

CHINA CAPITALIZES ON EARTHQUAKE



China is capitalizing on tourism to earthquake devastated Sichuan province. Tourists enjoy visiting the quake destroyed sites.

Whole world has heard about the vast devastation caused by the last May's earthquake in the Chinese province of Sichuan. Many thousands have died, according to some data approximately 90,000 people perished. The disaster has naturally caused huge public interest among Chinese. Especially sad was the information about thousands of kids and students who died in schools. Millions of people were somehow affected by the earthquake. According to Sichuan authorities some 1.5 million people lost their jobs and land in the disaster.

Officials feared that as a result of the disaster there could be severe unrests. For that reason they did not allow parents to grieve at the sites of the school debris where the children died. Some commemoration ceremonies have been banned and the officials even opposed creation of public memorials commemorating the disaster.

On the other hand, now it seems the Chinese officials do not oppose the idea of capitalizing on the earthquake. Related to the concept of dark tourism there are numerous people, who are attracted to sites of catastrophes, to other people's suffering. Local officials do not mind the interest, they even support it. As a result there is a new sector, the "**Earthquake Tourism**" where travelers come to Sichuan to visit the ruins from the quake.

According to officials people are already coming to the province to see the ruins, so why not to capitalize on it? There is for example the **Donghekou Earthquake Relics Park**, which is on site of a village where only 300 of more than 1,400 villagers survived a landslide. This memorial of the horrible disaster is a hot tourism destination for the "Earthquake tourists" as **more than 260,000 tourists have already visited the Park** since November. Other relics including earthquake demolished schools, bridges and factories will be opened.

The officials argue that income from this kind of tourism would help the region's economy to recover. There is, nevertheless, a question whether it is moral to capitalize on other people's suffering.

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