

Seshasayee Institute of Technology showcases machines from the past

Heavy engineering equipment from the 1950s are on display on campus

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There is a new 'reception committee' of heritage heavy machines awaiting visitors at the front park of Seshasayee Institute of Technology (SIT) campus in Ariyamangalam. The quiet but powerful collection of 11 lathes and other devices that were once used to create engineering components date back to the 1950s.

"Most of these machines were imported from England, Germany and Czechoslovakia in the 1950s, and were used not just to train students, but also for manufacturing parts for local fabrication industries in the 1980s," K. Vijaykumar, principal, SIT, told *The Hindu*.

"When they became outmoded, we decided to put them on public display

rather than dispose them as scrap, so that more people would have an opportunity to see and understand how industrial machinery works," he added.

Imported

The machines were imported by SIT in the early years of its foundation, to train candidates (mostly rural students who had completed Class 10) to qualify as skilled machinists in Junior Technical School courses. This stream was later converted into the Technical High School programme for students who had completed SSLC studies.

With each piece of equipment weighing over 500 kilograms, the SIT team used cranes to shift the selected machines from the institute's in-house workshop on to specially

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constructed raised concrete platforms at the park.

"We have disabled the moving and sharp parts of the machines to prevent tampering. It took us around two months to clean the devices and prepare the display area. We are planning to create a covered walking track around the platforms in the second phase," said Mr. Vijaykumar.

The most striking part of the brightly painted display is a lathe manufactured by D. Mitchell and Co of Keighley, in West Yorkshire, England. "This could be called the 'mother of all

machines' because it once used to be crucial to producing precision heavy engineering components. We have removed the outer casing of some machines, so that the public can get a clearer idea of the inner mechanism," Mr. Vijaykumar said.

SIT is planning to balance out the equipment park with a lush garden on the adjacent side soon. The machines have already got the attention of adults accompanying their wards to the competitive exams held at the institute over the weekends.

"These mechanisms keep people pleasantly occupied while they are waiting. We feel it will motivate greater interest in engineering, which was one of the founding goals of our institution," said the official.

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