

As Pallam Raju rethinks, HRD panel backs Aakash tablet

While Human Resource Development Minister Pallam Raju last week caused quite a flutter, saying his ministry was rethinking its own flagship \$35 Aakash tablet, a committee set up by his ministry has strongly backed the low cost access device.

Terming the tablet a "game changer" which needs to be invested into in a big way, the committee headed by eminent academic Prof Goverdhan Mehta — set up to review the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology and the Aakash tablet project — has said in its report that the very success of the NMEICT Mission

"strongly hinges around a low-cost device through which the content created can reach the learner".

This committee has recommended that keeping in view the increasing user requirements and buying capacities "it would be a good option to bring 2 to 3 models, good, better, best, of low cost access device".

The HRD Ministry has set up two committees — one under Prof Mehta who is also Chairman BoG IIT Jodhpur and another headed by NIIT Chairman Rajendra Pawar — to review the Aakash project. The Pawar committee is yet to submit its report.

The Mehta committee report, accessed by The Indian Express, says that the concept of creating a \$35 low-cost access device is a game changer.

The report also points out how the tablet has actually generated a lot of interest and competition in the industry to create low-cost solutions (in the form of low cost tablets) for addressing computing/accessing needs of a wide range of users.

"The committee recommends that a project of LCAD magnitude and importance should follow a professional approach in respect of design, component selection, layouts, prototyping, manufacturing and testing etc from the very inception," the committee's report said.

Suggesting a futuristic design for the low-cost access device, the committee said the tablet must be designed keeping in view the requirements and availability of bandwidth, quality of content to be displayed, availability of 24X 7 connectivity and electrical power conditions.

"In addition the design must be scalable and futuristic enough so that users can upgrade their requirements. The LCAD has to be robust and of high quality to take care of heat dust, moisture, rough handling etc. LCAD has to be also designed progressively with increased indigenisation of both hardware and software, with solar energy as a possible power source," it recommended.

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