

Inter(net)active future

One simply cannot overlook the fantastic developments taking shape in the Internet world, when talking about the technological progress. Rapid developments in multimedia technology have added glitter and glamour to information on the Internet. In fact multimedia is spoken of in the same breath as Internet today.

Multimedia along with Internet has proved to be a perfect combination. Internet, which offers information on almost anything, will be of little interest to its users if it is in the form of plain text. This is where the need for multimedia arises. A combination of text, graphics, audio, animation and video will make the information more interesting and user friendly. But building multimedia capability alone cannot make Internet interesting. An important component in the form of interactivity should be introduced which would make learning an enjoyable experience. (An exclusive article on multimedia is featured in this issue).

In fact interactivity, which is the essence of multimedia, will be the mainstay of Internet in future. During the US Presidential elections recently, people all around the world were asked to rate the candidates based on the Presidential debate, which was beamed online. Similarly Mr. Chidambaram answered queries on budget implications posed by a worldwide audience. These are only some examples of how interactivity could be achieved through Internet. Most other utilities like online medical services, video conferencing and so on are being adopted extensively, which essentially provide options for interaction.

The 'anytime - anywhere - anything' concept of Internet has caught the imagination of almost all segments of engineering and business world. With major branches of engineering converging and sometimes even colluding with each other, a global information channel such as Internet has assumed an indispensable position. But complaints of erosion of social structure with the widespread growth of Internet are also being echoed. Since almost any information from anywhere could be accessed through Internet, people fear that this may lead to sedentary population, bereft of personal contacts.

Man's quest for innovation has made him recreate unimaginable things in the recent past and it promises further more exciting things in the future. Multimedia and virtual reality techniques have ensured that man could recreate speech, video and the sensation of touch. Future may see man realising the sense of smell and taste also through computer!

G. P. VINAYABABU

February 1997 - Technoworld