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Upgraded Aakash Tablet To Be Launched In May; DataWind Vs IIT-Rajasthan

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In a bid to 'clear the air' around the controversial Aakash tablet project, [DataWind](#), the company that had won the contract for manufacturing the tablet for the Indian government, informed that following the transfer of the project from IIT-Rajasthan to IIT-Bombay, the latter is issuing a purchase order for 1,00,000 upgraded Aakash tablets, which DataWind intends to deliver by May. DataWind CEO, Suneet Singh Tuli, said that the government will launch the upgraded Aakash tablet device in May upon approval of the initial deliveries, for which IIT-Bombay and C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing) will be conducting testing and certification, at the same price.

DataWind Vs IIT-Rajasthan: The upgraded tablet would be different from Aakash 2, for which IIT-Rajasthan had floated a limited tender, and kept DataWind excluded from it, according to the company. DataWind also accused IIT-Rajasthan of being biased and using an unscientific criteria for rejecting units delivered by the company. Tuli also informed that IIT-Rajasthan had till date not obtained RBI clearance for transfer of funds to DataWind's UK headquarters, and that the company had not received a payment from IIT-Rajasthan for the 8,000 units that were supplied, out of which around 600 were accepted.

He added that IIT-Rajasthan refused to accept certifications from agencies like BVQT and ERTL and upgraded the base specs on the lines of HP's military ruggedized notebooks. He also alleged that IIT-Rajasthan secretly signed an MoU with DataWind's subcontract manufacturer, Quad to create a 'convergence device'. In February 2012, IIT-Rajasthan made the Letter of Contract to DataWind, commercially invalid. At the same time, the project was taken away from IIT-Rajasthan by the HRD Ministry, according to DataWind.

IIT-Rajasthan has asked for 10% non-delivery liquidated charges from DataWind, while DataWind has sent legal notices to two professors. However, according to Tuli, DataWind does not want to pursue a legal battle against IIT-Rajasthan and the government.

On Payment dispute with Quad: Tuli informed that Quad had been paid for all tablets produced, excluding 600 which were not returned by IIT-Rajasthan. He also said that Quad had sold the rest of the tablets in open market. Since, each government procurement is via a new tender, there will be a new one for phase-2 of the Aakash project, for which DataWind intends to bid again.

On the delays in delivery of the commercial version of the tablet: DataWind had also launched UbiSlate, a higher priced commercial version of the tablet, for the public. After launching pre-booking in October and fully paid bookings in January, the company has not started deliveries. Although, Tuli declined to reveal the total number of pre-bookings or full payment bookings, he informed that deliveries will start imminently and the company aims to catch-up in the next two weeks. He said that the company was receiving 8,000 pre-bookings every day. On slouchy customer service, Tuli informed that DataWind receives about 40,000 calls each day on its toll-free helpline, out of which 4,000 are answered, and that the company is building capacity to receive more queries, and is allocating different lines and e-mails for different issues.

DataWind is announcing the launch of the next version of its commercial tablet, UbiSlate, on 26th April 2012.

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