KDDI to sell nine new smartphones

The Associated Press

TOKYO, Oct. 17 (Kyodo) — KDDI Corp. said Wednesday it will launch nine new smartphone models capable of a high-speed data communication service in Japan, a move likely to further intensify competition among mobile phone carriers to pursue better infrastructure.

Of the nine models that are capable of using the LTE high-speed network, eight will hit the market on Nov. 2. The company which operates the "au" network also plans to launch a new tablet computer manufactured by Sharp Corp. in mid-December, it said.

KDDI President Takashi Tanaka told a news conference that the company is placing its focus on "quality" of the network, saying it is working to cover more population in Japan to offer its higher speed service and building a network system which enables smartphones to save energy.

"We have to use our resources for what customers really want," Tanaka said.

The announcement came as Japan's top mobile handset carrier NTT Docomo Inc. and third-place Softbank Corp. are also moving to enhance their communication infrastructure to offer faster data communication services.

All the smartphone models as well as the new tablet computer run on Google Inc.'s Android operating system. The Aquos Pad tablet computer will be equipped with Sharp's next-generation liquid crystal display panel featuring low energy consumption and high definition.

Tanaka said KDDI's sales of Apple Inc.'s new iPhone handsets have been "really favorable," expressing a view that the company has won competition so far with rival Softbank, which also sells the popular smartphones in Japan.

Commenting on Softbank's announcement earlier this week that it is buying major U.S. cellular phone company Sprint Nextel Corp., Tanaka said positive effects expected to come from the buyout are likely to be limited, citing such factors as different communication systems adopted by the two companies.

"Chasing volume is one way to do a business, but it is different from our values," Tanaka said.

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