

'India to lead global smartphone growth'

Will Get Back Market Leadership From Apple This Year: Samsung's Mobile Head T M Roh

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TM Roh, president and head of mobile eXperience business, Samsung Electronics, seems to have his task cut out for new year. Having lost global smartphone leadership to Apple for first time in 2023 (IDC data), the company is ready to fight back and regain the crown. "... we intend to take back the mobile market leadership," Roh tells TOI in an interview, as he bets on AI and strong growth in India for the global resurgence. Samsung is also set to manufacture laptops in India. Excerpts:

The global market for smartphones has been subdued for some years now. Do you see a turnaround happening this year?

According to estimates, global market for smartphones saw 5% decline in terms of units sold last year. However, a 5% growth is forecasted for this year. So, we expect a turnaround to happen in 2024 to reach levels achieved in 2022. Demand had been subdued over past couple of years as replacement cycles had got longer and because there was not much motivation or enthusiasm for consumers to go for new devices. Now with AI coming embedded in smartphones, such as, in our Galaxy S24 series, we hope that it will reinvigorate market and bring back growth momentum.

What will be the role played by India in this global turnaround?

India is a very important market now and will become even more important in near future. The Indian consumer is highly tech-savvy and is open to new technologies and inno-

ventions. In fact, they demand them. India is a very dynamic market that can create new ecosystems and new industries. It is also a vibrant home for startups and industries. You have many young smartphone users in India, who have the potential to further growth of the mobile industry. I believe India is one of the

hip this year. We have long contributed to the mobile industry and we have maintained the market leadership for a long time. Of course, it (numbers) differs, depending on market research organisation. We fell short in terms of number of units. We intend to strengthen them again with our stronger product competi-

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“ We have decided to start producing laptops there (Noida) and have made necessary investments to allow their manufacturing
— T M ROH | PRESIDENT AND HEAD OF MOBILE EXPERIENCE (MX) BUSINESS, SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS

most important driving forces behind revival of global smartphone market and also AI phone market. The picture in India is a lot better than what we see globally because the market fared much better here and is still growing. We are also seeing a fast growth in the premium, high-end category in India. We look forward to a similar picture this year.

But increasingly as the market moves towards premium, we've seen this big surge for Apple globally and in India. This was first time that you lost worldwide market share leadership to Apple. Do you think you can get your leadership back?

Yes, I believe we will be able to get back the market leaders-

tiveness as well as sales and marketing capabilities. By providing what the consumer truly want, we intend to take back the market leadership.

Samsung is understood to have invested around Rs 15,000 crore in India since 1995. You also opened one of your biggest mobile manufacturing facilities in Noida a couple of years back. Will you ramp up production & investment?

We have a production base in Noida where we have invested heavily for quite a long time. So, we have enough capacity. And, we keep the operations at optimum level, calibrating according to the domestic demand in India as well as demand-supply dynamics in global smartphones market.