



<http://www.medianama.com/2012/05/223-aakash-tablet-rti-rs-47-72-cr-for-100000-tabs-cost-49-98-each-no-tender-docs-with-ministry/>

Aakash Tablet RTI: Rs 47.72 Cr For 100,000 Tabs, Cost \$49.98 Each; No Tender Docs With Ministry

Nikhil Pahwa

In response to MediaNama's RTI on the Aakash Tablet, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has passed the buck (and the RTI) to the Indian Institute of Technology Rajasthan, Jodhpur. From their responses, we've gleaned the following information:

- The final price of the Aakash Tablet is \$49.98 per unit (or Rs 2276 at the exchange rate at the time of the order), which includes taxes, levies, freight, insurance, servicing and documentation.
- The HRD Ministry has released Rs 47.72 crore to IIT Rajasthan for testing low cost access-cum-computing devices and hardware and software optimization of low cost access devices.
- The ministry says that it does not have details of the tender/document/financial bid/payment made by IIT Rajasthan to Datawind.
- IIT Rajasthan was given the task of procuring and testing the Aakash Tablet. Datawind was given the pilot of procuring 100,000 pieces "for the purpose of testing by students all over India in different climatic and usage conditions".
- Norms for distribution of the Aakash Tablet to students have been not been finalized.
- The HRD Ministry says that it has no information regarding the number of tablets provided to IIT Rajasthan by Datawind, the list of educational institutions to which Aakash Tablets have been distributed, the total number of tablets that have been issued and how many students in each educational institution have been issued the Aakash Tablet. Note that, in Parliament, HRD Minister Kapil Sibal said that 6440 tablets were supplied to IIT Rajasthan, of which it has accepted 650 tablets. In addition, there are details of distribution of 366 tablets in 11 states (but no specifics on educational institution).

The Minister appears to have information that the Ministry doesn't.

Questions Not Answered

The Ministry of HRD has not answered our questions regarding the timeline for delivery of the Aakash Tablet, not has it shared any information on penalties if deadlines are not met. It has not clarified that it doesn't have this information.

- The Ministry has not provided us with a list of applicants for the RFP related to the Aakash Tablet, neither has it clarified that it doesn't have the information.
- The Ministry has not provided information on the number of tablets delivered till date
- The Ministry has not provided information on the number of tablets to be bought over time and at what price, and only shared information regarding "this current Aakash tablet". Again, not answering a specific question.
- Questions regarding warranty, replacement, repaid, parts, percentage of procurement that has to take place from India, service and support, ownership of intellectual property of the design of Aakash, ownership of the brand name Aakash, surveillance software on Aakash, preloaded applications,

custom-built software and additional tenders have been passed to IIT Rajasthan.

A scan of our RTI filing and the Ministry's response: [Page 1](#), [Page 2](#), [Page 3](#), [Page 4](#), [Page 5](#).

We're awaiting a response from IIT Rajasthan (since the RTI has been forwarded to them) but these responses from the HRD Ministry do raise questions about whether it has been asleep at the wheel – it's paying for the procurement of the tablets for the pilot, but it claims that it doesn't even have copies of documents related to the tender process, and doesn't have any information about the distribution of the tablets in the pilot, among other things. This just reeks of mismanagement.

[A column the Hindu](#) by Ashok Parthasarati, former Science Adviser to Indira Gandhi, and secretary of several major scientific departments, had additional information:

- Datawind placed an order for 50,000 tablets with Quad Electronics Ltd, Quad produced only 20,000 and Datawind took only 10,000. 2000 tablets were provided to IIT Rajasthan for testing before October 5th 2011, after which Datawind stopped taking tablets from Quad because of poor performance. (Ed: Note that the HRD ministers statement in Parliament states that IIT Rajasthan was supplied with 6440 tablets, of which it accepted 650, conditionally)
- According to a suit filed by Quad against Datawind, it has not even been paid for the first 10,000 tablets, leave alone the 50,000 ordered.

Several issues have been raised in that column about the process followed by the HRD Ministry. The question raised in it about the money paid by the Ministry for the tablets has been in the responses to our RTI, but most questions still remain.

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