

No more fooling around

The IT Asia '94 in Delhi, which had all the trappings of a hi-tech exposition, proved that the Indian Information technology industry now takes itself seriously

The recently concluded IT Asia's exhibition held at New Delhi's Pragati Maidan proves one thing for certain. That the Rs4,000-crore Indian information technology industry takes its business very seriously. And just how seriously is indicated by the fact that this year the Manufacturers Association for Information Technology (MAIT), the apex body representing the computers hardware industry for the last three years, had to book 12,000 sq metres of floor space, twice that of last year, to accommodate all the players. Just about all the computer majors barring HCL-HP and the Tata group which has a host of computer companies namely TCS, TISL, Tata Elexi, TUL — were present. While HCL-HP felt that its road shows were a better way of reaching out to its customers, potential and existing, the Tata group of companies chose to stay away for reasons best known to them.

Barring this glitch, just about everything else went right about IT Asia '94. Over 215 companies participated this year, up from 143 in IT Asia '93. Though the exact head count is still being arrived at, it is estimated that around 200,000 business visitors, besides a few lakh of general visitors, visited the exhibition. This is up from 120,000 business visitors last year. Several small companies said they attended to over 2,000 customers in four days and had inquiries from all over the country. One such company, Tulip Software, went to the extent of saying that he expects to do four times next year as a result of inquiries generated from here.

Such statistics apart, IT Asia '94 has established another thing for sure. That India can host international class exhibitions. There was a VIP lounge, business centre, a full-fledged media centre with a press conference room and a work area with computers for the journalists and a

coffee vending machine for good measure. Besides, there were multimedia information booths where one could access snap shot profiles of companies participating and their location. Also, 24 computers were networked to aid the registration process. It had all the trappings of a hi-tech exposition. And for a change, most people spoken to had no complaints other than not having good toilets, which had more to do with ITPO and the structuring of Pragati Maidan. A large measure of thanks for this must go to Business India Exhibitions, which along with

Pranab Mukherjee. Just as well because the computer industry got the opportunity to publicly highlight how the grey market operators were making capital out of the situation and how unless some of these were remedied, the real manufacturers would find themselves going out of business.

But of course, it is an entirely different issue that the computer hardware and most of the software displayed at the exhibition was mostly foreign. Though instances of real 'Indian' innovation in software were not visible, there was one small Hyderabad-based company that had packages out of the ordinary. Kernex Microsystems displayed two of its packages: Mimex, a tool for developing



IT Asia '94 had twice as many stalls as last year

MAIT hosted this event.

It is this seriousness that caused K.R. Palta, president of MAIT, speaking of the nagging problems faced by the computer industry on account of the high import duty on critical components in his inaugural speech. Unlike last year, where prime minister Narasimha Rao was invited to do the honours and which led to severe protocol problems and much unhappiness among the participants, this year it was minister for commerce,

graphical user interface, and MathX, a mathematical computation package that can solve all mathematical problems and generate graphs. The company is simultaneously launching the products in India and the US.

L&T is the other company that had a software package with global scope. Its package CA-Unicentre, a systems management software, makes distributed processing and heterogeneous computing (much talked-about trends in the US)

