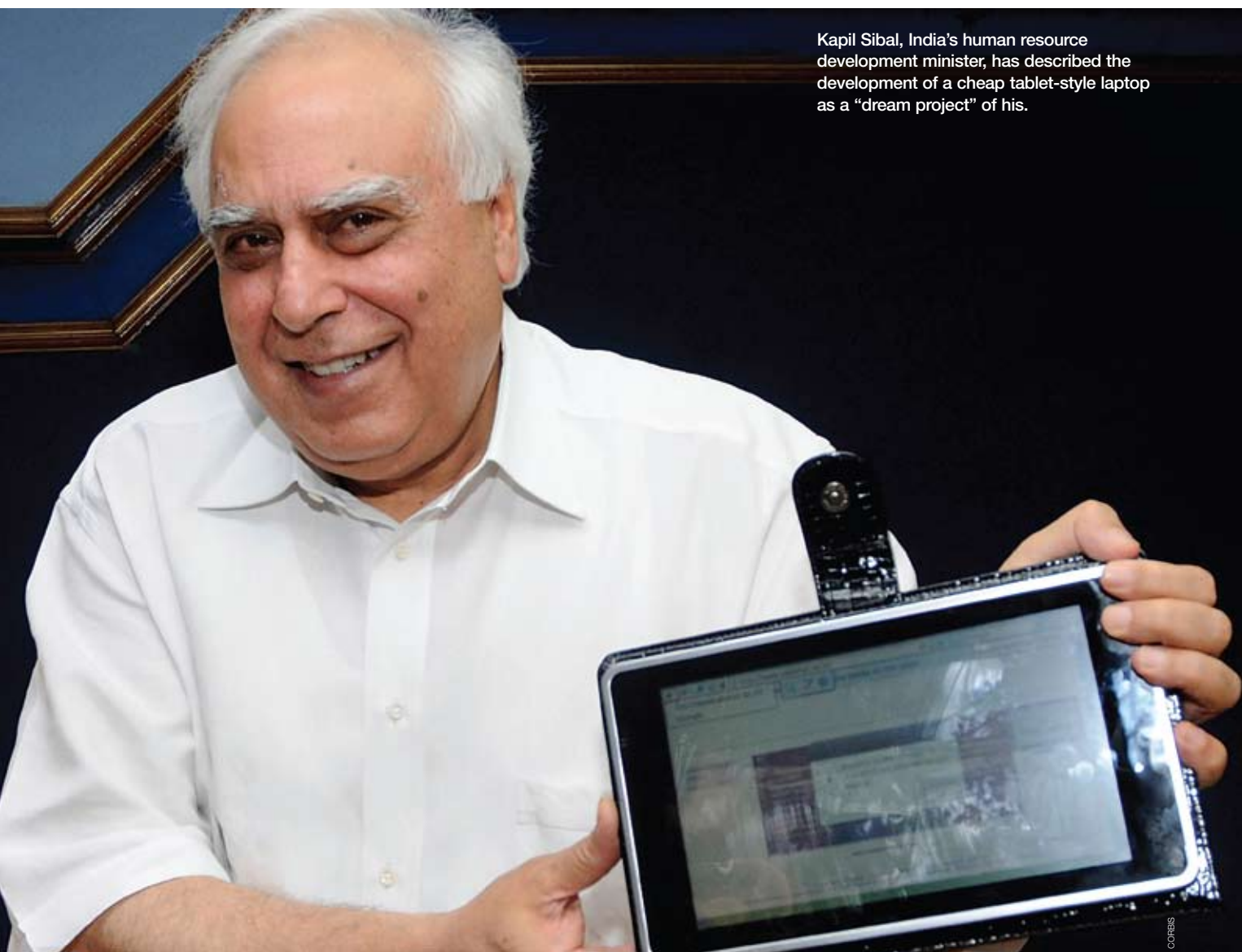


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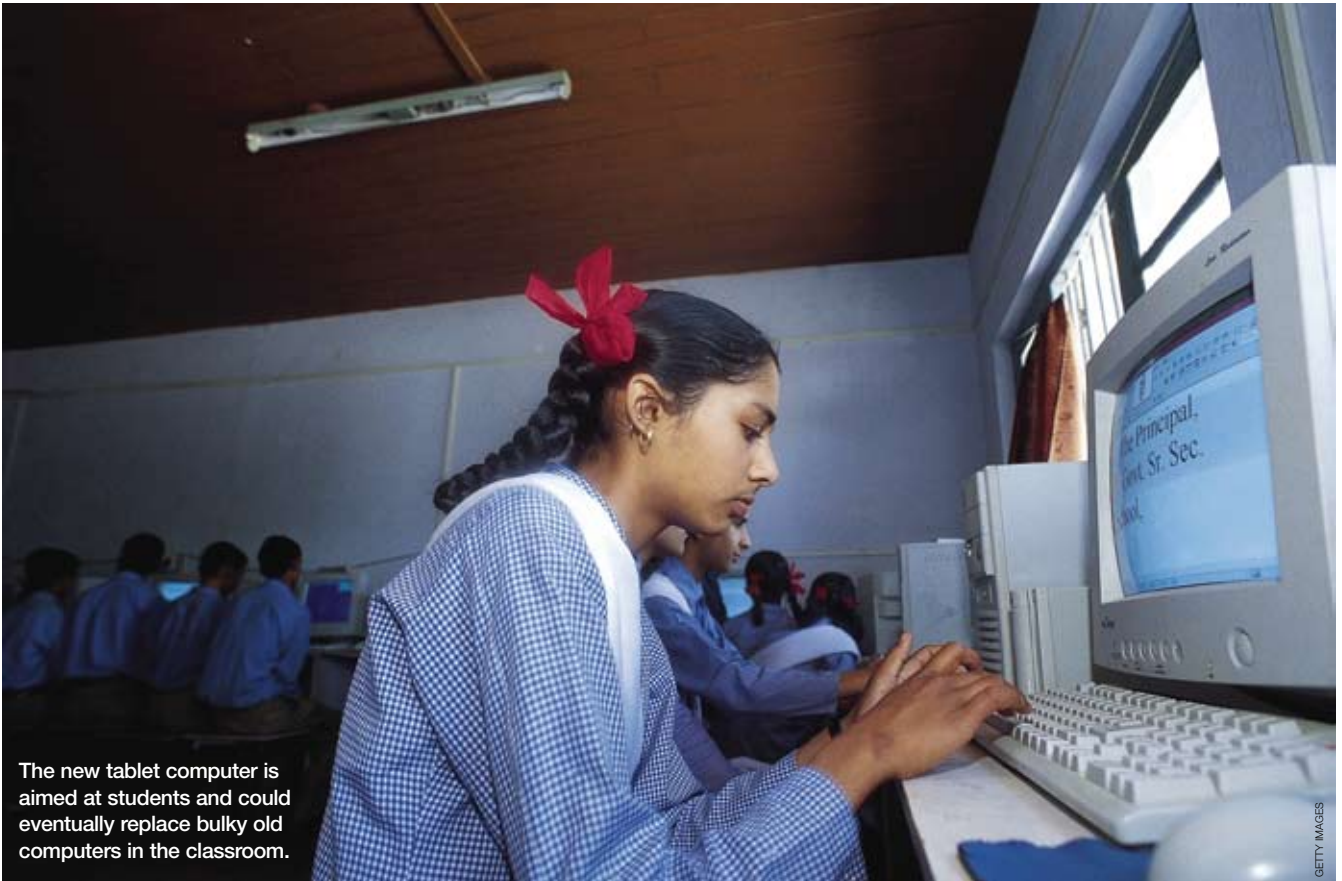
Kapil Sibal, India's human resource development minister, has described the development of a cheap tablet-style laptop as a "dream project" of his.

India's \$35 Touch-Screen Computer

A new tablet-style computer could represent an Indian 'solution of tomorrow', reports Heba Hashem.

THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT

has revealed a prototype similar to the iPad, a touch-screen laptop, at the comparatively low cost of US\$35. The gadget, which is directed at students, supports web browsing, video conferencing and word processing. According to Kapil Sibal, India's human resource development minister, a suitable manufacturer is presently being sought for



The new tablet computer is aimed at students and could eventually replace bulky old computers in the classroom.

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the computer, developed by India's leading IT colleges. An earlier low-budget laptop project by the same ministry had fallen through but the new model is now set for general release. The device, which will be officially launched next year, has no hard disk. Instead it relies on a memory card, similar to mobile phones. Planned to run on the Linux operating system, the new device can also operate on solar power. If successful, the gadget would cost

a fraction of the price of Apple's highly popular iPad, which retails from \$499. Sibal said the Indian tablet is expected to be offered to higher education institutions next year. He added that the price will eventually drop to \$20 and ultimately to \$10. As the prototype was revealed, the human resources development minister told the *Economic Times* newspaper that this would be India's answer to the "\$100 laptops" developed by the Massachusetts

Institute of Technology in the US. "The solutions for tomorrow will emerge from India," Sibal added. In 2009, one of the ministry's officials announced it was about to unveil a \$10 laptop, sparking global media interest. However, this was followed by disappointment when the 'Sakshat' turned out to be a prototype of a handheld device, with an unspecified price tag, that never took form. To develop its latest gadget, the ministry gained assistance from the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology, and the Indian Institute of Science, due to a slow response from the private sector. Although the price tag is strikingly low, the device is said to be feasible because of decreasing hardware costs. Although several global manufacturers, including at least one from Taiwan, have shown interest in making the device, no deals have been agreed as yet. ■

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