

Majority of Google phones may soon be India-assembled

PHOTO: PTI

Currently, the phones are made in Vietnam and China

SURAJEET DAS GUPTA

New Delhi, 14 August

In a major push for local manufacturing, Google has started assembling the Pixel 8 in India through its vendor, Wowtek Technology India. Wowtek, a subsidiary of Bharat FIH and part of Hon Hai Technology Group (Foxconn), operates a factory in Tamil Nadu. Senior officials from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) have indicated that Google plans to shift the majority of its mobile device assembly, including Pixel, to India within three years.

At present, Pixel phones are manufactured in Vietnam and China. Google began assembling Pixel phones in China in 2016 and moved part of the production to Vietnam in 2019 due to rising US-China tensions. Google launched the Pixel 9 on Tuesday.

A senior Meity official revealed, "Initially, a limited number of phones will be assembled, but as production stabilises, the plan is to assemble most of their new phones in India within three years. This strategy mirrors Apple's approach, which has shifted a sizeable portion of iPhone assembly to India."

Bharat FIH is eligible for the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for mobile devices but has yet to claim the 4-6 per cent incentive due to unmet production value and investment targets. One of its largest original equipment manufacturers, Xiaomi, has reduced its partnership with Bharat FIH and opted for other players, including Dixon Technologies (India). In a related development, Foxconn has decided to double its capacity in India to accommodate the increased assembly of iPhones and its new contract with Google. Foxconn has com-



Foxconn Chairman Young Liu (left), who is visiting India, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is expected to meet with senior Meity officials to discuss expansion plans

mitted to creating 100,000 direct jobs, up from the current 50,000.

Foxconn Chairman Young Liu, who is visiting India, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and is expected to meet with senior Meity officials to discuss expansion plans.

In October 2023, Google announced its intention to assemble Pixel phones in India and began scouting for vendors. While Bharat FIH was selected for assembling non-Apple devices, Google has also finalised a deal with Dixon (which is also eligible for the PLI scheme).

Despite being a minor player in the global mobile market — with a 0.25 per cent share in the first quarter of 2024 compared to Apple's 17 per cent — Google's entry into Indian assembly could boost its presence. In India, Google's market share was just 0.25 per cent in 2023, though this was double the previous year's figure.