

13/02/2003

Celcom has no immediate plans to downsize workforce

Anna Maria

CELCOM (Malaysia) Bhd, Malaysia's second largest cellular phone company, has no immediate plans to downsize its workforce following its merger with

TM Cellular Sdn Bhd, the mobile unit of Telekom Malaysia Bhd.

Chief executive officer Datuk Ramli Abbas said since the company had already conducted a voluntary separation scheme (VSS) last year, staff downsizing is not a main priority at the moment.

He told reporters in Kuala Lumpur recently that the company sees its employees as one of its most important assets.

"Beside that, we are currently occupied with other important matters, especially in strengthening Celcom's position in the market," said Ramli.

Celcom, through a VSS exercise last year, had already scaled down its staff strength by 40 per cent from more than 4,000 strong employees nationwide.

The exercise was conducted in two phases where the first was offered to

managerial staff, followed by another for the lower-level personnel.

Meanwhile, Ramli said Celcom expects to offer full nationwide coverage, as defined by the Communications and Multimedia Commission (CMC), within 18 months to two years. He was responding to a recent statement made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, urging mobile phone companies to work together in order to provide a blanket cellular telephone coverage nationwide.

He said the merger with TM Cellular enables both companies to reconfigure and share their infrastructure, and thus allowing them to expand their service coverage more effectively and efficiently.

This will include relocation of existing redundant transmission towers to new untapped areas and patching areas (urban and suburban) where there are drop calls, thus giving seamless coverage.

"Celcom's nationwide coverage at the moment is only about 95 per cent. Imagine how fantastic the service coverage would be when the two networks

are combined," he said, adding that both parties are in the process of reconfiguring their network systems.

Ramli also said that the two merged networks are coming up with one brand within this year.

However, until a more concrete decision is made on the matter, he said both companies will continue to operate under their existing brands.