

GLOBAL NEWS



CHINESE CABBIES IN “ASSAULT” RECORD UPROAR...

A situation that could emerge within the cab trade of any country – and one that already exists in the UK and London in particular - has surfaced in China. Taxi drivers convicted of various offences could now have their licences revoked under contentious new proposals. The idea was raised by a Transport Advisory Committee, which has urged a review of measures against taxi driver misconduct following a public consultation.

Committee chairman, Dr Cheng Hon-Kwan, said drivers convicted of serious offences such as causing personal injury or assault should be banned from driving taxis. Those with records of such offences should also be denied the right to apply for a taxi licence for a long time. “We consider that these people are not suitable to be taxi drivers,” Dr Cheng’s spokesperson told Taxi Globe.

He had no statistics showing a particular trend of drivers attacking passengers, but said cases had occurred in the past and passengers should be assured of their safety. “We are not necessarily looking at a permanent ban, just a certain period of time which has not been looked into yet,” he added. However, taxi unionists said the move would deprive drivers of their right to turn over a new leaf. Leung Yiu-ki, of the Chinese Taxi Owners Association, called the idea ridiculous. “Because a man has committed a crime, it does not mean he can’t be a good person again,” he said. “If he has served his sentence or has been fined, he has got what he deserved and should be given a second chance. What should these people do? The committee is only forcing them to become thieves again. They will have no choice but to rob again to earn a living.”

The Urban Taxi Drivers Association chairman, Kwok Chi-Piu, said the proposal would give offenders “a life sentence”.

AUSTRALIAN CABBY FINED FOR BANNING A GUIDE DOG

At a time when London taxi drivers are being reminded of their obligations towards the blind and partially sighted, a Melbourne taxi driver has been fined after refusing to accept a blind man as a passenger because he had his guide dog with him. The driver, Arthur Pantel, also faces possible suspension

or cancellation of his driving certificate as a result of the incident, which happened outside a blind persons convention last year. The Melbourne Magistrates Court was told that Dr Peter Gorbel - local chiropractor - had booked a taxi. When Dr Gorbel got into the vehicle, Pantel allegedly told him to get the dog out of his cab.

A Taxi Directorate inspector told the court that Pantel had said he had a phobia about dogs. David Rebbie, prosecuting, said that under Aussie Victorian law, a visually impaired person may be accompanied at all times and in all places by a guide dog. Pantel did not appear in court to answer the charge. The magistrate said that his behaviour was unacceptable and convicted and fined him A\$400 with A\$640 costs.

Speaking outside court, Dr Gorbel said the driver’s attitude wasn’t that uncommon but that this time it was once too many as it had been two in the morning. A spokesman for the Taxi Directorate told Taxi Globe that Pantel would be asked to show cause why his driver’s certificate should not be suspended or cancelled.

UK ASIAN CABBY DOES A DUKE OF EDINBURGH!

A Birmingham Asian cab driver has made the same gaffe as the Duke of Edinburgh when HRH claimed that a ‘dodgy’ piece of workmanship “...must have been made by Indians.” Waheed Hassam, who runs a taxi service in Birmingham in addition to driving a cab, has been banned until he takes down a sign in the back of his taxi that says: “You’ve tried the cowboys - now try the Indians.”

Drivers from rival cab companies claimed the message amounted to ‘racism in reverse’ and was an insult to them insinuating that they operated ‘cowboy’ firms - as in cheap and no good!

They were backed by Birmingham taxi authorities who suspended Hassam from running the cab service. The decision was upheld in a local court, but Hassam now plans a Crown Court appeal. He told local papers after the case: “It’s a storm in a tepee. Firms are called Black and White Cabs yet nobody complains. Whatever happened to a sense of humour...”

£75M M25 SCHEME OPENS THREE MONTHS EARLY

Good news for taxi drivers using the Waltham Abbey section of the M25 in Hertfordshire - Transport Minister Tom Harris has opened the £75million project to refurbish and add extra lanes through the Holmesdale Tunnel and junction 25. The project, which has been completed three months ahead of schedule, increases the number of lanes through the Holmesdale tunnel. An extra lane has also been added to the eastbound M25 through junction 25 while key tunnel systems, including lighting, ventilation, CCTV monitoring and incident detection systems, have been upgraded.

Tom Harris said: “120,000 vehicles use this busy part of the M25 every day. It’s an important stretch of road both for local people and businesses and long-distance traffic. Adding these extra lanes, combined with the tunnel refurbishment, will ease congestion, shorten journeys and improve safety.

“I’d like to congratulate the Highways Agency on completing this important

scheme three months early. Refurbishing a tunnel while keeping 120,000 vehicles a day flowing through the site is no mean feat. The Government is committed to delivering this sort of quality improvement to the road network.”

The extra lanes have been added to the M25 junction 25 and Holmesdale tunnel without any additional land take. The Minister visited the completed project and attended a ribbon cutting ceremony to commemorate the opening. The Holmesdale Tunnel was originally opened in 1984. At Junction 25, the M25 motorway was designed with only two lanes for through traffic, which was causing congestion through the junction at peak times. By redesigning the internal layout within the tunnel an extra lane in each direction has now been provided. In addition new mechanical, electrical and ventilation equipment has been installed in the tunnel.