

Aakash Tablet: 3 more IITs to work for making it cheaper

New Delhi, Feb 3 (TruthDive): The HRD ministry has decided to involve three more IITs to manufacture one million Aakash 2 tablets to make it more indigenous and further lower its price.

Apart from IIT Rajasthan, which is spearheading the project, IIT Mumbai, IIT Madras and IIT Kanpur would also be roped in for the project, sources in the HRD Ministry said.

The ministry will require 220 million tablets in the coming years to fulfil its promise to provide a tablet to every college and university students. The ministry wants to achieve the target by 2014.

For this, the Aakash tablets will have to be sourced from multiple sources and the ministry wants to bank on public sector companies as its experience with Datawind, the company required to supply one lakh tablets by March, had not been very good, government sources said.

The HRD Ministry has already said that it will require an additional 22 crore units of Aakash and for this fresh tenders will be issued enabling other companies along with Datawind to also get a chance.

Several PSUs and Centre for Development of Advanced Computing are also expected to chip in to roll out the second phase of the Aakash. The speed of the device will come at 800 MHz instead of 300 MHz at present.

The HRD ministry, which has developed prototype of Aakash, also wants the public sector Indian Telephone Industries (ITI) to participate in the bid to supply Aakash 2 tablets from April this year.

HRD and telecom minister Kapil Sibal on Wednesday held a meeting with public sector telecom companies including ITI to gear them up for supplying Aakash 2 at \$35.

"We want public sector to participate in the bid to have a balance between public and private sector. It could also help in revival of these companies," a senior government official said.

The sources said much emphasis was laid on indigenisation of the tablet. At present, several components including the processor are procured from outside.

The aim is to give shape to the indigenisation plan within the next two years and make the product 90 per cent Indian.

At the same time, emphasis will be laid on further lowering the prices of the device, they said. At present, the device is available to students at Rs 1,100 after government subsidy.