

5G services to go live on Samsung devices, iPhones in Nov-Dec

Most phone makers to roll out updates by year-end

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Samsung will send the necessary over-the-air (OTA) software updates for all its 5G-enabled smartphones in India by mid-November, beating Apple, which will release those upgrades in December.

These OTA updates shall enable users of the 5G smartphones of these two companies to finally access the super-fast service.

These two and other mobile handset makers have promised to provide software support for their in-use 5G smartphones by the year-end.

This was communicated during a meeting — called by The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and chaired by both telecom secretary and MeitY (Ministry of Electronics and Information

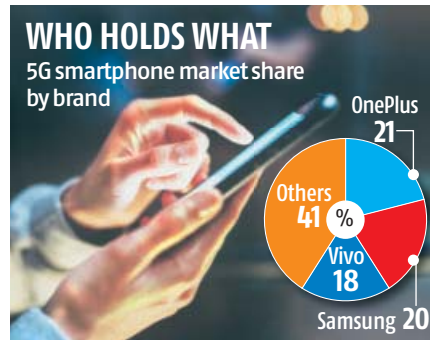
Technology) secretary — between device makers and telecom companies on Wednesday, officials said.

Following the launch of 5G services on October 1, two of the three telecom operators have rolled out the service in select cities.

While Airtel has gone for a full launch across eight cities, Jio has rolled out the service to select users in four cities.

But many subscribers are yet to access the service since their '5G-enabled' smartphones are yet to be 'activated' through the requisite software updates, a senior executive from a handset manufacturing company told Business Standard.

"We have informed the government that network validation for all 5G-enabled smartphone models will take some time but we are working on it. We are testing all these models with 5G



Phones shipped till June 30; Source: Counterpoint Research

frequency bands of both Airtel and Jio in major cities and this will ensure these phones always latch onto the best frequency available. The issue is that we are under pressure from both government and telcos to roll out the software updates as soon as possible," he said.

SIGNAL ISSUES

▶ India had **50 million 5G-enabled** smartphones as of June 2022

▶ But many yet to be 'activated' with over-the-air software updates by phone makers

▶ DoT called a meeting with phone makers and telcos to push for faster 5G software updates

▶ Chinese brands like OnePlus, Vivo, and Oppo lead in releasing updates

Government officials dubbed such challenges teething troubles and said these were anticipated. They stressed the meeting was called to ensure a smooth rollout of 5G.

5G smartphones growing

More than 50 million 5G-enabled

smartphones were shipped in India until June 2022, according to data from Counterpoint research.

OnePlus commands the largest share at 21 per cent, closely followed by Samsung (21 per cent), and Vivo (18 per cent).

According to data from Airtel's website, most Chinese brands — including OnePlus, Vivo, Oppo, and Xiaomi — have already released software updates for a large chunk of their 5G smartphones.

But despite having one of the most diversified product ranges of 5G smartphones, most Samsung devices are yet to catch 5G signals.

"Samsung has pioneered 5G technology development since 2009 and took the leading role in standardising 5G technology globally. In India, Samsung has the widest portfolio of 5G devices. We are working closely with our operator partners and are

committed to rolling out OTA updates across all our 5G devices by mid-November 2022, enabling Indian consumers to experience 5G seamlessly," a Samsung India spokesperson said.

Though in India, Apple's sales volume remains relatively low, the company has also geared up to enter the 5G race, eyeing tier-I cities.

"We are working with our carrier partners in India to bring the best 5G experience to iPhone users as soon as network validation, and testing for quality and performance are completed. 5G will be enabled via a software update, and will start rolling out to iPhone users in December," Apple said in a release.

Google, which has a series of 5G-enabled devices in India, has also informed the government that it is working on enabling 5G accessibility for all carriers as soon as possible.