

PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

SHRI KAPIL SIBAL LAUNCHES 'AAKASH', LOW COST ACCESS DEVICE

New Delhi: October 5, 2011

Shri Kapil Sibal, Union Minister for Human Resourced Development launched 'Aakash', a low cost access cum computing device, here today. This device was also distributed among 500 children on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion the Minister underlined that Aakash will help in eliminating digital illiteracy. For this he also emphasized the need for having high quality study content to be made accessible to students. He also called for support and partnership from all so that the device could cost further less, while praising the team which had worked towards the creation and production of this device.

Background on the Device

. To ensure complete transparency and a level playing-field, the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT) decided to task one of the IITs (IIT Rajasthan at Jodhpur) with the job of procuring and testing these devices based on the design and specifications that the Mission's team had finalized.

IIT Rajasthan followed an open tender process. A three-step process was followed to evaluate the bids that were received. First, a committee scanned all bids to check their eligibility based on the conditions specified in the tender. Eligible bids were then evaluated by a technical evaluation committee comprising of eminent academics and industry experts. Bids that were found technically suitable were then evaluated by a financial evaluation committee which then declared the lowest bidder. Following set government norms, a further negotiation was then held with the lowest bidder and a further discount obtained from them

On 22nd July, 2010 Shri Kapil Sibal, had unveiled a device that was expected to cost "around US\$ 35". The lowest bidder quoted an ex-factory price of US\$ 37.98 which was close to the cost mentioned by HRM. This cost that comprised of cost of components and material as well as manufacturing expenses. The final landed price of \$49.98/unit (which translated to INR

2276 at the exchange rate at the time of the order) included taxes, levies, and charges like freight and insurance, servicing and documentation etc. The landed price also includes one-year free replacement warranty from the manufacturer

It needs to be mentioned that this price does **not** include any subsidy from the Government and is a price that has been arrived at following a commercial tender process. The Government will also be providing price subsidy to the students on the price indicated in the earlier paragraph. The device will be distributed to students through the institutions at which they are studying.

The development of this device has been done in India in a plant at Hyderabad. This unique device is meant for students across India. Using this device, and the connectivity also provided under this Mission, learners will be able to access all the thousands of items of content available on the Sakshat portal and other educational web-sites

Roadmap

This current phase was a pilot to procure 100,000 devices. This pilot helped in sorting out the production related issues. These devices are now being distributed to students all over the country so that they can be extensively tested in various climatic and usage conditions. The feedback obtained from the testing will form an input into the design of the next version of the device. This is important, as the numbers that the Mission needs to procure are very large.

To achieve this, the team of experts working on this project would be broad-based. The production capacities of Indian manufacturers would also have to be substantially expanded to meet production requirements of a few million devices within a six-month time frame

Broadly speaking, future efforts will move in two directions – to achieve the same functionality at a lower cost and to achieve added capabilities at the same cost

MHRD invites collaboration, ideas and inventions from the community of academics and experts and inventors to achieve the cherished goals.

Connectivity:

It is expected that 416 Universities and 20,000 colleges all over India will be connected under the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT). The Mission pays for fiber connectivity for each University to connect to the nearest

NKN node. The Mission has placed a consolidated order for connecting all Universities and Colleges to BSNL and about 80% of the Universities and Colleges have been connected already

Content Creation

The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT) has proposed 18 different line items for content creation. All content that is created under this Mission needs to meet the following criteria:

- It should be related to education delivery.
- It should involve faculty from different institutions
- All IP (Intellectual Property) created under projects funded by this Mission will vest with MHRD
- All content should be created using open-source software.
- All content created under this Mission is for open access by all and cannot be charged for in any way

The National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT) was launched by the Union Ministry of Human Resource Development, in February 2009 with a budget of Rs 4612 crore. The National Mission on Education comprises of 48 different components structured broadly around building CONTENT, enabling ACCESS and developing LOW COST ACCESS cum COMPUTING DEVICES.

Aakash UbiSlate 7 Specifications

- **Hardware:**
 - Processor: 366 Mhz with Graphics accelerator and HD Video processor
 - Memory (RAM): 256MB RAM / Storage (Internal): 2GB Flash
 - Storage (External): 2GB to 32GB Supported
 - Peripherals (USB2.0 ports, number): 1 Standard USB port
 - Audio out: 3.5mm jack / Audio in: 3.5mm jack
 - Display and Resolution: 7" display with 800x480 pixel resolution
 - Input Devices: Resistive touch screen
 - Connectivity and Networking: WiFi IEEE 802.11 a/b/g
 - Power and Battery: Up to 180 minutes on battery. AC adapter 200-240 volt range.
- **Software:**
 - OS: Android 2.2
 - Document Rendering
 - Supported Document formats: DOC, DOCX, PPT, PPTX, XLS, XLSX, ODT, ODP
 - PDF viewer, Text editor
 - Multimedia and Image Display
 - Image viewer supported formats: PNG, JPG, BMP and GIF
 - Supported audio formats: MP3, AAC, AC3, WAV, WMA
 - Supported video formats: MPEG2, MPEG4, AVI, FLV
 - Communication and Internet
 - Web browser - Standards Compliance: xHTML 1.1 compliant, JavaScript 1.8 compliant
 - Separate application for online YouTube video
- **Safety and other standards compliance**
 - CE certification / RoHS certification

Other: Additional Web Browser: UbiSurfer-Browser with compression/acceleration and IE8 rendering.

MV/GK