

# From phones to drones, Google looks to firm up India bet

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Following in Apple's footsteps, Alphabet — Google's parent company — is in advanced talks with Foxconn to manufacture Pixel smartphones in Tamil Nadu, an industrial state which will also double up as drone-manufacturing hub for the US tech giant soon.

According to a state government release, officials from Google will soon visit Chennai to meet Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin to hold discussion on manufacturing of Google Pixel near Chennai.

Foxconn did not respond to queries from *Business Standard*.

An industry source privy to the development also confirmed it.

"Foxconn may be manufacturing Pixel phones for Google through a newly-formed company under Foxconn's subsidiary Bharat FIH. This will be done at an erstwhile Nokia campus in Sriperumbudur," he said. Sriperumbudur is located 40-km southwest of Chennai.

Apart from the smartphones, the US tech giant is also going to start manufacturing drones in the

state through its subsidiary Wing LLC.

According to the plan, Wing LLC will set up an assembly line for its drones in Tamil Nadu. This comes after a meeting between Google's top executives and a team of officials led by state's Industries Minister TRB Rajaa in the United States recently.

The drone manufacturing by Wing LLC may give a fillip to India's plans to develop itself as a drone exporting hub.

According to industry estimates, the drone market in India is expected to touch \$13 billion by 2030, from around \$2.71 billion in 2022.

"Manufacturing of drones by Google in the state will be a huge boost to the overall investment eco-system in Tamil Nadu. It will be done by Alphabet arm Wing," said another source on condition of anonymity.

Though there is no confirmation from Google or Foxconn on the matter, the US giant had already lined up plans to start production of Pixel 8

smartphones in India and had announced the plan way back in October 2023.

There were also reports that

Google had joined hands with Dixon

Technologies, a domestic electronics manufacturer, to produce its flagship Pixel 8 smartphones in the country.

The move is interesting as other global majors like Apple

and Samsung are also expanding their manufacturing presence in India.

Google's move comes at a time when Tamil Nadu is being transformed as the electronics hub of India. Driven by Apple's aggressive India push, the southern state now boasts of the highest tally of electronics goods exports in the financial year ended March 31, 2024 (FY24), ahead of Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh. The state posted a 78 per cent increase in exports from \$5.37 billion in FY23 to \$9.56 billion in FY24.

This was around 33 per cent of the total electronics exports of the country.

