

GLOBAL NEWS



Thai “Minicab” Murders...

According to the brochures, Bangkok is a city that overloads the senses as you watch crowded streets filled by tuk-tuks, the occasional elephant weaving its way through congested traffic, motorbikes with whole families on board and monks clad in their bright orange robes. You can stop at a food stall to pick up a few fried grasshoppers while the spicy smells of Thai cooking wafts from the restaurants.

But until very recently there was also a dark side and that came from two words we in London know well... unlicensed minicabs. Warnings against taking unlicensed cabs from Bangkok's international airport were posted after revelations of a Thai investigation into the murder of at least six foreigners during the past 10 months - all apparently lured into unlicensed cabs on arrival in Bangkok, taken to isolated areas on the outskirts of the city, robbed and then murdered. One source told Taxi Globe that they were stabbed or had their throats cut. Officials in Bangkok have said that tourists should only get into taxis at officially designated pick-up points at the airport. The dumped bodies of two French nationals, an Austrian, a German, an Iraqi and a citizen of the United Arab Emirates were found after tourists arriving at the airport were apparently persuaded with offers of cheap fares and hotel accommodation to take an unlicensed cab by one or more touts lurking outside the arrivals terminal.

An Egyptian tour guide, along with his 31-year-old Thai wife, have been arrested in connection with the investigation. Police questioned him closely during a search of his home for any murder weapons. Police told journalists that they were seeking knives showing any traces of victims blood. It was reported that they found several victims credit cards.

“Even on what we already have, we can prove he is guilty,” said Police Major General Sakri Tunketa in a rather un-British type of statement. The killings have highlighted persistent security problems at the airport where rip-offs and scams by unlicensed minicab-type vehicles and tour guides have drawn complaints for years. The head of airport security was quoted by Bangkok papers as saying that it was almost impossible to bar the airport to people - even those known as scam artists.

Bangkok's airport is the main gateway for the many millions of tourists that Thailand is hoping to attract following a two-year advertising campaign.

Las Vegas Bid To Stop Nightclub Payoffs To Cab Drivers...

As a London night driver, have you ever been tempted to take your passengers to a night-club that you suspect may rip them off just so that you can take a rake-off? In Las Vegas it happens all the time - clubs, brothels (outside the county line) and topless bars are paying cab drivers to take customers to their businesses. Now a Bill is on the way to stop it.

In Northern Nevada, at least one cab driver told a Senate committee that he received payoffs for taking his customers to a chicken shack (house of prostitution) in Lyon County. The Bill describes it as a deceptive trade practice for an owner or employee of one of these businesses to give cash or services to the driver of a taxicab (or limousine or bus) to divert passengers away from the location requested, to the business, which is making the payoff.

The first offence would carry a civil fine of up to US\$1,000. A second offence would carry a maximum fine of US\$5,000 and the third violation would be a maximum fine of US\$10,000.

His Majesty King Abdullah II Of Jordan – Licensed Cabby!

Disguised in worn-out clothes and roaming the streets of his capital Amman unescorted, King Abdullah II of Jordan posed as a taxi driver recently to hear the complaints of his countrymen. It was the second time in a week that the Jordanian monarch had gone undercover in a bid to fight bureaucracy in a country where even children's admission to school depends on family connections.

The king managed to successfully complete his inquiries without revealing his identity, palace officials revealed to the world's press including Taxi Globe.

The officials said the King had spent over two hours in the afternoon chatting with passengers while driving a yellow cab to both the well-to-do suburbs and slums of Amman.

At one point, King Abdullah stopped to ask astounded traffic police for directions and then mingled with them, discussing their concerns about traffic violations in a country known for its reckless drivers. “He also heard passengers' concerns on all sorts of things ranging from political to bread-and-butter matters,” said an official.

Abdullah's late father, King Hussein, played similar tricks during his 46-year reign. His most famous escapade came when he sped off in a motorcycle in bustling downtown Amman enraging traffic police who were inspecting new radar gear. When the King was finally stopped after a 90-minute chase, he took off his helmet to greet baffled policemen. Rumours that Prince Charles would attempt something similar in London were denied by Buck House officials who told us that SGS “...had failed Daddy's Metrocab!”

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