

IN CLASSIC TERRITORY

The GD Group in Coimbatore launches a car museum with 60 vintage vehicles from as early as 1886 on display



launchpad

COIMBATORE'S first car museum is a series of lessons in progress. Be it the evolution of the first wheel, or the working mechanisms of engines like the Wankel rotary engine (used in cars like the Mazda) — the walls of the Gedee Car Museum bear information not only about each vehicle it houses, but also about the history and evolution of cars and bikes. Launched earlier this week, the 19,000 sq ft museum is located in the basement of the GD Museum of GD Naidu Charities, and displays around 60 cars, most of them restored and others donated by enthusiasts like C R Subramaniam, whose Austin Sheerline A125 is among the beauties lined up. The vehicles are part of a private collection of GD Naidu Charities, a trust founded by the late GD Naidu (the

industrialist credited with inventing the first electric motor in India), and have been classified based on their country of origin.

The back story

Starting from the Mesopotamian era, the museum engages you with information even before you spot the bullock cart that marks the beginning of your tour. Then come rows of classics like the Morris Mini, the Porsche Boxster and scooters like the BMW C1. A lesson on the history of engines follows, starting with the Otto engine, that inspired the likes of Gottlieb Wilhelm Daimler, who invented the high-speed petrol engine. GD Gopal, GD Naidu's son and managing trustee of the museum, says, "The present collection goes back to my father's, who accumulated over 10, after which I too followed suit," adding that they have established their own restoration shop inside the premises of the museum, and will offer services for vintage cars.

Collectors' pride

Among the line up of cars, we find the Benz Motorwagen,

the first ever automobile patented by German, Karl Benz, followed by other unique cars like the Ford T, the Volkswagen Beetle and the Morris Mini, considered a forerunner of modern cars thanks to its front-wheel drive layout. Other impressive vehicles on display include the Rolls Royce 20, American classics like the Dodge Victory Six (the first car to have an all steel body) and the Cadillac Limousine, with self adjusting brakes and an integrated on-board microprocessor system (also the official car of the President of the USA). The museum also has a royal connection in the Hispano Suiza H6B, the only one in the country, that once belonged to the Maharaja of Mysore. Racing enthusiasts can take in cars like the Formula Rolon built by B Vijayakumar, and for something from closer home, there's the Ambassador (Mark 2), whose production was discontinued last year.

Open from 9 am to 5 pm
(10 am to 6 pm on Sunday).
Entry at ₹50 per head.
Details: 0422 2243462

— Karan Pillai

Prakash Chellamuthu