

Now, steer by satellite – countrywide

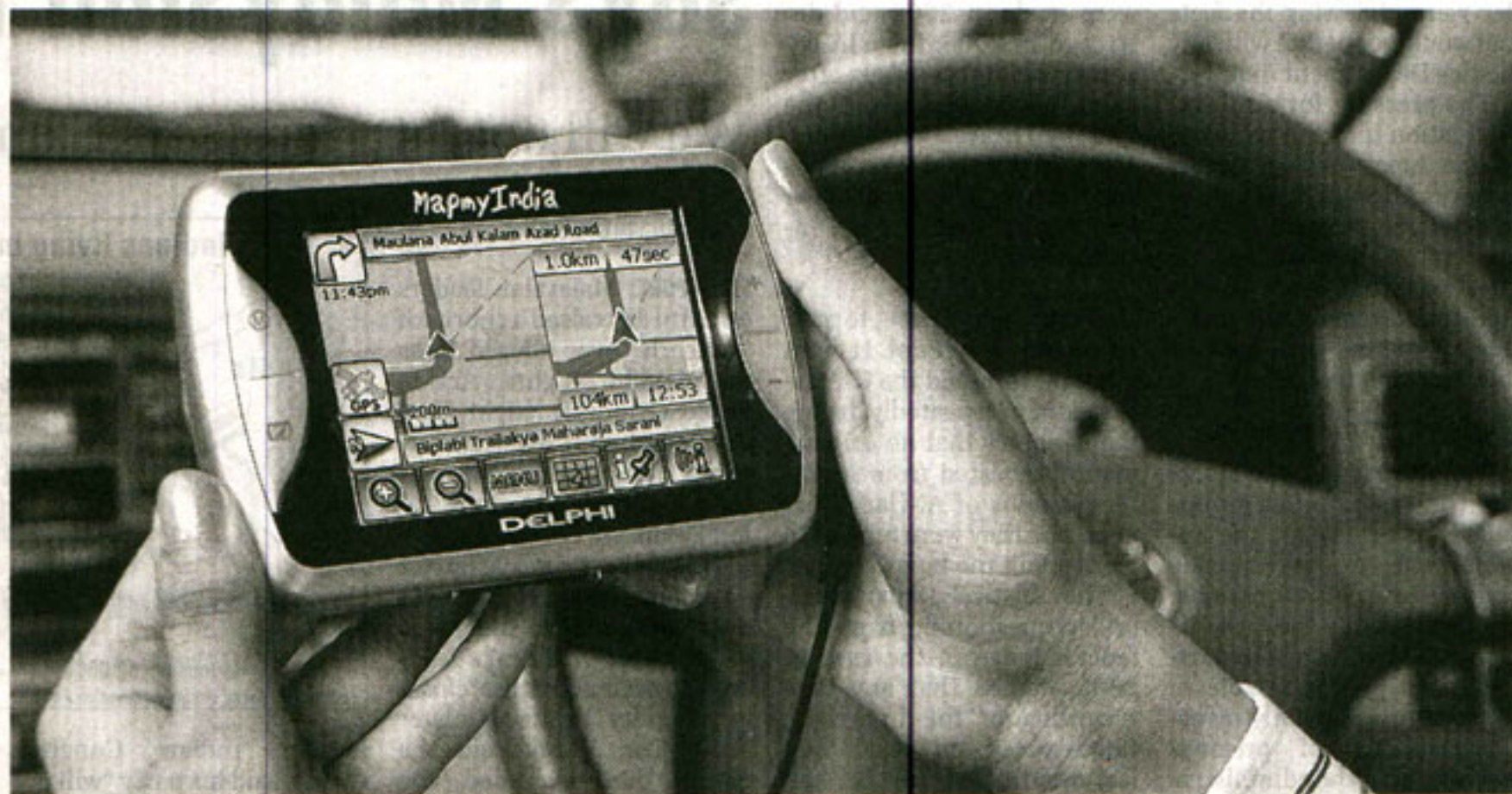
GPS navigators launched by MapmyIndia is backed by Indian database

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BANGALORE: Between travelling hopefully and arriving safely, there is a small challenge to be overcome: the need to know precisely where you want to go and how to reach there. Thanks to the network of satellites known as the Global Positioning System (GPS), you can obtain guidance to reach virtually any corner of the earth – as long as someone has created a digital map of the route (and marked the obstacles).

GPS-based personal navigators are now one of the hottest Christmas and New Year gift items in the West – and some of these models have been available in India for some time now. However, the challenge has been to complement the hardware with reliable maps that span the entire country.

Last week, the Delhi-based MapmyIndia – a sister concern of a leading player in the Geographical Information Systems (GIS), CE Info Systems – launched two new models of what are being called Personal Navigation Devices (PNDs). These are small hand-held devices fuelled by a chip that obtains the exact position using the built-in GPS satellite receiver



SATELLITE GUIDANCE: MapmyIndia's personal navigation system can be fitted in cars and will soon cover 1,000 cities in India. — PHOTO: SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

and merges the information with a software resource of maps and directions.

What is new in these devices, being made available in India, is the huge database of digitised maps covering 55,000 towns and villages, 150 landmarks and 18 cities as well as local places in 52 categories.

CE Infosystems has al-

ready collated information for 1,000 cities and 5-lakh towns that make for a total of a million points of interest – and by 2008-end plans to format them to work with the PND systems. The two navigator models offered last week, the Delhi NAV 200 and the AMAX 06GP5A, are 3.5-inch colour touch-screen devices fuelled by a GPS system

sourced from Sirf and a Samsung processor. They are almost similar in function and cost Rs.21,000 and Rs.22,000 respectively. The heart of both models is a 1 gigabyte Flash "SD Card" which stores the entire map database.

Rohan Verma, who heads MapmyIndia, told *The Hindu* on Saturday that the company had invested \$5 million

in building up what is arguably the largest digital map database in India. It also planned to pump in an equal amount in sales and distribution – now that the consumer end of the navigation business is picking up. He assures that with MapmyIndia-fuelled PND systems, one can travel from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.