

Soon to open, country's first private transport museum located in Gurgaon is a wonder in itself. Behind its high walls are parked live embodiments of centuries of technological evolution. TOI offers you a sneak peek as we take a roller-coaster ride back in time

HOW MAN MOVED WHEELS OF TIME

Sumeet Keswani | TNN

A wormhole is about to open on Bilaspur Taoro Road at Tauru-Gurgaon. As India sends its first unmanned spacecraft to Mars, Heritage Transport Museum promises to be a portal to a simpler time, sketching out the remarkable evolution of transport in India over the centuries.

What started as a passion of Tarun Thakral, founder and management trustee of heritage transportation trust, almost two decades ago, has turned into the first private museum of its scale and kind in the country. The experience begins with an exhibit that showcases the evolution of wheel. Placed alongside is the oldest artifact of the museum — dating back to 2,500 BC from the Harappan civilization — a bird with wheels for wings.

Vintage cars and buses, a 1930 luxury rail saloon; pre-mechanized transport modes like palanquins and camel and elephant howdahs; a 1946 Piper J-3 Cub airplane suspended mid-air; indigenous vehicles like the phat-phat; obsolete two-wheelers sure to strike emotional chords; old lithographs, engravings, original photographs, rare books and maps, automobile spare parts, enamel advertise-



ment boards, lobby cards, post-cards and more are laid out for an interactive experience on four levels of a structure designed to resemble a factory churning out the old and priceless. There's even a Bollywood corner with a red convertible that featured as Shah Rukh Khan's drive in 'Dil To Pagal Hai'.

"Indian museums have traditionally been boring and static," says Tarun, "This museum breaks the myth by providing an original visitor attraction which has been completely imagined and designed. It is of national importance and international standing. Our aim is to awaken and maintain an interest in transportation."

A walk amid the collection is like a fall down the rabbit hole. The wonderland here is every auto collector's fantasy. Ask Tarun his most prized possessions and he finds it difficult to

choose. In the end, he proudly points to a 1932 Chevrolet Phaeton, a 1934 Buick Limousine, a 1938 Ford Convertible, a 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air convertible and a 1957 Ford Skyliner Retractable Hard Top which is parked in front of an old petrol pump. The cars have been refurbished and restored, and are in working condition.

Acquiring all of it was not easy; it was done through a network of scrap dealers across India, global auction houses, eBay and other websites. "At times I had to compete with scrap dealers at auctions to buy some of the most priceless automobiles. Justifying a museum of this kind and getting funding were the biggest challenges. The ministry of culture has contributed Rs 6 crore," Tarun says.

The museum has something for everyone: conference rooms boasting visually-stimulating environment; a library and research centre with over 2,000 books on transport and art; a discovery centre that lays auto parts threadbare for children to learn about them; and even 3D shows as part of school programmes and workshops.

Calling it a museum, however, would be misleading. For the collection here isn't surrounded by white walls and lit with tungsten light. Vintage automobiles are placed in streets recreated from the 80s, complete with rustic garages, tea stalls, artifacts and

hardware stores. The setting itself is a collection to be proud of and a strong trigger of nostalgia. The art, too, is not limited to vintage. Contemporary art links the history of transport and the society that has evolved around it. For instance, a truck stop is seen lined with heavy vehicles in the backdrop of graffiti that draws on AIDS and other medical and social ailments that plague truckers in India. Panels of tribal art that show rural and tribal landscape of an ancient country adapting to various transport modes act as a virtual storyboard. A Pakistani artist has also done his bit by bringing in some of



Carts and palanquins from different eras on display

A two-seater 1946 Piper J-3 Cub airplane is suspended mid-air

A 1948 Hudson Commodore



his country's truck art.

"The museum has been designed in a way that a majority of galleries can be changed at regular intervals. The trust is not putting its entire collection on display; it aims to rotate its exhibits every quarter, which will include those belonging to Indian and foreign collectors. We foresee a larger interest from various transport related companies in times to come to display latest technology too," says Tarun.

The old-world portal opens on December 1. Pack your time-travel gear for a memorable ride!



WAR OF WORDS: 1-A 1957 Ford Skyliner with a retractable hard top, 2-One of the palanquins exhibited in the pre-mechanized transport section, 3-A 1938 Early Ford, 4-The museum tour starts with the evolution of the wheel



Transport museum opens doors

Rao Jaswant Singh | TNN

Gurgaon: A museum that will showcase the evolution of transportation in India was inaugurated by chief minister Bhupinder Hooda on Saturday. Situated in Fatehpur, around 35km from Gurgaon, the museum houses around 2,500 antique items ranging from the Indus Valley civilization to the British era.

The museum is the brainchild of vintage car collector Tarun Thakral. He said the museum has come up at the cost of Rs 12 crore. Hooda said the museum is the first such museum in the country.

In the museum, visitors will find different modes of transport in different parts of the country. Thakral, who lithographs of Indian transport system, said the museum showcases its gradual evolution to the present age. Young generation should have proper knowledge



The museum houses around 2,500 antique items

about from where the transport system has evolved in India, he added.

The entry ticket for adults will be Rs 300 and Rs 150 for children. Apart from this, entry for differently-abled persons and children below three years of age would be free.

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