

# Govt may mandate NavIC for auto, smartphone cos

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The Centre might make it mandatory for smartphone and auto manufacturers to support the Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC) tool in devices made for the domestic market, Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar said on Thursday.

Apple, the world's largest tech firm, on Tuesday launched iPhone 15 Pro and Pro Max models that for the first time support the navigation technology developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro). This allows iOS app developers to choose a home-grown system apart from the US's Global Positioning System (GPS), Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System, the European Union's Galileo, China's BeiDou, and Japan's Quasi-Zenith Satellite System.

"It is very conceivable that something like this could be mandated if there is a second round of production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for mobile phones," Chandrasekhar told reporters. Asked if another round of PLI for smartphone makers was on the cards, the minister said the government had a target to gain 25 per cent share in global mobile phone manufacturing by 2026.

## HOME-GROWN NAVIGATOR

- NavIC designed by Isro with 7 satellites and a network of ground stations operating 24x7
- Project approved in 2006 at a cost of \$174 mn; became operational in 2018
- It offers Standard Position Service for civilian users and Restricted Service for strategic users
- Coverage area extends 1,500 km beyond India's borders

He also shared that Accord Software & Systems, a domestic startup, was the first Indian firm to design NavIC chips. It has already manufactured over one million 28 nanometres of NavIC chips so far. "Our innovation ecosystem, app developers, and startups must have access to as much choice as possible, whether it's Cloud, navigation or a device... in the automotive industry, since there is a chip available, there are sufficient reasons for the government to mandate that the trackers in India are NavIC-powered," Chandrasekhar said.

The government has been pushing to promote the NavIC system — launched as a dom-

estic alternative to the GPS — aiming for self-reliance, technological advancement, and showcasing India's space capabilities. The system has a coverage area across India and a region up to 1,500 km beyond the nation's boundary, according to Isro.

"When we have a mobile phone-grade chip that is performance- and cost-competitive, we will certainly incentivise mobile phone devices to incorporate NavIC as well. We will start pushing platforms to incorporate the increasing capability that we have today in India," the minister said.

Currently, only a few smartphones from Poco, Vivo and Xiaomi support NavIC.

"If you see the IT hardware PLI, there are incentives for manufacturers who incorporate Indian-designed chips and or Indian-manufactured chips. So it is very conceivable in the near future that the chips themselves that power mobile devices will be NavIC chips," Chandrasekhar said.

As notified in May, the modified IT hardware PLI scheme offers incentives of up to 9 per cent on incremental sales of locally manufactured products to attract investments in the sector. This was in line with the government's focus on increasing the local value addition in electronics manufacturing.