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Dealers Advise

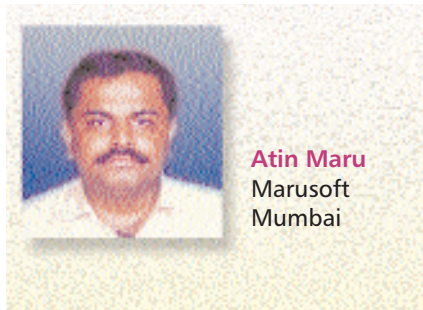# Buying the right processor

The processor and the motherboard are key components of your computer. So, buy them with care. Consider the present requirements and not of the far future

If you are considering buying a PC or upgrading the one you already have, you will need to buy a new processor. If you buy Intel you won't be going wrong, but remember, Intel is not the only company manufacturing processors. Processors from AMD (preferred for graphics applications) and Cyrix (for day-to-day processing power) are equally good.

A processor should be purchased keeping the present and the near-future requirements in mind. One should not get carried away and plan for a very long-term investment and buy a very expensive processor. Rapid advances in technology could make your expensive processor obsolete six months after you buy it.
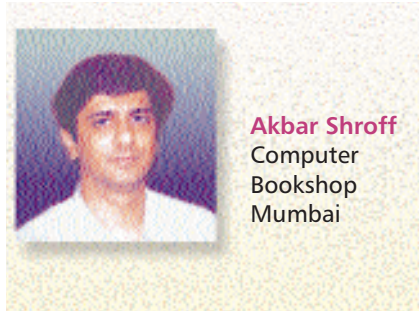
Thus, it is also important to know which processors are being phased out, so that you do not get conned into buying something that is almost useless. Intel has stopped manufacturing the Celeron series below 300A and the P-II Series below 350 MHz. Though the Pentium III seems very attractive, do not it buy it right now as very few applications that can fully exploit its KNI abilities are currently available.

As Intel has abandoned the Socket-7 segment, this has given a boost to the sales of the other Socket-7 processors. The prices of the Socket-7 mainboards have crashed.

Akbar Shroff
Computer Bookshop
Mumbai

"With the growing popularity of Linux, it seems likely that very soon Linux will be the next most preferred operating system"

You can now get a VIA board with 512 KB cache for as low as Rs 2,400. This is ideal for beginners and for those who are going to use the PC only as a glorified typewriter or for browsing the Net. These are not upgradable beyond the AMD 333 MHz, but on the positive side some have the AGP slot and support the 100 MHz bus speed.

While buying Intel products insist on the shrink-wrapped ones. Currently these are available for the Celeron and P-II series. All other processors come as a standalone piece—no point in hunting for a Cyrix processor in a box pack. The same goes for AMD. The processor constitutes a sizeable cost and hence a warranty must be insisted upon.

A cooling fan is a must-buy for Socket-7 processors. The Slot-I types come with the cooling fan mounted on the chip itself. Though most newer BIOS chips support processor over-clocking, *do not* attempt this as this will reduce the life span of the same.

Caution also has to be exercised while specifying the mainboard. The LX series cannot support bus speeds over 66 MHz and hence will not support processors over 333 MHz. Go for 440 BX series as these support the Celeron and the P-IIs up to 500 MHz.

Atin Maru
Marusoft
Mumbai

"The computer books business is growing very slow. It is thriving only because of good titles by foreign publishers done exclusively for India and at a special price"

INSIDE Information

Monitors
The popular Samtron 40 Bn (14-inch SVGA) monitor has lately been reporting a high failure rate. On the other hand, ViewSonic monitors come with an on-site warranty for the entire range.

CD-ROM drives
Be alert when you are buying a CD-ROM drive, as there are many low-priced OEM products in the market which do not perform up to the mark. Play safe and buy the LG/ASUS CD drive.

Mouse
The Logitech box pack True Mouse , though priced about Rs 100 higher than the OEM version, is a lot smoother in maneuvering. A highly recommended mouse.

Soundcard
The SoundBlaster Live value card (Rs 5,000) supports positional speakers but the only hitch is that it requires powered speakers. If you have this card you could buy the INTEX 120 W powered speakers which are hot in the grey market.

Video Conferencing Kit
The price of the Video Conferencing Kits varies from Rs 3,000 to 30,000. Buy a kit that comes with the display card and special sockets. Check if it gives realtime video in full motion colour.

LAN card
The 10/100 Mbps Ethernet LAN cards are the ones to look out for. You will need to hunt for a card supporting shielded and UTP cables (COMBO). C AT-3 is out and replaced by CAT-5. ISA (16-bit) is a big NO and the PCI (32-bit) is the way to go.