

PHOTO: KANLESHWAR SINGH



Fondly known as 'Pickbrain', Quiz master G. Balasubramaniam finds Indians take to knowledge easily!

Man of questions

JAGMEETA THIND JOY

FOR a change we are the ones throwing questions at him and he's doing all the answering! With G. Balasubramaniam that doesn't happen very often. The quiz master, well-known for his distinctive style and fondly called 'Pickbrain', was in the city to conduct the regional round of the Tata Crucible - The Business Quiz 2008. Into its fifth edition, it's one of the country's most challenging corporate quizzes with much credit to G. and his team. "Today, quizzing has gone vertical. While at school and college levels it still has a broader base by way of subjects, at the professional stage it's more specific and topical," mentions the quizmaster who also heads Greycaps India Pvt Ltd, the country's third largest quiz company with its headquarters in Bangalore. It's here that they churn out specialized quizzes like IT quizzes, corporate quizzes, quizzes

designed for docs et al.

Quizzing has evolved over time, feels the quiz master. For one, it's no longer perceived as a "nerdy" activity to be a part of. "There was a time when a quiz brought in straight fact file questions. Preparing for such quizzes meant mugging it all up. But that's no longer the case," feels Balasubramaniam who finds the big shift now towards contemporary quizzing that's moved away from traditional style. "We now design questions that actually get you to apply your mind and not just fall back on recall information. Even factual questions can be presented in a new way," he mentions. With so many mediums opening up, quizzing is fast becoming a career option as well. "I find that Indians take to knowledge easily. But to be a successful quizmaster, there's more than a good voice and stage presence that you need," he says adding. "It's about doing your homework well. The quizmaster has to

know what he's asking. The research has to be thorough."

Speaking of question and answers, his company has pioneered into quizzing in regional languages too. "It all happened thanks to our former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam. I presented him a book of IT quizzes and he asked me to replicate it in regional languages as well. That's how the ball got rolling," tells Balasubramaniam who is impressed by the talent in the non-metros. "Cities like Jamshedpur, Pune and Chandigarh have bright sparks that do really well. Perhaps it's got to do with the element of sincerity that's still present in the education system here." As for how he managed a name 'Pickbrain', G. smiles to say, "I ran a newspaper column by that name and was accidentally introduced as that on a function. It just stuck on and I think it's fun with kids and easier to pronounce than Balasubramaniam." You said it.

