

GLOBAL NEWS



HONG KONG CABBIES DISAPPOINTMENT OVER OLYMPIC BOOKINGS

The Hong Kong Tourist Board is reporting disappointing hotel bookings for its Olympic month of August and that has upset the local cabbies that – like London's finest in regard to 2012 – had been promised a bonanza. Hong Kong is to host the equestrian events at the Games, but says that with just three months to go before the big event begins, just 50% of available hotel rooms have been booked – a 10% fall over last year's bookings for the same period when they had no Olympics!

Hong Kong's Tourist Board chairman James Tien says that there is little the Board can do to boost flagging interest except continue with its promotional activities. Meanwhile the Federation of Hong Kong Hotel Owners executive director Michael Li described the bookings as "unsatisfactory." He said the equestrian events had a "lack of appeal" and added: "Even the government has no idea how many spectators the events could attract." He added that the complicated procedures introduced when applying for mainland visas and the Sichuan earthquake had also lowered the interest of tourists, who may have planned to visit the mainland after the events in Hong Kong.

One cab driver told the Globe's Hong Kong reporter that far from the bonanza, he could now see himself taking the time off as he expected many traffic diversions but little work.

PASSENGER ATTEMPTS SUICIDE IN TAXI

Global News has been told how police officers surrounded a Yellow Cab after an apparently suicidal woman stole the taxi she had hired in San Diego by taking out a gun and forcing the driver out of the cab, before later pointing the weapon at herself when caught.

A police spokesman told us that Andrea Buleigh, 28, forced the driver out of his vehicle at gunpoint shortly after he picked her up at 6am. She then drove off in the taxi. An officer on patrol in the area spotted the stolen taxi a few minutes later and pulled it over. Ms Buleigh refused the officer's request to step out of the cab and pointed the gun at her own head. After she refused to comply with demands that she put the gun down and get out of the cab, SWAT officers were called to the scene. Despite continued demands to leave the vehicle, the distressed young lady remained in the cab for about an hour with the gun pointed at her head.

At 7.45am, SWAT officers fired nine rubber baton rounds at Ms Buleigh. She was struck by one of them and officers were able to take her into custody. She is now facing medical tests.

BURGLARS CALL POLICE-DRIVEN TAXI!

Staying with the USA, two burglars were fleeing from an apartment with stolen goods when they attempted to call a cab. Unfortunately they hailed the wrong taxicab – one driven by an undercover police officer!

The policeman was on a routine undercover patrol in a Yellow cab, when he stopped for two men who were acting suspiciously as they tried frantically to hail a taxi. The unnamed officer said they drew attention to themselves because one was on a bicycle, while the other appeared to be hiding behind a van.

The man behind the van then approached the cab and told the policeman he wanted to go to the Bronx. When the "cabby" identified himself as a police officer, the man on the bicycle fled. The first suspect, a 17-year-old, was arrested carrying a video camera that had been stolen.

The two suspects and one other had just broken into an apartment by climbing from the roof to the fire escape, where they removed an air conditioning unit and pried the security bars from the window. In addition to the video camera, the burglars took a VCR, a stereo and jewellery from the apartment.

Is a policeman driving a taxi unusual? "Well," said a police spokesperson, "cab drivers have nothing to fear from the competition, but we have found it extremely useful to have an officer driving undercover as a taxi driver. We've had some great results from it..."

JAPANESE CABBY PERFORMING EXORCISM ON PASSENGER!

A Japanese taxi driver was arrested recently after he convinced a regular passenger into handing over 25 million yen for exorcisms that he told her were vital if she wanted to find the right man!

Kiri Harike, a 48-year-old taxi driver, was arrested and held for defrauding his victim regularly over a six-year period from 2001. The woman, whose identity was withheld, first hailed Harike's taxi in May 2001 when she confessed during a conversation to the silver-tongued cab driver that she had a strong desire to get hitched but had been unable to find the right man! Quick-minded Kiri 'revealed' that he just happened to be a fortune-teller and offered his services to her! He later expressed surprise to the police that his passenger had believed him so fully.

"I'm afraid you are possessed by evil spirits," Kiri reportedly told her after a quick fortune telling session in his taxi, "and unless you exorcise them immediately, your chances of getting married will be virtually non-existent."

The passenger admitted to being bewitched by Harike's smooth talking and decided to ask for his help by agreeing to meet him at a later date. Just over one week later, she handed over cash as an initial 'consultation charge'. In June that year, she followed up with another payment.

It is claimed that Kiri held up to 240 'exorcising sessions' during the six year period and dishonestly charged the woman around 25 million yen for his fortune telling services. Oh, and by the way, the passenger is still not married...!

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