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Will Tablet Makers Be Interested If Indian Govt Licenses Aakash Brand?

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The government of India wants to convert “Aakash”, under which it had launched Aakash tablets, into a brand name, reports [Business Standard](#). The report also states that any private company or government agency that fulfills certain criteria and specifications could license the brand name.

Rajat Moona, director general of the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (CDAC), said to the publication that the entire Aakash project was a government of India initiative but several companies are driving mileage out of its publicity by selling anything in the name of Aakash. The report states that government will allow private companies to licence Aakash logo if it fulfills criteria set by the government.

As per the mandate, the tablet will have to have at least a 7-inch capacitive screen with 1GB RAM, 4GB of internal SD card memory expandable up to 32 GB and should run on Android OS with added capability to run on open-source Linux software.

Aakash project, which was conceptualized in 2010, has been mired in controversies ever since its inception. The Aakash project which was supposed to be a shining knight for the government has instead become a laughing stock worldwide. It had taken a major hit after [reports](#) surfaced that the tablet was bought off the shelves from China, instead of manufacturing or designing it in India. It's very presumptuous of the government to think that major brands would want to licence the Aakash logo and suffer from the market wrath.

Note that in March 2013, the government itself was [confused about the status of the project](#). The government was close to shutting down the project, with Raju stating that the overall focus of the project should be on how they enable students to access educational content and allow them to access this content on a device of their preference. The same week, he had contradicted his own statement and said that the government was planning to launch the next version of Aakash tablet shortly.

It appears that the government has finally found a solution to carry forward the project. We feel that it should have taken this approach from the beginning itself instead of signing a contract with a single OEM (Datawind). The problem that might arise now is, while brands who earlier might have wanted to participate in the project, would not want to licence the logo because of its murky image in the market. That said, will licensing Aakash logo help the Indian government make better tablets?

Controversies surrounding Aakash

In November 2012, there were [reports](#) that Aakash 2, the second iteration of the Indian Government's ambitious low-cost education focused tablet project in partnership with Datawind was designed and manufactured in China for \$42. Datawind CEO, Suneet Singh Tuli, had however refuted the allegations.

Datawind vs Quad Electronics: MediaNama had earlier [filed](#) an RTI on the original Aakash Tablet and it was learnt that Datawind had placed an order for 50,000 tablets with Quad Electronics Ltd, Quad produced only 20,000 and Datawind took only 10,000. 2000 tablets were provided to IIT Rajasthan for testing before October 5th 2011, after which Datawind stopped taking tablets from Quad because of poor performance. Out of the 6440 tablets supplied to IIT Rajasthan, only 650 tablets were accepted. Quad

Electronics had [sued](#) Datawind in April 2012 for non-payment of \$1.12 million against dues outstanding and inventory procured for DataWind.

The Indian Government had unveiled Aakash 2 on November 11 and Datawind had announced that they will be providing 100,000 units of Aakash 2 to IIT Bombay in the first phase, which in turn intends to distribute these tablets to Engineering students across various colleges and universities. However, the goal appears to be far from reality. For its first installment, IIT Rajasthan had distributed 572 of the 6640 Aakash Tablet devices received by Datawind, the college said, in response to a Right To Information [request filed by MediaNama](#).

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