

## Now, AC metered taxis in the city

*Hind Motors' Move Comes In Wake Of Govt Nod For Tatas' Tata Indigo Taxis*

THE CK Birla-controlled Hindustan Motors (Hind Motors) on Saturday launched AC metered taxis in Kolkata. The taxis will be available across the city.

The move literally comes on the heels of a recent approval given by the Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee government to the Tatas for launch of some 300-odd air-conditioned Tata Indigo taxis in Kolkata. At present, a tiny fleet of Tata Indica cars already ply the city streets as luxury taxis under the Blue Arrow brand banner. The fares of these luxury cabs would also be nearly 25% more than the ubiquitous "yellow" variety. Citybased car rental agency, the Orix Group, will operate the Tata Indigo cabs within the Kolkata Metropolitan area.

Hindustan Motors' Uttarpara plant executive vice-president Moloy Chowdhury told reporters in Kolkata that the state transport department had sanctioned 200 permits for AC metered taxis in the city. He said the tariff for the AC taxis would be 25% more than the non-AC variety. At present, there were more than 20,000 non-AC taxis plying in the city.

Incidentally, HM's AC taxis will conform to the BS III emission norms. These cars will have split seats with head rest, front and rear seat belts and a mobile charge station. It will also have a red stripe running on the body.

Moreover, these taxis will give an improved mileage because of improved engine and five speed gear box with Japanese technology (option of overdrive) and will be available at the company's authorised dealers in Kolkata — Austin Distributors and Shah Automobiles.

Mr Chowdhury said separate counters would be put at the airport and major railway stations for AC taxis. The first batch of AC taxis would be offered at an introductory price of Rs 3.79 lakh, ex-showroom, in Kolkata.

Hind Motors' Uttarpara plant churns out nearly a 1000 Ambassador cars at present — one-third of the rated capacity primarily due to low demand.

It has suspended manufacturing LPG taxis due to lack of refilling stations in the city. Besides cars, the plant also has other verticals like auto stampings, auto forgings and auto castings.

**Our Bureau/Kolkata**