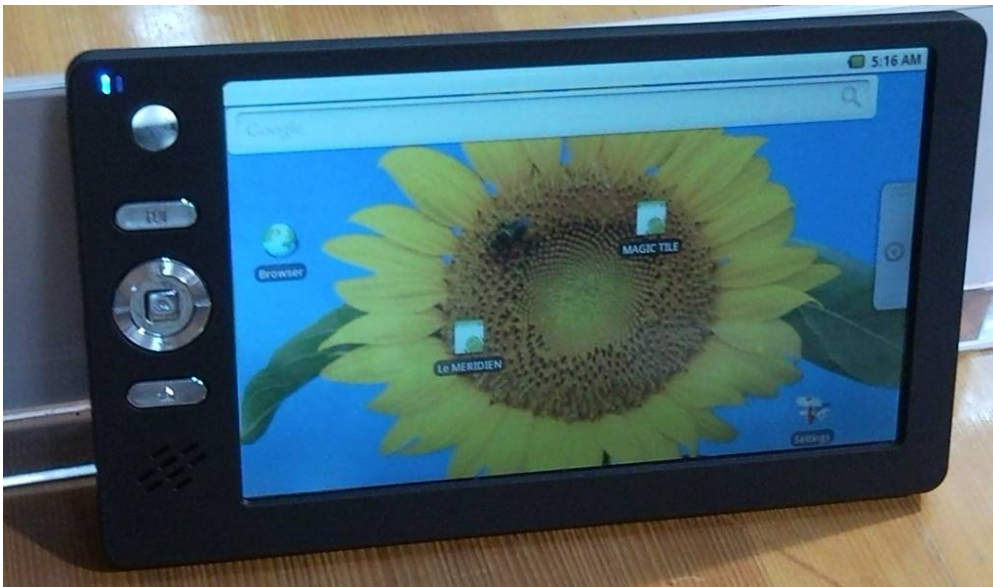


## Story of India's \$35 Aakash tablet



Indian HRD minister Kapil Sibal finally launched the \$35 tablet Aakash today. It took government over 14 months to release a tablet, which actually got in the hands on few students. From the first prototype announcement way back in July, 2010 to October 5, i.e. today, the story of this tablet has been quite fascinating; much like a typical Bollywood movie story with a happy ending.

It all started [on July 22, 2010 when Kapil Sibal announced a \\$35 Android tablet](#), that was supposed to be made available to students right from primary schools to universities. The following prototype was showcased and Indian TV channels went all gaga over the tablet and it became one of biggest tech news of the day across the global media.



*Original Prototype*

The specifications of this seven inch prototype were nothing less than extra-ordinary for the listed price tag of \$35 and there were even reports of 5 inch and nine inch versions. [Government press release](#) stated how the tablet was made with the help of IITs and other institutes and it was fully [indigenous product](#).

Obviously this too good to be true story turned out a big lie, when [we reported in September that this prototype was nothing but a cheap Chinese tablet](#), which Indian Government had planned to buy in bulk and then subsidize and sell to students at promised \$35 price.



*Kapil Sibal on July 23, 2010*

This launch never happened; then there were many reports of HCL backing out from the testing of the tablet and other reports how tablet was going to land in January 2011 and then postponed to the next Academic session and all that. The tablet never materialized.

But suddenly in September 2011, there were rumors of the tablet being launched again and how new tenders were passed and manufacturers changed. We were pretty skeptical of it actually becoming a reality. Then came the October 5 launch date, press invites were sent and finally the press conference took place earlier today.

To our surprise, the tablet at display in the press conference was not even 1pc similar to the tablet prototype showcased 15 months back. Obviously, there were enough reports in online

media about the prototype being Chinese that government scrapped their previous plans altogether and went back to the drawing board.



Originally showcased last year



launched today

It was decided that a real manufacturer was to be selected by a tender process, who will be the face of this tablet and manufacture it. Mind you, there was no manufacturer at the time of first prototype announcement; HCL was decided on a later date.

Datawind, a company founded by two NRIs with R&D facility in Canada and listed in UK, was selected to make the tablet. This company had some experience in making cheap IT products, thus making it a decent candidate for the job, and also there are Indian names at the helm of the company, not some Chinese or Taiwanese.

Datawind won the tender to make a pilot set of 100,000 tablets and these tablets were supposed to be made in India, so that government does not have to go through the previous experience. Therefore company, which actually assembled all its products till now in China actually searched for a [manufacturing partner in India](#) and decided to go with [Secunderabad based Quad Electronics](#) to manufacture the tablet. This company is into the manufacturing of products like modems and wireless routers for the past 14 years with 900 employees and no prior experience in tablet manufacturing. Well, no Indian company has; most the manufacturing and assembling is done in China even for Indian or US companies.



Kapil Sibal on Oct 5, 2011

Quad Electronic has the capacity of churning out 700 tablets per day and has to complete the order of 100,000 tablets.

So, the [tablet \(named as Aakash\)](#) at [today's press conference](#) came from this manufacturing unit itself, and testing was done by IIT Rajasthan and content provided by NME-ICT. Over 500 school students were also invited to the launch event to show that the tablet is indeed real and will be

distributed to these kids and it was given to them for free.



*Image Credit: Reuters*

The features of Aakash are very different from the initial prototype and it comes with a 7 inch resistive display, 366MHz processor, WiFi, 256MB RAM, 2GB storage and microSD card slot. No camera or GPRS connectivity is present in this tablet. As you can see the most basic features have been chosen to actually make the tablet in the given pricing. According to Datawind, it is selling 100,000 units of Aakash tablet to Indian government at \$45 (INR 2250) and government is subsidizing it to sell it at \$35 to the post-secondary students.

So that was all of this, I might have missed a few things but it is more or less the story of Indian \$35 Android tablet "Aakash".

### **Suggested Reading:**

[\\$35 tablet Aakash FAQs](#)

[First look at \\$35 tablet 'Aakash' from Indian government](#)

 Android Tablets, General News, India  Aakash Tablet, HCL Tablets  October 5, 2011  
[<http://www.androidos.in/2011/10/story-of-indian-35-aakash-tablet/>]  Gaurav Shukla.

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#### About Gaurav Shukla

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