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Motorola to make India its research hub

Washington: US telecoms group Motorola is to hire more people in India to make it a research and technology hub, a report said Wednesday.

Motorola chief Mike S. Zafirovski told the Hindustan Times he was hoping to save money by shifting work to India which has a large pool of highly-skilled engineers willing to work for half the salary of US or European workers. "I cannot give you any numbers but we are looking at doubling our revenues in India, adding to the 1,500 employees and investing in engineering and software resources," said Zafirovski. "We understand the business process outsourcing advantage that India has and we will enter this space directly or through tie-ups with Indian companies," he added.

Zafirovski told the newspaper Motorola had reduced costs by four billion dollars by outsourcing work in the past four years and planned to reduce costs further by another three billion dollars. "I see a saving of a billion dollars each through engineering effectiveness, procurement and the very cost of poor quality. I want to achieve these goals by 2005," said Zafirovski. "I am vigorously driving this and I am sure a part of this can be outsourced from India. Research and development is obviously headed here."

Zafirovski told a telecommunication conference organised by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) here Wednesday that he was impressed by India's research skills. "It is no accident that the chief technology officer in Motorola Inc. is made in India. Padmashree Warriar has a 3.7 billion-dollar research budget and she is here with me to look not only at India's market size but its strong research capabilities," he said. "India is a crouching tiger. In 1999, it had a wireless subscriber base of a million people. From what I hear it added over a million subscribers in July (alone)."

According to the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), the number of cellular phone subscribers in India more than doubled to 16.3 million in the year to the end of July. COAI said a record 1,153,783 new customers signed up in July. "India's phenomenal growth makes it the most exciting place to be. We are planning to significantly increase our presence here," Zafirovski said. Warriar, a chemical engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi, told the same conference that Motorola's research centres in Delhi and Gurgaon were coming out with products not only for India but the global market. "Motorola's Indian labs are designing sophisticated chips used in our GSM mobile technology. We view India as a source for creating technology for the world," said Warriar.

According to industry sources, Zafirovski and Warriar are in India because they were impressed by a presentation made by Pramod Saxena, the chief of Motorola India.

In June, Saxena travelled to Chicago to make a three-point presentation before the Motorola board revolving around increasing mobile handset sales in India and cashing in on India's business process outsourcing strength and skilled engineers. Last month Motorola said it had emerged from the red in the second quarter of 2003 but sales had slumped. It reported a net profit of \$119 million in the three months to June, emerging from a year-earlier loss of \$2.32 billion. —AFP

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