

India's push for own navigation system irks smartphone makers

CAUGHT IN A WEB. Samsung, Xiaomi, Apple fear this will lead to high production costs

Reuters
New Delhi

India is pushing tech giants to make smartphones compatible with its home-grown navigation system within months, worrying the likes of Samsung, Xiaomi and Apple who fear elevated costs and disruptions, as the move requires hardware changes, according to two industry sources and government documents.

In line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's drive for self-reliance, India has, over the years, expanded the use of its regional navigation satellite system called Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC).

The government wants to reduce dependence on foreign systems, including the widely used US Global Positioning System (GPS), and says NavIC



CALLING THE SHOTS. India has, over the years, expanded the use of NavIC, its home-grown navigation satellite system

provides more accurate domestic navigation and that its use would benefit the economy.

GPS RIVALS

China, the EU, Japan and Russia have their own global or re-

gional navigation systems to rival GPS. Operational since 2018, NavIC's uptake is minimal.

But government and industry documents show Modi's administration and space officials want to broaden

its use, and have this year pushed smartphone giants to make hardware changes to support NavIC, in addition to GPS, in new phones they will sell from January 2023. In private meetings in August and September, representatives of Apple, Xiaomi, Samsung Electronics and others pushed back, citing worries that making phones NavIC-compliant would mean higher research and production costs.

The changes would also require more testing clearances, which, with a January 1 deadline, would disrupt businesses and planned launches, according to two smartphone industry sources and documents. Samsung declined comment on the meetings, while Apple and Xiaomi did not respond to requests for comment.