

ISRO TO BOOST NAVIC, WIDEN USER BASE OF LOCATION SYSTEM

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NavIC system is not widely in use in India because mobile phones are not compatible. Dado Ruvic

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is working on a series of improvements to NavIC, or India's equivalent of the Global Positioning System (GPS), so that more people are motivated to install and use it. Plans are also afoot to give it a global reach, S Somanath, ISRO Chairman, said on the sidelines of the India Space Conference on Wednesday.

NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation), or the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), is a constellation of seven satellites akin to the U.S. GPS, the European Galileo and the Russian GLONASS, and can be used to track location.

Though available for use in mainland India and within 1,500 km around it, the system is not in wide regular use in India primarily because mobile phones have not been made compatible to process its signals. The Indian government has been pressing manufacturers to add compatibility and has set a deadline of January 2023, but media reports suggest this is unlikely before 2025.

Mr. Somanath told *The Hindu* that adding the L1 band into NavIC would be a major change. This bandwidth is part of the GPS and is the most used for civilian navigational use. "Currently NavIC is only compatible with the L5 and S bands and hasn't easily penetrated into the civilian sector," he said. "Currently (NavIC) only provides short code. This has to become Long Code for the use of the strategic sector. This prevents the signal from being breached. This had been part of the original scheme for NavIC, but less work has gone into it," he added.

There are five more satellites in the offing to replace defunct NavIC satellites that would be launched in the coming months. However, to make NavIC truly "global", more satellites would need to be placed in an orbit closer to earth than the current constellation, said Somanath.

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