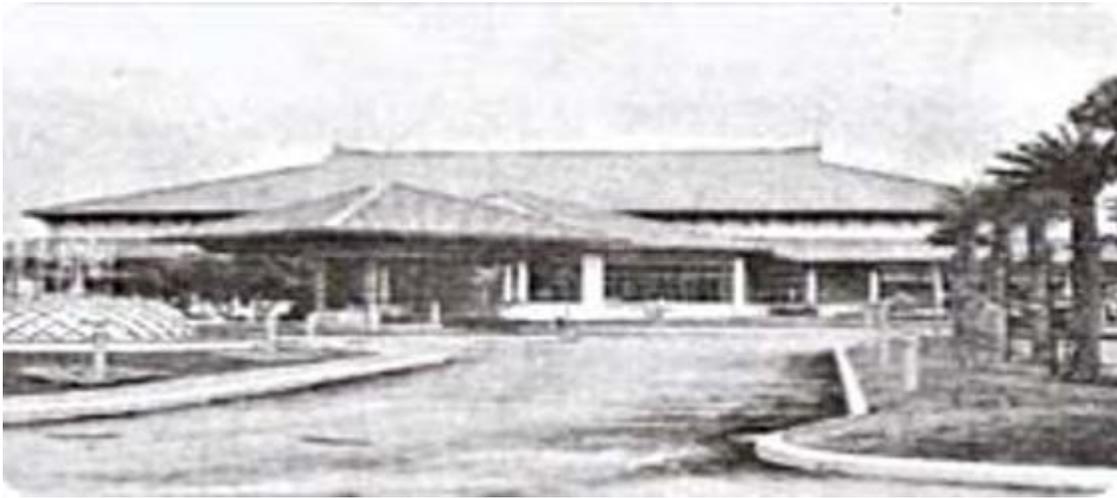


India's second biggest convention centre coming up in Thrissur



An international convention centre, claimed to be the second biggest of its kind in the country and the biggest in Kerala, will be inaugurated at Puzhakkalpadam area on the outskirts of the city by Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanaridan on July 2. Christened Lulu International Convention Centre, it is being set up by the United Arab Emirates (UAE)-based EMKE Group headed by a non-resident Keralite M.A. Yusuffali. Spread across an area of more than 18 acres on the Thrissur-Guruvayur highway with a built-up area of 1,60,000 sq. ft., the convention centre will have a capacity for over 4,000 people divided into indoor hall and open-air auditorium. It will have dining facility for 2,000 guests at a time. Being set up at a cost of Rs.40 crores, the convention centre will have three mini-conference halls with a total capacity for 750 guests and a 50-room hotel with restaurants. Addressing a press conference here on Tuesday, Mr. Yusuffali said the centre would have a helipad as per the international aviation standards. This would give a whole new dimension to the way conventions and events were to be arranged in Kerala in future. There would also be parking facilities for 2,000 cars, he said.

Mr. Yusuffali said that the EMKE Group, which is best known in the Gulf through a chain of Lulu hypermarkets, supermarkets and departmental stores, was also planning to set up a five star hotel with 200 rooms at the convention centre.

"The hotel to be set up in collaboration with international hotel chains is expected to cost Rs.60 crores and will be completed within 18 months," he said. Replying to questions, he said the group was planning similar convention centres in Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram as well. Asked about the viability of setting up such a huge convention centre in a relatively underdeveloped area like Thrissur, Mr. Yusuffali said: "We will be launching a marketing strategy to attract conventions at international, national and State levels to this centre. We see lot of potential for developments taking place in Thrissur in future. The feasibility study conducted by us indicates that the project will turn profitable within ten years." He said the group's turnover was Rs.3,200 crores last year and this year it was expected to touch Rs.3,500 crores.