

Aakash Tablet Project – Govt Dumps Datawind; MediaNama's RTI

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As expected, the Indian Government is reportedly booting out [Datawind](#) from the Aakash tablet project, and is planning to assemble the tablet on its own, while retaining the same price tag of Rs 2250, reports [Livemint](#). The report quotes Communications & IT Minister Kapil Sibal, who told PTI that the government has now roped in others including PSUs such as C-DAC and ITI, after it encountered problems dealing with Datawind, to manufacture a completely indigenous product. The statement contradicts the government's earlier claim that the tablet was completely indigenous.

The Indian government had assigned a contract to Datawind to manufacture 100,000 tablets at Rs 1750 (\$35) per unit. However, the report points out that Datawind was able to deliver only 10,000 tablets to IIT Jodhpur, while several tablets were reportedly sold in the open market, since it was available for [online purchase](#) at Rs 2500 from December 2011 and was [sold out](#) within a week of its launch.

Quoting two unnamed senior government officials, the report states that the government is now planning to launch a revamped tablet at the same price tag. The tablet will apparently be completely indigenous and supervised by a committee comprising of members from the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Department of Information Technology, IITs including IIT Kanpur, IIT Mumbai, IIT Chennai and IIT Jodhpur, and a few public sector units. The immediate need for tablets, will however be managed by Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) and Electronics Corp. of India Ltd.

While this announcement seems promising, we hope that the government doesn't just focus on compromising on the tablet's features and specs to bring down its price. After all, a \$35 paperweight wouldn't serve any purpose.

There has been a lot of ambiguity surrounding the number of tablets delivered by Datawind, on the specifications of the next version and on the assignment of responsibility for tendering. We've recently filed a Right To Information (RTI) request with Ministry of Human Resource Development, to gather more information on the Aakash Tablet project, to get some clarity. Here are the questions we've asked:

1. How many Aakash Tablets have so far been delivered to the Ministry of HRD and/or IIT Rajasthan as of 15th February 2012. Please provide us with monthwise information, beginning with the month in which the first Aakash Tablet was delivered.
2. The list of educational institutions to which Aakash Tablets have been distributed, and the total number of Tablets that have been issued to (or via) each of these institutions.
3. How many students in each educational institution have been issued the Aakash Tablet?
4. How much money has so far been allocated to the purchase of the Aakash Tablet and how much has been paid to Datawind? Please provide information on the dates on which the payments were made.
5. Please provide us with a copy of the request for proposal (RFP)/tender document for the Aakash Tablet
6. Please provide us with copies of the technical and financial documents submitted by Datawind

when applying for the Aakash Tablet tender

7. Please provide us with a list of applicants for the RFP related to the Aakash Tablet
8. Please provide us with a timeline for delivery of Aakash tablets, and information on penalties if deadlines are not met
9. Information on steps being taken to ensure that students who purchase government subsidised Aakash Tablets do not sell them in the open market
10. What is the number of pieces of Aakash Tablets ordered (and delivered) by the Government till date and the price per tablet at which the order has been placed?
11. What is the number of pieces of Aakash that the Government or Ministry of HRD has contracted to buy in total over time – please provide details of the number of pieces to be bought in each lot and deadlines for purchase of each lot and the purchase price agreed for each lot.
12. What percentage of the components in the bill of materials of Aakash is manufactured in India and what percentage is manufactured outside India?
13. Is the supplier contractually obliged to manufacture a certain proportion of components within India by a certain time? If so, what percentage and by when?
14. What are the warranty terms that the supplier has agreed including duration of warranty, replacement, repair, parts and labour?
15. Is the supplier required to set up service and support centres across India? If so how many service centres and in which locations and by when?
16. Does the Government of India, or any State Government or any other Government organisation own any intellectual property rights relating to the Aakash tablet? If not, who owns the intellectual property rights to the design of Aakash?
17. Does the Government of India, or any State Government or any other Government organisation own the brand name Aakash? If not, who owns the brand name “Aakash”?
18. Has any surveillance software been installed on the Aakash Tablet?
19. What is the criteria for selection of third party applications to be preloaded? Please provide us with a list of applications and the conditions under which they have been included.
20. Is there any custom built application or software pre-loaded on aakash? Who owns the source code of this custom software?
21. Have any tenders been floated to develop digital educational material specifically for aakash? If yes, please provide us with a copy.

We'll do a follow-up post as soon as we receive a reply from the Ministry.

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