

## 'Aim is to make India a global motoring destination'

*By Mansi Desai*

Published: 20 Aug 2010 - 08:35

MUMBAI: Consistent grassroot initiatives and the increasing number of motorsport organisation seem to be giving motorsports in India its share of popularity and attention. Cougar Motorsports is one such organisation formed a year ago with the vision to encourage participation in motorsports events from international driving and motor sport enthusiasts.



The organisation was founded in 2009 as a motorsports club by a group of 8 high ranking professionals from varied fields but with a common first hand understanding of the added dimension that motorsport can bring to executive life.

“The club was formed with the aim to bring together the experience of motor sport competitors, officials and event management specialists to create a motorsport and motoring platform for business owners, senior executives, high ranking professionals and other owners of premium vehicles,” says Cougar Motorsports director Ashish Gupta.

A registered member of The Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India, the organisation was set up with a seed capital of a little over Rs 2 million.

Cougar Motorsport has two annual flagship events in its kitty, namely The Desert Dash and The Himalayan Dash.

The Himalayan Dash, which is trans-Himalayan driving expedition from New Delhi to Leh and Srinagar that covers 3000 kms across 5 states, concluded last month in Srinagar.

The DD 2010, which will be flagged off from The Aman, New Delhi on the 25 November, will feature an all new route, more off-roading and the spectacular drive across Sambhar lake.

It is the second edition which is run in compliance with the National Competition Rules of the FMSCI.

“It is not a race but a Time Speed Distance rally that comprises a set of instructions specifying a route to travel, and a speed at which to travel. A team, consisting of a driver and a navigator, attempts to travel the specified route at exactly the specified speeds. Our organisation will take care of all aspects of the rally including FMSCI licenses, safety gear, insurances, service back up and medical back-up,” says Gupta.

The sponsors for the event are Hospitality Partner: Aman Resorts, Medical Partner: Fortis Healthcare, Service Partner: Carnation Magneti Marelli – Auto Premio Solutions and Media Partners: BBC Top Gear; Lonely Planet.

“DD 2010 has a direct cost budget of over Rs 5 million apart from the advertising and promotional spend,” says Gupta.

DD 2010 is an invitation only event with 30 cars participating.

Apart from organising inter state rallies, Cougar Motorsports also organises events based on various customised formats including geo-caching, TSD rallies, off-roading events, product demonstrations etc. “We primarily target auto manufacturers, other clubs and organisations or groups for their vehicle owners, clients and members,” says Gupta.

Mentioning some of the customised events organised by the club, he says, “We were the technical partners for ‘The Valentine Drive’, a Geocaching event organised in February exclusively for Skoda car owners. The event involved identifying and driving to various locations of historical / cultural relevance across New Delhi based on clues and matching of latitudes and longitudes with the help of GPS Navigators.”

“We also organised ‘The Independence Drive’ in Agra which was based on unlocking a given set of clues to identify a group of historical and popular cultural places in Agra and driving to the identified locations,” he adds.

The organisation plans to organise a lot of events in future.

Talking about their short term plans, Gupta says, “We plan to include ‘The Rain Forest Dash’ and ‘The Coastal Dash’ in our annual calendar. We are also in discussion with a few international motoring clubs and organisations based in UK who are interested in conducting events in India to provide them with on the ground logistics and technical support.”

Moreover, Cougar Sanctuary, our exclusive invitation-only club for participants of our past events will organise member-only events and bring special value product offers for them. We also plan to develop a dirt track for SUVs and 4WD vehicles near Delhi where we will organise various one day and weekend events including rally schools. The track will also be available to people to test their off-roading skills in a controlled and safe environment.”

“Our long term goal is to make all the highly rated and beautiful drives in India accessible to our clients by organising driving expeditions, rallies and other motoring experiences around them. We will provide them with the entire logistical support including vehicles for their participation in these events and seek to make India a global motoring destination,” he concludes.