

Business As Usual

This month I've compiled a few business tales (said to be true life) from around the world. Here's one for the road...



A very successful businessman was leaving his office building when he saw a small boy sitting on the curb with a dog. The boy yelled at the businessman, "Hey, how would you like to buy a dog?". The man was intrigued by this sales approach and asked the boy, "How much do you want for your dog?" The boy told him, "fifty thousand rupees."

"Fifty thousand rupees!", the man repeated in astonishment. "What special tricks does this dog do for it to be worth fifty thousand rupees?", the man asked the boy. The boy replied, "Mister, this dog never made a nickel in its life. Matter of fact, if you count what it eats I guess you could say you lose money on it every year."

The businessman felt this was a good time to explain economics to the young boy and expounded on how an item had to produce more income than it consumed to fetch such a high selling price. The man told the boy that he should be happy if he even gets Rs 5 for the dog. Feeling happy that he had imparted a very valuable lesson to the young man, the businessman went on his way.

A few weeks later, the businessman came out of his office building and found the small boy again sitting on the curb, minus the dog. The man said to him, "I see you

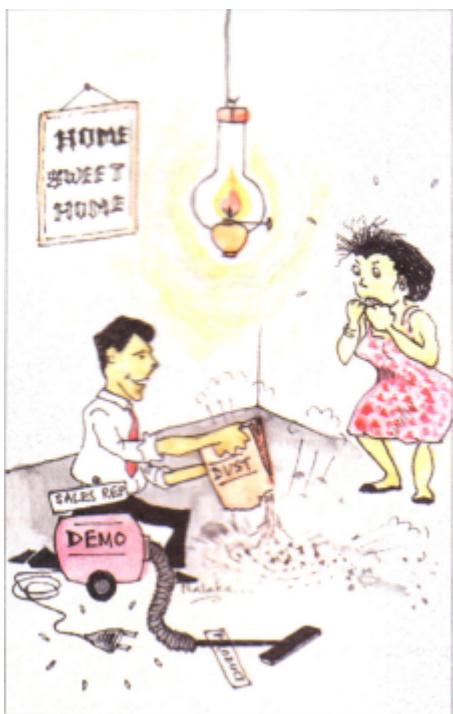
took my advice and sold the dog for five rupees". The boy said, "no, I got fifty thousand rupees for him". The businessman was completely flabbergasted. "How did you ever get fifty thousand rupees for that dog?", he asked. "It was easy", said the boy. "I traded him for two, twenty-five-thousand-rupee cats.



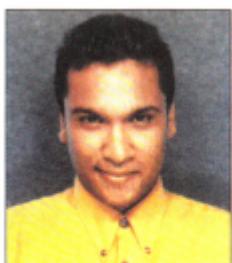
If you've ever been totally bewildered by what people seem to be saying in advertisements these days, then fear not, you aren't the only one. This story is about the shoe giant Nike who has produced a television commercial for hiking shoes, that was shot in Kenya using the Samburu tribesmen. In the advertisement, the camera closes in on one tribesman who speaks in native Maa. As he speaks, the Nike slogan "Just Do It" appears on the screen. Lee Cronk, an anthropologist at the University of Cincinnati, however says that what the Kenyan really said in native Maa is, "I don't want these. Give me big shoes". Says Nike's spokes- woman, "we thought nobody in America would know what he said."



A Tokyo company, Juonsha, recently began offering a mail-order curse kit, featuring a straw doll to represent the hexee, along with eight accessories, including nails, a curse manual, and a curse blocking doll to ward off return curses. The company at first marketed this product among boys and girls who were bullied at school, but soon discovered a major market in women who hoped to put spells on neighbors, in-laws, and husbands. Among the hints in the manual, one reads as follows: "It is important to specify the kind of misfortune (you wish upon the victim)... It is important to imagine the unhappy scenes." A perfect birthday gift for your boss when your salary increment is denied.



And for those of you who think this column is getting too highbrow.....here's a more down-to-earth story. A door-to-door vacuum cleaner salesman managed to bull his way into a woman's home in outback Australia. "This machine is the best ever", he exclaimed, whilst pouring a bag of dirt over the lounge floor. The woman said she was really worried it may not all come off, so the salesman said, "if this machine doesn't remove all the dust completely, I'll lick it off myself". "Do you want ketchup on it?", she said, "only we're not connected for electricity yet!"



Afdhel Aziz is a journalist and broadcaster. He currently works at Young Asia Television as Public Relations Manager. He has an Honours degree in English Literature from Kings College, London.