

With an experiential museum at Powai, L&T eyes the future



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For close to two years now, Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has been busy converting the podium level of an office tower at its Powai campus into what the conglomerate calls “Planet L&T”. Among other things, panoramic screens were raised, dramatic voice-overs were recorded, and two robots — named Elle and Tee — were created to zip around in this new exhibition space in Mumbai.

“Museum” is one way to describe the 11,500-sq-ft expanse. In effect, it is an “experience centre” that showcases the 81-year-old company’s current and future projects in addition to historical happenings. A veteran of physical infrastructure and hydrocarbon engineering, this is L&T’s attempt to pitch itself as a company that is also on a par with young technology companies.

Earlier this year, the company had given its Chennai-based corporate museum — the Henning Holck-Larsen Centre in L&T Construction’s Manapakkam premises — an immersive digital upgrade. Group CEO S N Subrahmanyam and Chairman A M Naik felt the need for another such venue in Powai, which is special because it was the company’s first manufacturing plant. While the 12,000-sq-ft Chennai museum focuses mainly on the history of the construction business, the Mumbai space aims to show off every business that the group owns.

To sharpen their brand identity and bring about a sense of pride in their workforce, several Indian companies including Godrej, Cipla and Dr Reddy’s have been developing such archives. The Tata Group, which also maintains an impressive archive, has specially curated corridors with historic images at its Taj Hotels.

“We made up our mind that Planet L&T’s tone of voice will be light, contemporary and digital,” says Yuvraj Mehta, head-Corporate Brand

Management and Communication, L&T. Science fiction-like transparent monitors with searchable databases are sprinkled across the various zones.

Corporate history buffs can look up stories including how the company’s Danish founders, Holck-Larsen and Soren Kristian Toubro, once travelled second-class to Mithapur in Gujarat to meet their clients, the Tatas. It was uncharacteristic for most Europeans in India. But this thrifty duo had a habit of pointing to their modest beginnings in an office with a single chair and table. Such episodes were sourced from the company’s history books, which had been printed for limited internal circulation, and from a few veteran employees who are reputed for being historians of the company.

To boast its range of interests, the exhibits include scaled-down versions of some recent structures and products. These include the K9-Vajra-T gun, the Medigadda Barrage, the ultra-supercritical thermal power plant in Khargone, Madhya Pradesh, and the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle rockets. For security reasons, the models for defence equipment had to leave out some details. Another of its zones hints at future projects for which the group has ambitions — underground

cities and Hyperloop technology.

As business visitors and other guests amble through the venue, Mehta expects it will create a favourable memory of the conglomerate. One wall, labelled “The Nationalist”, is dedicated entirely to chairman Naik and his accomplishments. To see him walking and talking in a life-size 3D hologram, Mehta reckons, will increase pride and loyalty among employees who don’t always get to meet him.

Guided tours are expected to begin at an undetermined date. The museum will take in visitors — including customers, employees, and school children — by appointment.

The conglomerate expects the futuristic venue will help it win new projects and lure young talent

