

- Trunk automatic exchanges during the 8th Plan will require around 300,000 trunk exchanges.
- Telex equipment demand of 40,000 expected.
- To reach the target of 20 million telephones by 2000, India will need around US \$ 500 billion worth of combined investment from domestic and international sources.
- A growth of about five times expected for micro-electronics, which are imported almost in bulk. Investment expected to the tune of US \$ 1.16 billion.
- In Office automation equipment, total requirement is expected to the tune of over US \$ 1.45 billion for Plain Paper Copiers and US \$ 348 million for cash dispensers and US \$ 406 million for electronic typewriters.
- Computers are expected to maintain a sustained growth and to reach US \$ 750 million. PCs and micros requirements are expected to be tremendous. The demand for the low priced PC by the end of the decade is expected to be 500,000. Almost 300,000 PCs will be required for educational purposes covering around 30,000 schools. From the existing requirement of 600,000 PCs per annum the requirement by the end of the eighth plan would be 645,000 PCs per annum. A large number of peripherals will be required viz. disc drives, floppy drives, streamer drives, dot matrix printers, line and laser printers, digitisers, plotters, monitors, keyboards and mouse.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

The new Government appointed a thirteen member high level Committee to examine the working of the C-DoT. The report indicted the C-DoT for its various lapses, though four members dissented. The report points out that the 5,000-line exchange won't be ready for commercial production before 1992-93; and it has criticised the C-DoT for not being able to start commercial production of the 40,000-line exchange by 1987 as promised. The C-DoT has not yet started work on developing a central module which connects different exchanges to one another and an input-output processor which stores billing information in the computer. The C-DoT has also progressively reduced the specifications for busy-hour call attempts from 28 million in 1986 to 18 million in 1990. The Committee pointed out that despite its anti-imports stance, the Telecom Commission has not taken any action against CIT-Alcatel even though the company refused to upgrade the technology it supplied 'free of cost' as specified in an agreement with the ITI. The C-DoT also signed an agreement with the US-based Trans Tech for the development of cellular phones at US \$ 2.4 million, though it has always been critical of the project on elitist grounds. The C-DoT has been asked to start work afresh on the design of a large electronic switching system. The delay of more than two and a half years to develop the exchange has already cost ITI, a whopping US \$ 870 million.

Presently the merger of the DoT and DoE is being speculated in various echelons of the Government. The C-DoT was entrusted with TRC's mandate after it was disbanded. The revival of TRC is also being reviewed to strengthen R&D activities once again. The merger of the DoT and DoE with the Ministry Of Industries is also being considered. The final outcome is anybody's guess. Nevertheless these speculations have added new dimensions to the telecommunications scenario.

The C-DoT setback has created a sudden void in India. If Alcatel or MNCs like Ericsson, AT&T, or Canadian leaders like Bell Canada or Northern Telecom submit a technically and financially attractive offer (which will fit into the bilateral trade arrangement) for the updated E-10B version (meeting 800,000 BHCA), it is expected to be approved by the Government. The collaborator can expect at least 5 per cent royalty for eight years apart from major supply of production equipment and type-approved components for a long time. The royalty alone on 2 million lines at US \$ 500 per line giving total sale value of US \$ 1 billion works out to US \$ 50 million per annum for the four ESS factories.