

OUSL training centre for automobile technology students

The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) recently commissioned an ultra-modern training centre designed to give practical training to its automobile engineering students. The facility will also be focusing on research and development activities in connection with the automobile industry.

The two-storeyed training centre, built with an aid grant of USD 1 million by the Korea International Co-operation Agency (KOICA) is by far the most advanced in the academic arena even when compared to the automobile training facilities at Moratuwa and Peradeniya Universities. The grant by the Korean funding agency consisted of the supply of equipment, erection of the building and training of academic and non-academic personnel.

Four academics, two mechanics and a Technical Officer participated in short training stints in the Hyundai and Daewoo automobile plants in Korea.

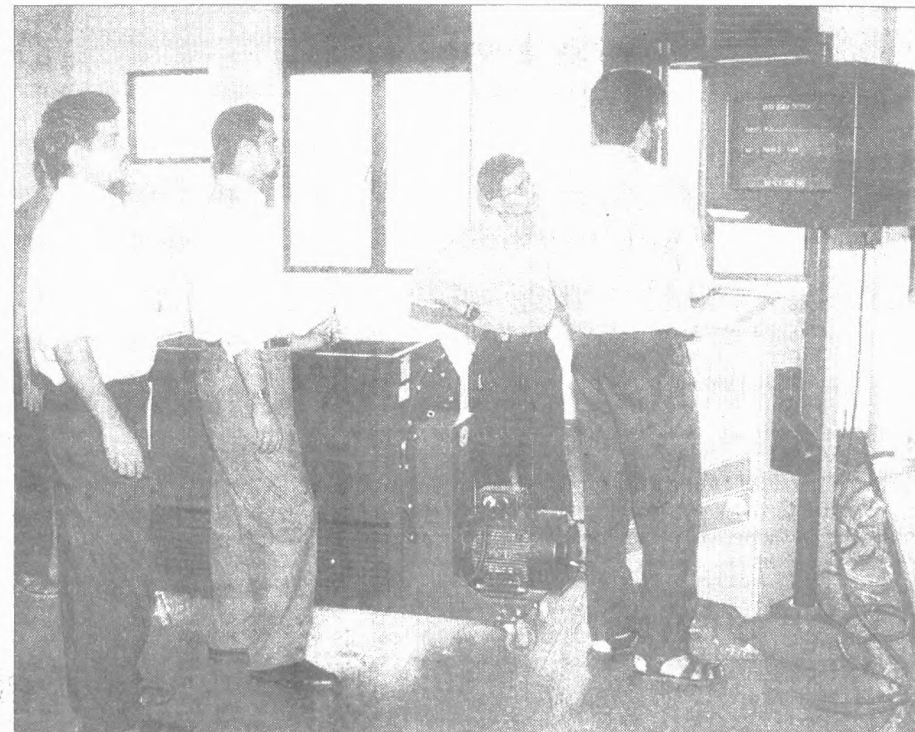
The facilities, which includes among other advanced equipment, an

engine dynamometer to test brake power, fuel consumption and air flow, and an engine analyser to diagnose faults, will enable students to get practical training in modern vehicular technology and test the performance of vehicles under controlled conditions.

Senior Lecturer and Head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering, OUSL, P.D. Sarath Chandra said that most of the vehicles currently being imported into the country are fitted with complete computer-controlled electronic devices and control systems and that wayside workshops and motor garages are no longer able to repair and maintain such vehicles. It is thus imperative that the know-how and practical skills be developed among those involved, he stressed.

Among the modern systems local motor engineers cannot deal with are electronic fuel injection, electronic speed control, electronic idling control, catalytic converters and anti-lock brakes, he noted.

He observed that this situa-



Automobile engineering students receiving practical training at the centre.

tion has resulted in loss of power of vehicles, riding inability on the road, increased traffic congestion and increased pollution. "Besides the repair of

advanced system vehicles, there also exists an urgent need for monitoring their performances and controlling and tuning up vehicles to give the expected performances", he stressed.

Sarath Chandra said that besides training undergraduates, the facility could also accommodate students who wish to conduct research at postgraduate level.

Professionals already employed in the motor trade would also be able to avail of the facility for research purposes, he added.

The OUSL's four-year diploma course in automobile technology which is by far the most advanced in the country not only caters to students hoping to embark on motor engineering careers, but also provides an opportunity for continuing education of engineers and technologists already employed in the industry through the OUSL's unique distance education system.

The study, which is geared

towards the modern automobile industry includes thermodynamics, fluid mechanisms, vehicle dynamics, workshop technology, computers and control systems and design of automotive electronics and micro-processors.

Sarath Chandra observed that whereas in the past, the annual enrolment for the Diploma in Automobile Technology was about 20 students, this year there had been a five-fold increase to nearly 100 students.

This he attributed to the practical training facilities now available.

He also said that they intended to offer short courses to those involved in the automobile industry at managerial level shortly, as well as training courses at a higher level for technical officers. Such short courses could spur individuals already exposed to entrepreneurship to invest in setting up their own motor workshops and thus offer a better service to vehicle-users, he added.