

# ISRO'S NAVIC SET TO BE COMMERCIALISED BY ANTRIX

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Easy navigation: A boat carrying a NavIC receiver sets out to the sea for user trials at Kerala's Vizhinjam harbour. File photo

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its older commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd. are poised to commercialise India's regional navigation satellite system, NavIC, with Antrix recently floating two separate tenders to identify industries that can develop dedicated NavIC-based hardware and systems.

NavIC (Navigation in Indian Constellation) is the Indian system of eight satellites that is aimed at telling business and individual users where they are, or how their products and services are moving. The indigenous positioning or location based service (LBS) works just like the established and popular U.S. Global Positioning System or GPS, but within a 1,500-km radius over the sub-continent.

Antrix's Chairman and Managing Director S. Rakesh said the company was currently identifying suitable device manufacturers on the one side and comprehensive integrators of NavIC-based systems (SIs) on the other side. Eligible manufacturers from the two sets would be empanelled so that they could bid for government projects that require monitoring of moving assets and fleet.

## Early users

The early set of commercial NavIC users, he said, would be potentially transporters of resources such as mined ore, coal and sand in various States. Several transporters currently use GPS-based systems.

"Mining and transportation sectors need vehicle tracking applications that are tied to revenue sharing systems of the government," said Mr. Rakesh.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways mandated last year that all national-permit vehicles must have such tracking devices. As a pilot, many fishing boats have been fitted with these devices that have a unique texting facility.

Besides the Antrix tenders, two other recent developments have paved the way for taking NavIC closer to end users.

## Positive developments

In mid-October, ISRO announced that Qualcomm Technologies, Inc., a leading producer of semiconductor chips, had developed and tested NavIC-friendly chipsets across its user bases and that it would add NavIC to them.

The third and important positive for NavIC was the certification of the Indian system by the 3GPP (The 3rd Generation Partnership Project), a global body for coordinating mobile telephony standards.

The specifications will be available in March 2020 and the Telecommunications Standards

Development Society, India has said it would adopt them as a national standard.

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