

Indian firm unveils low-cost Linux-based PCs

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NEW DELHI, India--Indian technology firm Encore Software will soon offer a low-priced Linux-based mobile computer, the company announced on Tuesday.

The new machine, called Mobilis, is powered by Intel's XScale PXA255 200/400MHz processor and has 128MB of SDRAM, the company said. It features a 7.4-inch VGA LCD screen, roll-up keyboard, touch screen with stylus input, six-hour battery life and a case that opens up as a desktop stand, [Encore](#) said. The machine weighs 750 grams, or about 1.6 pounds.



Another version of the device, Mobilis Wireless, comes with an integrated keyboard. A third version, the Sofcomp, is an ultra-compact desktop that works with a regular monitor, the Bangalore-based firm said.

All three products support Indian languages--three of which are included on each model--and offer options for applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, a personal information manager, e-mail, a Web browser, PC synchronization and a text-to-speech engine, Encore said. Mobilis Wireless also has a built-in GPS receiver, and a GPRS wireless modem is offered as an option. Company officials said a Mobilis version supporting Windows CE also is in the offing.

The basic Mobilis model will be priced at about 10,000 rupees, or \$230, while the version with the TFT screen and integrated keyboard may be priced at about 15,000 rupees, or \$347.

The SofComp box with a cathode-ray tube monitor also will cost about \$230. Encore CEO Vinay L. Deshpande said at a press conference that final prices, based on the production volume for each item, will be announced later.

[Affordable computing devices](#) have caught the attention of many [technology companies](#) targeting emerging markets such as [India](#) and Russia. [Advanced Micro Devices](#), for example, has partnered with Tata Group to market its Personal Internet Communicator in India. And Taiwan's Via Technologies on Tuesday [launched a reference design](#) for a PC that would cost around \$250.

Encore said its computers target different segments of the low-end market, including students, small businesses, government workers and professionals such as lawyers and chartered accountants. The company said Mobilis has been integrated into the dashboard of a recently launched [electric car](#) and will be deployed in the United States for home automation applications. Four universities in India and four in South Africa are going to Mobilis as an electronic-book reader, the company said.

The firm previously developed a low-cost handheld device, called the [Simputer](#), with diverse applications. It hopes to begin commercial manufacture of the new products in three months.

The Mobilis line was developed with a grant of 30 million rupees--about \$691,000--from the [Council of Scientific and Industrial Research](#) under its technology finance scheme, called New Millennium Indian Technology Leadership Initiative.

"This marks India's leap into the future of PC technology. It is recognition of the hardware design talent India has," Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said at the unveiling of Encore's new products. Sibal ruled out, however, any preferential treatment for Encore's line when it comes to government procurements.



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