

# THE HINDU BusinessLine

**For car buffs, a museum of old beauties!**

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The world's first automobile, the 1886 Benz Patent Motorwagen

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You would have come across philatelists (stamp collectors), numismatists (coin collectors), labeorphilists (individuals collecting beer bottles) and many more. But have you come across one who has a collection of veteran cars (built before 1904), vintage (between 1904 and 1931) and classic cars (built between 1931 and 1979)?

Well, Coimbatore-based industrialist and philanthropist the late G D Naidu, who was an ardent automobile fan, started collecting rare and technologically unique cars during his life time. His collection includes the first ever automobile made in the world — the 1886 Benz Patent Motorwagen, Hispano Suiza H6B car (owned earlier by the Maharaja of Mysore and the only Hispano B series car in India) among several exotic, massive and outstandingly impressive cars.

Naidu's son G D Gopal continued his father's hobby by not just adding to the collection, but maintaining most of the cars in motorable condition. Pointing to the tri-cycle-like vehicle, Gopal said, "We recently drove the world's first automobile — the 1886 Benz Motorwagen — on Delhi roads and covered close to 40 km".

He is now ready to fulfil his father's dream by displaying the collection at the Gedee Car Museum, located within the Gedee Technical Training Institute premises on Avinashi Road.

This private car museum is all set to be inaugurated on April 27.

The descriptive details of each of the 60-odd cars on display highlights the technology transformation in the automobile industry with due respect to the inventors behind these inventions.

"We are not just showcasing the collection but explaining the technology transformation in the automobile industry from the engine, shaft, body construction, seating, tyres and so on. The objective of this museum is to inspire young minds to think differently and challenge themselves to innovate," says Gopal.

The collection has been categorised into few sections. The unique car section has five cars which revolutionised and influenced automotive technology such as the Benz motorwagon (the first ever car in the world), Ford-T (the first mass produced car in the early 1900), the Volkswagen Beetle (first rear engine car), Hitler's people car, and the Morris Mini (the forerunner of today's cars).

The cars have further been classified on their country of origin such as the British cars, German cars, Japanese, French, Spanish and American cars.

Gopal has established a restoration shop to restore cars which require refurbishing. To a query on spare parts for the veteran and vintage cars, he said "it is difficult, but we don't give up."

Asked how he managed to collect some of these exotic cars, he smiled and said "importing such stuff has not been easy. The rules are archaic and expensive."

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