

Kapil Sibal's cheap Aakash proves to be a dud

Ritika Chopra | [Mail Today](#) | New Delhi, January 8, 2012 | UPDATED 13:08 IST

The students' verdict on the world's cheapest computer tablet is not really encouraging.

Three months after it was launched amid much fanfare, [Aakash](#) - an affordable "access device" priced at Rs 2,250 - seems to be in need of a makeover.

The feedback received from 600-odd students, who have used the tablet as part of the pilot run, has revealed quite a few drawbacks in the device that have been acknowledged by Kapil Sibal's Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) and are currently being worked upon.

The [tablet's](#) slow speed, for instance, is one of its biggest problems. There have also been complaints about the device heating up quite quickly and its poor battery life. Moreover, students don't seem too comfortable with the resistive touch-screen and the fact that the tablet supports only Wi-Fi access to the Internet.

[Aakash](#), which was unveiled on October 5, is the country's latest offering in the series of affordable technological innovations that includes the world's cheapest car, the Tata Nano. The device was created specifically for students with the aim of bridging the "digital divide" between the rich and poor. Its closest competitor (in terms of features and price) in the country at the time of the launch was Beetel's Magiq, priced at Rs 9,990.

Since then, the Internet has been abuzz with Aakash's performance reviews. The HRD ministry, however, was waiting to hear from the students, who were given the computer tablet as part of the pilot run.

"We have already said we will better the device as and when we get appropriate feedback. About 600 students had the tablets and we got their feedback through questionnaires. There are 15 to 16 points that need to be looked at. But first, we have agreed to make some immediate improvements," said a ministry official.

"The battery normally lasts for four hours, but if you play music or watch a movie, then it dies in about two to three hours. This tablet has been made specifically for university students who work long hours on the computer these days. So its battery life should definitely be improved," said Shilpy Dewan, an MBA student of Teri University, who has used Aakash.

The tablets distributed among students under the pilot run had an Android 2.2 operating system, a seven-inch touch-screen, a 366 MHz processor, two USB ports, a multimedia player and 180 minutes of battery power.

"Instead of the 366 MHz processor, the improved Aakash will have a 766 MHz processor and a battery with a better life. The improved specifications, however, will come at the same price," added the ministry official.

The ministry had initially placed an order of one lakh units with the manufacturer Datawind.

Since the first 30,000 tablets have already been assembled, the improved specification will only be incorporated in the remaining 70,000 units of the order.