

'Internet via cable' comes to State

By Anand Parthasarathy

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, NOV 23. Asianet, a Kerala-based satellite television and cable provider, has launched its service providing a telephone free Internet connectivity, using its own satellite gateway at Edapazhanji, near here.

Subscribers of its cable TV service in the State capital can now opt to surf the Net either on the TV set or on their personal computer.

Mr. G.P. Biju, technical supervisor in charge of the new facility, explained to *The Hindu* that cable TV subscribers who do not own a PC can access Internet on the TV screen if they install a 'set top' box, costing approximately Rs.7,500. PC users must use Cable Modem rather than the more common telephone modem and also install what is known as an 'ethernet' card inside the PC. This will add about Rs. 14,000 to the cost of the PC. Asianet's fixed monthly charge for unlimited Internet access is Rs.880.

However, Mr. Biju explained that when the charges of about Rs. 24 per hour now being paid by way of telephone bills are factored, the cable route will be cheaper annually for any one surfing even two hours a day.

Moreover, the download speeds will be zippingly fast to those used to the crawling speeds of Internet via-telephone.

The argument seems to have made sense to many savvy Net surfers- as the Asianet stall at the exhibition being held at Technopark as part of the State

Government's 'IT Kerala 2000' expo attracted many enquiries-and over 300 subscribers, mainly small corporate, were signed up on the very first day.

Asianet hopes to launch its internet operation for its Kochi cable subscribers by January 2001.

The exhibition, possibly the largest IT fair ever organised in the State, drew large crowds of both business visitors and students.

Almost all the companies housed within Technopark used the show to project their wares. Case Consultants unveiled two new Java productivity products. IBS Software services highlighted their focus areas in airport logistics, passenger reservation and other travel-related industries.

The Kochi-based Xtend Technologies, a joint venture of half a dozen young engineers, show cased a cheap voice response system software on a single CD which service providers like gas agencies or travel bureaus can use to serve customers through automatic voice prompts.

Keltron displayed some of its recent software products in e-governance areas as well as hardware units like home PCs and automated attendance systems.

Stalls offering free registration on jobs websites and offering on line shopping marts proved popular with the hundreds of students who visited today.

The exhibition will continue till November 25.

It is open to the general public after 1 p.m., with the forenoon reserved for business visitors and delegates.