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TOI
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An IIT, IISc-designed laptop for just 1500

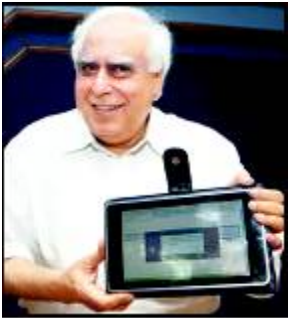
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: More than five years after it was conceived by then education secretary Sudeep Banerjee to take on Nicholas Negroponte's \$100 laptop and one-and-half years after his demise, HRD minister Kapil Sibal on Thursday unveiled access-cum-computing device priced at Rs 1,500 or \$35 for students but can be eventually owned by public at large.

The sleek-looking device — a cross between I-Pad and tablet PC and charged by an equally sleek solar panel — is designed by experts at IIT, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras and Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore. The upper price limit for the device is pegged at \$35. HRD ministry has made an open invitation to one and all to come up with more variants that fulfils specifications spelt out by it. The ministry has set up several separate teams, which are involved in bringing out their prototypes. In the next few months — by then more innovations will emerge and even price can come down to \$20 or \$10 — the ministry will issue an international expression of interest for manufacturing of these devices.

"Initially manufacturing might be done in Taiwan or some other place but eventually it will be done in India," Sibal said. He said there are already enough offers for lower price. The \$35 price, he said, is inclusive of cost of manufacturing abroad. However, the cost of the solar panel has not been factored into the price yet. The ministry is in talks with a company to bring down the cost of solar panels.

One reason for the low cost — apart from the falling prices of chip — is the sheer number of students who will get this device. Under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan alone, there are over 11 crore children, who are the likely recipients. Add to that lakhs of aided and unaided schools in the primary and secondary sector.



MADE IN INDIA: Sibal displays the cheap computing device

ET
July 23

HRD unveils future notebook

Our Political Bureau NEW DELHI

IN A move that will change classroom education across the country, the ministry of human resource development unveiled a low-cost computer with a price tag of 1,500 or \$35 on Thursday. "This is our answer to MIT's \$100 computer," human resource development minister Kapil Sibal said.

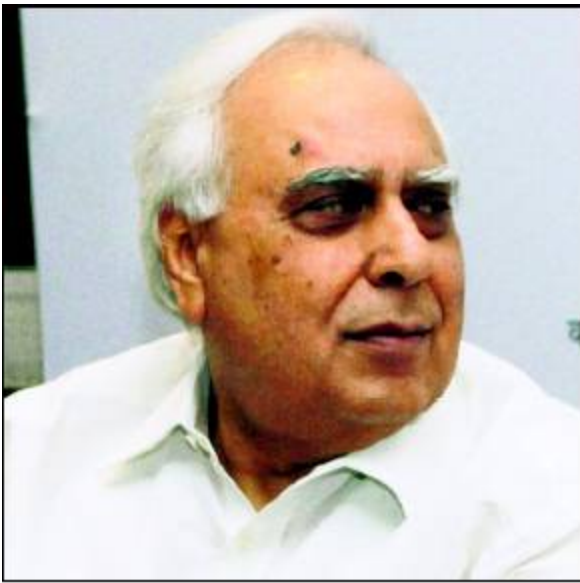
The device, which is no bigger than a conventional laptop, will have all elementary features, including internet browsing. It is a single unit system with a touch screen and a built-in keyboard along with a 2 GB RAM memory, wi-fi connectivity, USB port and powered by a 2-watt system to suit poor power-supply areas. The low-cost computer will be available for students by next year. Unveiling the device, Mr Sibal said: "This is real, tangible and we will take it forward. The sun will rise for the children in 2011."

The device has been indigenously developed through an unique collaborative effort, which included the

ministry, institutes like the IITs, IISc and VIT, Vellore and students. The idea for a low-cost computer has been in the works for nearly a decade now, with efforts being made by Murli Manohar Joshi in his tenure during the NDA regime, and then by Arjun Singh during UPA-I. Given the lukewarm response from IT sector companies, the ministry began discussions with professors and experts at IISc Bangalore, IIT Kanpur, IIT Kharagpur, IIT Madras and IIT Bombay. Undergraduate and postgraduate students participated by working on the development of a mother board for a low-cost device with ample flexibility to change components. Initially, the device came at a cost of \$47, however further collaborations across institutes led to refinements which helped reduce price. "When we started the project, the response from the private sector was lukewarm. Now, many are willing to join the innovation," Mr Sibal said.

The government's objective is to bring down the price to 470 (\$10). "We have come out with the device at 1,500 (\$35) and now we invite individuals, entrepreneurs, firms and industries to produce the device at cheaper rates than this. We have demonstrated to the world that we have produced a cheaper device when the prices of computers are going up," the minister said.

The manufacturer of the device and the distribution system are yet to be finalised. The minister said that the price tag of 1,500 has been computed after taking all aspects into consideration.



ANOTHER MILESTONE: Kapil Sibal

HindustanTimes

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Super 30's Kumar dons the role of a motivator

Sanjeev K. Ahuja

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GURGAON: Patna-based celebrity mathematician, Anand Kumar, donned the role of a motivator when he was invited for an interactive session by the leading corporate groups in Gurgaon.

Kumar the founder of Super 30 initiative — a model of education for underprivileged seeking admission to India's premier institutions — shared his success mantra and delivered lecture on leadership skills to a group of around 100 restaurant managers of KFC and Pizza Hut in Gurgaon on Sunday.

KUMAR, FOUNDER OF SUPER 30 INITIATIVE, DELIVERED A LECTURE AND SHARED HIS SUCCESS MANTRA ON LEADERSHIP SKILLS.

"I received an invitation from a corporate group and I accepted it instantly. I shared my experiences with the executives. I told them about the Super 30 initiative that was launched to help the underprivileged realise their dreams," said Kumar.

Kumar said that he also pre-

sented a power point presentation before the executives and also showed them a video documentary on Super 30.

He said that his one-hour session with the executives was a success and he looked forward to more assignments from the corporate world. Kumar was also flooded with a volley of questions during the hour long session.

"Participants exhibited tremendous interest in the success story of Super 30 and its founder," said Abhishek Sharma, the training manager of Devyani International Limited.

New fund for HRD schemes

ANUBHUTI VISHNOI

NEW DELHI, JULY 21

WITH the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission holding up many of its proposals, the Union HRD Ministry plans to set up a non-lapsable fund to finance secondary and higher education schemes.

Madhyamik and Uchcha Shiksha Kosh, like the existing Parambhik Shiksha Kosh, will be set up with proceeds from the education cess, sources said.

Parambhik Shiksha Kosh was set up in 2004, with the money collected as 2 per cent cess, to finance elementary education schemes — mainly the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the mid-day meal schemes.

When an additional one per cent Secondary and Higher Education Cess was imposed in 2007 to help fund new seats in higher educational institutes that are required to reserve 27 per cent seats for other backward classes, the HRD Ministry had no non-lapsable reposi-

tory to receive this money. So, the unutilised money automatically lapsed and was directed to the Consolidated Fund of India. By setting up the new non-lapsable fund, the Ministry has ensured this money remains at its disposal when if it is not utilised.

The fund will get around Rs 3,000 crore to start with and will assist in setting up of the proposed National Education Fund Corporation the Ministry has been working on.

The fund is also expected to finance existing schemes including Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, ICT in education and Girls Hostels Scheme, which require considerable investment.

With the Right to Education Act having cornered the lion's share of the ministry's allocations, several of its proposals are stuck with the Finance Ministry and the Planning Commission, which want the costs trimmed down or the schemes postponed.

KAUTILYA SINGH
KANPUR, JULY 22

Student death: Police to probe negligence charges against IIT-K

THE police will conduct a probe into the allegations of medical negligence levelled against the IIT-Kanpur authorities and Mahendru Psychiatric Centre, a private clinic, by the family of Rakesh Kumar Thakur, a first-year student of MTech (Mechanical Engineering) who died on July 7.

The DIG (Kanpur) Prem Prakash has directed ASP (Kanpur South) Mohit Gupta to probe the matter with the assistance of Chief Medical Officer (Kanpur) Dr Ashok Kumar Mishra.

Rakesh (22), who died —

reportedly of a cardiac arrest — at the private clinic, had returned to the institute's hostel on June 27 after attending a religious function at his home in Bihar. The next day, he was taken ill and was admitted to the IIT-K Health Centre. After remaining there for nearly a week, he was shifted to Mahendru Psychiatric Centre in Sarvodaya Nagar area on July 4.

"The family has blamed the negligent attitude of IIT-K au-

thorities and medical negligence for the student's death. If the allegations are found true, we will definitely register a case against those responsible," said DIG Prakash after meeting the Rakesh's father Vinay Thakur, uncle Basant and maternal uncle Shrishti in Kanpur on Thursday.

The family alleged that the health card of Rakesh — maintained by the health centre at the IIT-K — contained no significant entries.

"If my son was admitted in IIT-K Health centre for six days between June 28 and July 3, why were the medical details not mentioned in the health card?" questioned his father.

The family said despite their numerous requests, the IIT-K authorities said no to a post-mortem. "Why was the post-mortem not carried out at Kanpur? It appears that both IIT-K administration and Mahendru Psychiatric Centre authorities are trying to hide

some important facts from the family," said Basant.

His maternal uncle Shristi said Rakesh never suffered from any psychiatric disorder.

"We are stunned to know this. We fail to understand why the IIT-K administration did not inform the family earlier," he added.

Meanwhile, the IIT-K authorities have formed a team to investigate the matter. The team is expected to hand over the report within seven days.