

GOOGLE CEO SET TO VISIT INDIA NEXT WEEK

Made-in-India Pixel phones on the table

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Google assembling its Pixel smartphones in India would be one of the key issues of discussion between Sundar Pichai, CEO of the tech giant and also its parent Alphabet, and top government officials when he visits the country next week.

Asked about Pichai's visit, Communications Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told *Business Standard*: "Yes, we will be meeting him to discuss a wide range of issues. We will discuss the manufacturing of Google phones in India, developing an app developer ecosystem, cybersecurity, the use of Indian languages, etc."

An e-mail sent to Google India on the agenda of these meetings did not receive any response. But sources said the issue of various penalties imposed on the company by the Competition Commission of India recently for allegedly abusing its dominant

position via the Google Play policy may come up during Google's discussions with the government. According to a recent *New York Times* report, Google is planning to shift half the production of the latest Pixel 7 phones from its Foxconn facilities in south China to Vietnam. The meeting with Vaishnaw would be significant as the Indian government has been pursuing global companies to shift part of their production for the global market in India as part of the 'China-plus-one strategy'.

If the talks fructify, Google would be the third major global mobile device player using India as an export-oriented manufacturing hub.

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Google CEO Sundar Pichai's visit comes against the backdrop of a slew of antitrust cases against the tech giant

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The other big players are Apple, which has already exported ₹20,000 crore worth of iPhones between April-December this year, and Samsung India.

Both Apple and Samsung are eligible for incentives under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

The government recently even pushed Chinese companies, which dominate the Indian market, to up their exports from here and asked them to prepare a clear plan. Pichai's India visit has been preceded by a few top Google executives visiting the country. They also met government officials.

These executives included Wilson White, vice-president of public policy, and Karan Bhatia, global head of policy at Google.

In 2020, Google committed an investment of \$10 billion in India. Google's CEO visit comes against the backdrop of the CCI's recent order slapping a ₹936.44-crore penalty on it, allegedly for abusing its dominant position with its Google Play policy.

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