

**ITALY, ROME**

## Earth, italian tech to clean up Himalayas

Italian technology is going to help clean up the masses of garbage mountaineers leave every year on mountains like Everest and K2.

The new system, called Earth (Ecological Activity for Refuse Treatment at High-Altitude), was presented Wednesday by its creators - Italian renewable-energy firm Actelios and the National Research Council's Ev-K2-Cnr Committee.

The technology processes and breaks the rubbish down, reducing its volume by as much as 97%. It does not need electricity to work, is easy to maintain and

is specially designed to function in low-oxygen environments like the Himalayas without generating harmful emissions. "It is the first time a project like this has been carried out," said Actelios Ceo Roberto Tellarini. "Earth is our response to the challenge of contributing to sustainable development and safeguarding the environment."

"The results of the tests have been highly satisfying and so we will be able to start sending the equipment to the Himalayas in September". Rubbish is a massive problem on the Himalayas, which every year attract increasingly large numbers of mountaineers. Mountaineers often discard stuff like bottles, cans, egg-shells, banana skins and oxygen tanks as the refuse is excess weight in their rucksacks that they want to be rid of. On average 12.8 tonnes of trash, enough to fill four train wagons, are left at Everest's base camp every year. The



authorities also have to deal with masses of rubbish left at camps higher up on the mountain.

Some environmentalists have nicknamed Everest the "world's highest garbage site" as a result. As well as being unseemly, the refuse upsets the ecological balance of these delicate environments and can harm wildlife. Furthermore, the waste can contaminate glacier ice, which becomes the drinking water of local communities when it melts into rivers. Even biodegradable waste is a problem because the cold and the low oxygen levels mean the rubbish

takes much longer to break down there than it would normally.

The first Earth system will be installed at 3,400 metres above sea level in September in the Baltoro valley, which leads to K2, in Pakistan's Central Karakorum National Park. Another will then be set up at 4,700 metres above sea level in Nepal's Sargamatha National Park, which plays host to the southern half of Mt Everest. "This is a great project," said Agostino Da Polenza, the president of the Ev-K2-Cnr Committee, which has been working to safeguard the Himalayas since the 1980s.

"It is part of our effort to study and support areas that are precious to the whole world."

"We are also working to give scientific-technical training to local people, to complete a project that flies high, right up to the roof of the world".

**SPAIN, MADRID**

## Mideast crisis brings tourism to its knees

The serious crisis in Lebanon, Israel and Palestine risks bringing the Middle Eastern tourist industry to its knees despite the fact that it has registered the biggest growth in the world in the last decade, the World Tourism Organisation (Unwto) said in a statement issued by the organisation's secretariat in Madrid. The Unwto recalled that the tourist sector has become a vital part of the social and economic fabric of the region and it is an important component for the livelihoods of its people. While international tourist arrivals worldwide grew at an annual average of 4%, the average growth rate of arrivals in the Middle East during this period was 11%, and the number of arrivals to the region

almost tripled, leaping from 13.7 million in 1995 to 39.7 million in 2005. Revenue from international tourism (measured in local currencies at constant prices) has followed a similar pattern, jumping from USD 9.8 billion in 1995 to USD 28.6 billion in 2005. In Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, as well as in some destinations in Egypt (Cairo, Alexandria and along the Red Sea coast) the driving force of tourism growth has come from the intra-regional market especially from the Gulf countries.

During the first month of 2006, the key destinations in the region started posting outstanding double digit results. Lebanon posted a 37% growth in the first quarter of the year. Israel too was experiencing si-

milar levels of growth (25%) while Egypt, Jordan and other major destinations in the gulf also showed positive results. The overall problem for tourism in the area given the current situation is compounded by the destruction of basic infrastructure and the absence of normal

transport and communication facilities. As yet no foreseeable time-frame for a return to normalcy can be outlined, the Unwto said. At this point the primary issue for the sector is the safety of tourists and their rapid repatriation from risk zones. "This is yet another example of where tourists and the tourism industry are hostage to global events beyond their control," Unwto Secretary-General Francesco Fran-

gialli said. "We will work closely with our members to help those who are suffering and to rebuild the tourism economy." Unwto main-

tains close contacts with the concerned countries and in this context the organisation announced the creation with Microsoft of an Emer-

gency Response System with a dedicated portal to provide better information and support in similar situations in the future.

**ALGERY, ALGIERS**  
**"Star academy Magrheb"**  
**reality tv show moves**

'Star Academy Maghreb' - the reality show program which has launched castings for immigrants in Tunisia, Morocco and half of Europe - is heading to Algeria. From August, the show will start the casting in the country to find 14 young people for the show produced by Endemol, the Dutch company which invented 'Big Brother' and by Karoui&Karoui, the most important Maghreb advertising agency. It will be the first big reality designed for the entire Maghreb area made in a North African country but could be sold also to television channels from southern Europe, which would like to attract the big public of young immigrants. Endemol's

production will have to be careful, however, because similar attempts resulted in protests from more traditional Islamic parties. A few months ago in Algeria the programme Al Academia, produced in Lebanon by the private network LBC and filmed by Algerian state television Entv, stirred polemics. Despite the high ratings, the start of the programme was cancelled following protests from Bouguerra Soltani, leader of the Movement of Society for Peace.  
"The programme is against the morals, habits and traditions of the Algerian society and a vehicle of a culture which is neither ours, nor of the Arab Muslim world," Soltani said at the time. Still, Endemol is pu-

shing ahead, posting advertisement for the casting in almost all Algerian newspapers. 'Make your dream come true, become the first winner in the Maghreb area,' the slogans of the campaign for the new programme read.  
The casting will be held in the 'Big Brother' style in Algiers, Oran and Annaba, but the producers assured that the show, which will last three months and a half, "will have more family character" compared to the one that caused opposing political reactions. According to the project, the 14 young people who will be chosen for 'Star Academy Maghreb' will live in the same house and take lessons in singing, dancing and stage presence by various Maghreb stars.

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