Beat: Technology

Apple signs iPhone deal with China;s largest phone company

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USPA News - U.S. technology giant Apple has signed a deal with China Mobile, the world`s largest phone company by subscribers, to bring the iPhone 5 to customers in a market dominated by cheaper rival phones from Samsung and domestic developers, the companies announced on Monday. As part of the multi-year agreement, iPhone 5s and iPhone 5c will be available from China Mobile`s expansive network of retail stores across mainland China beginning on January 17. Customers are already able to pre-register on the website of China Mobile, which has more than 763 million customers, making it the world`s biggest cellular communications company.

"Apple`s iPhone is very much loved by millions of customers around the world. We know there are many China Mobile customers and potential new customers who are anxiously awaiting the incredible combination of iPhone on China Mobile`s leading network," said China Mobile Chairman Xi Guohua. "We are delighted that iPhone on China Mobile will support our 4G/TD-LTE and 3G/TD-SCDMA networks, providing customers with high-speed mobile service." Apple CEO Tim Cook said the California-based company has "enormous respect" for China Mobile and said they are excited to begin working together. "China is an extremely important market for Apple and our partnership with China Mobile presents us the opportunity to bring iPhone to the customers of the world`s largest network," he said. Details about the pricing and availability of iPhone 5s and iPhone 5c for China Mobile were not immediately made available. The deal with China Mobile is likely to boost Apple`s global sales in the short run and give the iPhone a big lift into the vast Chinese market that is dominated by low-cost Android smartphones. China`s three bestselling smartphone markers are Samsung, Lenovo and Coolpad, according to a recent report by market intelligence provider International Data Corporation (IDC). "The sharp increase in shipments of low-end China Mobile smartphones has driven the growth of Lenovo and Coolpad," IDC China analyst James Yan said in September. "Affected by the sluggish sales of iPhone 5, Apple`s market share has declined dramatically [in China], but its performance is expected to remarkably improve with the launch of the new iPhone." With the issuance of 4G licenses and the launch of Apple`s new iPhones by China Mobile, IDC expects China`s smartphone shipments to exceed 450 million in 2014, including 120 million smartphones that support 4G functions and over 32 million smartphones that will adopt China Mobile`s TD-LTE air interface.

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