

the opening of a tender for construction of a national data network called COLDAPAQ, won by Siemens, in 1986. This network entered into service at the end of 1988.

The current telecommunications system in Colombia has four components:

- The local telephone service operated autonomously in the major cities by a total of 22 municipal enterprises.
- The long distance domestic and international telephone and telex services operated by TELECOM, the state company. In addition TELECOM has developed a nationwide rural telephone network servicing isolated and remote towns via several strategically located earth satellite tracking antennas.
- The colour television network operated nationwide by INRAVISION, a state enterprise which through a public bidding process periodically awards time on two of the nation's three existing channels. Programming on these two channels is thus developed by several private commercial TV companies, while the third channel presents cultural programming created directly by INRAVISION.
- The radio broadcasting system which is based mainly on the operation of a number of private radio stations licensed by the government. INRAVISION also directly maintains a radio station for cultural programs.

The Ministry of Communications supervises the operation of the telecommunications system, acting as Chairman of the Board of Directors of TELECOM and INRAVISION.

In the last decade the number of telephone lines nationwide doubled, climbing from 1.3 million lines in 1980 to 3.6 million in 1990. In long distance international telephone service, Colombia has become one of the first countries in the world to make use of a modern optical fibre submarine cable which entered into operation in 1991. The investment cost of the cable was shared by several countries, including the United States through ATT. It vastly increases the capacity for simultaneous calls to North America by linking Barranquilla in north coast of Colombia with the United States, through Puerto Rico.

In a country with rugged terrain such as Colombia, it has been difficult to expand communications by using traditional methods, especially in rural areas. Four years ago TELECOM instituted a particularly successful program to expand the rural telephone network by making use of international communications earth satellites via several land stations equipped with satellite tracking antennas. The effort continues, improving vital internal communications.