

Friendship Hall to be leased out

SABRINA KARIM MURSHED

The authorities have almost finalised the process of leasing out the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Hall to private operators.

The Public Works Department (PWD) received the international tenders on December 12, 2004 following the government's decision to lease the hall to the private sector.

Sources in the PWD said the tenders went through an evaluation process and the consortium headed by Hotel Agrabad was found to be the highest bidder. The consortium includes a Thai group called Comfort Patang, Hotel Marco Polo of Thailand and the DCCL were among the other bidders.

Hotel Agrabad has offered Tk 3.7 crore annually as leasing money while others had offered around Tk 2.7 crore, said sources.

A meeting of the cabinet committee last year decided to lease the hall to the private sector for operation and maintenance. A committee was formed to chalk out the rules and regulations.

The 200 crore Taka centre was inaugurated on January 12, 2002. The Chinese government provided 135 crore Taka for

The hall will be leased out for 10 years to a private company with experience and ability to run it. The rules of leasing do not permit any renovation or alteration to the hall

construction.

The hall will be leased out for ten years to a private company having the experience and ability to run it properly. "There could be extension of the lease after the contract period had expired depending on the performance of the company," said a high official of PWD.

The rules of leasing do not permit the leaseholder to renovate or perform any alteration to the conference hall. There is also a provision that allows the government to use the hall for 12 events in a year for free. For any subsequent use, the government has to pay the full rent.

When asked PWD officials said the government was already making a profit by renting the conference hall.

"Around eight crore Taka was earned in three years," said a high official of PWD. Rent for the huge plenary hall with 1662 seats is Tk 2,30,000. The banquet hall with a seating arrangement for 700 can be rented for Tk two lakhs. The maintenance of the centre costs around Tk four lakh every month.

"It was not incurring a loss but the cabinet division decided to lease it for better operation and more profit," the PWD official said adding that the PWD does not have sufficient manpower for maintaining the hall.

Some PWD officials however feared that the hall might lose its sanctity if there was no restrictions on renting it. "At present we do not allow holding occasions like weddings or birthdays. But once it is leased out there won't be any such control," explained one of them.

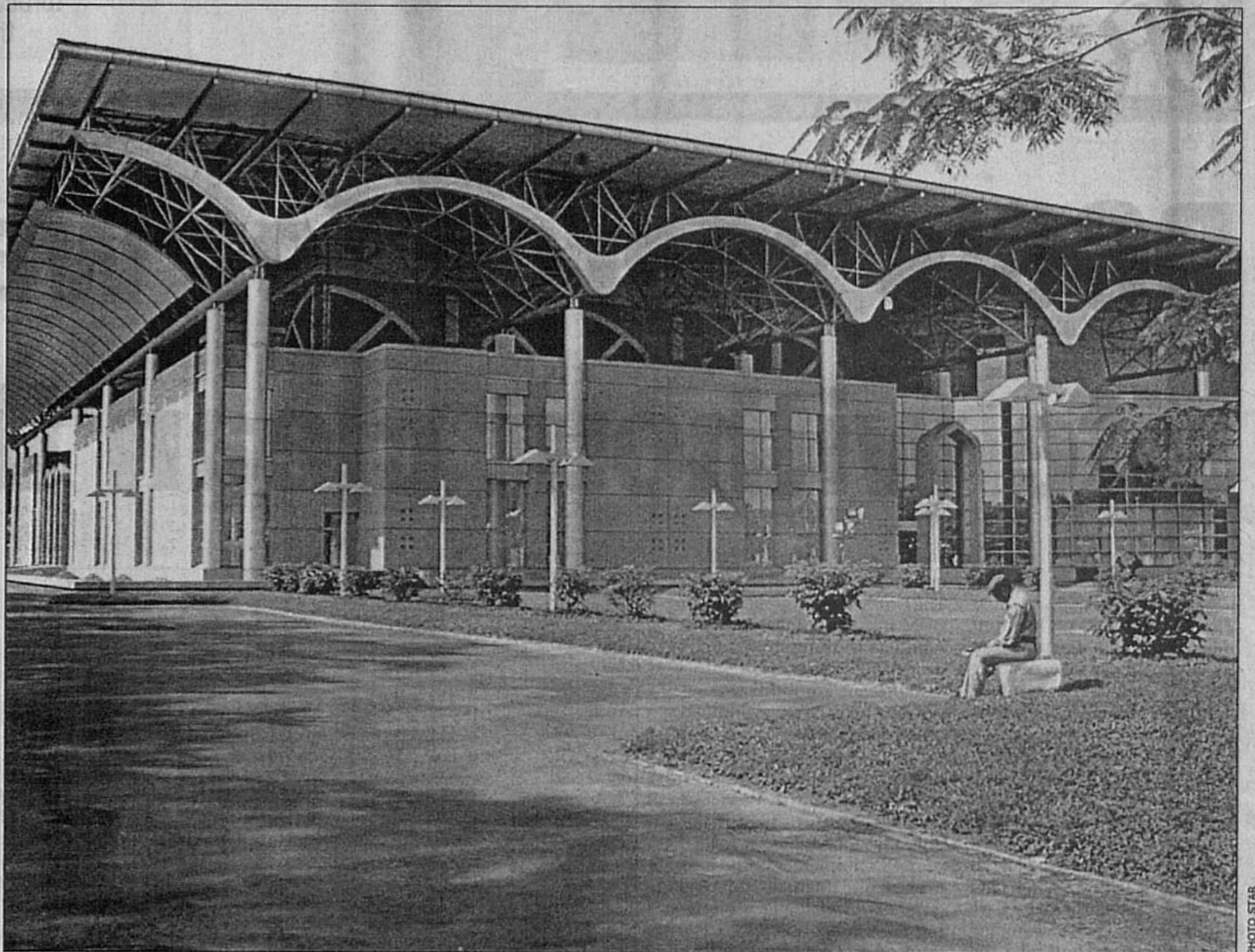


PHOTO STAR



Travelling in taxi cabs may turn out to be safer once identity cards are introduced.

IDS FOR CABBIES

Passengers' safety now prime concern

CHRISTINE WANNER

In the face of repeated mugging by cabbies, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) plans to introduce ID cards for drivers proving their 'non-criminal' past.

Both passengers and taxi companies think the idea is good but they demand more steps to improve security of passengers. Some 10,000 registered taxis ply the streets. A driver's personal ID card will contain his picture, name, address and registration number of the vehicle. "The DMP will help taxi companies introduce and implement the ID card system," said Ansar Uddin Khan Pathan, deputy commissioner of the DMP traffic (south).

He said: "People in Dhaka would rather take a CNG-driven autorickshaw than a taxi. Not because the autorickshaw costs less, but because it is considered safer than a taxi. The cards will assure passengers of their safety."

"We have not yet heard of the ID card system. But it seems a good suggestion," said Tarun Kumar Kairy, assistant general manager of the taxi service department of Navana, the largest service provider in the city. Navana fits every vehicle with its

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own radio communication system, allowing the company's control room to locate it at any time and to stay in constant contact.

According to Kairy, this is vital to improve the security on the streets. "We wish that all taxi cab companies are equipped with the radio communications system. Companies that are not linked to any communications should be penalised by law."

To hire a professional driver, Kairy demands at least two responsible references. "In case the driver is involved in an accident or any criminal matter, these two persons should be held responsible for the driver's actions and compensate the loss."

Another taxicab company, Anudip, assures safety differently having introduced its own iden-

tity system. Khaled Saifullah, Anudip's general manager, said: "Taxi business is relatively new to Bangladesh. The main problem lies with insincerity of the drivers who sometimes carry illegal licences."

"We test the applicants before employing them. They have to get through oral, written and practical tests, as we cannot rely on the BRTA issued licences." In addition to this, Anudip has dispersed its own security staff in the city.

To prevent accidents after a long working day and to stop car burglaries, Anudip taxi drivers have to park the vehicles at the company's parking lot themselves.

The safety issue is important to passengers. "I would rather ask my friends to take me home at

night than take a taxi," said Mansur Ahmed, a passenger. He uses an autorickshaw during the day. "If the ID card system would ensure safety, I may use taxis," he added.

The DMP has another answer to people's lack of confidence in taxi service. "A new taxi cab company may be the answer. The Ministry of Communications will give licences to a new taxi company, operating with green taxi cabs," said the deputy commissioner.

Apart from the safety issue, drivers refuse to take passengers to required destinations if the distance does not seem to be 'feasible'.

It adds to a passenger's worry when the phone numbers provided for complaints are not in proper working order.

healthouting, taxicab & train timing

HEALTH

Hospitals
Heart
 National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), -9130800, 9122560-59
Burn
 Dhaka Medical College Hospital Burn Unit-8626812-6
Cancer
 National Cancer Institute-8014914, 8826561-65
 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University-8612550-4, 861455-9
Diabetes
 Diabetic Research Hospital (BIRDEM)-9661551-5, 8616641-50
Mother & Child Care
 Shishu Hospital-9119119, 8116061-62
 Azimpur Mother & Child Health

Training Institute-8624827, 8624980
Eye
 Islamia Eye Hospital-9110794, 9119315
 National Eye Hospital-8117202, 8114807
Dental
 Dental College-9002035
Orthopaedics
 National Orthopaedics (Pangu) Hospital-9114075, 9112150
General
 Dhaka Medical College Hospital-8626812-6
 Rushmono General Hospital-8317819
 Holy Family Hospital-83111731-25
 Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital-8612550-4, 8614545-9
 Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital-8115443, 9118202,

Shamarita Hospital-9131901
 Suhrawardy Hospital--9130800, 9122560-69
 Salimullah Medical College Hospital--7310061-4, 7319002-6,
 Cholera Research Hospital (ICDDR)-8811751-60
 Monowra Hospital 8319802, 8318135
Blood Bank
 Red Crescent Centre-9116563
 Sandhani (DMCH)-8624040
 Sandhani (SMCH)-7310061, 7310061, 7319022
 Dhaka Medical College Hospital-8626812-9
Eye Bank
 Sandhani International Eye Bank-8614040
Ambulances For Dead Body
 Anzuman Mafidul Islam (Kakrail) 9336611, Gandaria 7319808, 7318166,
 Al-Markajul Islam 9127867,

MARKET CLOSED

Gulshan 1, 2 markets-Friday
 Elephant Road-Friday
 Bishal Center-Friday
 Bahtal Mukarram Market-Friday
 Polwell Market-Friday
 BCS Computer City-Friday
 Isha Khan Shopping Complex-Friday.
 Rajjaxmi Complex-Friday
 Stadium Market-Friday
 Bangabazar Market-Friday
 National Museum-Thursday
 Ahsan Manzil--Thursday.
 New Market-Tuesday
 Gausia Market-Tuesday
 Mouchak Market-Sunday
 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
 Dhanmondi Hawkers Market-Tuesday
 Eastern Plaza-Sunday
 Farmview Super Market-Sunday
 Mukjuddha Jadughar-Sunday
 Dhaka Zoo-Sunday
 Shishu Jadughar-Sunday

TAXI CAB

Yellow Cab
 Navana 9558065
 Salida 9344477, 0171620881
 Cosmo 9112959 and 8127191
 Cab One 7113282-3
 Nihon 8624741-2
 Orion 9347277
 Anudip 8125285 and 8127611
 Capital 9352847
Black Cab
 Cab Ex 9358401
 Cabline 8321162
 JBS Cab 019364575
 Sajjan 018126036
 Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611
TRAIN TIMING
Subarna Express
 Mahanagar Prabhali
 Mahanagar Godhuli
 Turna
Parabat Express
 Joyantika Express
 Upaban Express
 Tista Express
 Ekata Express
 Upakul Express
 Agnibeena Express
 Leaves Dhaka at 4:30 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 7:30 am
 Leaves Dhaka at 3-15 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 11-00 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 6-40 am
 Leaves Dhaka at 12-45 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 9-45 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 7-00 am
 Leaves Dhaka at 5-00 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 8-00 pm
 Leaves Dhaka at 9-20 pm

Union 8130485
 Kool 0171826731
Black Cab
 Cab Ex 9358401
 Cabline 8321162
 JBS Cab 019364575
 Sajjan 018126036
 Anudip -- 8125285 and 8127611
 Cab One 7113282-3
 Palki 0171052500
 Cab I 7113282
 Jatri 0171540074
 Nipun 9572277
 R-Cab 8914782
 Star Cab 9571919
 Shihab 018202477 & 018228675
 KGN 8620011
 Reaches Chittagong at 10:35 pm
 Reaches Chittagong at 1-55 pm
 Reaches Chittagong at 10-55 pm
 Reaches Chittagong at 6-40 am
 Reaches Sylhet at 2-30 pm
 Reaches Sylhet at 9-20 pm
 Reaches Sylhet at 6-40 am
 Reaches Bahadurabad at 1-05 pm
 Reaches Bahadurabad at 11-15
 Reaches Noakhali at 5-00 am
 Reaches Jagannath at 2-30 pm

LIBRARY & INFO

Libraries, Cultural and Information Centers
 Central Public Library-8626001-4,
 Shishu Academy-9564128
 Shilpakala Academy-8614673
 Bangla Academy-8619550
 Islamic Foundation-9550280,
 9556407
 Nazrul Institute-9114602
 Ford Foundation-8116133
 Alliance Francaise-8611557
 Information Resource Center, The American Center-8813440-4,
 9886395-9
 British Council-8618867-8,
 8618905-7
 Community Development Library-8113769, 8113604
 Goethe Institute Int'l- Dhaka-9126525-6
 Indian Information Centre & Cultural Library-8850141-2
 The Russian Cultural Centre-9116314, 9118531, 9118314
 Drik Photo Gallery-9120125,
 8112954, 8123412
 Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) 9330081-4