



# Tourism Scan

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*"The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism is a Chiangmai, 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."*

## From the Editor

It has been some time that TourismScan was not published and ECOT is pleased to send out a new edition today.

TourismScan is a monthly e-publications sent out to some three thousand affiliates of the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism worldwide. It aims to be a means of information and distribute details about ongoing urgent issues related to tourism development and human rights on a worldwide perspective. Thus, it is a platform for all ECOT affiliates. Therefore, don't hesitate to share information about your ongoing projects or campaigns with us! Please send them to: [contours@ecotonline.org](mailto:contours@ecotonline.org)

In the current issue, you will find articles on two overarching subjects: protection of coastal and marine ecosystems, and linking agriculture and horticulture with (rural) tourism development.

Firstly, we shall travel to Central America to understand the ongoing land right struggle of the Afro-Caribbean communities facing tourism development on the coastal belt. Further south, in Brazil, the fisher folk of Prainha do Canto Verde successfully agreed with Brazil governmental institutions on sustainable fishing and lobster catching which guarantees income generation through fair trade and nature protection in this fragile ecosystem much appreciated by tourists. And finally you will find information from Bangladesh where the Centre for Coastal Environmental Education is working to protect mangroves and encourage corresponding income generation- indispensable issues to prevent local communities from natural disasters.

Secondly, we have chosen to look deeper into the challenge of linking agri- and horticulture with (community based) tourism development. In Asia, medical tourism is pushed by the governments, especially the Indian Government. However, an alternative, Ayurvedic tourism, is left behind, despite the fact that it would offer a wide range of benefits including biodiversity protection, local income generation and rural tourism. We then look up north, to Kashmir, where not medical plants but flowers are supposed to generate a new field for tourism. On this issue, ECOT would appreciate to get more information from NGOs working there... Last but not least, biofuels and rural tourism development will be looked at: The challenge to use renewable energy for transportation in regard to the growing tourism demand in regions like Asia (or Europe!) is convoking necessary discussions about tourism, climate change, and deforestation, food and energy security.

TourismScan highlights a few outstanding initiatives and thoughts, communicates their approach, success and needs and wants to encourage global information exchange between all readers.

Julia Schonharl  
1, February 2007

## Central America – Afro-Caribbean communities defend land rights and access to the sea

Afro-Caribbean communities residing on the Central American coasts condemn the privatization of beaches and demand to be direct beneficiaries of the tourism development. As reported by Thelma Mejia of Tierramérica.com, Garifuna communities located along the Caribbean stripe of the Central American isthmus are again demanding ecological tourism in order to surpass centuries of marginalization which is intensified by the politics of free trade in Central America.

Some 230 years ago, West Africans arrived on the isthmus supposed to become slaves in the sugar cane plantations. But as slavery was abolished by then, the Africans mixed with Caribbean natives, and the Garifuna ethnic came into existence. Garifunas soon after settled on the Honduran Northern coast just in front of the famous Bay Islands. Today, they make up some ten percent of the almost 40 million residents of Central America.

In Tierramérica, the President of the Central American Black Organization (ONECA), Celeo Álvarez Casildo, laments that "the forces of free commerce traps us and diminishes each time more the spaces of inclusion and cultural preservation".

"They tell us that free commerce encourages tourism. But what we see are fights for land rights and displacement of ecological tourism for another kind of business followed by privatization of public beaches and isolating tourists from the real Garifuna culture", assured Álvarez. Although privatization of beaches in Honduras is not legalized is has become almost impossible for national/local tourists and visitors to enjoy public beaches as the majority of land is blocked by hotel and resort fences.

Fighting for land rights is a big issue ever since Honduras became one nation: farmers from inland are coming to the coast and often illegally settle down and start cultivating the land. "Gradually, some adventurers were buying the Garifuna lands to ridiculous prices and transformed them into treasures for foreign investors", indicates community lawyer G. Fonseca. He urges that "... land property rights of the Garifunas must (...) be guaranteed since there are many communities that sold their lands reaching down to the beaches at very low prices due to ignorance and discrimination". With limited or no access to the sea, also the traditional artisanal fishing custom is disappearing...

Miriam Miranda of the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras indicated that Garifunas should play a more active role "in the commercial treaties for alternative tourism policies (...)". At its recent XII Annual Assembly, ONECA gave priority to the challenges presented by neo liberal commercial treaties and discrimination. The Afro- Caribbean participants agreed to implement and promote eco-friendly tourism projects that respect land titles, to improve the quality of higher education, generate opportunities for micro-businesses and ensure preservation of their culture. Miranda observed that in many Central American countries political participation is excluding the Garifunas. But there is some hope: in Honduras, for the first time in half a century, there are five Garifunas in the parliament.

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## **Brazil's artisanal fishers secure access rights to lobster fishery**

The recent meeting of Brazil's management committee for the sustainable use of lobsters (CGSL) ended with a historic decision (taken unanimously) which guarantees access to the lobster fishery for close to 10,000 artisanal sailboat fishers concentrated on the coast of Ceará and Rio Grande do Norte in the northeast of Brazil. It was also agreed to reduce the fishing effort from over 80 mn traps to 30 mn traps by 2009. This will be achieved by management measures such as the prohibition of gillnet and the illegal compressor diving fleet, and protecting several important nursery areas with co-management arrangements in the 4-mile zone. The agreement opens the way to license all boats of over 4 m length fishing with traps and built before 2001 and aims to exclude boats of non-fishers/owners, which entered the fishery with gillnets and compressor diving fleets, without licenses contributing to the an increase of illegal and predatory fishing.

Now, however, it is hoped that livelihoods of fishers/boat owners are protected through licenses for their boats and through a compensation scheme rewarding them for not fishing lobsters during the closed season. Also, widespread fraudulent misuse of social benefits meant for genuine fishers will be reduced. In 2001, when the federal government, for the first, time allowed fishers and NGOs to participate in the deliberations on fisheries management, the fisher delegates had proposed the very measures now adopted. But they were then still a minority in the committee. Over the years, they strengthened their organizations and participated in local enforcement activities, thus gaining the confidence of fisheries managers, the public and scientists, and convincing them that sailboat fishers are no danger to the resource, but an important economic factor for poverty reduction.

Over the years, fishers and NGOs worked their way to a majority in the CGSL, and in 2006 had the first positive result when the CGSL approved a proposal by the scientific subcommittee to create a co-managed marine protected area (MPA). Now, they are exploring the possibility of marketing lobsters with certificates of origin from artisanal fisheries in MPAs. This historic case of the struggle of artisanal fishers and NGOs will be presented at the Seafood Summit in Jacksonville, Florida/US.

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## Coastal environmental conservation in Bangladesh's Sudarbarn region

You can almost feel wet feet and clothes sitting on a small canoe type boat while floating through the wetlands accompanying Bangladeshi Film Director Shaheen Dill-Riaz in his movie 'Sand and Water' where he shows in impressive and moving pictures the living conditions and survival strategies of the Chaura population of river Jamuna. A quite similar feeling will arise when reading Amitav Ghosh's novel 'The hungry tide' giving in-sights into the life in Bangladesh's Sudarbarn region.

Both, however, clearly highlight the importance to protect the Coastal Mangrove Ecosystem. In the Sudarbarn region (UNESCO World Heritage Site), the local environmental NGO Centre for Coastal Environmental Conservation (CCEC) is to take on the initiative of an in-depth community participation program including environmental education, awareness and campaigns. Apart from the Environmental Education Training (EET) among the Primary School teachers and a program of Biodiversity Conservation Awareness among Sundarban stakeholders, major focus is on livelihood security of the FCDI polder communities.

CCEE started with a first initiative on the protection of mangrove herb, thicket and palms through environmental education and awareness protecting from natural disasters such as flood, cyclone, tidal surge, sea level rise caused by global warming. Recently, CCEE launched the Kajibacha Nature Club involving local youths, and is working on leasing out BWDB lands (Bangladesh Water Development Board) for natural regeneration.

As one component, livelihood measures especially for women will be generated. CCEC plans to extend the activities to an area adjacent to Sundarban and is looking for cooperation in raising funds for the conservation movement.

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## Ayurveda in South East Asia – between ecotourism and exploitation

Europeans show increasingly interest in health tourism. Particularly, more and more persons are interested in alternative Asian therapy forms like, for instance, Ayurveda. The therapy method traditionally developed in the Indian subcontinent and Sri Lanka is a holistic concept of health as **Ayu(r) Veda** means 'the logic of life'. It includes internal and external applications of essences and oils prepared of medical and aromatic plants (MAP). Thus, Ayurveda is more than only a massage – despite that's the way it is promoted in Europe.

For Ayurveda, the power lies in the MAP. In Sri Lanka, India and Nepal governments nowadays recognize the potential of Ayurveda but seem to lack the ability to efficiently use the full potential of the related natural resources. MAPs are cultivated and used for Ayurveda by families since generations and there is a lot of inherited, indigenous knowledge about cultivation and preparation. The protection and maintenance of the ecosystems in which the plants grow and be harvested used to be controlled as often MAP related activities were the only source of income for those families. However, nowadays, MAP relevant lands (often pristine forest) are threatened to be sold to private firms with foreign pharmaceutical companies' backing who clear-cut forests for single-crop plantations and threaten the local (often indigenous) populations' (ecological) economy. Subsequently, facing this challenge of the non-timber sector, alternatives and diversifications must be identified for additional income possibilities.

One such diversification could be ecotourism with its key components protection and maintenance of the natural resources in addition to the education of visitors about biodiversity and sustainable development ensuring economic benefits for local populations. Both, Sri Lanka and India have been promoting ecotourism already for a few years due to its expected potential in preservation of biodiversity and income generation opportunities (Kotagame and Vidanege, 1995), particularly in the tea plantation highlands. But not enough effort was given to an integrated development approach: as tea pickers usually don't have the education level required for management and product development, probably plantation owners would be the ones who mainly gain from tourism.

The chance to establish committees of tea pickers, train them to implement activities and products around Ayurveda, was not considered. However, Hettigoda Industries' Director hopes that "...as the European perspective regarding alternative therapy changed, this presents a great opportunity for Asian tourism development". Both, Sri Lanka and India are (yet!) rich in forests and may offer tourists a unique nature experience...Protecting biodiversity is thus a main issue for ecotourism and Ayurveda. According to IUCN (2/2004) some 80 MAP are in extinction already due to the current exploitative use of natural resources.

But this might go on without control systems: Due to the boom of Ayurveda in western countries, a large illegal market for MAP has developed with dumping price policies... As long as there is no eco-certification of MAP and Ayurveda products, and as long as there is enough forest to exploit to meet the demand of the processing industry, harvesting of wild grown MAP will continue threatening the biodiversity.

A possible solution might be so called organic-partnerships of small farmers, manufacturers, small distributors, Ayurveda users, exporters etc. Also relevant tourism service providers could incorporate to find a strategic balance of all stakeholders. Certainly, there is still a lack of managerial and/or entrepreneurial skills in both sectors what presents – as usual - the hurdle for the rural population to overcome poverty, and acknowledgment of the sustainable use of MAP as well as sustainable tourism development as economically important rural factors is still at its infant stage. However, as both sectors would address quite similar target groups: Why not combine ecotourism and Ayurveda and thus encourage India's and Sri Lanka's efforts to reach the millennium goals of poverty reduction?

Julia Schonharl

### **Flowers for Kashmir**

As reported by Reuters (28 Jan 2007 08:37:00 GMT) officials in Indian Kashmir have a new idea to heal the region drained by nearly three decades of fighting: flowers! Kashmir has the world's largest tulip garden which should lure tourists as they are set against snow-capped mountains. Over 350,000 tulip bulbs have been already planted close to Kashmir's summer capital, Srinagar, home to 2,000 ornately-carved pinewood houseboats also popular with tourists. It is expected that tourist numbers of the former top Asian destination will rise again to the volume before violent rebellion which left tens of thousands dead broke out in 1989.

With the experience of the European wide campaign of Fair Flower Label (FFL) launched by FLO (Fair Labelling Organization, Germany) to raise awareness of European customers about fair salaries of the flower plantation workers and organic flower farming in Latin American countries like Ecuador, it seems urgent to start

a similar project in Kashmir. As long as most western countries still caution citizens against travelling to Kashmir, there might be some time still to organize such a project to train the Kashmir flower farmers about their rights and the potential to combine their future flower business with locally organized tourism services.

### **New energy for more mobility**

Energy security and efficiency as well as renewable energy sources and climate change were vital issues at the second East Asian Summit (EAS) in Cebu, Philippines. Effectively, on January 15th, the “Cebu Declaration on East Asian Energy Security” (<http://www.aseansec.org/19319.htm>) was signed by the participating countries. As stated the declaration not only aims to improve the efficiency and environmental performance of fossil fuel use and to provide affordable energy but also wants to encourage investment on energy resource and infrastructure development. Among other measures this goal is meant to be achieved by promoting the use of biofuels and clean technologies.

Meanwhile the ASEAN tourism industry convenes in Singapore at the ASEAN Tourism Forum (ATF 2007) from 26 January to 3 February. Themed “Embracing the Past and Together Shaping the Future”, the conference puts and emphasis on the youth travel market pursuing the long-term goal to enhance tourism by regional integration and co-operation. Especially an increase in intra-ASEAN tourism, now still at less than 50% of total arrivals, is desired and expected in the near future. As transport is the fastest growing sector of greenhouse gas emission, it links up tourism strongly with the energy issues. Considering current scenarios of global warning there is no time to wait for international agreement - the EU teaches us a bitter lesson when it comes to rapid decision making.

Furthermore, especially rural communities cannot wait until the innovations made in neighboring cities have trickled down to the periphery – the travelers searching for the “authentic” and “eco” do not wait either. It should be the responsibility of NGOs and community initiatives to trigger bottom up activities to ensure sustainable innovation and investment not only from the environmental but also the social and cultural perspective. And before getting overrun by motorized crowds of tourists or swallowed up by foreign or multinational investors. Examples of best practice can speed up progress as, for instance, the ASEAN Working Group on Environmentally Sustainable Cities ([www.aseansec.org](http://www.aseansec.org)) shows.

But no matter whether the transport systems of the future will be run by rechargeable batteries or biofuels, the bigger picture must be kept in mind. When the ASEAN governments highlight biofuels as a green solution, there are also critical voices like Almuth Ernsting from [biofuelwatch.org.uk](http://biofuelwatch.org.uk): “We must remember that the EU Biofuel Directive, UN policies, bilateral biofuel agreements etc. have nothing whatsoever to do with this ‘green’ idea. They are putting a global blueprint into action which is threatening local communities, biodiversity, water supplies, rainforest and the climate across the globe.” After all, only saved energy is really green. For now, the desired co-operation of ASEAN as well as the involvement of the private sector seems to offer a promising starting-option for joint venture, innovation and synergies in both, energy security and soft transport for tourism. However, the consultation, involvement and empowerment of the local peoples are a prerequisite for any sustainable solutions.

by Nona Schulte-Roemer

## Special Note

### TV program in German TV reduces Birma/Myanmar to a beach and exotic destination

A recent co-production of major public German and Austrian television companies (ZDF and ORF) called 'cruise trip into the good fortune' was considered as a rather unfortunate start into the New Year program by Respect, the Austria based Institute for Integrative Tourism and Development. The promotion of wedding cruises to long haul destinations while reducing them to sun and sea exotic places is neglecting the political and human rights violating situation as in the case of Birma/Myanmar where the first cruise went to (shown on TV on January 1st, 2007).

Respect institute in cooperation with Nature Friends International (NFI) addressed a letter to the superintendents of both TV stations and requested to renounce from destinations where human right injuries and totalitarian conditions of life are hidden behind attractive surfaces. Respect has published the critical tourism report on Birma/Myanmar 'Terra non Grata' ([www.respect.at/spektrum](http://www.respect.at/spektrum)) and is not promoting the boycott of tourism to the country but rather wants an informed tourism in which tour operators take on responsibility towards the local peoples.

Interested in Birma/Myanmar and its tourism development from a political/human rights perspective?

Please write your thoughts and comments to: [julia@ecotonline.org](mailto:julia@ecotonline.org).

### Selected upcoming Events

#### **In the South:**

- 23-24 Feb Tourism Development, Impacts and Future Strategies, Kurukshetra, INDIA
- 27 Feb Business Tourism Conference, Johannesburg, SOUTH AFRICA
- 17 - 18 Mar Cutting Edge Research in Tourism, Shimla, Himachal Pradesh, INDIA

#### **In the North:**

- February 2-4, 2007, alternative tourism fair 'Reisepavillon', Hannover/Germany. With ECOT partners Tourism Watch and 'respect' - Institute for Integrative Tourism and Development. Highlight presentations will be on Africa's image in travel brochures of German tour operators and the discussion of a Fair Trade Labeling for tourism. [www.reisepavillon-online.de](http://www.reisepavillon-online.de)
- May 30-31, 2007, UNWTO Ulysses Conference 2007, Madrid/Spain [www.world-tourism.org/](http://www.world-tourism.org/). "Knowledge-based development through tourism on. Call for papers until 1 March 2007. Information: The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Email: [hmkchon@polyu.edu.hk](mailto:hmkchon@polyu.edu.hk)
- March 07 - 11, 2007, ITB Berlin - International Tourism Fair in Berlin/Germany. [www.itb-berlin.de](http://www.itb-berlin.de)

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