Publication	The Economic Times
Date	13th April 2011
Headline	The First Free Smartphone

The First Free Smartphone

ET REVIEW

MTS Pulse

Price: Free (under 1yr contract)

Features

RATING ★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

528Mhz Qualcomm processor, 288 MB RAM, 5MP AF camera, Android 2.1

3.2" 320 x 480 capacitive touchscreen

GPS, Wi-Fi, 1300mAh battery, 120g

PROS: An Android phone for free

CONS: Locked to MTS,

Also See

LG Optimus One P500

Price: ₹ 10,000

600Mhz processor, 3.2 inch 320x480 pixel capacitive touch-screen, 3.2 MP camera

HITESH RAJ BHAGAT
NEW DELHI

At first glance, this looks like any other Android touchscreen phone. But the new MTS Pulse (or HTC Pulse, co-branded by MTS) is significant, because this is the first operator-subsidized smartphone in India (though not the first operator subsidized phone: remember the Reliance Dhirubhai Ambani offer?)

It has a 3.2-inch, 320 x 480 pixel capacitive touchscreen, 528Mhz Qualcomm processor, 288MB RAM, 5MP autofocus camera, Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, GPS, micro SD slot (8GB card supplied, 32GB supported) and runs Android 2.1. The Pulse is a CDMA/EVDO phone, which means there's no SIM card. But in every other way, it operates just like any other Android touchscreen phone, with all the Google services, social networking features, push mail and Android Marketplace intact. Sure, it doesn't have the raw power of some of the 1Ghz Android phones, it doesn't record HD video and it doesn't have a lot of RAM, but as a mid-range Android handset, it does pretty well. You get solid built quality from HTC, the excellent HTC Sense user interface and a decent quality screen. Camera quality is acceptable and the 1300mAh battery is good for about a day. Unfortunately, the device will never get upgraded to Android 2.2, which could be a deal breaker for some.

A special mention should be made of MTS' network, which performed flawlessly most of the time (even for streaming video using YouTube or the pre-loaded MTS TV app). No issues to report with call quality, though in certain locations, signal strength would drop to just one bar, indicating that network coverage is an area that needs working on.

But the operator contract is the real draw here. Under the terms of the contract, you can get the phone free if you pay ₹1,500 monthly (as a minimum commitment per month) for one year. Your money also gets you 1500 minutes of talktime per month, 1500 text messages and 1500MB of data. For heavy users, this is the sweetest deal.

There are other offers too: pay ₹6,000 upfront and ₹1,000 monthly for six months — in which case your ₹1,000 per month gets you 1,000 minutes, 1,000 texts and 1,000MB of data per month. After the contract period expires, you're free to choose any plan. Or you could just pay ₹16,000 upfront for the phone (with the option of 12 interest free installments on credit card) and choose any plan you like. This makes the least sense, because a GSM Android phone with similar capabilities to the MTS Pulse (say, the LG Optimus One P500) costs just ₹10,000 now.

The burning question is: Why is MTS the first to offer this kind of a deal? What stops others from subsidizing the cost of a phone too? The catch is that the phone is locked to and connects only to MTS' CDMA network. MTS can take the risk because it can't be easily unlocked, and under the terms of the contract, they would have all your contact details anyway — making it easier to catch offenders who break the agreement.

However, it's a step in the right direction and hopefully, will persuade other operators to start seriously considering contract offers. If the operators are (rightfully) worried about contract-subsidized phones being unofficially unlocked, there is an easy way out — offer the contract only to trusted, long-time, postpaid subscribers. A small minority in the sea of almost 1 billion Indian mobile subscribers, but a significant number nonetheless.

Publication	The Hindu Business Line
Date	13th April 2011
Headline	Sistema Shyam's Net dongle will allow CDMA-to-GSM roaming

Sistema Shyam's Net dongles will allow CDMA-to-GSM roaming

Adith Charlie

Recently in Orlando (US)

Sistema Shyam TeleServices is planning to launch Internet dongles for international travellers. The dongles will enable CDMA subscribers to roam on GSM networks when they travel abroad.

"We are launching special dongles for international travellers which would connect with partner GSM networks across the world and at the same time have an MTS India number...We will continue adding to our list of partner networks all over the over the world," Mr Leonid Musatov, Chief Marketing Officer, SSTL, told *Business Line*.

SSTL, which operates mobile services under the MTS brand and broadband services under the Mblaze brand, is a joint venture between Russia-based Sistema and Mr Rajeev Mehrotra-promoted Shyam Telecom. It is one of the few operators providing services on the Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) platform in India. Industry analysts feel that the dongles provided by MTS could have dual-SIM capability thereby enabling it to switch services to the GSM platform while roaming abroad. Mr Musatov said it already has 443 network partners in 231 countries.

The dongles will enable CDMA subscribers to roam on GSM networks when they travel abroad.

The company is internally testing its international roaming offering currently and plans to do a full-fledged launch over the next two months. The pricing would be "competitive," the company said, without getting into further details.

Separately, an MTS India spokesperson said that the company is offering the lowest calling rates to Russia and the CIS countries.

Call to CIS countries – Armenia, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan – are priced at Rs 5.99 a minute. Calls to Russia, as part of a special Russia calling card, are priced at Rs 4.99 a minute.

While MTS has 10 million customers in India, it has over 100 million in Russia and other CIS countries. SSTL, which now offers services in 18 circles of India, is targeting 30 million customers by 2013.

This correspondent's trip to the US was sponsored by SSTL.