

# GLOBAL NEWS



## Saudi Arabian Cabbies Moaning At Mecca!

Taxi driving in Mecca is not as profitable as it once used to be according to many Saudi cabbies that worked in the holy city during Ramadan. Mecca taxi drivers were once famous for charging pilgrims exorbitant prices to drive them to the holy mosque from the car parks, with parking anywhere else being impossible. Now, as the cabbies wait for September, tales of woe from the holy city last year during the greatest religious observance in Islam, are slowly filtering through.

2009 saw the introduction of minibuses, which take pilgrims to the holy mosque for a small bus fare. One taxi driver told Taxi Globe that he used to make a third of his yearly salary during Ramadan, charging visitors and pilgrims three times his 'normal' fare and 35 times what the bus fare was! Saudi cabbies used to come from all over to work at Mecca during Ramadan, but since the advent of the minibus service to the holy mosque, people have been attracted to them because of the ultra-low charge. Drivers' takings are said to be down by 90% on previous years and just to rub salt into their wound, local police are preventing the taxi drivers from "hanging up" near unofficial parking places where pilgrims and visitors leave their vehicles. "I won't be bothering next year," one disgruntled cabby told us, "I'll stay at home and watch the television!"

## Chinese Taxi Driver "Sees Ufo!"

In February, Global News reported on the strange story of Zambian taxi driver James Mwassambula who claimed he had picked up a 7 foot alien in his home city of Lusaka. Newspapers from around the world took an immediate interest, but the hapless cabby eventually admitted he had lied because he didn't like taxi driving and thought that he could earn some money by coming up with the story!

However, a Chinese taxi driver from Lanzhou now claims to have followed a UFO as it passed across the north-western Chinese sky and according to scientists his story could be genuine. Cabby Xian Chow Teh made the claim of sighting a fireball – confirmed by several witnesses - shortly before midnight in the clear China night sky.

"Everything turned light as day," Xian told Global News via the internet, "it flew at the fastest rate I have ever seen anything move and the only reason I managed to follow it for so long was because it did not go in a straight line, but kept moving up and down and even sideways. If it was a meteorite, would it be able to go sideways?" Police are working on the theory that it probably was a meteorite and went to investigate the matter, but have so far found no evidence as to what caused the phenomenon.

Xian, now something of a celebrity having appeared on Chinese talk shows, is sticking to his story that he was in his cab and everything suddenly became as bright as day. He pulled over and saw the fireball with a tail of about 10 feet darting across the sky. So far, though, no stories of little green cabbies coming out and waving for a taxi have come out! China has been hit by several waves of UFO sighting in recent years and the country has a research association devoted to the study of possible extraterrestrial visits.

## USA Cabby's Good Deed

The family of a cancer-stricken New Jersey girl who lost a video camera full of irreplaceable memories, got it back thanks to an honest cabby and an eagle-eyed policeman. "I'm so happy to have it back so I can watch all my videos on it and take it to school to show all my friends," said 11-year-old Ria Collett. Ria and her family left the camera and tape - which documents her year long struggle against a rare bone cancer - in a New Jersey cab.

The driver Dan Brownstein made three unsuccessful attempts to find the family at the hotel where he had picked them up and eventually turned the camera over to police. The officer had seen a lost property request handed in by the distraught family and as luck would have it, was the officer who the taxi driver handed the video to. Any other officer would not yet have known about Ria's video.

Mr Brownstein told Taxi Globe that he had no idea anyone had been looking for the camera when he returned it. He drew cheers when he refused to accept the \$5,000 reward that had been offered by the family and a local newspaper for the invaluable tape. "Give it to Ria," he said, "money is secondary for me. Humanity and human beings and honesty are first."

## Taxi Death Over Unpaid Fare

Back to China for the sad story of a 26-year-old man who plunged 20 floors to his death in Tuen Mun just minutes after being chased by a taxi driver over an unpaid fare. Chan Kam-wai had flagged down the taxi at around 2am, but then said he had no money when the taxi arrived at his home. "He got out of the cab and ran into the building. I gave chase but lost him on the third floor," the driver told police who he had called on his mobile. As the driver and police were confirming the story, they heard a bang and found the man lying unconscious on the ground. He died on the way to hospital...

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