



Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union

Beijing takes TV sports coverage to new heights

Spectacular opening and closing ceremonies, magnificent venues, and an efficient host broadcast utilising an array of new technologies, all added up to the Beijing Olympic Games providing the ABU with its most successful sports coverage ever.

The ABU took its multi-channel programming package into 30 countries, and ABU members across the region undertook their most ambitious live sports production including HDTV coverage in seven countries of the Asia-Pacific.

China Central Television (CCTV) played a pivotal role. It provided key assets to the host broadcaster, Beijing Olympic Broadcast (BOB), in the form of technical and human resources.

The Beijing operations involved the deployment of the most complex broadcast contribution network ever used for live sports coverage, with all 90 feeds being produced in high definition, and 700 concurrent fibre-optic circuits linking venues and non-venue facilities to the International Broadcast Centre (IBC).

Apart from CCTV's wall-to-wall coverage which broke all records in the People's Republic of China, ABU members in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and New Zealand had a major presence in the 55,000 sq m IBC.



The spectacular Opening Ceremony at the Bird's Nest stadium

Other ABU members from India, Iran, Thailand and Malaysia also established production facilities at the IBC, and smaller members were able to make use of the ABU common production area.

TVNZ-New Zealand was contracted by the ABU to provide 3,500 hours of coverage for its members in a six-channel package with two other channels being used for news, features and unilateral requirements.

As well as providing coverage to members that were rights holders through the ABU's contract with the

International Olympic Committee (IOC), the ABU multi-channel package was also used by three rights-holding broadcasters in Central Asian republics and the Philippines.

The President of the IOC, Dr Jacques Rogge, said he was delighted with the increased coverage that had been achieved through the ABU's initiatives.

"The IOC is pleased to be partnering with the ABU to ensure that the Olympic Games can be seen in every corner of the Asia-Pacific and thus bring the Olympic values to nations no matter how small and how distant," he said. □

(More reports from Beijing on pages 20-25)

General Assembly to meet in Bali



The General Assembly venue: the Bali Convention Centre at the Westin Hotel

The effect on tourism of the media's coverage of terrorism will be a key focus when ABU members meet for their General Assembly in Bali in November.

The issue will be the subject of a Special Topic discussion on the second day of the meeting, which takes place on 24-25 November, hosted by Radio Republik Indonesia (RRI).

The Special Topic is always a highlight of the General Assembly and this year's session *on Tourism and terrorism – are the broadcast media reporting responsibly?* is likely to draw a big crowd.

Acts of violence in Asia in recent years – including on Bali itself in 2002 and 2005 – have led to an immediate downturn in the tourism industry, despite the introduction of measures to improve security and protect tourists.

Among issues that will be discussed in the Special Topic session on 25 November is whether coverage by the

broadcast media is overly sensationalised or dramatised, thus worsening the impact on the tourism industry.

There is no doubt that international media coverage of terrorist attacks and acts of violence can have a significant negative impact on a country's tourism industry.

Some would argue that the media is not interested in reporting when conditions have returned to normal, and thus the adverse impact caused by media coverage lasts much longer than should be the case.

The session will look at whether the broadcast media has a moral responsibility to report on the recovery from such situations in more detail than is currently the case in order to assist economic recovery from terrorist attacks or other acts of violence.

Another question is whether the tourism industry should be more proactive in engaging the media to

promote more accurate and balanced coverage that does not unduly alarm potential visitors.

The Professional Discussion, also on 25 November, will look at the role of the broadcast media in promoting peace and democracy in Asia.

It will cover issues such as peace journalism, reporting on conflicts, the tensions faced by journalists working for state broadcasters, and the increasing impact of cyber-journalism and blogging on freedom of speech.

Many commentators have called for more peace journalism as opposed to war journalism, and argue that more objective reporting of conflict situations is required in order that audiences can better understand the background to conflicts.

But others believe that if journalists seek to report from a peace-oriented viewpoint, they compromise their duty to uphold the journalistic value of impartiality.

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The session will also look at the difficulties faced by journalists working for state broadcasters. How much are they constrained by government policies on reporting on issues such as democratic rights and freedom of expression, and how much is their role being usurped by cyber-journalists and bloggers in the new media age?

Another highlight of the General Assembly will be the election of a new ABU President to succeed Genichi Hashimoto, who stepped down in January when he resigned as President of NHK-Japan.

An ABU Vice-President, Abdul Rahman Hamid of RTM-Malaysia, has been acting President since Mr Hashimoto's resignation.

RRI will host a gala night on the first day of the General Assembly, 24 November, for the presentation of the annual ABU Prizes, and NHK will host a reception on the second night.

The General Assembly will be preceded by meetings of the ABU Programme and Technical Committees and Sports Group, starting on 19 November.

The Technical Committee will address a range of issues relating to the implementation of digital

technologies. These include MPEG-4 compression technologies and their licensing, HDTV and new digital delivery systems such as digital video broadcasting (DVB-T2) and the new digital radio technology DAB+.

The Programme Committee meeting will include discussions on the crucial role of public service broadcasting on radio, content protection principles for free-to-air digital broadcasting and the potential of HDTV from a production point of view.

The Administrative Council meeting and the ABU/FES Seminar will both take place on 22 November.

Between these meetings and the General Assembly, RRI has arranged an excursion for participants on 23 November – a full-day tour of Bali with several stopovers. From 20 to 22 November, a programme of tours will take place for accompanying persons.

The President Director of RRI, Parni Hadi, said: "We are confident that the 45th ABU General Assembly will be an excellent forum for broadcasters in the Asia-Pacific to discuss strategies, improve and promote their services, as well as provide an opportunity for further cooperation and enhanced interaction among members."



Parni Hadi

"Through the years, other host organisations have always ensured that the guests leave with pleasant memories, and therefore we will be doing everything possible to likewise make our delegates stay in Bali a pleasant and memorable one."

ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, urged delegates to register early as the tourism industry in Bali has experienced a resurgence this year, and hotel bookings are high all the year round.

He said that demand for rooms was so great that RRI could not obtain sufficient rooms in the Westin Hotel to accommodate all delegates.

"When we were in Bali in July to finalise the hotel arrangements, one of the hotels adjacent to the Westin said they were already fully booked for November, so we could not secure additional rooms there," he explained.

"However, we have managed to obtain a small allocation of rooms in the Sheraton Laguna, right next to the Westin, and some in the Melia about five minutes walk away, and they will be made available on a 'first-come first-served' basis.

"After that, we will have to accommodate delegates in hotels further away, which will involve short shuttle bus rides to get to the Bali Convention Centre at the Westin Hotel." □



ABU Vice-President, Manual Goncalves (TDM-Macau) and Councillor, Cao Yin (RTPRC-China), practice their Balinese dancing in preparation for the General Assembly

Asiavision members' fees cut again



Participants with Mongolia's President Nambaryn Enkhbayar

Another cut in the monthly fees of Asiavision members – that was the outcome of the ABU News Group meeting held in Ulaanbaatar at the end of June.

The group agreed to reduce the subscriptions of all AVN members. The highest level was cut from US\$3,500 to \$2,500 and the lowest level from US\$700 to \$500. The reductions took effect immediately.

Asiavision fees are based on members' operating expenditure, with five levels. Asiavision has 19 members ranging from many of Asia's largest broadcasters to some of the smallest. They exchange news by satellite twice a day.

The reduction is the second in three years. Since 1997, monthly subscriptions have been progressively lowered from US\$8,500 for all members to the present levels, making membership of the news exchange much more affordable.

The News Group also agreed to a big increase in funding for training and sponsorship of members' participation in ABU news meetings. The total amount for 2008/09 is more than 75 percent up on last year.

The group agreed that, as a result of the fee reductions and the increased funding for spending, Asiavision would budget for a deficit in the year ahead, using AVN reserves to make up the difference.

The increased funding will enable members to attend News Group and Asiavision coordinators' meetings as well as take part in regional and in-house training courses. It takes into account the increasing cost of airfares and other expenses.

The Secretariat urged members to make use of the Asiavision Advisory Service, which offers them in-house training and consultancies, with AVN covering most of the costs.

The group also set aside funding to enable non Asiavision members to take part in AVN training courses or other news-related training approved by the group.

In addition, it agreed that any existing member who helps secure a new member will be entitled to a 30 percent rebate on its subscription for one year.

Mongolia's TV5, an Asiavision member since January 2007, hosted the meeting. It was the first time the News Group had met in Mongolia. More than 40 people took part.

Mongolia's President Nambaryn Enkhbayar opened the meeting, which came just a day after the country's general election. He praised Asiavision for its role in the sharing of news among broadcasters in Asia.

Shaun Seow, MediaCorp's Deputy CEO (News, Radio & Print), chaired the meeting, which took place on 30 June to 1 July. NHK's Director of International News, Yoshio Nishikawa, was elected Vice-Chairman for a three-year term. RTM's Monshi Abdullah is the other Vice-Chairman.

Asiavision and other ABU news activities were discussed on the first day. The second day was devoted to a seminar on Living with the Regulators: a *Guide for Asian News Broadcasters*, with three invited speakers (see story on page 7).

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News Group Chairman Shaun Seow thanks the Mongolian President

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Asiavision's membership is the highest in its 24-year history. However, the meeting noted that some members were not able to contribute news stories because of the difficulty of transmitting by satellite. This remains one of the main challenges facing AVN.

Despite this, the meeting heard that members contributed more than 10,000 stories last year, a new high. More than half of these were same-day coverage – stories contributed to the news exchange on the day they were filmed.

Major stories covered by AVN recently included the earthquake in China's Sichuan province, Nepal abolishing the monarchy, a closely-contested general election in Malaysia, Thailand's former prime minister, Thaksin Shinawatra, returning home from exile, a series of bomb blasts in the Indian city of Hyderabad and a naval dispute between Iran and the US in the Persian Gulf.

AVN's Specialist Engineer, Heesu Kang, spoke on the research he is doing into the needs of AVN members in the event of a switch to an IP-based exchange of news. Mr Kang is on a year's secondment from KBS-Korea.



Participants enjoy an outing on the outskirts of Ulaanbaatar



An evening excursion for participants



Delegates from TVB and CCTV at the meeting

The winners of this year's Asiavision Annual Awards were announced at the meeting. NHK won the award for most news flashes during the previous 12 months. CCTV and MCOT were the other two winners, in a ballot among members, for the overall quality of their news coverage. Each award carries a cash prize of US\$700.

TV5, under its General Director, Bazarragchaa Nanzad, and its Chairman and Advisor, Sarangerel Davaajantsan, did an excellent job of hosting the meeting. Apart from ensuring everything ran smoothly, it laid on a memorable range of entertainment and excursions for participants. □

Broadcasters have 'big social responsibility'

Broadcasters had a big social responsibility and should cover all aspects of life in their country, a leading African broadcaster told the ABU News Group Seminar in Ulaanbaatar.

Mactar Silla, CEO of Spectrum Television in Cameroon, said broadcasters were most effective when they kept their reports balanced.

There was a trend among broadcasters in Africa, and perhaps in Asia too, to shut their eyes to some things in their coverage, Dr Silla said. This was wrong.

"The politicians will never give you things if you don't fight for them."

Speaking on *Living with Regulation: an African Perspective*, he said live broadcasting was sometimes a way to highlight issues that could not be covered in pre-recorded programmes because of regulation.

Dr Silla was one of three guest speakers at the seminar, which took place on 1 July as part of the ABU's annual News Group meeting. His participation was funded by Canal France International.

A senior correspondent from NHK-Japan, Tetsu Imai, spoke on *Disaster Early Warning Broadcasting*.

Mr Imai, from the NHK News Department's Disaster and Safety Information Centre, stressed the crucial role of broadcasters in providing information in times of disaster and described NHK's experiences in this field.

Noting that major disasters often occurred at just about the time that



Mactar Silla admires a yatga, a Mongolian stringed instrument

the last one was being forgotten, he said it was important to teach the next generation about the horrors of earthquakes and tsunamis.

Broadcasters had a key role to play in providing long-term education about disasters and raising public awareness, in addition to early warning broadcasting.

During the session, the Director of CCTV's International News Department, Lu Wei Chang, gave a detailed description of how the Chinese broadcaster had been covering the Sichuan earthquake of 12 May, which claimed tens of thousands of lives.

He said CCTV had learned from its experiences in covering earlier events such as the SARS outbreak and last winter's bad weather, and had been able to react quickly. Less than an hour after the earthquake it had begun non-stop coverage of the disaster.

Mock Pak Lam, Managing Director, MediaCorp Technologies, spoke on *New Media Trends in News Reporting*. He noted that the roles played by journalists

and bloggers were blurring and said that by going online, broadcasters could offer viewers many alternative sources of news. He said news organisations were now actively seeking contributions from their viewers to meet the challenge from bloggers and social networking sites.

Blogging allowed for speculation, argument and debate, he said. Traditional media, in facing up to this new challenge for viewership, now had their reporters becoming personalities as well who wrote their own blogs.

Mr Mock said content providers were moving to online sites as the money was moving from traditional to online advertising. Newsmakers were putting content directly online and getting the message out ahead of the mainstream media.

With the rising citizen journalism trend, he said there was no way a regulator or the news organisations could control the flow of news.

Matt Walsh of Media Advisers Asia was the seminar moderator. □

Foreign broadcasters gear up for US election

The American presidential election is attracting "intense" interest in other countries, leading foreign broadcasters have told a meeting in Atlanta.

The BBC's head of newsgathering operations, Martin Turner, described the election campaign as fascinating and said it had "captured the imagination of people around the world".

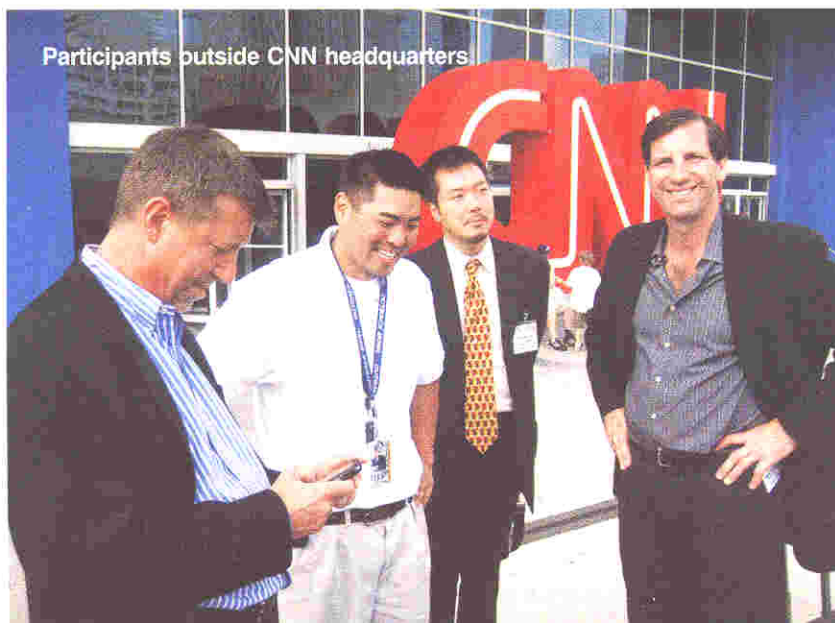
He told a meeting of the World Broadcasting Union's International Satellite Operations Group (WBU-ISOG) at CNN headquarters in June that the challenge for broadcasters covering the campaign was the sheer pace of technological change. "We have to be agile – we have to be able to react quickly to events," he said.

Joe Shimizu, Director of International Circuits at NHK, said the Japanese public broadcaster had been covering the election race as a top priority story. It was using four dedicated high definition television circuits between the US and Tokyo.

NHK had devoted 530 hours to the story so far, compared to fewer than 60 hours for the last US presidential election in 2004, he said. It had covered all the



CNN headquarters, the meeting venue (above) and CNN's specially designed election bus (below)



Participants outside CNN headquarters

primaries for the first time, working closely with its US partner, ABC.

Didier Debellemanniere of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) said interest in the election among European broadcasters was intense and much greater than four years ago.

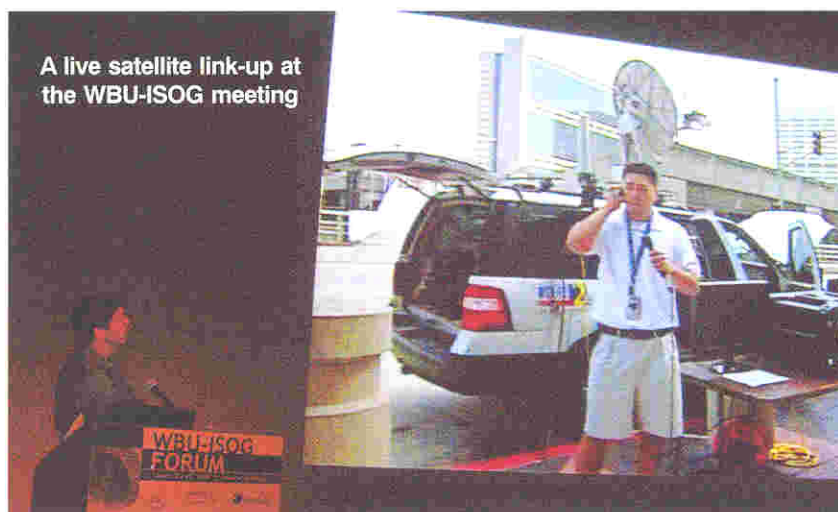
He said that on election night, 4 November, the EBU would have up to 40 transatlantic circuits in use simultaneously for its members, with three studios in Washington DC and

others in Chicago and Phoenix, the home cities of the two main candidates.

A Senior Producer in CNN's Political Unit, Sam Feist, spoke of the innovations CNN had brought to this year's election campaign. They included YouTube questions for candidates' debates, a specially designed election bus – half a newsroom for 20 people, half a satellite truck – and the 'Magic Wall', a touch sensitive studio display monitor originally designed for military use.

WBU-ISOG brings together members of the world's broadcasting unions including the ABU along with satellite operators and broadcasting service providers. The Atlanta meeting on 12-13 June attracted more than 100 participants.

Other issues covered included new developments in transferring video and audio over IP, continuing efforts to protect broadcasters' spectrum and the latest in automated SNG hardware. □



NHK to host WBU-ISOG meeting

NHK-Japan is to host the next meeting of the World Broadcasting Unions International Satellite Operations Group, WBU-ISOG, in Tokyo on 13-15 May 2009.

It will be the first time the group has met in Asia for many years

All ABU members are welcome to take part. The ABU Secretariat will send them more information as soon as it is available.

The meeting is expected to include a tour of NHK's Science and Technical Research Laboratories. □

Satellite interference growing worse, forum told

The problem of interference to the satellite signals of broadcasters and others is growing worse, the WBU-ISOG meeting in Atlanta heard.

"Interference is coming in all shapes and sizes," Intelsat's Vice-President for Network Operations, Khalid Chaudhry, told delegates.

He said the problem was becoming more critical because of the global demand for the Internet, including services for ships and aircraft, which required the use of satellites.

Military activity was another difficulty for satellite operators, as it

combined mobility and secrecy. Also, people wanted to transmit using lower cost equipment, which led to issues of reliability.

Mr Chaudhry said the problem could be tackled more effectively with close collaboration between different satellite operators, their customers and industry regulators.

The WBU-ISOG Chairman, Dick Tauber of CNN, said the biggest problem for broadcasters was interference to a live event. "Nothing can be done – there's no second chance."

He called for concerted action against those responsible for

interference. No one should do business with them, he said.

Most of the interference was accidental, caused by human error or faulty equipment, the meeting heard. But a small amount was deliberate, some of it politically motivated.

Trying to stop deliberate interference was difficult, even if the source could be traced, a senior manager at satellite operator SES, Adam Edwards, said.

WBU-ISOG is campaigning for all encoders to include data that would identify the source of the signal, to help satellite operators pinpoint where interference is coming from. □