

GLOBAL NEWS



CHINESE CABBIES SLATED OVER EARTHQUAKE

The earthquake in China which severely damaged the mountainous province of Sichuan has left whole towns and villages needing to be rebuilt from scratch in order to re-house the millions displaced by the 7.9 magnitude quake. Many thousands have already died, with more bodies being discovered all the time as the towns and villages are cleared.

But some are now slating Chinese cab drivers. Relatives told how they found themselves stranded following the quake when taxi drivers refused to ferry them to the worst hit areas. Many taxis were at some of the more-built up areas of Sichuan, but the drivers refused to take passengers to the quake black spots as they feared fresh tremors and disease. One taxi controller said that not one of his drivers was prepared to go even to the areas where roads were still intact. Journalists, aid workers and relatives of victims anxious to help their families or mourn their dead had asked for some taxis to go as close as they could, after being told that further tremors were unlikely, but the drivers said they were too afraid.

The controller continued that some earlier drivers had gone, but began returning because there was no food, no water and because life was so unbearable in the Sichuan area. Even when he persuaded one driver to go, the family told him not to. Journalists were told that the cab drivers regretted their actions, but they too had families and driving a taxi should be just a job and not something you have to risk your life at.

BRIBERY ALLEGATIONS AT JAKARTA AIRPORT

If you think that Heathrow Airport's taxi park charges are expensive, well thank your lucky stars that you don't drive a cab in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta. There, according to reports reaching Taxi Globe's far eastern reporter Sam Allahwi, taxi drivers at the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport are claiming that they have to pay illegal bribes to airport officials, causing the drivers to extort money from their passengers in order to make a living.

One taxi driver who didn't want to be identified, revealed that he was required to pay Rp20,000 (just over £1) to several officials when he parked his cab at the airport last week. "The amount they charge you varies," he told us, "it just depends on what mood they are in!" He went on to add: "If we don't charge passengers higher fares, we will suffer losses as we are forced to pay these unofficial levies."

Another taxi driver agreed, adding that the officials who helped taxis

queue – as do traffic wardens at Heathrow - often asked them for uang rokok – roughly translated as "cigarette money." This is in addition to other "charges" for stopping and picking up etc... "None of us dare to protest the unofficial levies, because it could spell trouble for us," the driver said, "what is important for us is that we are able to work here." An airport officer in charge of regulating airport taxis rejected the allegations. "All the fees for taxi drivers are official," he told us, "there are no unofficial levies." The officer also refused to give his name – perhaps somewhat surprising?

However, the story does a complete turnabout when speaking to taxi passengers who claim that few, if any, airport taxi drivers charge the metered rate: "They usually charge anything up to double and always have a new reason as to why," one regular taxi commuter told us, "this week it is a fuel hike, last week it was an "airport tax." If they are being caught at the airport, then they are probably just getting some of their own medicine back!"

Taxi Globe decided to leave them sort out their own problems!

CANADIAN PASSENGER ALMOST FREEZES TO DEATH

A problem any taxi driver could encounter and possibly end up in court with? A woman who nearly froze to death outside her Alberta home in Canada after a night of drinking, is suing the city, the emergency personnel and the taxi driver who dropped her off.

Kate LaHone has undergone several skin grafts, lost one finger and has severe nerve damage in her right leg after spending seven hours in the cold last January, said her lawyer. He claimed that emergency personnel and the taxi driver should have made sure that Ms Simon was safely inside her house before leaving. Ms LaHone was 33 years old at the time. The mother of two children was out with friends and had several beers. She passed out in the cab on her way home.

At the time, the chief of the city's fire and paramedic services said six emergency personnel were called to the home by the cab driver. "She came out of the cab with them and she was perplexed as to why they were there, she said she didn't want their services," the fire chief said. Ms LaHone's father said that his daughter was found with her trousers pulled down and the skin on her legs exposed right down to her ankles. Her winter jacket was open, her keys were clenched in her left hand and she had a cut on her lip. She is looking to settle out of court. More if we get it...

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