

India May Quit Galileo

According to subcontinent press sources including the Times of India, India's participation in the Galileo project has run into the hard-ground realities of security concerns. India apparently fears that sharing of sensitive data may not be adequately firewalled from individuals and other nations participating in the enterprise. While Indian military and civilian facilities are currently open to surveillance by US and other satellites used for military purposes the Galileo project poses the problem of uncertainty over data users.

India signed up to the thirty-satellite landmark space navigation project in September last year. The details of Indian participation were to be completed during a recent summit meeting between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and EU leaders in Helsinki. But reports suggest the expected progress could not be made in Helsinki; cited are Indian concerns relating to access the satellite system will have to all sorts of geographical and tactical locations in the country. Further, there were questions over how broad would be access to very precise data provided by the system concerning facilities and even individual phone and vehicle users. It had proved impossible to resolve these issues in Helsinki and, despite an official statement prior to the PM's visit that details of Indian participation in the Galileo project were close to being finalised, discussions between Indian and EU officials ran aground in Finland.

China, a major contributor to the project, has agreed to sign seven contracts with the EU to participate in Galileo and has committed itself to a \$241 million investment in the project. Security objections had already been raised concerning Chinese investment in projects in India relating to areas like ports and telecom. In a recent shift of policy that set it on a collision course with the UK and the US, the European Commission suggested that Galileo might be opened up for military use. A report in the UK newspaper The Independent quoted European Commissioner for Transport Jacques Barrot as saying that "the idea of only using Galileo for civilian purposes will not persist into the future because I think that our military cannot do without some sort of (navigation) system".

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