



Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union

# Media and terrorism proves a timely debate

**I**t was an issue straight out of the headlines. It engaged minds at the General Assembly in Bali – and grabbed the attention of a much wider audience only a day later.

Terrorism, and how the media should cover it, was the subject of the Special Topic session on the final day of the ABU General Assembly on 25 November.

The debate was a lively one, with claims that the media could both deter terrorism and provoke it – that it was all too easy to make mistakes in coverage without the right expertise and training.

The discussion was timely, coming just 17 days after the execution of three men found guilty of the Bali bombings in 2002 – an event that led to a media-frenzy and prompted some countries to issue warnings against travel to Bali.

But it proved far more topical than anyone could have imagined. Only a day later, gunmen launched bloody attacks on two luxury hotels and other targets in the Indian city of Mumbai.

The attacks, which left close to 200 people dead, led to further questions about the role of the broadcast media in covering terrorism, with the Indian government claiming that the live saturation coverage had helped the terrorists.



ABU's new President, Yoshinori Imai, receiving a souvenir from Parni Hadi, RRI-Indonesia's President as EBU President, Fritz Pleitgen looks on

Despite the Bali travel warnings, the 45th General Assembly and annual meetings, hosted by Radio Republik Indonesia, attracted the second largest participation yet, with more than 500 delegates. Only the General Assembly in Beijing in 2006 drew more people.

In addition to the focus on covering terrorism, ABU members pledged to step up the fight against another deadly scourge: the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region.

The General Assembly passed a 'Bali Declaration on HIV/AIDS' in which members vowed to expand public knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS, integrate related information in programmes and help reduce stigma and discrimination, among other actions.

The General Assembly also looked at the role of the broadcast media in promoting peace and democracy, and discussed the implications of the current economic downturn for broadcasting organisations.

A new ABU President was elected: Yoshinori Imai, Executive Vice-President of NHK-Japan. He replaced Abdul Rahman Hamid, Director-General of RTM-Malaysia, who has been Acting President since January 2008.

Other highlights included the ABU Prizes 2008 awards presentation ceremony, honouring the best in Asian programming. Indonesia's Metro TV hosted and televised the event, with producers from China and Japan walking away big winners. □

# New President elected

**T**he ABU General Assembly in Bali has elected Yoshinori Imai of NHK-Japan as the new President of the union until the end of 2011.

Mr Imai is the Executive Vice-President of the Japanese public broadcaster. The ABU post fell vacant when the then ABU President, Genichi Hashimoto, resigned in January 2008 and the longest serving Vice-President,

Radio Television Malaysia Director-General Abdul Rahman Hamid, stepped in as Acting President of the ABU.

Mr Imai has been working as a broadcast journalist at NHK, at the forefront of global news gathering and international relations for 40 years. He was appointed Executive Vice-President of NHK in January 2008. He has been associated with the ABU for more than a decade. □



Yoshinori Imai

## New members admitted to AC

**D**uring the 45th ABU General Assembly, two new members were elected to the Administrative Council, while two others were re-elected.

When PBC-Pakistan did not seek re-election, Hum TV-Pakistan was elected to replace it.

Also elected to the Administrative Council was Mongolia's national broadcaster, MNB.

ABC-Australia and RTPRC-China were both re-elected. The newly elected and re-elected members will each serve a three-year term.

Effective 1 January 2009, the Administrative Council will comprise:

- Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK)
- All India Radio (AIR)
- Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB)
- Nippon Hoso Kyokai, Japan (NHK)
- Khabar Agency, Republic of Kazakhstan (KA)
- Korean Broadcasting System (KBS)
- Teledifusao de Macau, S.A. (TDM)
- Radio Television Malaysia (RTM)
- Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT)
- Mongolia National Broadcaster (MNB)
- Eye Television Network Limited (Hum TV)
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)
- Radio and Television of the People's Republic of China (RTPRC)
- Bhutan Broadcasting Service (BBS)



MNB-Mongolia was elected to the Administrative Council



**General Assembly – SG's Report**

# ABU now has over 200 members

**F**or the first time in the ABU's 45 year history, membership has topped 200, the Secretary-General, David Astley told the General Assembly in Bali.

The number includes 131 broadcasters, 64 affiliates and eight Institutional members.

In his annual report to members, he said that the membership increase had helped the union to return to an operating surplus a year ahead of schedule.

"We did that by reducing our expenditure budgets to a more sustainable level, but focusing on maintaining our core services and activities so that we could continue to grow our membership," he said.

To spontaneous applause, Mr Astley reported that the Administrative Council had taken a decision to defer the second subscription rate increase that had been approved at last year's General Assembly in Tehran.

"The Council did not feel it was appropriate given current economic downturn and the fact that we had just returned a sizeable surplus," he explained.

"We have doubled our activities over the past five years, and during that time there has been only one five per cent subscription rate increase, so we are quite proud of what we have achieved in managing our budgets during that period.

"Our future strategy will be to fund the increased costs of activities by



**David Astley**

increasing membership, securing industry sponsorships and external funding, as well as continuing to focus on improving productivity.

"We have cut the Secretariat's operating expenditure by over 11 percent in the past two years – which included reducing staff by three – but our overall income has grown because we have increased membership and sponsorship revenue by more than ten per cent as well as expanding the number of activities for which we are receiving external funding."

The Secretary-General said that in the past 12 months, the ABU had provided a total of 226 travel fellowships worth nearly US\$400,000 – most of which came out of sponsorships and external funding grants.

Nearly every developing country member received one or more fellowships from the ABU, he added.

After reporting on the year's activities, Mr Astley went on to talk about how he hoped the ABU could assist members to

develop and exploit new content delivery opportunities.

He suggested that the 'traditional' role of broadcasting was changing through the exploitation of new digital technologies much faster than many broadcasters realised.

Many telcos were establishing new television channels on IPTV and mobile platforms, and were often bypassing broadcasters when sourcing content.

"That's because some broadcasters don't fully understand the new digital paradigm and are still trying to do things the old way," he said.

"Not many partnerships are being forged between telcos and broadcasters because telcos see these partnerships as one-sided. Telcos believe they bring more to the table than broadcasters because they can produce channels for much less than traditional broadcasters.

Mr Astley said that many broadcasters regarded high definition television as their competitive advantage for the future, but believing that this is an area in which telcos could not compete would be a mistake.

"Look at what has happened to the cost of digital storage in the last six years – it is 400 times cheaper (per gigabyte) today.

"If something similar were to happen in compression technology in the next six years, think about the implications on bandwidth usage. For broadcasters that would mean telcos could suddenly become serious competitors in HDTV too." □

# ABU members to step up fight against HIV/AIDS

**B**roadcasters in the Asia Pacific region have pledged to step up their role in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The 45th ABU General Assembly in Bali in November passed a 'Bali Declaration on HIV/AIDS' through which members vowed to expand public knowledge and understanding about HIV/AIDS, integrate related messages and information across radio, television and new media platforms, ensure that their organisations understand HIV/AIDS as a developmental, national and corporate social responsibility priority, and produce programmes that reduce stigma and discrimination.

During the past quarter of the century, more than 60 million people worldwide have become infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Of these, 25 million have died.

"With its vast communication outlets, mass media represent a formidable force in the fight against HIV/AIDS – both in its spread and reduce stigma against people already living with the disease



AMAI's Chairperson  
Monaliza Hashmi



The Bali Declaration was adopted during the Members' Forum

through a more informed public," said a representative from the Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI) Stephen Massey, during the General Assembly.

"HIV is preventable. Yet, gaps in public awareness and knowledge about HIV/AIDS continue to exist in every region in the world. By working in partnership with media, information can be spread faster than the disease."

By incorporating HIV-themed content across platforms, the GMAI acknowledges media's key role in opening channels of communication and fostering discussion about HIV/AIDS. "From targeted PSAs, news and public affairs reports, original programming, to HIV-themed storylines incorporated into popular TV sitcoms and dramas, media can deliver lifesaving messages."

Echoing this, under the Declaration broadcasters agreed to devote substantial and increased radio and television airtime

in both peak and shoulder periods and to use new media for all HIV/AIDS-related communication and programming including public service announcements.

"HIV/AIDS has long been a strategic priority for the ABU," said Francyne Harrigan, ABU Development Projects Manager, "the Declaration represents an important step in mobilising our broadcast members across the region to expand their programming on HIV."

"The Declaration recognises broadcast media have a critical role to play in the fight against HIV/AIDS and Asian broadcasters can make an important contribution to HIV/AIDS information dissemination, awareness, behaviour change, prevention, care and support in the region."

The ABU members who attended the meetings will review their progress at the ABU's 2009 General Assembly in Ulaanbaatar. □



**General Assembly – AMAI**

# New angles on HIV/AIDS reports

**F**inding new angles to HIV and AIDS issues will attract more viewers, a workshop in Bali heard.

"Broadcasters need to move away from repeating the same sad and gory stories because they reiterate the HIV stereotypes, inadvertently give rise to stigma and discrimination and turn the viewers away," Pramod Kumar, a Senior Programme Advisor of the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo, said.

"We need to find new slants, angles and story ideas to continue to communicate on HIV."

The radio production workshop, with the theme 'What works, what doesn't', attracted more than 20 TV and radio producers and directors. Among the producers taking part were some shortlisted for the ABU Prize on HIV/AIDS Reporting and others who were winners of the HIV/AIDS ABU Projects Awards.

"Reporting on HIV/AIDS is always a big challenge. We have to be fair towards the audience as well as the people living with HIV and AIDS who are featured

in the stories," said Retno Shanti Ruwyastuti, the Deputy News Director of Metro TV-Indonesia.

"As broadcasters, we have to be more aware of this, we need to find the balance."

The workshop's aim was to exchange ideas and experiences on how to improve television and radio productions when reporting on HIV and AIDS. The workshop was part of the ABU's annual meetings.

It was an activity of the Asia-Pacific Media AIDS Initiative (AMAI), a joint project between the ABU and AIBD to mobilise broadcasters across the region

in response to HIV/AIDS. The AMAI receives technical and financial support from the Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI).

"The AMAI workshop provided a unique opportunity for regional broadcasters to come together and share best practices in programming on HIV/AIDS," said Stephen Massey from the Global Media AIDS Initiative.

"By sharing experiences and leveraging expertise, broadcasters across the Asia Pacific region are able to better reach their audiences with lifesaving information on how to prevent the spread of HIV and care for those who are already living with the disease." □



ABU delegates who attended the AMAI workshop

## Two more members

**T**he Administrative Council admitted two new Institutional members at its meeting in Bali.

They are the United Nations Department of Public Information (UN-DPI) and the International News Safety Institute (INSI).

The ABU has worked with the UN-DPI on many projects over the years.

The Department produces video material on developmental issues that is made available to broadcasters on a rights free basis, and the ABU is currently working with the UN-DPI to promote the availability of this content to its members.

INSI is a non-profit organisation formed to create a global safety network of advice and assistance to journalists who may face danger covering the news on

international assignments or in their own countries, and promotes measures to improve safety understanding among news organisations, militaries, governments and international bodies.

### *Member expelled*

The Administrative Council also expelled China Entertainment Television (CETV) of Hong Kong from membership of the Union for non-payment of outstanding membership dues. □

# ***Educating young minds 'a key to media freedom'***

**T**he annual ABU-FES workshop which was held in Bali prior to the General Assembly identified the education of young minds on the role of the media as essential to media freedom in emerging democracies.

Broadcasters attending the workshop said laws guaranteeing editorial independence, regular training on media impartiality and balance, and ways of making "boring" news interesting were also keys to media freedom.

The workshop brought together senior broadcasters from a wide range of developing Asian countries.

They looked at the challenges the media faces in emerging democracies and how best to overcome them.



**Janice Lua reviewing  
recommendations made  
by delegates**

The broadcasters also suggested that segments of news bulletins be set aside for 'good news' with a human angle, to hold the attention of audiences.

The workshop was organised jointly by the ABU and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation of Germany and held in

conjunction with the ABU's annual meetings.

It attracted 20 participants from 14 countries. The facilitator was Janice Lua of Facilitators Network Singapore.

The workshop used 'Open Space Technology', with participants breaking up into small, informal groups to discuss issues relating to media freedom.

They tabled 11 topics, then discussed these and came up with 65 ideas covering a wide range of subjects. The participants then each voted for the ideas they considered the most important.

The views of the workshop participants have been forwarded to the ABU and AIBD for further consideration. □

## ***ABU 'can help pave way' for a digital Indonesia***

**T**he ABU General Assembly in Bali could help pave the way for a digital Indonesia, the country's Information and Communication Minister, Muhammad Nuh, said.

He said the meeting could serve as means for Indonesian broadcasters to exchange technical information in the nation's plan to completely digitalise its broadcasting system.

Mr Nuh said that the Indonesian's

broadcasting system was still completely analogue. "That must change and this convention is an important step in accomplishing that goal."

The digital broadcasting system, Mr Muhammad said, would also allow TV stations to transmit digitally encoded information, such as disaster warnings from the country's early warning system. "And because everything is already in digital form, we cannot let our broadcasting system get behind," he said.

He said by providing information and education, broadcasters could help the people seek opportunities for self development and a path towards prosperity; and by educating the people on the impact of conflicts and violence, broadcasters could help to foster a peaceful environment.

"Broadcasters have to strengthen their moral responsibility to the people. The programmes to be aired should have added value." □



**General Assembly – Special Topic Session**

# Media ‘can help resolve conflict’

**T**he media can play an important role in helping resolve violent conflict, the General Assembly was told.

Chevaan Daniel, Channel Head, News 1st, MTV/MBC-Sri Lanka, said that by focusing the attention of the international community on the conflict, the media could put pressure on the parties to resolve it. It could also help educate the parties – a critical element of conflict resolution.

Mr Daniel was speaking in a Special Topic discussion on ‘Tourism and Terrorism – are the broadcast media reporting responsibly?’

The media could also counter incendiary rumours, provide early warning of impending conflicts and participate in the process of healing and reconciliation, he said.

Tourism was down more than 9 percent so far this year amid a continuing conflict between the government and Tamil separatists, he said. Terrorists had clearly targeted tourism as the most effective way of crippling a nation.

The President Director of Radio Republik Indonesia, Parni Hadi, said the media needed to be neutral, covering both sides. It should explain why people became terrorists as well as reporting the cruelty of their actions.

He said the media could function as both a deterrence to terrorism and a provocateur.

It could deter terrorism by condemning terrorists as cold-blooded killers of innocent people and by revealing the suffering of the victims. But if it showed sympathy to relatives of



**Chevaan Daniel**

executed terrorists, this might glorify terrorism by making the terrorists seem like martyrs.

Mr Hadi said education and training for reporters, camera people and producers on a code of ethics was essential. Press freedom carried with it a moral responsibility to use that freedom in a proper and professional way.

Radio Nepal’s Deputy Director General, Rajendra Sharma, said a long-running Maoist insurgency in the country had had a serious effect on tourism, with many hotels and other tourist-related businesses forced to cease operations.

## **United media**

One lesson was that a strong and united media – supported by state bodies such as a tourism board – was necessary to counter negative and misleading coverage and in the national and international media.

“Tourism survives despite setbacks. It has to. No other way is possible for Nepal,” he said.

The First Vice-President of Islamic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), Ali Darabi,

said some governments were undermining the real role of the media by using it for their own purposes. It was sometimes used to create intimidation and sow the seeds of discord instead of promoting unity.

He questioned why some sections of the broadcast media covered acts of terror in countries such as Indonesia but did not talk about the return of peace and calm later on. He suggested they wanted to create a feeling of fear and insecurity.

Islam was strongly opposed to terrorism and believed that the killing of an individual was tantamount to the killing of a nation, he said. “Contrary to some media that speak of good and bad terrorism, we strongly condemn terrorism in all its forms.”

The President of the European Broadcasting Union, Fritz Pleitgen, said that to cover terrorism properly, public service broadcasters should develop in their staff real expertise and maintain the highest editorial and ethical standards.

The coverage of terrorist attacks by the broadcasting media could clearly have an effect on tourism in affected areas.

“However, it is also clear that the media should not be made the scapegoat for all the woes of the tourist industry following a terrorist attack.”

Terrorism was based on deception and fear, he said. On the other side, the security forces could be effective only if they kept their secrets of how they were protecting us. This posed a real dilemma for public service broadcasters. The way to resolve it was to develop in their staff real expertise and maintain the highest editorial and ethical standards. □

# Peace and democracy first

**J**ournalists must seek the truth and report the truth, the ABU's General Assembly was told during the Professional Discussion session.

The discussion featured a panel comprising KBP-Philippines' President Maloli Espinosa, Radio Australia's Chief Editor Deborah Steele, NHK-Japan's Executive Controller-General Toshiyuki Sato and Metro TV-Indonesia's Deputy News Director Retno Shanti Ruwyastuti.

The session discussed the role of the broadcast media in promoting peace and democracy in the Asia-Pacific region, looking at topics such as peace journalism, reporting on conflicts, the tensions faced by journalists working for state broadcasters and freedom of speech.

Ms Steele said that "peace journalism is simply good journalism". She quoted Wikipedia as saying "an explicit aim of peace journalism is to promote peace initiatives from whatever quarter, and to allow the reader to distinguish between stated positions and real goals".

## **Political agenda**

However, she did not support "editorialising", an attempt to control the public discourse, adding that it was not the role of the media to promote a political agenda, even if it was for peace. She said that peace journalism meant, accurate and fair reporting, using a broad range of sources, rather than relying on official sources, as well as using a non-partisan approach and avoiding demonising language.

Mr Sato said that strong will power was most essential for a journalist. "The potential journalist should be curious, inquisitive and should show intuitive,



**From left: Retno Shanti Ruwyastuti of Metro TV, Deborah Steele of Radio Australia, Manoli Espinosa of KBP and Toshiyuki Sato of NHK**

but should not have to have high intelligence nor be very intellectual."

He added that objectivity, impartiality and critical judgement were important attributes. "The foreign correspondents should be well aware of the socio-political, cultural and political background of their area of operation."

Ms Retno Shanti described the dilemma faced by Indonesian journalists reporting on the armed conflict between the Free Aceh movement and the Indonesian military as "no freedom of the press".

When some TV journalists obtained exclusive interviews with the rebels, they were harassed by the military. On the other hand, Free Aceh movement fighters also scrutinised their reports broadcast and singled out journalists whose reports the rebels disliked. Thus the journalists faced pressures from both sides.

Dagmar Skopalik of ZDF said we may have high values for journalists but asked if there was a secure environment and legal framework for their functioning.

She added that the EBU had taken several training initiatives for

journalists and some others also offered this facility.

Mr Sato said events were always dynamic and the journalists should keep their independence as much as possible. "Reporting reality will help people to judge," he said.

Ravin Bacchoo of MBC-Mauritius said journalists needed to evaluate themselves. If the foundation for good work by journalists was not laid, they would be unable to fulfil their duties as journalists.

## **Two sides**

Ms Espinosa questioned the real role of the media – whether it was a silent operator or one actively involved in the events. As there were always two sides in any story, remaining independent was important for the media, she said.

Some participants called for more peace journalism and support for more objective reporting on conflicts so that the people could better understand the background to the news. Others were of the view that journalists reporting from a peace-oriented viewpoint could compromise journalistic impartiality. □