

AVIATION, TOURISM AND CONSERVATION NEWS from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.
A weekly roundup of breaking news, reports, travel stories and opinions by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang H. Thome



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ABU DHABI AIRPORT DEVELOPMENT PLANS SUPPORT ETIHAD EXPANSION



(Impression of the new Midfield Terminal, courtesy of Abu Dhabi Airport Company)

Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, will be commencing flights to Nairobi in April, as was earlier on reported here. Now news have emerged through aviation sources in the Gulf region, that Abu Dhabi's government has responded to demands to improve the facilities at the international airport to more effectively compete with Etihad's main rivals Emirates and Qatar Airways.

In neighbouring Dubai it is not only the brand new Dubai World Central, or in short DWC which is being built in Jebel Ali to make room for further expansion of both passenger and cargo traffic in coming years, but at the present international airport DXB a dedicated A380 terminal is in the final stages of construction, giving Emirates, the world's largest A 380 operator, a competitive advantage in providing short ways for connecting passengers in state of the art comfort.

In Qatar, the new international airport is due to open in less than a year's time to the relief of not only the passengers using the world's only 5 star airline but for Qatar Airways itself. Hampered in its expansion drive through crowded airport facilities and the resulting less than 5 star ground handling at the present airport, the opening of the new facility cannot come soon enough according to a reliable source at QR who said on condition of anonymity: ***'As a 5 star airline and airline of the year 2011 we are not only measured by our inflight service but also by what our handling is like for connecting passengers. Our fleet is expanding and we are adding new destinations, so we have more and more passengers changing planes in Doha. The new airport will radically alter the handling on the ground with new facilities and we can guarantee 5 star service to all our connecting passengers'***.

Etihad, fast catching up with the Gulf's two leading airlines, clearly saw this competitive threat on the horizon and prevailed upon the Abu Dhabi Airport Company and its owners, the government of Abu Dhabi, to respond in kind to these developments in their immediate neighbourhood, and the lobbying paid off now.



(Impression of the new Midfield Terminal, courtesy by Abu Dhabi Airport Company)

A brand new '**Midfield Terminal Complex**' has been approved at an estimated cost of nearly 7 billion US Dollars at current prices, and the new facility is due to come on line by 2017, i.e. in 5 years from now, at which stage Etihad

and her two current partner airlines Air Berlin and Air Seychelles will be able to benefit from a state of the art new terminal. Etihad's own expansion drive with new aircraft joining the fleet and new destinations being rolled out, combined with their strategy to buy into suitable and compatible partner airlines – they hold 40 percent in Air Seychelles and a near 30 percent stake in Germany's Air Berlin, which has already shifted their entire Gulf operation from Dubai International to Abu Dhabi as a result of the partnership – will see passenger numbers rise by very large margins in coming years to at least 20 million per annum, before the new terminal, located between the two present runways, will become operational and create more space for future growth.

The new terminal will cover as much as 700.000 square metres in size and will reach up to 52 metres height but more important has been designed and will be built in close cooperation with MASDAR, which is overseeing the new zero carbon city which is being built near the airport to incorporate the latest technologies in energy savings and reduced carbon emissions.

With Etihad coming to East Africa soon, travelers from our region will be able to see work progress on the new terminal as they land or take off from Abu Dhabi and see this exciting new project evolve every time they travel on Etihad. Watch this space for aviation news from Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean region, and stories closely related to it.

East Africa News

AFRICAN AVIATION AWARDS CROWN ET, KQ AND PW



Following the audit of over 20.000 votes by readers of 'African Aviation News' has **Ethiopian Airlines** once again been crowned 'African Airlines of the year 2011/12' in an award ceremony earlier in the week. The prestigious award has underscored ET's efforts to stay at the leading edge of African aviation in a hard fought battle to attain supremacy in the African skies.

Kenya Airways took the runners up spot to take the silver award back to Nairobi and **Precision Air** of Tanzania came a respectable third and took the bronze award home to Dar es Salaam. None of the airlines from North, West or South Africa made it into the top three, showing the level of advancement aviation has made in the wider Eastern African region, leaving much of the continent to play catch up with them in terms of destinations, fleet size, current orders and connectivity through their respective hubs via alliance membership. Congratulations to Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and Precision Air for their constant leadership in Africa.

Uganda News

AIR UGANDA UPS DAR FLIGHTS TO DAILY



Uganda's quasi national airline U7 has announced that they will move from presently 6 departures per week between Entebbe to Dar es Salaam to now daily flights with immediate effect, adding Sunday flights which previously were not featuring on the schedule.

The airline now serves Nairobi 3 times a day, Juba twice a day, Kigali daily with three times a week via Bujumbura and also flies three times a week to Mombasa and on to Zanzibar.

Following the termination of the code share agreement with RwandAir it is also understood that Air Uganda is looking at upping frequencies to Kigali as permitted under the present bilateral air services agreement. There has also been talk of new destinations being looked at by the airline, as their new CEO Kayle Haywood has settled in and completed his first 100 days in office.

Kenya News

LAPSSET LAUNCH SET FOR MARCH – SUBJECT TO POTENTIAL COURT INJUNCTION

The tripartite launch of LAPSSET, also known as the Lamu Port – Southern Sudan – Ethiopia project, has been announced for March 02nd, when President Kibaki will in the presence of Southern Sudan's President Salva Kiir and Ethiopia's Prime Minister Menes Zenawi officially launch the project in Lamu.

Already coined as one of Africa's most important infrastructure mega projects, when complete it will radically alter the economic and strategic outlook of this part of Kenya but also for Southern Sudan and Ethiopia.

Besides the port itself, and the surrounding city of 'New Lamu' will the planned road, rail and pipeline link connect Southern Sudan with a safe route to the Indian Ocean, while Ethiopia too will create redundancy from their present sole outlet to the sea via Djibouti.

Southern Sudan, which only recently halted all oil exports via their hostile neighbour's territory to Port Sudan, has vowed to build a pipeline for crude oil exports via Kenya and the construction of a brand new port in Lamu, with dedicated crude oil loading facilities, will achieve a new secure export route for the new country. In turn, it will at last provide a safe and fast traffic axis on both road and rail to import and export commodities into and from the Southern Sudan, which at present depends on the road route from Mombasa via Nairobi, the Ugandan border and then on to Kampala and Gulu. For Ethiopia equally strategic and economic considerations have brought them on board the new project, and with all three countries committed to co-finance the cost, estimated to be at least 20 billion US Dollars as current prices, the Kenyan government lost no time to set a launch date and get contractors on site. The project, which Kenya's business community has hailed as the most important development project seen since independence, has however also raised immense concerns amongst conservationists, who have already taken their grievances to court over allegations that EIA's were not conducted in accordance with internationally acceptable rules and standards, that community involvement and participation was literally absent and that no meaningful consultations were taking place giving opportunity to discuss, propose, amend or even reject findings and recommendations made towards mitigation. Under the spotlight are the UNESCO World Heritage Status of the 'Old Lamu Town' but also mangrove forests, marine reserves and generally the pristine wilderness found along the coastal stretch on both sides of the Lamu archipelago.

A regular source, close to the seat of power in Nairobi, had this to say in a communication to this correspondent under strict rules of anonymity: *'The Kenyan government is aware of attempts to stop the project launch in court through an injunction. That is a process which will run its course and I am not speculating on the outcome or the merit of their case here. What I will say however is that Kenya has a unique opportunity to develop a part of the country which has been backward, underdeveloped and underfacilitated. We know tourism is a crucial factor in our economy and we in fact hope that the development of Lamu port will bring investments from the tourism sector to that part of Kenya too. Since our colonial days we have been expanding on Mombasa port and concentrated only on that traffic artery from the coast to Nairobi and on to Uganda. That axis has been saturated now, there is little opportunity to make much more out of it but improve, put the new pipeline, widen the Nairobi to Mombasa highway, make the railway into a standard gauge for faster speeds and greater capacity. But Mombasa port has its limitations. We continue to modernize and improve but the inherent problems of capacity constraints will always be there. With Lamu however we can create a new port and link our neighbours Southern Sudan and Ethiopia to us here in Kenya. The pipeline will give Southern Sudan a secure export route and they get a modern crude oil loading terminal. They and Ethiopia will have a road and rail link to Lamu to facilitate cargo traffic both ways, for imports and exports, and the standard gauge railway will be fast and cheap compared with road transport as it is now. Both countries have hostile neighbours and we are in friendly terms with them where they have nothing to fear. Both countries have interest to join the East African Community and when that happens the trade bloc will be stronger but also needs the facilities, the infrastructure, to fully exploit the integrated economies. The construction of a new sea port in Lamu will bring relief to growing trade volumes now squeezing through Mombasa. The construction of a new city of Lamu will create many opportunities, for investors, for Kenyans looking for jobs. There can be manufacturing under bond, an export processing zone, maybe even a free port. Water and electricity supplies are logistical issues which will be solved along the way. Imagine the opportunities for real estate developments, and in particular for tourism in that part of Kenya. Right now there are very few resorts and yet there are many beaches better than what the resorts north of Mombasa have. I am sure that along the road and rail the Lamu airport will also be expanded and modernized, giving access to business and leisure travelers. One has to highlight the opportunities, and see that we have to move development to parts of the country which since before independence were never really touched. And contrary to what is being said, we know that tourism can be a very big business, already is for the rest of the country. So the mangrove forests and beaches and wilderness will not be spoiled. We have seen the destruction in the Niger Delta and Lamu will be spared so that tourism can find a good environment where resorts can offer what tourists hope to find in Kenya. Did tourism to Mombasa suffer because the city has developed and grown since the 60's and 70's? In fact tourism has grown and they are demanding that the bypass to the south coast is being built to link the airport and Nairobi highway to Ukunda. These developments go hand in hand. We will leave old Lamu intact, there is no intention to spoil the face of old Lamu but it can coexist with the city of 'New Lamu' which has to be created. There are many examples where old and new, heritage and tradition and modern developments, can exist near each other. And with Southern Sudan and Ethiopia on board, the financing is also easier now as the risk is shared amongst the three of us, because the cost for just one country would be hard to bear, considering*

other infrastructure cost in the country, and those two countries help finance the user fees for the port and transit cost will be much lower for them because they are almost like shareholders.'

Conservation sources however denounced the plans as megalomaniac and destructive to the extreme to the life style and traditions of the region, which hitherto largely made a living from fishing and subsistence farming, or through employment in the tourism industry, and to a lesser extent the building of traditional sailing dhows. A regular conservation source in Nairobi, when confronted with the input from 'official Kenya' had this to say in response: *'It is all good what they say, but we know what our government says and what it does is different. The carving into Nairobi National Park is the most current example for that trend. We simply cannot take their word for it. So, our concerns are over the secrecy of how or if any Environmental Impact Assessment and Social Assessments have been done. Who was consulted and when. Those EIA's if they exist must be put into the public domain to cross check, to see if the assumptions made by consultants are right or wrong. There are consultants who are paid to simply say what their paymasters want as a result and there are many examples for it. So our first step is to have an injunction to stop any work from beginning in Lamu. Secondly we want to have public scrutiny of any contracts and how they were awarded and are being awarded. Profiteering must be ruled out.*

Already there is land grabbing in and around Lamu and communities are being threatened with losing their ancestral lands. These people never knew about title deeds, they only ever lived there like their forefathers did. Their livelihoods are threatened and where will government put them? We still have displaced people living in camps since the 2008 violence. Our government does not plan for such issues. Our courts are now more independent since the new constitution came in force and we Kenyans have a say in such matters. We are confident that court will side with us and allow a transparent process to take shape. We have waited for nearly 50 years since independence to develop this part of the country and can wait a little longer surely. And if the Kenyan courts fail us, we will take our grievances to the East African Court of Justice in Arusha which has jurisdiction. Already the Tanzanian government has to defend itself there over their plans to build a highway across the Serengeti and our case for Lamu might head there too. We are NOT anti development but we are also the sole voice of the communities in and around Lamu, the sole voice of the environment and the sole voice of nature. Development and conservation can co-exist but it has to be done with respect for nature and with fully understanding the impact of water extraction, all the issues surrounding waste water, waste processing, preparations for potential oil spillages. This is something which happens regularly in Mombasa port and at the refinery / offloading terminal and we must have mechanisms in place to not only avoid it but to combat a spillage instantly and not let it spread first and contaminate the mangrove forests and coast line citing lack of resources or lack of equipment. We know we are being made look like wanting to keep Kenyans in poverty but it is not true. Tourism last year almost earned 100 billion Shillings and this can double easily in the coming decade but only if we protect our environment and use the strictest guidelines for developments. And that is lacking right now. The people in government are in an election year and all they see is dollar signs. We cannot let that happen without using all legal and peaceful means to make sure nature, environment, heritage and tradition have their rightful place in Kenyan society.'

Pro's and Con's side by side as the clock is ticking towards the planned party in Lamu on the 02nd of March, not much time left to have a court decide on an injunction or for the Kenyan government make alternative arrangements should one be issued against them. Watch this space as conservation and development are once again seemingly on a collision course in Kenya, adding yet another battle ground where developers and government on one side and the conservation fraternity, local, regional and international are likely to slug it out in court.

MAULID FESTIVAL IN LAMU PROMISES TOURISM REVIVAL

Tomorrow will the annual Maulid Festival in Lamu go underway and up to 80,000 visitors are expected to descend on the archipelago in coming weeks, to celebrate the birth month of the Prophet Mohamed as done every year. The Festival is co-organised by the National Museums of Kenya and the Riyadha Mosque in Lamu, aimed at promoting the rich Islamic history and culture as found still today in the ancient town. Hoteliers are confident that the festival this year will kickstart tourism to Lamu and the neighbouring areas of the Kenya coast, severely impacted last year by a series of raids by terrorists from across the border in Somalia.

However, the iron fist reaction by Kenya's military, now advancing on Kismayu, the last major base of the terrorist Al Shabab group, has created a wide buffer zone and a regular source from Mombasa said: *'Security has been stepped up a very great deal. Immigration has been on the lookout for potential trouble makers claiming to want to visit Lamu for the festival and the town and surrounding areas are saturated with police, army units and special security operatives to ensure a peaceful celebration of the prophet's birth month'*. Bus companies operating between Mombasa, Malindi and Lamu have increased capacity and airlines flying to Lamu's aerodrome

from Nairobi, Mombasa and Malindi have also added flights with additional charters operating during the festival month over and above the daily scheduled operations.

KENYA TOURISM MISSES 100 BILLION TARGET BY A WHISKER



With final figures now available from the Ministry of Tourism in Nairobi for the year 2011, it has become evident that the 98 billion Kenya Shillings tourism revenues missed their initial target by just 2 billion, a remarkable achievement considering the circumstances the industry was faced with in the last quarter of last year.

Abductions and killings of foreigners by radical Islamic terrorists from Somalia prompted widespread anti travel advisories and an albeit shortlived spate of explosions in Nairobi, after Kenya pursued the terror groups deep into Somalia with land, sea and air forces, too shook the tourism sector. Added to that came the woes of the Eurozone and the prospect of yet another global recession, and still, Kenya's arrival numbers were remaining steady through the steep growth rates of the earlier part of 2011 eventually flattened out. Arrivals by air, the most significant factor of inbound travel, reached 1.26 million passengers while cross border arrivals from Tanzania and Uganda topped 520,000 travellers. While arrivals in Nairobi soared, the same cannot be said for Mombasa where, inspite of more inclusive tour charters from core producer markets in Europe, the overall annual trend for 2011 remained not too much above 2010. All in all, Kenya established a new arrival and revenue record though, for the third year running, since the recovery set in during 2009, and the forecast is cautiously optimistic amongst key tourism stakeholders for 2012. *'We are introducing new tourism circuits in Western Kenya and are highlighting the attractions beyond the best known parks. New upmarket lodges and safari camps, even beach resorts, have come on line in 2011 helping us market Kenya as a choice destination. We offer the widest range of air connections from overseas of any airport in the region, and that also makes Nairobi a first choice for passengers to travel to. It benefits Kenya overall. When the airport expansion at JKIA is completed, we will also have a much better arrival and departure experience for visitors and Kenya Airways are playing a big part in putting Kenya on the map, in Africa and overseas. For 2012 we are optimistic and more so for 2013, when we will celebrate our 50th year of Independence. We are planning a big programme of promotions along the Olympics in London this year and for 2013 we will probably see record spending for tourism marketing as we have our golden jubilee year. This is all now getting into gear and will no doubt show good results'* a regular source from Nairobi communicated to this correspondent overnight in response to relevant questions.

Tea, as a result of favourable exchange rates, however topped the foreign exchange earners list with 107 billion Kenya Shillings, leaving tourism again in second place but determined to reclaim top spot in coming years. Visit www.magicalkenya.com – KTB's official website, for more information about the destination.

KENYA AIRWAYS B737-800 IN SKY TEAM LIVERY



Kenya Airways has completed painting one of their B737-800 aircraft in *Sky Team* livery and the aircraft has resumed flying and carrying out *ambassadorial duties* across the KQ network.

The Pride of Africa is the only *Sky Team* member the alliance has in Africa and therefore of crucial importance to carry traffic into the continent via their hub in Nairobi, where key alliance member KLM / Air France is operating code shared flights with KQ on a double daily basis from Amsterdam.

Through the alliance's flights passengers can stay *'within'* to 926 destinations in 173 countries around the globe, earn miles and enjoy the comfort of nearly 500 lounges in key airports. Said Dr. Titus Naikuni, CEO and Group Managing Director of Kenya Airways, when the aircraft was *'launched'* in Nairobi earlier in the week: *'Our partnership with SkyTeam will enable us to consolidate our presence in the African and global markets in line with our 10-year Growth Plan. SkyTeam is a compelling proposition that enables partner airlines to offer customers additional connections across the globe'*.

Kenya Airways is the East African Community's leading airline, connecting East Africans via their Nairobi hub to the rest of Africa and beyond. The airline is in the final stages of a major new share issue and is set to double their fleet by 2015. Visit www.kenya-airways.com for more details.



(Fresh out of the paint shop of Kenya Airways' own MRO at their Embakasi base in Nairobi)

GULF AIR TO CLOSE MORE ROUTES



Gulf Air has announced that following the closure of their routes to Entebbe and Geneva two weeks ago, a further four routes will be shelved from March onwards. Affected are Athens and Damascus, both in the bad news over political troubles, but also Milan and Kuala Lumpur which have also not performed to financial expectations. Juba, Southern Sudan's capital city, has also been affected as the planned start of flights has been delayed for the time being until changed circumstances permit the route to be reconsidered.

Gulf Air's Chief Executive, when making the announcement, said: *'It is currently a challenging business environment for airlines around the world. These closures are pragmatic commercial decisions aimed at focusing services on routes with higher passenger traffic. Our commercial strategy, developed in 2009, delivered significant gains in 2010 but last year has been challenging. Therefore, we are now adapting our approach to address the challenges on an urgent basis.'*

A further statement from the airline also points to the local and regional political situation, the high price of fuel and lower than anticipated passenger numbers.

The daily flights between Bahrain and Nairobi will however continue and, according to an airline source, are performing above expectations, offering Kenyans and travelers from the East African region the option to connect to Gulf Air at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

Tanzania News

ZANZIBAR MARINE AUTHORITY STOPS FAULTY SHIP FROM SAILING FOR PEMBA

It appears that the lessons learned from the disaster of the sinking of the MV Spice Islander last year were learned well when the Zanzibar Marine Authority prevented a vessel, set to sail to Pemba, from leaving port, after the ship's safety was called in question over its mechanical condition. MV Skagit was compelled to remain in port following the order being served on them leaving all passengers stranded but safe on shore, though unable to travel without first having their fares refunded, something the company has up to now refused to do.

A source from Dar es Salaam mentioned overnight that the last safety inspection of the ship in late 2011 revealed apparently defects which were cited and ordered for repairs, but with that not done the Marine Authority opted to rather ground the vessel than risk another tragedy on the open sea.

Said the source: *'Wananchi find it a bit difficult now travel between the islands but it is for their own safety. Ship owners are slow to make repairs when ordered and unlike last year, before Spice Islands sunk, the authority is now under public scrutiny to act decisively. It is the operators to blame for not fixing their boats, but some have claimed that they no longer make enough money when operating within their load limits. In the past they overloaded and got away with it and made a lot of profits but that is now almost impossible to get away with. Even back packer tourists are now frequently asking who safe a particular ship is they want to use and then rather wait for another when they are not satisfied.'*

Owners' representatives were predictably negative about the action and denied that they were in any default but a statement from the Zanzibar Marine Authority tells a different story – now whom to believe or is it simply *'safety must come first'*. Watch this space.

INTERVIEW ON STIEGLER'S GORGE POWER PROJECT WITH LEADING OFFICIAL

As repeated mention was given in past months about the planned hydro electric power plant at the Stiegler's Gorge / Selous Game Reserve in Tanzania, a recent interview by Michael Haonga with the Director General of the Rufiji

Basin Development Authority Aloyce Masanja was recently published in The Guardian. In the interest of my readers I am reproducing it here and thank the International Rivers Network for availing me this information:

Stiegler's Gorge electricity project – where to?

Interview by Michael Haonga

14th February 2012

Tanzania is known for its huge power generation potential. Our Correspondent Michael Haonga spoke to the Director General of the Rufiji Basin Development Authority (RUBADA), Aloyce Masanja, who cited the case of Stiegler's Gorge as one of the potential sources of hydro-power which once fully put into use, could improve the country's socio-economic wellbeing;

QUESTION: Kindly give an overview of the much orchestrated Stiegler's Gorge multi purpose project in Rufiji River Basin.

Answer: First, it should be noted that the Rufiji River Basin (RRB) in which the Stiegler's Gorge Multi-Purpose Dam is located, is the largest river basin in the country covering an area of about 177,000 square kilometres. It extends some 700 km from Mbeya in the west to the Indian Ocean with land elevation ranging from 0 to 3000m above sea level.

Q: Could you enlighten our readers as to why the name Stiegler's Gorge is given to the project?

A: This is to remember Dr. Stiegler who was killed by an elephant in 1907 while exploring the Rufiji River.

Q: And what is RUBADA?

A: Historically, RUBADA was established in 1975 by an Act of Parliament to promote and regulate development in the Rufiji Basin including the generation and supply of electricity. As it might be remembered, right from its establishment RUBADA has been predominantly engaged in planning of the Stiegler's Gorge Multi Purpose dam project.

During the planning, in 1982 and after failure of the Stiegler's Gorge to be implemented, RUBADA commissioned a study of hydropower potentials in the Rufiji Basin - Hydropower Master Plan and was completed in 1984. The Rufiji Basin Power Master Plan identified eight hydropower potentials and ranked them according to priorities.

Q: What are the potentials?

A: The following are the hydropower potentials with installed capacities in brackets -Ruhidji (685MW), Mnyera (485MW) Kihansi (240MW), Mpanga (165mw), Iringa (80MW), Lukose (130MW), Kilombero (Kingenenas and Shughuli- Falls (464MW), and Stiegler's Gorge (2,200MW). Only Stiegler's Gorge was studied up to feasibility study.

Q: What makes up the Rufiji River ?

A: Rufiji River is made up of the following tributaries; Great Ruaha -15 percent (84,000sq.km Catchment), Liweu 18 percent (26,000sq.km catchment) and Lower Rufiji 5 percent (27,000 Sq.km catchment) these are proportion of total run of off at Stiegler's Gorge.

Q: What is the hydropower potential of the project?

A: At the Stiegler's Gorge, a 130m gravity arch dam can be constructed in phases according to power needs. The total capacity is 2,1000MW and four phases were proposed. Phase 1 -300MW, Phase 2 -600MW, Phase 3- 300MW

and Phase 4 -900MW. The cost of the energy to be produced is estimated to be as low as 2US c/KWh per kwh and in the context of East African Power Pool, Tanzania has a comparative advantage over its neighbours when this project is finally developed.

Q: What are some of the advantages of the Stiegler's Gorge?

A: The project will provide flood control down stream where at present a major flood exceeding 2500M³/S can occur once in a period of three years and usually occurs in March and April. The dam once constructed will eliminate these damaging floods and simultaneously allow passage of water that is beneficial to agriculture flora and fauna and other downstream needs.

Q: What about agriculture?

A: The dam once constructed will have impact on agricultural development downstream where the Rufiji has formed a flood plain some 170 kilometers long and varying width between 7 and 30 kilometers. The soils of the flood plain are generally fertile and an area of some 80,000 hectares has been identified as suitable for irrigation. When at full development, some 450,000 hectares of paddy, 7,000 tons of maize and 3,000 tons of cotton can be grown in addition to facilitating vegetables to be grown commercially at large scale.

Q: Any other advantages?

A: Yes ranging from water supply facilitation, boosting up tourism and fisheries. With regard to water supply, a dam once constructed will create a permanent reservoir with total storage capacity of 34,000million cubic meters covering surface area of 1,200 Sg.Km. The reservoir at the Stiegler's Gorge is a potential permanent reliable source of water to Dar es Salaam city.

Q: What about tourism?

A: The gorge is in Selous Game Reserve, which is the widest game reserve in the world containing some 750,000 animals of numerous types. Tourism in the Selous has hitherto been hindered by poor access. The 120 KM long access road from Chalinze to Stiegler's Gorge will open up this area as part of Southern Tourism Circuit development area with the Gorge itself attracting various tourist activities in the area.

Q: And fisheries?

A: The 1,200 Km² reservoir to be created after construction of the dam will be a habitat for fish and fishery development ranging from long average yield of fish to an estimate of 3,700 tons extending to 20,000 tons at peak period in the early years with the predominant fish species being Tilapia.

Q: What is its viability?

A: Well, the economic assessment indicates that construction of the Stiegler's Gorge was the cheapest option. In 1980 the study indicated positive economic returns taking into account power export option to neighbouring countries too.

Q: What is the cost involved?

A: In 1982 it was determined that the capital requirement for the power project was about USD1,400million with the current being at USD2bn. A high proportion of equity will be needed, let alone the fact that at 6.5/kw the project will realize profit some 12 years after commissioning of the first phase. It is also held that Rufiji River Basin has immense potentials in hydropower development in the country if exploited, and can be a source of cheap and reliable energy as well as being among existing hydropower potential in Rufiji Basin, the Stiegler's Gorge is of the highest priority development in the country.

Q: Any latest thinking on the Stiegler's Gorge?

A: In 2003, the fourth government decided to include Stiegler's Gorge in its development manifesto with the Infrastructure Development Finance (IDF) of South Africa showing interest in implementing the project. They focused on Hydropower only with limited capacity of producing 900MW. In 2007, the project development was put on hold by the Government.

In July 2010, the President of Brazil visited Tanzania and made a promise to implement the Stiegler's Gorge project. In Sept 2010, a delegation led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Benard Membe visited Brazil as a follow up and in October 2011, a delegation led by Prime Minister Mizengo Pinda visited Brazil as further follow up culminating into what one may call current thinking.

The current thinking is characterized by the possibility that the design of the dam may change calling for new studies to be needed and that financing options could include EPC, PPP or IPP as well as possible integration with other sectors such as water supply, irrigation, tourism, fisheries due to their importance.

Q: Any foreseeable challenges?

A: Yes. They include possibilities and implications of integration with key related sectors such as - water, agriculture, energy, tourism, and fisheries. There is also the aspect of definition of the role of the government like infrastructure development as well as institutional capacity building for RUBADA in terms of human, financial and materials resources. There are also matters pertaining to the roles of other related stakeholder institutions such as TANESCO, Rufiji River Basin Water Oddice, ministries, local government authorities as well as consideration of Tanzania commitments to International Conventions like Ramsar, World Heritage, Biodiversity as well as implications on legal framework - RUBADA Act, No, 5 of 1975.

Q: What can you say is your way forward?

A: I could say that the way forward entails capacity building for RUBADA and the role of other stakeholders. This would also entail government role and commitment among others.

SOURCE: THE GUARDIAN

Rwanda News

RWANDA TAKES THE LEAD – AGAIN

A source from Kigali's international airport has confirmed information obtained a few days ago, that the Department of Immigration of Rwanda was introducing two 'automated gates' at Kanombe International Airport, aimed to test their suitability for fast track processing of arriving passengers. It is understood that these new unmanned gates will have two stages to go through for initially Rwandan passengers coming home, first the scanning of the passport, which when successful will allow advancing to the second check point, where the finger prints are scanned and a biometric picture comparison taken. When all the data of the passport and finger prints have been matched, the passenger will be allowed to move on to the baggage collection area after being electronically 'cleared' by the machines to re-enter Rwanda. The entire process is said to last no longer than 12 – 15 seconds for both phases, as long as the documents are in order and the 'recognition software' clears the traveler.

No immediate confirmation could be received if the test would be extended to foreign visitors, many of whom need Visa on arrival, though a good number of nationalities have been formally exempted from paying Visa fees, as their locations of stay during their visit are normally also recorded in the arrival forms.

It is expected that the test results will be complete by the end of March at which stage the new gates will be formally launched. Rwanda is one of the most advanced countries in terms of computerization and even Visa are now to be obtained in advance via the immigration department's website, so as to facilitate the fast clearance of arriving passengers wishing to visit Rwanda without much of bureaucratic red tape which so often spoils the mood for the rest of the visit. Another first for Rwanda, making travel to 'The Land of a Thousand Hills' even easier now.

AIR TRAFFIC GROWTH IN RWANDA – REFLECTIONS BY A REGULAR READER

Rwanda set to experience high growth in air travel

With major global carriers eyeing Kigali International Airport, is the existence of the national carrier threatened? The government of Rwanda has redoubled its efforts towards making tourism and foreign direct investments priority for the economic development of the country. The results of these initiatives can be seen in the rapidly changing business environment of Rwanda. Limited access to Kigali is now a thing of the past if we are to go by the number of flights operating in and out of Kigali International Airport. The list of new entrants is expected to grow exponentially with this year alone projected to see another five major carriers enter the Rwanda air travel market. Apart from old timers like Kenya Airways, Ethiopian and Brussels Airlines, KLM last year came in with five flights a week. South African Airways now flies into Kigali three times a week, Qatar Airways is scheduled to start Kigali

“With a population of only 2, 262,000 Million in an area of 4,114 km², Dubai International Airport handled close to 50 Million Passengers in 2011”.

Doha connections at six times a week from March this year. One might say easily that the national carrier is faced with major incoming competitor challenges in the face of evolving air travel scenario.

Interestingly, while actively opening up the market and fully aware of the resultant effect, the government of Rwanda has been putting in equal effort in ensuring that the flag carrier RwandAir keeps punching above its height. Rapid fleet expansion, new destinations are just a few items of news that donned the media scenes last year.

One of aviation’s most renowned personalities and former Ethiopian Airlines CEO Mr. Girma Wake now seats in Kigali as RwandAir’s board chairperson.

Sources within the industry affirm that a protectionist approach will slow down Rwanda’s rapid growth while at the same time new entrants in the aviation scene might end up swallowing the national carrier. The government however has a completely different view on the subject; Rwanda is a double landlocked country and air transport is one of the fastest means for connectivity to the rest of the world. This means that more and more airlines are welcome to fly to Kigali if it fits their business model. At the same time as Africa we must nurture our local carriers to limit overdependence on foreign carriers.

With a population of only 2, 262,000 Million in an area of 4,114 km², Dubai International Airport handled more than 50 Million Passengers in 2011. Emirates their national carrier uplifted three quarters of these passengers. Going by these statistics, it is clear that the flying population of Rwanda alone will not sustain the investment being done by RwandAir. However, with clear origins and destinations planning, the national carrier can succeed in hubbing Kigali, thereby fitting in the national development agenda.

In a press conference with RwandAir CEO Mr. John Mirenge, he affirmed the national carriers position in the emerging scenario. “Last year Kigali International Airport handled over 320, 000 passenger out of which, 50% travelled on RwandAir. Our passenger numbers January 2010 stood at a paltry 6,000, the numbers more than doubled to 13, 000 last January. This year January we uplifted 25, 000 passengers a sharp increase over the same period last year. New entrants are very much welcome. It is the only way we will grow the air travel market in this country”. He added that healthy competition would give the traveller options and put the onus on operators to work hard and smart to retain customers.

“You will have to keep in mind the fact that most of the carriers coming into Kigali have been at this business for a long time. We have to measure up and surpass our customer expectations in terms of our service delivery”, added a beaming John Mirenge who was very modest with the airlines achievements since last year. “Of course as home airline, we are open and willing to enter into meaningful and mutually benefiting partnerships with other carriers. But such agreements must be tangible benefit to either partners involved”

From two brand new Boeing Sky Interior aircraft – first on the African continent, four new routes on the continent, Dream Miles - a mile based frequent flier program to the more recently launched online booking engine with credit card payment facilities, Mr. Mirenge says these are not extras but basic air traveler expectations. RwandAir becomes the first local organization in Rwanda to enter into the e-commerce retail market to distribute its products and acquire money online.

While operators are digging in to buy market share, airport authorities on the other hand are smiling all the way to the bank from extra income arising from every time there is a landing and take off from Kigali International Airport. Industry analysts predict that initially, air travellers are likely to see heightened fare competition to common destinations however the long term effect will be more responsiveness from airlines in terms of service delivery, on time performance and inflight service among other items.

Sources at Rwanda Development Board say the ideal number of inbound and outbound travel must exceed a million passengers per year within the next few years if economic drivers of the transport industry are to make meaningful contribution to the growth of Rwanda.

Ethiopia News

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES SIGNS UP FOR 5 MORE BOMBARDIER Q400 NEXTGEN



Earlier speculation was confirmed overnight when Ethiopian Airlines was named by Bombardier as the customer for a further 5 orders of the state of the art turboprop aircraft of Q400 NextGen make. Two of the planes will be used by Ethiopian directly while three of them will be deployed to ASKY Airlines, operating out of Togo, a partner airline under ET's management.

This latest order brings to 13 the number of these cost efficient short and medium haul regional turboprop planes, which Ethiopian incidentally also uses for some of their flights between Addis Ababa and Entebbe.

The transaction is reportedly worth some 160 million US Dollars.

Ethiopian Airlines is one of Africa's leading airlines, serving 64 destinations in Africa and overseas and is THE erstwhile Pan African carrier, creating the concept of connecting Africa from within. A recent addition to the globally leading Star Alliance – the third African member airline after South African Airways and Egypt Air – Ethiopian is the choice partner in Africa for such global giants as Lufthansa, with which ET codeshares on the route between Frankfurt and Addis Ababa and beyond. Watch this space for breaking news from Eastern Africa's aviation industry.

South Sudan News

NIMULE ELEPHANTS KILL VILLAGERS

Sad news arrived from Juba / Southern Sudan yesterday when it became known that rogue elephants straying outside the Nimule National Park had reportedly killed at least 3 people including a pregnant woman.

Complaints voiced in Juba to the Directorate for Wildlife were reportedly also not meeting with any significant action, a source citing the chronic shortage of funds in the Ministry of Wildlife Conservation and Tourism and the state government too appears helpless to act to protect people from animals straying outside of the park.

Residents of the Nimule area, which borders Uganda, have also reportedly complained about massive loss of food crops the elephant have been destroying in search of food with no emergency food aid being availed to them by local or central government bodies.

Utilising the park as a tourism resource has also not taken off, leaving nearby residents wondering about the promises made to them when the Southern Sudan first became a semi autonomous region and then independent in July last year, that tourism could change their fortunes, yet tourist visitors remain conspicuously absent and no significant investments have been seen since then to create infrastructure in the park, attract investors and make tourist visits possible. Said a source from Juba: *'That Ministry has been spending a lot of money on the Nimule Lodge but has nothing much to show for. We think that was a waste and should have been left to an investor to fix up or rebuild that lodge. The site of it is very good but we are lacking laws and regulations and investors want protection for their money. We have a long way to go and wasted a lot of time'*.

It is understood that no compensation mechanism is in place either to cater for loss of property and lives caused by marauding wildlife in Southern Sudan, where inspite of highly rated parks and attractions tourism remains a low priority for the government in Juba, caused by lack of funds but most important, by lack of vision and understanding. Watch this space.

Congo News

ANOTHER PLANE CRASH CLAIMS LIFE OF PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR

Information has been received from Eastern Congo, that a plane crash in Bukavu has claimed the life of top presidential advisor Augustine Katumba Mwanke, while seriously injuring the Congolese Finance Minister, the Governor of South Kivu Province and other senior officials of the regime in Kinshasa.

The aircraft of unidentified make apparently slid off the runway on attempting to land after an *'unusually steep final descent'* according to the report received, indicating that not all was well with the preparations to land the aircraft and it is now a matter of the unfolding air accident investigation to establish what led to the crash and why the pilot did not do an *'overshoot'* and then tried landing a second time.

Most airlines registered in the Congo have been banned by the EU's black list and the country has amongst the worst record with aviation safety, yet all past accidents have failed to improve the situation vis a vis maintenance and crew training, as this latest accident once again shows. Watch this space for emerging news and updates from East Africa's and the Indian Ocean islands aviation sector.

Mauritius News

AIR MAURITIUS CHOPS SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE



Reactions came pouring in swift and harsh when news were announced that Air Mauritius had decided to chop two of their three Australian destinations, concentrating on Perth only, and leaving Sydney to Air Austral – operating via La Reunion – while the significant Melbourne market was abandoned altogether. The news came in the face of a 37 percent rise in passenger numbers in 2011 over 2010 which translated in over 4.000 extra passengers for Mauritius, and the mood amongst Australian Mauritius aficionados was understandably foul, as seen on a number of social networking sites.

Benefitting from the move by Air Mauritius, currently undergoing a massive cost cutting programme following a loss of over 28 million US Dollars for the first 9 months of the current financial year, is primarily Air Austral, which was swift to restore flights to Sydney which had already been announced for cuts too, before this opportunity arose to step into the gap left by Air Mauritius. Using this flight via La Reunion however will add an extra stop for travelers, many of whom may in fact then opt to stay in La Reunion instead of going on to Mauritius. The other beneficiaries will be the Gulf airlines offering one stop solutions from Australia via an albeit longer routing, namely Emirates. This however poses added problems for Mauritius in as far the marketing drive of the Gulf airlines goes, with in particular the Seychelles being seen as more media friendly, more media proactive, more airline friendly and – unlike in Mauritius – having a tourism board which actually works the market relentlessly instead of being silent, something for which MTPA has become almost notorious for.

In particular has the website www.visitmauritius.com.au where the opposition to Air Mauritius' move has been most vocal and where fears are openly expressed that the move by the national airline will backfire on the entire tourism industry with competitors in the Indian Ocean region picking up the spoils. Watch this space as the airlines of the Indian Ocean islands are engaged in a battle for survival, which will be for the financially fittest or the one with the right choice of partner, as and when in the case of Air Mauritius the government comes to terms with the inevitable.

AIR MAURITIUS TO AXE UP TO 8 ROUTES



Further information received from Port Louis now speaks of a consulting firm, hired by the top management of Air Mauritius, to have recommended the cutting of up to 8 routes not bringing in the revenues expected of them. The same source also suggested that the airline may 'offload' their entire A 340 fleet, as the aircraft were now considered to be too expensive to operate. While the management of the airline apparently insists, that any such changes would not result in staff reductions, experience from a year ago at Air Seychelles suggests otherwise, as even there assurances were given before a massive cost saving programme eventually resulted in redundancies anyway, a parallel two sources in Mauritius quickly jumped on. ***'I have followed what happened at Air Seychelles. If 8 routes go, the staff needed to support those routes will have nothing to do. And if the A 340 are to be sold, the crews are also surplus. I am also not sure what concentrating on the other routes will entail. Because even there cost cutting is inevitable. The airline needs a strong partner to survive, alone it will absolutely not be possible or otherwise we go the same way like Air Seychelles. They were only saved because their President has such close ties with Abu Dhabi, but otherwise, they would have ended up with one aircraft and three or maybe four routes'.***

As said before here, the writing is on the wall, difficult economic times in aviation makes the need for difficult decisions even greater and whatever happens in Port Louis, you will read it right here, so watch this space.

AIR MAURITIUS FINANCIAL OUTLOOK WORSENS



Alarm bells are ringing at the Air Mauritius head quarters in Port Louis when the latest losses became public knowledge yesterday, showing a 28 million US Dollars loss for the three quarters of their business year by end December 2011. It is understood from a regular source from Mauritius that one of the airline's long haul planes, an Airbus A340, is to be withdrawn from service with immediate effect and to be sold, a hard proposition though at this time when the world's economy is again shaken by the Eurozone crisis and a mixed bag of economic performance data from leading economies as well as a less than enthusiastic outlook for the rest of 2012.

'They are blaming it on the stronger Rupee and higher fuel cost. But fact is that the writing is on the wall for Air Mauritius just like it was for Air Seychelles. Our government has to decide which way to go with the airline. Stand alone it will without a shred of doubt in my mind fail. We should learn from Air Seychelles fate. In La Reunion Air Austral too is struggling with financial issues. The three governments should have sat down long ago to discuss how our airlines can cooperate. Now Air Seychelles has Etihad as a partner and they have deep pockets to revive that airline and make it work. I think time is now to seek a serious partnership and then restructure Air Mauritius to concentrate on core routes which perform well and otherwise seek code shares from which it can also profit. But at this rate our airline will run out of money because our government, which is the biggest shareholder in the airline, does not have spare cash' said the source in an overnight message.

Other sources also doubted assertions by Air Mauritius' top management that their plans for the airline would return the carrier to profitability by 2013. The shares of the airline are reportedly now down by nearly 20 percent over the past weeks, as the financial situation continued to worsen and shareholders dumped stock to shift investments in more profitable enterprises. Watch this space for regular and breaking news updates from the aviation sector in Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands.

RAINS CONTINUE TO DRENCH MAURITIUS

While spared the onslaught of a recent cyclone, which passed Mauritius well off shore, the island was nevertheless at the receiving end of heavy rains. A regular source however saw the positive side of this weather as in his words *'at least our water reservoirs can start to fill up again and the rivers carry full water loads. We had some serious drought issues in the past year or two and water rationing was spreading, so the rains the cyclone brought are good. And best is we were spared a direct hit by the storm. That would have been very bad as we have seen in the past. But thankfully we only got the rain and not the associated damages. We are sorry for our tourists because of the high winds and ocean swells but apart from that they still can have a good time on Mauritius and none of the resorts has reported any damages'*.

The source also confirmed that there were no significant power outages on the island as cyclone *'Giovanna'* passed Mauritius last week.

Seychelles News

PRESIDENTIAL INTERVENTION SAVED AIR SEYCHELLES

Information is beginning to filter into the public domain, of how the personal intervention by President James Michel brought Abu Dhabi's Etihad into the frame, following discussions between the two governments in regard of part privatizing Air Seychelles. Upon agreement at the level of the two heads of state, Etihad then acquired a 40 percent stake in the airline with an agreed capital injection by both parties of 20 million US Dollars each, while Etihad then added a further 25 million US Dollars shareholder loan as working capital.

Also part of the deal was an initial 5 year management contract under which Etihad appointed Mr. Cramer Bell as the new Chief Executive Officer, which brought the shortlived term of office of Bram Stellar to an end.

Results of the new partnership are already visible with Air Seychelles starting code shared flights to Abu Dhabi from mid March onwards, while all former destinations from Europe, namely London, Paris, Milan and Rome are now being served by Etihad under a code share agreement with Air Seychelles, in addition to all the other European destinations now able to capture traffic to the islands, connecting via Abu Dhabi.

President Michel has earlier in the week given an interview to his party newspaper *'The People'* which is being reproduced here to further explain the circumstances of Etihad's partnership with Air Seychelles:

Interview with President James Michel

President James Michel was asked several questions about the Air Seychelles' partnership with Etihad, in which he says that today we have Etihad's management running the company, but in five years, Seychellois staff are expected to take over to complete the running of the airline.

***The People:** Following the strategic partnership of Air Seychelles and Etihad Airways, what kind of benefits and opportunities can we expect to see for our national airline, as well as our country and given that in time Air Seychelles is expected to resume its international routes?*



President: This strategic alliance has the clear competitive edge of the “strength in numbers”. Air Seychelles will no longer compete as the lonely ‘ world’s smallest airline,’ it is now part of one of the world’s best and fastest expanding brands. Now Etihad’s networks, offices, resources and training opportunities will double Air Seychelles’ chances to promote its name and attract new clients in the global market place. Air Seychelles now has the opportunity to grow at greater speed as it takes advantage of Etihad’s network, as well as opening up new markets for Seychelles, like China. Seychelles has seen a 422% increase in visitors from China, where some 705 Chinese visitors landed on our shores. Maldives had nearly 200,000 Chinese visitors last year and it’s now their number one market. We are just on the brink of tapping into this exciting new market, if all the tourism stakeholders take up this challenge and make this formidable window of opportunity turn into an economically-rewarding reality.

T.P: *Will that create more work opportunities for our people, taking into consideration the staff that were made redundant?*

P: Air Seychelles had to become more efficient, the losses it was making were no longer sustainable. Staff cuts were necessary in order to ensure the company becomes profitable once again. The entry of Etihad’s partnership does not mean that suddenly, over night, the company’s finances are healthy again; the business still has to work at increasing its revenues, running efficiently, to ensure that the routes which are opened are sustainable. When the staff cuts were made, the company was in a very difficult situation, now with the strategic alliance, there is potential for growth but the challenge to improve remains the same. With time I believe Air Seychelles will grow stronger and more opportunities will be created for Seychellois staff and for further expansion of the company. Air Seychelles needs to focus on the development of a high quality service, and with the expertise of the Etihad Airways management team, I am confident that our national airline will pass through the turbulence of the last few months, and steer towards even greater heights than it had achieved on its international routes in the past.



T. P: *Etihad has a five-year management contract. Does this mean there are no competent Seychellois staff to run the airline?*

P: Giving a management contract to Etihad is not an indication that Air Seychelles does not have competent staff. In making business alliances choices need to be made in

order for trust to be established. Etihad took a risk in investing in Air Seychelles as an airline that was making losses and downsizing, with a falling value by the day. It was important to establish a mechanism to build confidence in the business profitability of Air Seychelles. By asking Etihad to manage air Seychelles, the Government established the necessary trust that the investment made by Etihad would be overseen directly by the new shareholders, and while the key decisions concerning the company remain in the hands of the Government via the Board of Directors, the day to day implementation and accounting will be handled by Etihad staff, and therefore ensure the strategic partnership is feasible and transparent to both parties. In turn, Air Seychelles would get the benefit of the overseas training that Etihad offers and ensure that Seychellois managers are ready to take over their posts at the completion of the contract. Today we have Etihad management running the company, but in five years, Seychellois staff are expected to take over the complete running of the airline. There are many talented managers at Air Seychelles, and the Etihad team will groom them to take over the key management positions with the necessary experience for an increasingly competitive global airline environment.

T.P: *What are the factors that have contributed to Air Seychelles’ financial problems and why was the decision for a partnership not taken sooner?*

P: We’ve seen all around the world the effects of the economic crisis of 2007/2008, and more recently the Euro crisis. Many airlines – bigger and better established than ours – have gone bankrupt and have had either to re-structure or to close down. To avoid closure altogether, many of them have had to forge strategic partnerships. It is the only way forward. Other airlines in the region are searching for similar strategic partnerships, for example Air Mauritius, in order to weather the economic crisis.



Air Seychelles was audited several times over the last two years and both international and local auditors have highlighted similar findings; primarily, financial losses due to the rise in fuel costs, high maintenance costs, rate of exchange fluctuations and lower revenue levels compared to previous years. Government has been helping out financially during the last two years but could no longer sustain the requirements of Air Seychelles, as the Government had to meet its own fiscal target under the IMF programme. We urgently needed to find a partner that would give Air Seychelles the economies of scale and synergies of a larger business entity. I was determined to keep the airline alive, although many had already pronounced it 'clinically dead' in the financial ICU. Our national airline, flying the Creole spirit, means more than just the business of flying, it is our national symbol and our pride as an independent nation, but in order to ensure its survival we need to find a strong partner to help it regain its profitability. We found one, and it is one with a strong track record of proven partnerships as well as an airline that belongs to a government, the United Arab Emirates, which has also proved itself a friend of Seychelles.



T.P: *What are your hopes for Air Seychelles?*

P: Air Seychelles will grow and expand. It will happen if the staff work hard and give their best service to the nation and to our foreign visitors. I hope that I will start to hear about the 'great flight' that passengers experience on Air Seychelles, and the positive and welcoming attitude of the staff. I hope that staff will take every opportunity to grow and to learn and become strong airline professionals, that give Seychelles a good name wherever they go. It is a tough market and the world economy is increasingly volatile, but we will continue to have visitors, as we have the most beautiful islands of the world, and visitors will still

come and witness their beauty for themselves, even in hard economic times. It is up to us to ensure that the Creole service is world-class and that with this reputation, travelers will choose to fly with us, and that we will once again lead the market in tourism arrivals. This strategic partnership with Etihad has ensured that Air Seychelles will continue to fly the Creole Spirit. It is a major change, so let us embrace it and use it to our maximum. The sky is the limit!

AIR SEYCHELLES TO LAUNCH CODESHARED FLIGHTS TO ABU DHABI



It has now been confirmed that Air Seychelles will launch nonstop flights, twice a week, between Mahe and Abu Dhabi as of 12th March, alongside the present 4 frequencies by Etihad, Abu Dhabi's national airline, which now owns 40 percent of its shares. The airline will use one of their B767-300 aircraft in a two class configuration, and codeshare with Etihad, to Abu Dhabi and beyond.

The same source also confirmed that by June 2012 the number of flights between Mahe and Abu Dhabi will be raised to 7 a week, offering daily connections to the Seychelles from across the Etihad network via their hub. It is not clear at this time if the 7th flight from June this year onwards will be operated by Etihad with their A320 aircraft or by Air Seychelles using their B767.

Etihad started operations to the Seychelles only in early November last year and then invested 20 million US Dollars in Air Seychelles against a 40 percent shareholding, following an agreement between the two governments to part privatize the airline. With the injection of a further 25 million US Dollars in working capital it set Air Seychelles on a recovery path which will manifest itself in coming months with the introduction of new aircraft, expected to be an A 320 to cover flights from Mahe to Mauritius and Johannesburg, as well as new routes to the African mainland, while the B767's are expected to be exchanged for the more fuel efficient A330's to launch new destinations in the Far East. Watch this space for aviation news from the Indian Ocean islands.

7 DEGREES SOUTH RECEIVES HUNGARIAN CHARTER FLIGHT

It was learned from a regular source on the island of Mahe that 7 Degrees South, one of the Seychelles' leading DMC's has received over 100 tourist visitors off a chartered B737-800 from Hungary, which is part of a series of

such flights between Budapest and Mombasa / Kenya, but was extended to the Seychelles following an agreement with the 'Safari Travel Company' in Hungary.

The deal is according to the source *'good news for Seychelles because we as a destination get exposure in Hungary from where we do not have so many tourists visitors. Besides the charters there are the scheduled flights of other airlines from Budapest via the Gulf, which makes it easy for others to come to our islands.'*

The Seychelles Tourism Board and private sector, led by SHTA, have been active in working new and emerging markets in Eastern Europe and Asia and will see this *'first'* as a sign that demand for holidays to the Creole Island Paradise can indeed be generated by creative and innovative approaches to promoting the archipelago abroad, even in *'partnership'* with African mainland destinations, which STB has been actively promoting in the past as two centre holidays, combining safaris in East Africa with beach holidays in the Seychelles.

BLUE PANORAMA MAKES MAIDEN FLIGHT TO SEYCHELLES

Italy's Blue Panorama has yesterday landed for the first time in the Seychelles on a currently weekly flight from Milan and Rome to Mahe, offering Italian travelers once again a direct or nonstop connection from Italy following the withdrawal of Air Seychelles' services a month ago.

The *Who is Who* of Seychelles' tourism and aviation fraternity was assembled at the international airport to welcome the inaugural flight, which landed with 131 passengers on board, joined by members of staff of the Italian Consulate in Victoria.

Airline representatives were quoted in saying that their application for traffic rights and facilitation on the fast track was an extraordinary effort from all concerned on the Seychelles, from Civil Aviation over airport handling to the logistical support in putting the new flight on the market by the Seychelles Tourism Board offices in Bel Ombre and their Italian marketing office, making it possible to start flights in record time by cutting through the red tape. The airline is set to add a second weekly flight from July onwards, when the main vacation season starts in Italy and is confident that passenger numbers will steadily rise and soon overtake the passenger uplift Air Seychelles used to have from Italy. Seychelles, truly *'Another World'*.



(Picture courtesy of Seychelles Tourism Board, showing the traditional water cannon salute for the aircraft as it taxied off the runway to its parking position, disembarking passengers and STB's CEO Alain St. Ange in an interview with Italian and local media representatives)

CARNIVAL PROGRAMME PUBLISHED – 2 WEEKS TO GO TO #SEYCHELLESCARNIVAL2012

The Seychelles Tourism Board has overnight released the much expected official programme for the 2012 edition of the '*Carnaval de Carnivals*', co-hosted this year jointly with fellow Vanilla Island member La Reunion, and as one can see, bigger, better and more exciting than ever before.

The #SeychellesCarnival2012, as it is hashtagged and trending on Twitter, has become a key event in the annual calendar of activities the Seychelles now have to offer to visitors and has turned into an international media spectacle, with leading TV and Radio stations, but also newspapers and magazines having staff on the archipelago to report from Victoria. It is noteworthy that the Seychelles are host to the *ONE AND ONLY* carnival festival in Africa,

positioning the country on the top of the tourism food chain with their innovations and creative PR and marketing efforts. Visit www.seychelles.travel for more information about the carnival and the destination overall.

Review of Carnival 2011

The first edition of the Carnival International de Victoria took Seychelles by storm. The opening ceremony at the fairy-lit clock tower with opening speeches by President Michel, Alain St. Ange, CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board and such visiting dignitaries as Dionne Warwick preceded an evening of live music performances by Patrick Victor and La Reunion's Waki Band.

The atmosphere was electric and the huge crowds that poured into the normally sleepy capital were not disappointed by the wide variety of food stalls showcasing a great array of national cuisines and by an atmosphere crackling with excitement, spectacle and music.

The second day of the carnival saw a grand procession of some 60 floats featuring over twenty foreign participants snake its way from Roche Caiman through the streets of Victoria, thronged by some 30,000 people comprising locals, visitors and contingents from visiting navy ships. Victoria came alive in a way seldom before witnessed in its entire history. Basking in tropical sunshine, each float pranced, danced and gyrated its way into the centre of the capital on a route that would lead them past the national library where the dignitaries were seated before finally collecting in the stadium car park for general viewing and an evening of unfettered festivity.

The third and final day was a family-fun day where food stalls were jam-packed with visitors and other vendors and businesses placed their wares on view while bands played live music and a pure atmosphere of carnival reigned supreme until late into the night.

The Carnival International de Victoria had come to town in a way that would stay in the collective memory of the nation for many a year to come.

Day 1 - Official Opening

Friday 2nd March 2012

Clock Tower - Victoria

16:00hrs - Variety show and animation around Victoria by different musical groups

17:45hrs - Arrival of Invited guests
- Entertainment by percussionists

18:00hrs - Arrival of VVIPs

18:15hrs - Arrival of Didier Robert
President of La Reunion

18:20hrs - Arrival of President James Alix Michel of Seychelles

18:30hrs - Welcome by MCs –
Michelle Marengo
Galen Bresson
Masechaba Lekalake – Masechaba Media
Aaron Hessehurst – BBC

18:35hrs - Address – Alain St. Ange
CEO Seychelles Tourism Board

18:40hrs - Address – Pascal Viroleau
Directeur IRT – La Reunion Tourism

18:45hrs - Address by Taleb Rifai –
Secretary General of the UNWTO

*Followed by presentation of "Global Leaders for Tourism Campaign"
Open letter to Head of State and Government, by Mr Taleb Rifai
to President James Alix Michel, President of the Republic of
Seychelles & Mr Didier Robert, President Regional Ile de La Reunion.*

18:55hrs - Official Opening of Carnavale
International de Victoria 2012 by
Seychelles' Designated Minister,
Mr Vincent Meriton

19:00hrs - Presentation of Carnival song 2012 by
Jean-Marc Volcy and supporting artists

19:05hrs - Cultural manifestation by local artists
and international participants
La Reunion
Samba Brazil
Angelic
Germany
Indonesia
Dezil' & Team
Trinidad & Tobago – Lima Calbio
Ghana
Michael Quinn & The Bourbon Kings -USA

19:30hrs - End of Program

Firework display

Day 2 - Carnaval Parade

Saturday 3rd March 2012

14:15hrs - Arrival of VIP and Invited Guests

14:25hrs - Arrival of President James Alix Michel

14:30hrs - Carnival Parade

The Parade will start at Bois de Rose Avenue and will proceed from Latanier Road, passing in front of the National Library where the participants will showcase their first display to the VIP's and guests. Routes will pass in front of Cable & Wireless, the clock tower, taxi stand, Codevar, STC, Deepam, P&J supplies, SPTC bus terminal, Orion Mall, turning right in front of Caravelle House (Selected Floats will be enter Freedom Square)

with the remainder going through the roundabout "Bicentenary Monument", passing in front of the children's playground to the IDC car park where the parade will end.

17:00hrs - Animation outside Stad Popiler by group Zez and dancers, including percussionists

On-going entertainment in Stad Popiler car park

Food fiesta and cultural manifestation by local and international bands

20:00hrs - Musical show Stad Popiler – (Paying Event)

22:00hrs - After Carnival party "Grand open air Disco" in Victoria

01.00hrs - End of program

Day 3 - Family Fun Day Sunday 4th March 2012

12.00hrs - Exhibition /Food Stall by international floats

Entertainment on stage by various local & international groups

Food Fiesta & activities in Victoria

17.30hrs - Prize giving ceremony for Carnival Parade

- 2012 Carnival Lottery draw

18:00hrs - Closing remarks by the Minister responsible for Culture

CARNIVAL Time in the Seychelles



DRAW Sunday 4th March

www.seychelles.travel



SEYCHELLES GOVERNMENT RE-OPENS ALL BEACHES

Information was just received from the Seychelles Tourism Board that all hitherto closed beaches on the island of Praslin and others have been re-opened with immediate effect, following extensive safety precautions taken by government to ensure the safety of swimmers.

The statement reads as follows:

THE SAFETY LABEL FOR SEYCHELLES REMAINS THEIR PRIORITY AS ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE TO RE-OPEN ALL BEACHES

2011 was a trying year for many tourist destinations. Climate change phenomena arrived in never before seen patterns in behavior both beneath the waves and on land. Meanwhile, Seychelles and the neighboring islands of Mauritius and La Reunion were not spared and saw unusual behavior in their shark populations.

For the Seychelles it brought about a review of the Country's Emergency response Plans and advice from South African Experts was sought while the Government of Seychelles remained focused concerning the need to protect the islands' long-standing safety label.

In the interests of further ensuring the safety of swimmers in certain areas of Praslin, the government has announced that 90% of the recommendations of the experts from KwaZulu-Natal, brought in to advise on various aspects of marine security have now been adopted and an emergency response plan is now in place.

The Government of Seychelles also sought the Assistance of Specialists Life Guards from Australia through the their High Commissioner Mrs. Sandra Vegting. They are assisting the Seychelles Life Guards through a new intense training program.

With this now in place, beaches on Praslin, closed since the unfortunate, twin shark attacks of mid-2011, have now been re-opened and all restrictions imposed after the attacks removed.

Advisory signs are now in place on Praslin beaches and a set of safety guidelines has been drawn up that provides advice for swimmers and snorkellers, fishermen and scuba divers.

With a long history of safe swimming in Seychelles, the ZwaZulu Natal experts were brought in after two extremely rare shark attacks off Praslin's Anse Lazio forced a reconsideration of time-honoured, relaxed swimming practices. 'Seychelles waters have long enjoyed a well-justified reputation for safety', commented, Alain St.Ange, the CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board, 'but we need to move with the times and, in our modern world of climate change and associated phenomena, we must not rest on our laurels but rather take every step to make sure that safe swimming continues to be a characteristic of a Seychelles holiday.'



And in closing, as most weeks, some interesting reads taken from 'The Livingstone Weekly' produced by the indefatigable Gill Staden – thank you very much !

ZAMBIA

Given Lubinda Returns to Tourism

The government has re-organised some ministries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will now become the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Tourism. Given Lubinda was moved from the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism to Foreign Affairs, much to the sadness of Livingstone tour operators after his much-praised visit to Livingstone.

After a month of working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the government chose to give Mr Lubinda the added responsibility of tourism.

From my point of view, it does work as a ministry, but it is a huge job. But, if Zambia is to succeed as a tourist destination it needs a minister who understands and Mr Lubinda does understand.

From the Zambia Weekly:

President Sata has demoted Minister of Labour, Sports and Youth Chishimba Kambwili by transferring his labour portfolio to the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, which in turn has handed over the tourism portfolio to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The move is meant to restore calm, especially among investors:

"We know that there are numerous shortcomings in almost all sectors, but we will not address these shortcomings through threats and being loud-mouthed.

(...) Policy consistency is a compelling need for all governments all over the world. As my very final warning, I ask all the ministers not to lead me into temptation," stated Sata.

Last week, Kambwili toured companies on the Copperbelt, deriding them for poor conditions of service and threatening several with deportation – and ordered one for Xisheng Qin, Chief Medical Officer at Sinozam Friendship Hospital in Kitwe, for being rude by pointing, although he has apparently made up with the Chinese doctor since then.

Sata cautioned his ministers against taking "arbitrary" positions, which could lead to loss of investor confidence, but Kambwili said he was ready to die for doing "the right thing", arguing that three quarters

of the foreign-owned companies he visited failed to comply with labour laws: "We would be so foolish to disturb investments, but laws are laws and they must be followed," Kambwili said. ...

ZOS

The Annual General Meeting of the Zambia Ornithological Society will be held on February 25th at 10.30am at the ZOS office on Chinde Road.

Sioma Falls

Livingstone-Sioma Falls is about 320 km, but it is a 5½ hour journey.

Livingstone to Sesheke is 2 hours – a good tar road – but the stretch from Sesheke to Sioma is still a bad dirt road. The road is being worked on by the Chinese but only a short stretch has been completed.

A few weeks ago a group of Livingstone's kayakers went to Sioma for a few days – to have a look and to test the water.



One of the group, Sean:

We had a great trip to Sioma, a big thank you to Andie and Hemingways for providing the vehicle, they are really superb, you literally have everything you need in exactly the places you need it. Me, Mike, Andie and Sven went up there two weeks ago and had a great time. What an amazing place.

Looking at other peoples pictures and talking to them, kayaking levels vary a lot. Mikey found one waterfall that was good to go and we had a great time running it. We also paddled around and had a look at the other sections of the falls. We were very nervous of crocs but had no incidents.

We camped at the Zawa campsite which is great. It is quite a walk to the falls from there,



especially carrying boats. However, it is the closest camp site to the falls and right next to one of the best beaches I have ever seen.

The camp is a bit old but well kept, with functioning eco-loos which are great. They look to have three separate campsites, we were the only ones there. Water is carried from the river and the attendant keeps a couple barrels full, definitely make sure you take chlorinate. They do also provide hot showers.

For four of us camping for three nights including park entry it was K420,000 which was really reasonable.

They have a peace parks man there who stays at the camp and he told us about the plans to fence in the area and re-stock it with game as part of the entire peace parks process. Looks like it may develop into a major destination.

Though getting there is a mission. The drive to Sesheke is pretty easy but from there it is hell on a dirt road. There is road work going on, but it looks like it is nowhere near being finished. It took us five and a half hours from Livingstone, but it was raining hard so we were taking it easy. All in all great place to visit, but perhaps only once a year due to the drive!





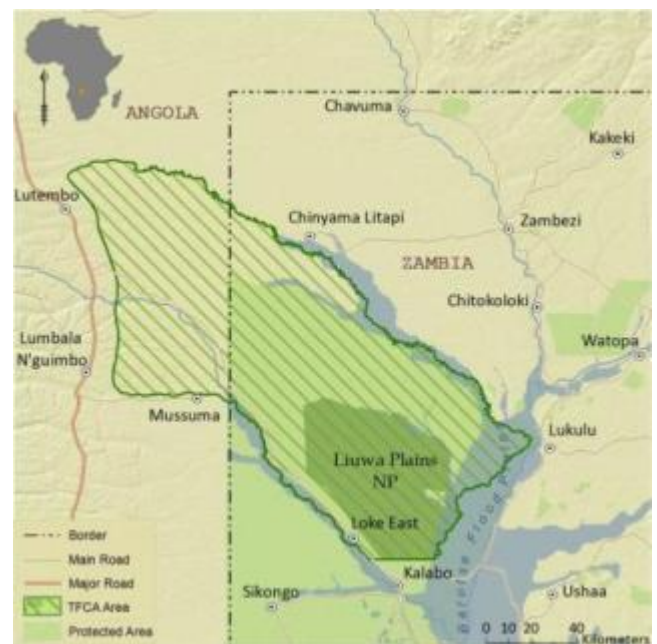
Liuwa-Mussumma Cross-border Conservation Area

Under the guidance of Peace Parks Foundation a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in Luanda recently. The MOU is a joint initiative between Angola and Zambia for the Liuwa-Mussumma Conservation Area. The area covers much of the migration route of the wildebeest and zebra which congregate on Liuwa Plain during the rainy season and then disperse during the dry season.

From Peace Parks Foundation

The Liuwa Plains-Mussumma transfrontier conservation area between Angola and Zambia protects the largest migratory population of blue wildebeest in the miombo ecosystem in Africa. Every year massive herds of blue wildebeest migrate from Zambia to Angola and back again, traversing the plains in their thousands and very often mingling with zebra along the way. The TFCA will also protect a significant portion of the catchment area for the Zambezi River, Africa's fourth largest river system.

Liuwa Plain-Mussumma is considered as one of the most important conservation areas, because of presenting most number of migratory animal species with international importance, such as blue wild beast (Gnu) and zebras, in addition to a potential exceptional biological diversity.



UNWTO

The Zimbabwe Cabinet approved Zimbabwe's co-hosting of the United Nations World Tourism Assembly meeting between Zimbabwe and Zambia to be held at Victoria Falls Town and Livingstone.

The date is now set as August 26th onwards.

Minister for Tourism, Walter Mzembi, was concerned about Air Zimbabwe which has collapsed and feels that its financial mess has to be rectified in order to provide domestic flights during that time. According to the Herald: *He said the co-hosting of the event by Zimbabwe and Zambia was a shining example of brotherly co-operation and regional economic integration.*

As part of the work to be done prior to the meeting Mr Mzembi mentioned a convention centre, hotels, villas and shopping mall in Victoria Falls Town; upgrading of Victoria Falls, Bulawayo and Harare airports. He also mentioned road rehabilitation, health care facilities, a theme park, a museum, exhibition parks and halls, broadband and information technology, and a clean and safe water supply in Victoria Falls Town.

Mr Mzembi: *This is endorsement of the country of the highest order. We claim to be the first sector to successfully bust (western imposed illegal) sanctions. Even our own detractors have supported the hosting of the convention in Zimbabwe. As a sector we want to showcase the true Zimbabwe, which is a beautiful and peaceful country.*

The Herald newspaper also states: *The country will play host to the official opening ceremony of the general assembly.*

This is a very odd statement as I feel sure that it has not yet been decided where the opening ceremony will be held.

I find very little in the news about what Zambia is doing for the UNWTO, but maybe that is OK and we can assume that things are going on in the background. It is fairly obvious that the government of Zimbabwe is using the UNWTO as some sort of political coup. The government's plan to construct such a mass of buildings and to repair infrastructure in and around Victoria Falls Town will be good news for Victoria Falls Town but, surely, it will come at a cost to the rest of the country.

Also looking at the plans for Victoria Falls Town, where is all the money going to come from? We have already seen that the government plans to construct a Financial Centre there. Several months ago we reported that there are plans to build a cricket ground. Actually, the mind boggles ...
