

South Korean regulator approves iPhone

November 18 2009, By KELLY OLSEN , AP Business Writer

(AP) -- South Korea's telecommunications regulator cleared the way Wednesday for the launch of Apple's iPhone, amid reports the hit device could reach consumers by the end of this month.

The Korea Communications Commission gave its approval at a meeting of its commissioners and the phone can be launched anytime, said spokesman Lee Sang-hun.

Local service providers KT Corp. and SK Telecom Co. have been in talks with Cupertino, California-based Apple Inc. regarding the introduction of the smartphone.

The iPhone's arrival in [South Korea](#) has been keenly awaited as the domestic market is dominated by domestic manufacturers [Samsung Electronics](#) Co. and [LG Electronics](#) Inc.

KT spokeswoman Alice Park said the company had no immediate comment on the commission's decision, though reiterated that the country's second-largest mobile carrier is committed to releasing the [iPhone](#) as soon as possible.

Lauren Kim, a spokeswoman for SK Telecom, South Korea's largest mobile carrier, said her company had made no decisions regarding the iPhone.

Apple spokesman Steve Park had no comment, saying that his company has yet to confirm whether it will introduce the phone to South Korea.

The Chosun Ilbo, South Korea's largest mass circulation newspaper, reported Wednesday that KT plans to start taking orders on the Internet for the iPhone on Thursday and begin sales on Nov. 28.

Apple's Web site, which lists countries where the iPhone is or will soon be available, did not include South Korea in its "coming soon" section.

South Korea would be one of the last major countries in Asia to get the iPhone. The device made its formal debut in China late last month via local partner [China Unicom](#) Ltd. It is also on sale in Japan, India and Australia.

South Korean law requires companies that provide so-called location based services, such as maps and direction finders, to obtain government permission.

The KCC said in September that to facilitate the iPhone's introduction it would allow local telecommunication service providers such as KT to obtain that permission on Apple's behalf.

Lee, the commission spokesman, said he could not immediately confirm how Wednesday's decision differed from September's, though said it was related to location based services.

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