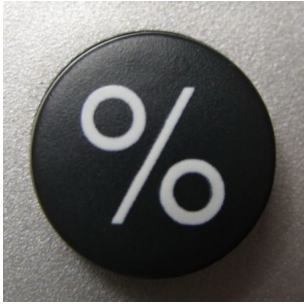


# MYANMAR'S TOURISM SERIOUSLY HIT



Compared to its neighbours, Myanmar's tourism industry has been, for a number of reasons, suffering for several years. Whereas India, China, Thailand and Nepal have been enjoying growing numbers of visitors from Europe and North America, Myanmar has been hit by setback after setback, resulting in poor profits of the tourism sector. For example, 2006 saw mere 350.000 foreign visitors come to Myanmar. The same number of tourists usually visits Delhi or Shanghai over the period of several months only.

The reasons of such differences can be found especially in the instable political situation in the country. News covering the numerous monk-led protests appeared in the most media of the world. Besides its political background similar unrests usually draw the attention of tour operators and often cause greater caution when sending western tourists to such countries. Another issue pointed out by various tourism experts is the government's point blank refusal to cooperate with the international community. Such strategy is naturally far less tourism friendly than the attitudes of the Indian and Thai governments.

Furthermore, Myanmar has been severely hit by the relatively recent cyclone which stunned the world and added to the growing list of natural disasters in the modern history. The cyclone destroyed many parts of the country, leading to food shortages and the inevitable lack of tourists. Some places have not seen a single foreign visitor since the cyclone struck and so the small profits from tourism that the local people enjoyed in the past often vanished completely. As a result of the disaster, only the Burmese pawnshops are doing any real business. The rest of the country has been forced to suffer in the economic and social turmoil.

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