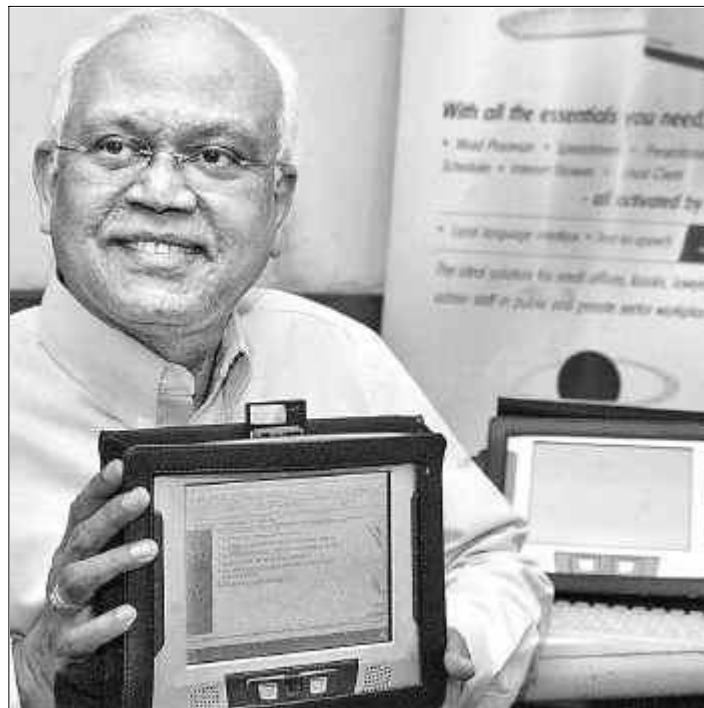


Date:11/05/2005 URL:

<http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/2005/05/11/stories/2005051102830500.htm>

Encore, CSIR roll out 'people's computer'

Our Bureau



Dr R. A. Mashelkar, Director General, CSIR, and Secretary, DSIR, at the launch of SoftComp products in the Capital on Tuesday. - - Kamal Narang

New Delhi , May 10

AN 18-month-old public-private partnership venture between Encore Software and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has resulted in the launch of "mobile desktops" which would be available in a range starting from "below Rs 10,000" to Rs 15,000-Rs 20,000. The products would be in the market in 3-4 months.

"Currently there are only 13 million PCs in India," said the Encore Chairman, Mr Vinay Deshpande.

"Wintel (Windows and Intel-based) PCs are not suitable for three-fourths of the world population given the high total cost of ownership."

The price is linked to economies of scale and can be met provided there is production of the level of 50,000-100,000.

Encore Software, however, is confident of achieving the scale given the fact that it already has orders from various customers and is in talks with many.

The products launched are Mobilis, Mobilis TFT and SofComp, all of which are Linux-based compact, mobile desktops.

They support all basic applications such as word processing, spreadsheet, Powerpoint presentation, e-mail, Web browsing, media player (audio/video), text-to-speech, book reading, and other small database applications.

Additionally, they are multilingual and support Hindi, Kannada and Marathi. Work is in progress to support Tamil and Telugu.

But since built-in memory is "up to 512 MB", users may require using additional storage devices.

Similarly, in order to use audio/video applications, users have to attach an external CDR drive.

Mobilis, which weighs 750 g, has a 7.4-inch LCD screen and comes with a foldable keyboard in a carry-case. The case opens up as a desktop stand.

The devices have a battery life of 6-8 hours and run with very little power.

Mobilis has "optional" GPS and GPRS capacity for accessing wireless Internet.

Both devices offer integrated smart card read/write capability as well.

SofComp includes a pocketbook size CPU and a 15-inch monitor and is slated to be priced below Rs 10,000. Mobilis will be available for around Rs 10,000 and Mobilis TFT for Rs 15-20,000.

The customers for the products include Habitat Technologies (for its home security system), ITC (for its e-choupal, education and healthcare initiatives), Reva Electric Car Company (for its dashboard), and another worldwide project where the device would be used as an "e-book reader by the students" in eight Universities (four in India and four in South Africa).

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