

S. Korea firm to launch mega-fast wireless service

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A South Korea man passes an SK Telecom advertisement in Seoul. South Korea's top mobile carrier has said it would launch its super-fast 4G wireless service Friday to meet growing demand from users of smartphones and tablet computers.

South Korea's top mobile carrier SK Telecom said it would launch its super-fast 4G wireless service Friday to meet growing demand from users of smartphones and tablet computers.

The company said it would begin providing the new service, based on Long-Term Evolution (LTE) technology, in Seoul and would secure national coverage by 2013.

South Korean operators now use WiBro or WiMax [network technology](#), but a fast increase in smartphone and tablet users has pushed them to deploy new networks for higher-speed data services.

SK Telecom said LTE would allow users to download large [video content](#) in minutes with a maximum downlink speed of 75Mbps, 1.9 times faster than WiBro.

It predicts its LTE service will attract around 300,000 users in the second half of 2011 and 10 million users by 2015.

"LTE will rapidly become widespread globally, realised through the rapid pace of LTE smartphone and tablet adoption, LTE equipment upgrades, and provision of diverse LTE-based services," it said in a statement.

The company plans to introduce its first LTE smartphone in September, built with a LCD screen of 4.5-inches or bigger, and nine different LTE devices this year.

LTE will help open "a true ubiquitous era supported by ultra-high definition, high speed and multi-networking services", it said, adding about 65 percent of total [data traffic](#) would be handled by LTE networks in 2014.

Domestic rival KT Corp plans to launch a 4G service in November. LG Uplus Corp will embark on the advanced network service in Seoul from Friday.

"The introduction of 4G LTE networks will help realise a digital nomad lifestyle where people can use a wide variety of services regardless of place," SK Telecom said.

Official data show gadget-mad [South Korea](#) had about 51 million [mobile phone subscribers](#) at the end of February, more than the population of 48.8 million.

Of the total, more than 10 million were smartphone users. Telecoms authorities say the country will have more than 20 million smartphone users by the end of this year.

The global tablet PC market is expected to expand to 30 million units next year from 13 million this year, according to industry data.

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