

A VINTAGE ROMANCE

Lovers of vintage automobiles are in for a treat in 2011. Thanks to the efforts of Tarun Thakral, Chief Operating Officer of Le Meridien, New Delhi, a Heritage Transport Museum is coming up on a 6.5-acre area on the outskirts of Gurgaon in March next year. The museum will trace India's fascinating journey in personal and public transport over the last 200 years. Jahnvi Sarma sneaks a peek at the vintage extravaganza.

All of us have, at some point or the other, heard about the horse buggy taken by our grandfather to school or the palanquin used by our great grandmother. Those were the days, the earlier generation would say, when traffic was smooth and the mode of transport exotic. Cars from Germany and Sweden graced the roads and rickshaws and tongas gracefully gave them right of way. Fast forward to the present day. We see more cars on the road from all over the world. But all of us often wonder what the roads would look like if the cars of yester years were to appear on the road. Well, that may not be possible but we will soon get the chance to experience the next best thing thanks to the upcoming Heritage Transport Museum. The brainchild of Tarun Thakral, the Heritage Transport Museum is all set to enthrall visitors with vintage carriages, carts, rickshaws, cars, commercial vehicles, lithographs, signages and even vintage rail saloons and aircrafts. Thakral, who is currently the COO of Le Meridien Hotel in New Delhi and the founder of Heritage Transportation Trust (HTT), which is setting up the project, is an avid collector of vintage cars and commercial vehicles. It was this interest that inspired him to come up with a museum that is exciting, informative and entertaining. In fact, if Thakral has his way, we might soon be able to get a ride on old carriages and rickshaws that no longer ply on the roads today.

In keeping with the demands of the times, the museum will have an auditorium, conference and meeting rooms and this will also be the main revenue generator of the museum. Thakral is confident that this will be India's answer to the Petersen Automotive Museum of Los Angeles' and the Transport Museum of London.

Thakral, whose romance with vintage cars started with a 1932 Chevrolet, today has a royal rail saloon, horse carriages, rickshaws, a vintage bus, a truck and even a three-wheeler 'phat-phatia' that used to run from Connaught Place to Chandni Chowk among others like a palanquin, a decorated bullock cart and horse drawn carriages from the Victorian era. His collection of lithographs, postcards and roadmaps besides shops and road signs of earlier days will make the entire experience very real. Given this background, the multi crore museum is bound to enthrall people and provide them a glimpse of a bygone era. ●

