/>
- Tourism Concern: <http://www.tourismconcern.org.uk>
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- Nelson Alcantara
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