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Encore Software develops low-cost Net-access device for rural areas

Bangalore-based Encore Software Ltd is bringing out a low-cost Internet access device with the object of making it accessible to rural and semi-urban areas, according to Shashank Garg, vice-president, software development. Speaking to The Financial Express, during a seminar on affordable telecom and IT solutions, Commsphere - 2000, he said that a trust had been formed by some of the company's founders to work on this technology.

The low-cost device will be a palm sized one 4x6 and can be used for surfing the Internet without the need of having a computer. While a personal computer works out to around Rs 30,000, this palm top will cost around Rs 6,000 to Rs 10,000. It can have other applications apart from surfing, like a digital organiser etc. Encore will be developing the prototype ready by April, though the complete device will be ready by June-July. The device will be used for a number of community-based services by having small servers in taluk offices etc from which files can be accessed, Garg said. If the concept is found successful and manufacturers take it up, volumes could bring down the price further, Garg said. However, Encore will help in devising a range of applications for the palm top and manufacturers could opt for their specifications.

The device will have a touch-screen device rather than a keyboard and will also have voice facility if needed. Encore is also working on radio software. Currently, there are chips for frequency demodulation and amplitude demodulation. The software can be used for demodulation, to decide on the channel frequency, channel selection and decoding of content. Only the receiver would be necessary Garg said.

Encore is primarily product development company and an EoU. In its previous avatar, it was known as NCore Technologies. This was merged with Encore Software, a listed company but the focus continues to be product development. The company gets its revenues from licensing its products. It has targeted a revenue of Rs 9 crore for the period of December 1999 -June 2000, its first year of operations. The key areas of focus for the company is in digital signal processing and embedded systems. It has its own Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) product.