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## World News

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# WORLD NEWS

by Nick Alarif and Kate Halloran\*

## AMERICAS

The Caribbean's fragile marine ecosystem is at a grave risk due to a non-native intruder, the red lionfish.<sup>1</sup> The red lionfish is especially destructive to ecosystems because of its voracious eating habits.<sup>2</sup> A single red lionfish is able to reduce the number of small fish in a coral patch reef by eighty percent in as little as five weeks.<sup>3</sup> It is believed that the red lionfish was introduced to the Atlantic during Hurricane Andrew in 1992, which is thought to have shattered private aquariums releasing the fish into Miami's Biscayne Bay.<sup>4</sup> Covered with poisonous pectoral spines, the red lionfish has no natural predator in the Atlantic and has increased in numbers tenfold from 2005 through 2007.<sup>5</sup>

To try and solve this potentially devastating ecological threat, conservationists have developed an innovative plan by combining business and conservation: sell the fish to consumers.<sup>6</sup> Companies, such as Sea to Table, have begun to work with local fishermen in the Bahamas by helping the fishermen sell their red lionfish catch to upscale metropolitan restaurants in the United States.<sup>7</sup> During initial trials in New York and Chicago, restaurants sold out of the red lionfish within two nights.<sup>8</sup>

## ASIA

A former luxury American ocean liner that is believed to be laden with high quantities of toxins recently arrived in Alang, India, the hub of India's ship-breaking yards.<sup>9</sup> The Platinum-II was previously anchored forty miles from Alang as the Indian government decided whether or not to allow the ship to be dismantled on its shores.<sup>10</sup> According to the Indian Platform on Ship-breaking, the Platinum-II contains close to 200 tons of asbestos and about 210 tons of materials contaminated by toxic polychlorinated biphenyls ("PCBs") as well as radioactive substances.<sup>11</sup> Groups such as Greenpeace opine that Alang's ship-breaking yards are ill-equipped to safely dismantle such poison-laden ships.<sup>12</sup>

The scrapping of the Platinum-II is in violation of the Basel Treaty,<sup>13</sup> which bans signing countries, including India, from receiving hazardous waste from countries who have not signed the treaty, which includes the United States.<sup>14</sup> However, Indian authorities have stipulated that the Platinum-II should be beached and disassembled in Alang, citing safety concerns that the Platinum-II was in too poor a condition and may break apart in the open ocean.<sup>15</sup> Earlier this year, the Environmental Protection Agency enacted fines against the owners of the Platinum-II

in amounts close to \$518,000 for illegal distribution and export of a ship containing PCBs. The Platinum-II, however, was not recalled to U.S. shores.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the health costs of dismantling aging ocean-liners is extremely high to the local Indian shipyard workers; a 2006 report by India's Supreme Court showed that one in six Alang shipyard laborers was suffering from symptoms of asbestosis, a fatal illness, and that the number of fatal accidents in the shipyard was six times higher than even the average in the nations mining industry.<sup>17</sup> Most shipyard laborers earn only about \$2 to \$3 a day. Even with such risks to workers, Indian authorities are hesitant to close down the shipyard as it is extremely profitable; scrapping a single ship can bring in revenues of close to \$10 million.<sup>18</sup>

## AFRICA

The proposed construction of a hydroelectric dam along the Zambezi River in Mozambique has stirred conflict between locals and environmental advocates.<sup>19</sup> While government officials argue the dam will benefit local villages by supplying electricity and fostering development, environmental activists assert the construction will displace approximately 1,400 small farmers.<sup>20</sup> The advocates also contend that another dam on the Zambezi River has negatively affected the ecology of the river, disrupting fishing and agriculture in the area, and that a second dam would only worsen the situation.<sup>21</sup> The Mozambican government believes it can build the dam and minimize impacts to the environment.<sup>22</sup> Construction is scheduled to begin in 2011.<sup>23</sup>

In eastern Africa, the United Nations World Food Programme projects that \$285 million is needed to stem a hunger crisis resulting from disastrous drought conditions.<sup>24</sup> Some harvests have been completely wiped out.<sup>25</sup> A severe lack of rainfall has contributed to the crisis and forced residents to drink water from contaminated sources.<sup>26</sup> Oxfam argues that, in addition to addressing the immediate food needs of eastern Africa, better irrigation and wells are essential tools to reduce the impact of drought in the future.<sup>27</sup> The Food and Agricultural Organization advocates a resilient variety of rice packed with more nutrition that could help curb the food crisis.<sup>28</sup>

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# EUROPE

Swedes are gaining a fresh perspective on their food as many markets and restaurants are listing the amount of carbon dioxide emitted on package labels and menus.<sup>29</sup> This initiative follows new nutritional guidelines released over the summer by the Swedish National Food Administration.<sup>30</sup> The pioneering labels couple environmental concerns over climate change with

health concerns.<sup>31</sup> The guidelines advocate choosing vegetables and meats that require less energy to produce and do not recommend consuming fish due to Europe's suffering fish stocks.<sup>32</sup> Critics argue that the average consumer may feel overwhelmed by the deluge of considerations when buying a bunch of carrots, and that it is difficult to accurately calculate the emissions generated by a food product.<sup>33</sup>



## Endnotes: World News

<sup>1</sup> See *Invasive Red Lionfish Threatens Reef Fish in Caribbean*, YALE ENV'T 360, Aug. 15, 2008, available at <http://e360.yale.edu/content/digest.msp?id=1383>.

<sup>2</sup> See *id.*

<sup>3</sup> See *id.*

<sup>4</sup> See David McFadden, *Red lionfish invade the Caribbean*, L.A. TIMES, Aug. 16, 2008, available at <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/16/science/sci-lionfish16>.

<sup>5</sup> National Aquarium Waterlog, *Now serving, red lionfish*, Oct. 14, 2009, available at <http://nationalaquarium.wordpress.com/2009/10/14/now-serving-red-lionfish/>.

<sup>6</sup> See Science & Technology, *Eat for the ecosystem*, ECONOMIST.COM, Oct. 15, 2009, available at [http://www.economist.com/sciencetechnology/Printer-Friendly.cfm?story\\_id=14637325](http://www.economist.com/sciencetechnology/Printer-Friendly.cfm?story_id=14637325).

<sup>7</sup> See *id.*

<sup>8</sup> See *id.*

<sup>9</sup> Common Dreams, *US Toxic Ship Lands in India*, Oct. 23, 2009, available at <http://www.commondreams.org/newswire/2009/10/23> [hereinafter Common Dreams].

<sup>10</sup> Suda Ramachandran, *Toxic Alert as US Ship Heads for India*, ASIA TIMES ONLINE, Oct. 24, 2009, available at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/KJ24Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/KJ24Df01.html).

<sup>11</sup> See *id.*

<sup>12</sup> See *id.*

<sup>13</sup> Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, March 22, 1989, 1673 UNTS 126, available at <http://basel.int/text/text.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Common Dreams, *supra* note 9.

<sup>15</sup> Nitin Sethi, *Toxic Waste on U.S. Ship: Gujarat Panel*, TIMES OF INDIA, Oct. 17, 2009, available at <http://timesofindia.com/articleshow/msid-5132641,prtpage-1.cms>.

<sup>16</sup> Ramachandran, *supra* note 10.

<sup>17</sup> Jacob Baynham, *India, World Shipping's Toxic Waste Dump*, SFGATE, July 6, 2008, available at <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/07/06/MN2510MASF.DTL&type>.

<sup>18</sup> See *id.*

<sup>19</sup> Pete Browne, *Debate Over Dams on Africa's Zambezi River*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 19, 2009, available at <http://greeninc.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/debate-over-dams-on-africas-zambezi-river/>.

<sup>20</sup> Zenaida Machado, *Watching the Water Flow Away*, ALLAFRICA.COM, Oct. 23, 2009, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200910230853.html>.

<sup>21</sup> See *id.*

<sup>22</sup> See Browne, *supra* note 19.

<sup>23</sup> See *id.*

<sup>24</sup> Ethiopia asks for Urgent Food Aid, BBC NEWS, Oct. 22, 2009, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8319741.stm>.

<sup>25</sup> See *id.*

<sup>26</sup> Millions Facing Famine in Ethiopia as Rain Fails, THE INDEPENDENT, Aug. 30, 2009, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/africa/millions-facing-famine-in-ethiopia-as-rains-fail-1779376.html>.

<sup>27</sup> See Machado, *supra* note 20.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Kapchanga, *FAO Introduces New Rice to Fight Food Shortages in Region*, ALLAFRICA.COM, Oct. 19, 2009, available at <http://allafrica.com/stories/200910210461.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Rosenthal, *To Cut Global Warming, Swedes Study Their Plates*, N.Y. TIMES, Oct. 22, 2009, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/world/europe/23degrees.html?\\_r=1&ref=europe](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/23/world/europe/23degrees.html?_r=1&ref=europe).

<sup>30</sup> See *id.*

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer LaRue Huget, *For Food Labels, First Calories, Now Carbon Footprints?*, WASHINGTON POST, Oct. 26, 2009, available at [http://voices.washingtonpost.com/checkup/2009/10/folks\\_in\\_the\\_us\\_who.html](http://voices.washingtonpost.com/checkup/2009/10/folks_in_the_us_who.html).

<sup>32</sup> See Rosenthal, *supra* note 29.

<sup>33</sup> Madeleine Kennedy, *Is Carbon Counting the New Calorie Counting?*, ATLANTIC, Oct. 30, 2009, available at [http://business.theatlantic.com/2009/10/earlier\\_this\\_month\\_the.php](http://business.theatlantic.com/2009/10/earlier_this_month_the.php).