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Indian satellite burns up
earlier than planned
THE Indian Space Research Organisa-
tion's (Isro's) latest satellite, Rohini
RS-D-1, burnt up when it entered the
Earth's atmosphere on June 9. The
satellite was launched on May 31
aboard an Isro-built SLV-3. It should have remained in orbit for about 90 days, but it now seems likely that the SLV-3 failed to place it as high as it should have. RS-D-1 made 130 orbits before entering as a result of atmos-pheric drag slowing it down.
Preliminary analysis shows that

SLV-3 gave RS-D-1 a perigee of about 183km and an apogee pf 426km. There is speculation that < SLV-3 failed to place the satellite higher because of anomalies between third stage separ-ation and fourth stage ignition. The satellite weighed 38kg at launch and carried a Landmark camera for Earth observation. This is the first time that the camera has been flown in space. India has previously used SLV-3 to successfully orbit a similar craft, Rohini RS-1 (Flight, August 2, 1980).

ESA approves ERS-1 payload
THE European Space Agency (ESA)
has chosen the experimental payload
for its proposed Earth resources satel-
lite, ERS-1. The instruments are:
• C-band active microwave equipment.
This combines a synthetic aperture radar, and wave and wind scatter-ometers.
• An ocean colour monitor to measure surface temperatures.

• A radar altimeter to record signifi-cant wave heights.
Norway has decided to remain in-volved with ESA's remote sensing studies, so there are 13 member
states taking part. The study will now
be completed in December this year,
instead of March. ERS-1 is expected
to be put out to industry tender at
the end of this month.

Argentina's space research includes this multi-stage, solid-propellant sounding rocket, TO I. The rocket is handled by Fuerza Aerea Argentina

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Spaceshots...
Logica has been awarded a study of geostationary orbit capacity by the European Space Agency. The study will attempt to forecast- the num-ber and type of satellites in geo-stationary orbit over the next 20 years—some experts forecast that the 36,000km-high equatorial orbit will become overcrowded, unless payloads are grouped together on large platforms. Subcontractors for the study include British Telecon-sult and Messerschmitt-Bolkow-Blohm.

ESA's Information Retrieval Ser-vice (IRS) and the Arabisation Study and Research Institute have signed an agreement covering the setting up of a dual-alphabet lexi-cographical data bank. The data bank is a continuation of the Lexar programme, whose purpose is to achieve a reservoir of Arabic ter-minology.

Argos, the CNES-designed remote-collection system, has successfully been used to help keep track of yachts in the Plymouth-Newport transatlantic race, which began earlier this month. Each of the competitors had a CML80-N trans-mitter, capable of broadcasting in-formation on pressure and tempera-ture to one of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-tration's weather satellites. The transmitters also had a button with which to signal distress. The NOAA satellite relays the signals to the CNES space .centre at Toulouse, allowing a track trf the yachts to be kept. Argos transmit-ters are mainly intended to record weather from remote stations—the yacht race coverage is an inciden-tal role. Electronique Marcel Das-sault makes part of the electronics for the Argos system.

Xerox has dropped its plans to build a data communications net-work, Xten, after investing more than $30 million in the project. Xten would have used radio trans-mitters to transmit data between offices in a city—intercity links would have been relayed by com-munications satellites. Xerox cites other demands on its resources and no Xten profit until the late 1980s as the reason for the project being abandoned.

Orbiter Columbia's lower surface was not photographed during entry after the first Shuttle flight be-cause of a problem with tracking programs aboard the C-141 flying observatory. A telescope aboard the aircraft should have taken an infrared picture as part of an ex-periment called Iris, in an attempt to gauge the temperature distribu-tion on Columbia's belly.