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Next Aakash tablet won't be tested by IITs

IIT Jodhpur, which was originally slated to test all Aakash devices, had run into a conflict with Datawind over testing parameters and procedures. (PTI)

Summary

After IIT Jodhpur-Datawind row, govt gives control to C-DAC.

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Having learnt its lessons after the earlier Aakash tablet project, which led to a row between IIT Jodhpur and Canadian manufacturer Datawind, the Centre is now keeping top notch engineering institutes out of its ambitious tablet plans.

Aakash IV, for which the Directorate General of Supplies & Disposals has issued a tender, would be tested and certified by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) instead of IITs. Seventeen vendors, including Dell, Acer, HP, HCL, Microsoft, Mircomax and Datawind, are in the fray to manufacture the low-cost tablet with improved technical specifications.

IIT Jodhpur, which was originally slated to test all Aakash devices, had run into a conflict with Datawind over testing parameters and procedures. The project was then transferred to IIT Bombay. For Aakash IV, both testing and certification would be conducted only by C-DAC.

Incidentally, the Kapil Sibal led Telecom Ministry, and not the HRD Ministry, is taking the lead in the project. The Telecom Ministry has taken the DGS&D route to scale up production of Aakash IV. C-DAC also falls under the Department of Electronics & Information Technology — also under Sibal.

A CAG report tabled in Parliament last year had slammed the HRD Ministry for its management of the project, questioning its decision to award the project to the new and ill-equipped IIT Rajasthan. C-DAC will conduct a two-stage testing procedure for Aakash IV. First would be a pre-qualification test before

the vendor is authorised to use the Aakash logo. The validity of the certification would be for three years, subject to annual acceptance tests. The second stage would involve sample testing where the acceptance test would be conducted on randomly selected samples.

At a meeting with 17 vendors held on January 2, several issues were raised about the price and technical specifications of the tablet. The Aakash IV is expected to cost under Rs 3,000. The tenders for manufacture of Aakash IV would open after January 28, and rate cards are likely to be announced by mid-February.

The tablet is expected to come with 1 GB RAM, 4 GB internal storage with integrated flash, USB port, micro SD card slot, a 7-inch LCD display, WiFi and Bluetooth support, a 0.3MP camera, an open source operating system and technical specifications developed and outlined by a committee.

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