

Low-cost smartphone coming from Google

SAN FRANCISCO, USA: Google is working on a low-cost smartphone aimed at emerging markets as part of an initiative called Android One.



Google's Sundar Pichai says that a sub-\$100 smartphone will be available for emerging markets later this year. Image: [Techno Buffalo](#)

The Android-powered handset will be built with a basic set of features including FM radio, have a screen slightly smaller than five inches and be priced at less than \$100, Google Senior Vice President Sundar Pichai said at the start of the technology giant's annual developers conference.

"We are going to be launching it around the world, but will start in India later this year," Pichai said.

He added that Google was working with carriers in India to provide affordable telecommunication service packages to go with the smartphones, which could in many cases provide Internet access for the first time.

According to Pichai, the Android One initiative sets out to work with smartphone manufacturers and others in the "ecosystem" to pool resources and standardise hardware platforms to provide turnkey solutions for making handsets.

"There are billions of people who still don't have access to a smartphone," he said. "We want to change that."

Collaboration with other manufacturers

Google is collaborating with handset manufacturers and others in the industry to bring affordable smartphones to market that are high quality and come with reasonably priced data plans.

"We've long wondered what potential could be unleashed if people everywhere had access to the latest technology and the world's information," Pichai said. "It's time to find out."

Google and Silicon Valley rival Facebook have made priorities out of connecting with people in parts of the world where Internet connectivity is scarce, unreliable, or non-existent.

Having more people tune into websites or services mean expanded opportunities to make money from online advertising or providing tools that connect shops with customers.

Google does not make money from hardware, with its own branded gadgets meant to set standards and show off software capabilities with an eye toward inspiring electronics manufacturers to improve their phones when it comes to Android or Chrome devices.

Developing countries have become primary targets for smartphone manufacturers and Android software made available free to handset makers has proven to be popular with budget-conscious buyers.

The news came after Microsoft said it would sell an Android-powered Nokia smartphone at a price of \$135, a device also apparently aimed at emerging markets customers.

Google in April bought Titan Aerospace, a maker of solar-powered drones that could be used to boost Internet access to remote areas.

Google is also developing Project Loon, which uses large balloons for transmitting Internet signals to regions that are not now connected.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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