

DRAGON SLAYER

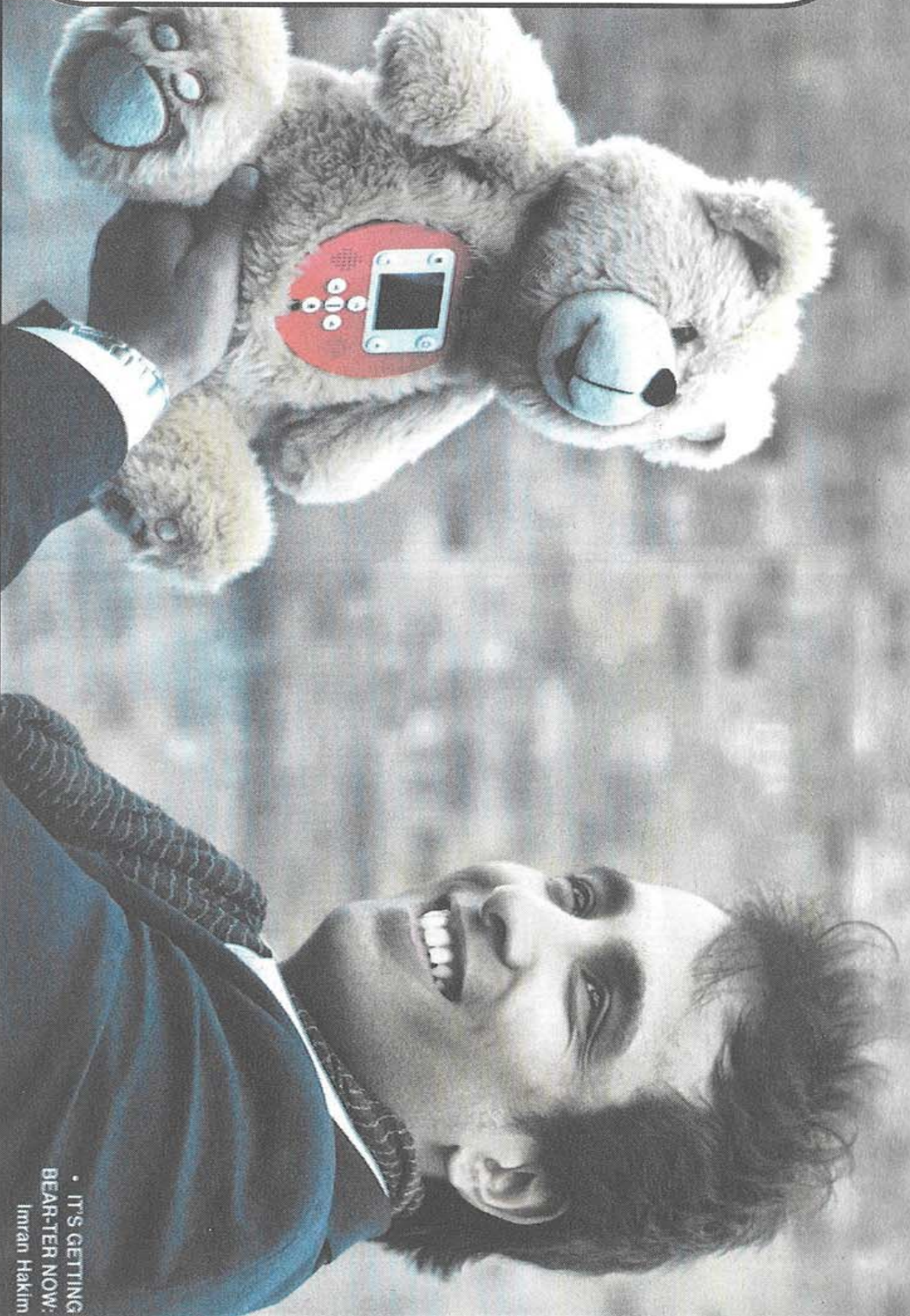
Imran's iTeddy tames tv judges

An entrepreneur from Bolton is poised to make millions after showing his novel children's toy on hit TV show *Dragons' Den*. And it's all down to his playful nine-month-old niece.

Imran Hakim wowed the panel of tough business bosses on the BBC2 show with his product, the iTeddy.

His successful sales pitch secured him a £140,000 investment after experts Peter Jones and Theo Paphitis agreed a joint 20 per cent share.

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• IT'S GETTING BEAR-TER NOW:
Imran Hakim

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Imran, 29, said: "We anticipate a multi-million pound turnover within the next three years. I have received orders already from major retailers worth millions."

UMIST graduate Imran, who lives in Manchester and Astley Bridge, Bolton, launched his business career at 15 and is an optometrist with 18 practices across the north west.

He also owns IT companies and invests in struggling businesses to reshape them.

He dreamt up the idea in October after playing with his young niece Aaminah.

The iTeddy, an interactive teddy bear with a computer in its tummy, is described as an innovative educational toy designed to help pre-school children learn as they play. Children can download cartoons, stories and online tutorials for basic computer skills from an associated website.

Imran said: "The idea came to me in October as I was playing with Aaminah and it has been a real roller-coaster ride ever since. I was trying to think of some-

thing to make a teddy a bit more interesting and interactive.

"It is obvious that the market is moving in the direction of this kind of thing, where young children want the same hi-tech things that their older brothers and sisters are using."

Imran made his gruelling business pitch to the panel of experts in January and millions watched on television this week as 'Dragons' Jones, a telecoms entrepreneur, and stationary chain boss Paphitis agreed to back his venture.

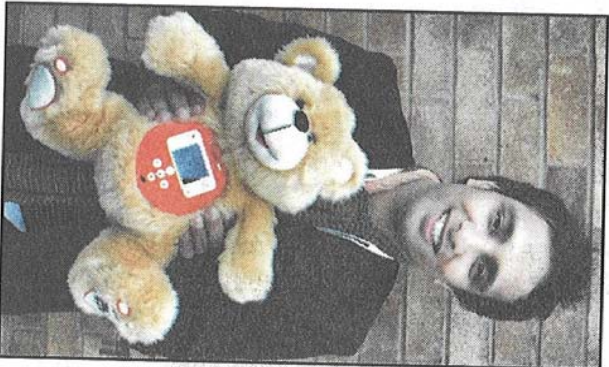
The show sees would-be entrepreneurs convince the panel that products of all shapes and sizes are worth investing in.

Imran said Woolworths and Argos had expressed an interest - alongside toy companies from as far a field as Australia.

The iTeddy was launched for £55 at the national Toy Fair in London last month and is due to go on sale next month.

"Parents want to give their children a head start in the brain race," Imran said.

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• **GREAT IDEA:** Imran and his iTeddy which is set to be a hit