

SRI LANKA DEFEATS TIGERS AND LURES TOURISTS



Sri Lanka wants to attract more tourists. Now, after the 30 years war they want to boost tourism by promoting the destination in international media.

Sri Lanka has once more become the main topic for world's media. The government forces managed to defeat the Tamil Tiger rebels after some 30 years of war. **The conflict severely damaged Sri Lanka's image and it has also cost huge sums of money.** The latest military operations against the Tamil Tigers made approximately 300,000 people leave their homes. These people now live in more than 40 camps.

The war and its recent escalation naturally scared off many possible visitors of the country. For example, the occupancy rates for 5 stars hotels in the Sri Lankan biggest city, Colombo, were around 40 per cent in the past two years. Average room rate was \$62 a night.

Sri Lanka receives approximately 500,000 visitors each year. The sector is important earner for the economy as it represents some 2.5 percent of the nation's \$32 billion economy. Officials believe that after the war ended they will manage to increase this number. The aim is to raise it to 8 percent of gross domestic product within five years.

They want to **increase tourism arrivals by 20 per cent each year** to earn money and also to fight off the impact of the global economic crisis. Sri Lankan tourism earns about \$325 million in foreign exchange each year. The country needs to boost this earner of foreign exchange as it is impacted by the crisis. They even turned to the International Monetary Fund in March for a bailout.

As everywhere tourism can provide jobs to locals. The sector has the ability to employ both skilled and unskilled personnel. Currently, there is 5.2 percent unemployment in Sri Lanka.

To efficiently boost the tourism industry Sri Lankan government decided to **launch a \$20 million worldwide advertising campaign.** The campaign entitled "Sri Lanka: Small Miracle," will start in world wide media from June 23.

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