

Engineering Excellence Awards

Outstanding broadcast engineers honoured

Senior broadcast engineers from Japan and Korea have received the 2008 ABU Broadcast Engineering Award and the ABU Engineering Industry Award for their contributions in the technical development of the industry in the Asia-Pacific region.

They received their awards at the Technical Committee annual meeting held in Bali.

TBS-Tokyo's Executive Researcher Takao Shimizu won the ABU Broadcast Engineering Excellence Award 2008 while KBS-Korea's Vice Chairman Dongsu Ahn was the winner of the ABU Engineering Industry Excellence Award 2008.

Mr Takao said: "It is my honour to have gained recognition in digital migration. Being an ABU engineer member, I am grateful for the accurate and useful information the ABU provides on studio technology and digitalisation issues."

The ABU this year received 13 nominations from its members and industry players in nine countries. Five were received for the Engineering Industry Excellence Award while eight



Takao Shimizu (right) receiving the ABU Broadcast Engineering Excellence Award from a Sony representative



Mohammad Alipour of IRIB-Iran receiving his Commended Article Award

were for the Broadcast Engineering Excellence Award, which is sponsored by Sony Electronics Asia Pacific Pte Ltd.

Sharad Sadhu, the ABU Director of Technical Department said: "The response from the members and the industry partners alike signifies the importance of the awards, not only

among ABU's members, but outside the broadcasting industry."

The ABU Technical Review Prize for Best Article went to NHK-Japan's Akio Ando, whilst Mohammad Alipour of IRIB-Iran and Updesh Singh of ASTRO-Malaysia won the Commended Article awards. □



Updesh Singh of Astro-Malaysia was another Commended Article winner

Balance free-to-air and pay TV

The Australian Minister for Broadband and Communication, Stephen Conroy, has said there has to be a balance between the competing interests of the free-to-air television industry and pay operators.

"We have to get the balance right between the two sides in the overall interests of the consumer," Mr Conroy said in an interview screened at the Sports Group meeting in Bali in November.

He said there was a growing backlash in some countries where sports had been acquired by pay television and were denied to the mass market.

"Some organisations focus more on themselves than the viewing public so there is justification for some of the criticisms.

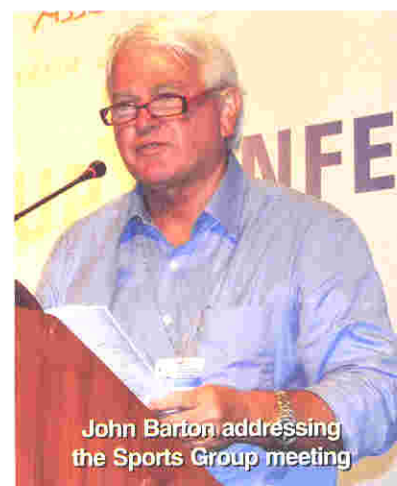
"Look at the England and Wales Country Cricket Board which has denied access to fans for the most iconic sporting match between England and Australia known as the Ashes.

"And not long ago the English national football team won 4 to 1 in Croatia but the game was not available on free-to-air television, so there was a huge outcry," he said.

He added that the problems in the United Kingdom were now so serious that the British Sports Minister had recently launched a public inquiry into why cricket and football were not freely available.

He said the Australian government had laws in place to protect the rights of its citizens to watch iconic sports events.

"So it is possible to put boundaries around these events so that there is mass market access. But the pressure is growing around the world from within the industry, due in no small measure to the changing technologies which is making the marketplace even more competitive," he said. □



John Barton addressing the Sports Group meeting

Chairman speaks via video

A clampdown by the Australian Government on its citizens visiting Indonesia did not deter the Sports Group Chairman, Les Murray (SBS Australia), from taking part in the 43rd Sports Group meeting in Bali.

"I haven't missed a meeting since I was elected Chairman seven years ago, and I was determined not to miss Bali!" he said.

Mr Murray booked a studio at SBS headquarters in Sydney, recorded his opening remarks and then interviewed the Australian Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Stephen Conroy.

Both items were uploaded to the station's file sharing server which was downloaded to an ABU computer in Bali.

"I would love to have been there in person, but at least I was there electronically," Mr Murray said.

The members were delighted to see their chairman, albeit on video.

During his speech Mr Murray said that broadcasters had an important role in enriching culture through the televising of sport.

"There are few things more powerful in boosting national pride, in creating national cohesion and

unity than sport and sporting success," he said.

He pointed to two events in Australia – the victory by Aboriginal Australian Cathy Freeman in the 400 metres at the Sydney Olympics, and the upset win by the Socceroos over their more fancied opponents Uruguay in the final qualifier for the 2006 FIFA World Cup – as ones which inspired a nation.

"The two events were the most watched in the history of Australian television. They were delivered into the homes of every Australian facilitating a colossal and positive impact on the whole nation," he said. □

General Assembly – Excursion

Balinese hospitality

After a busy four days of annual meetings at the Bali International Conference Centre, ABU members were treated to some relaxing and energy-replenishing treats on the annual excursion.

A one-day tour of Bali was held on 23 November. The first true Balinese

experience began at the Uma Dewi cultural performance centre in Denpasar.

Inspired by an episode taken from Mahabharata, the 'Barong and Rangda' dance symbolises a perennial battle between two mythological animals, the good spirit, Barong, and the evil spirit Rangda. ABU members were

entertained with an hour of drama that was colourful and folkloristic.

Next stop was Krisna Yuna, a silver and gold works centre in Celuk. The painstaking process of the fine silver filigree work was self-explanatory.

Then it was onto Ida Bagus Marka, a woodcarving centre at Mas where



⧡ At Mas, a local woodcarving centre



⧡ A stop for shopping at Celuk

Delegates browsing at an Ubud market ⧡



Touches ABU delegates

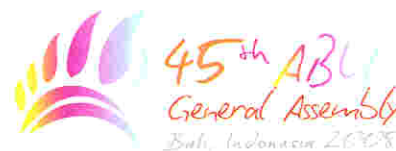
delegates were able to see patient and creative carpenter artists working on a plethora of wooden handicrafts ranging from puppets, masks and statues.

It was a two-hour journey to the Kintamani highlands, but it was well worth the effort as delegates enjoyed a sumptuous lunch, while managing to witness the splendid and breathtaking

hillsides and Lake Batu scenery from a hilltop restaurant. It was indeed a 'peak' experience to remember.

Sunset slowly draped the sky, and the charm of Pura (temple) at Tampak Siring and Pasar Seni Ubud (Ubud Art Centre) were calling. Before the excursion ended, all delegates ensured they savoured every second

of what Bali had to offer. □



⚡ Delegates watch locals making offerings at Tampak Siring



⚡ Barong dancers performing at the Denpasar Art Centre



⚡ A praying ceremony at Tampak Siring

⚡ Delegates enjoy lunch at the Kintamani highlands

General Assembly – Asiavision

Asiavision focuses on training

Asiavision is putting a strong emphasis on training for its members, the Programme Committee heard.

The news exchange's Managing Editor, Alan Williams, said the News Group had allocated more than US\$100,000 for training and fellowships to attend ABU meetings this financial year – an increase of more than 75 percent on last year.

The annual training and information sharing events included a regional workshop, a seminar as part of the News Group meeting, a day of training attached to the annual meeting of news and technical coordinators, and the newly launched Asiavision Advisory Service.

AVN funds had also been allocated for news training for non-AVN members for the first time.

At the same time the News Group had reduced the monthly fees of all Asiavision members for the second time in three years. The two key decisions came at its annual meeting in Ulaanbaatar at the end of June, hosted by Mongolia's TV5.

All five subscription levels were reduced with effect from 1 July. The fees are based on members' annual operating expenditure. The highest level was cut from US\$3,500 a month to US\$2,500 and the lowest level from US\$700 to US\$500.

The reduction meant smaller AVN members were now paying less than 6 percent of what they did in 1997.

The News Group agreed that Asiavision would use its reserve fund to make up any deficit in the budget as a result of these reductions.

Membership climbs

Meanwhile, Asiavision's membership had reached 19, the highest in its 25-year history, with the admission of TDM-Macau in May, Mr Williams said. Membership had grown from 12 to 19 since 2004.

On the content side, AVN members were now exchanging about 10,000 news items a year, a big increase on the figure of just over 6,000 four years ago. More than half the stories were same-day coverage – items contributed on the day they were filmed. □

New ABU training scheme launched

A new training initiative, the Asiavision Advisory Service, has kicked off with a journalism workshop for more than 100 people in Singapore.

The five-day workshop for Channel NewsAsia news staff in October was conducted by veteran journalist Matt Walsh, Managing Director of Media Advisers Asia, a Hong Kong based company.

New skills acquired

It was the first event held under the Asiavision Advisory Service, introduced by the ABU News Group to provide in-house consultancies and training for members of the news exchange.

Participants included executive news producers, presenters, reporters, assignment editors, current affairs producers and camera persons.

The training was divided into seven modules, all of which were repeated two or three times to enable participants on different shifts to attend. There were also one-on-one sessions for participants who asked for them.

The training started at 9 each morning and continued until as late as 9pm on some evenings.

Among those taking part was senior journalist Lau Joon-Nie, who said: "Even the most experienced editors and journalists need a break from the daily news rush to reflect and be inspired by

examples of fine broadcast work, and Matt Walsh's course fills that need.

"He provides useful reminders and simple pointers which can be easily incorporated into one's daily work. Having Matt at our station, thanks to AVN, also meant that many more staff had the chance to attend his sessions and benefit from them."

Asiavision covered Mr Walsh's fee and travel costs, with Channel NewsAsia paying his hotel accommodation and local transport costs.

The advisory service is available to all Asiavision members, and can cover any aspect of their membership of the news exchange, editorial or technical. □

ABU, EBU work to resolve 'Asiavision' name issue

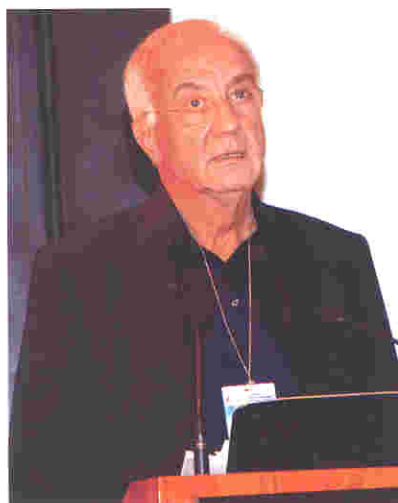
The ABU and the European Broadcasting Union agreed in Bali to hold top-level talks to resolve a disagreement over the use of the name 'Asiavision' for a planned song contest based on the format of the Eurovision Song Contest.

At the request of the Administrative Council, the Presidents of the two unions agreed to hold discussions to try to settle the issue.

A commercial company, Asiavision Pte Ltd, has bought the rights to the contest format from the EBU and announced plans to hold an 'Asiavision Song Contest' contest in 2009.

ABU members voiced their opposition at the General Assembly to the planned use of the name 'Asiavision' for the song contest.

The Managing Director of BBS-Bhutan, Pema Choden, said there was a great deal of concern among ABU members about the planned use of the name.



Fritz Pleitgen

It would compromise the ABU's daily news exchange, Asiavision, which was a serious, substantive news operation, she said. BBS is a member of Asiavision, which was launched in 1984.

"Many members feel quite emotional that the EBU might hijack the name the ABU has been using for many years," she said.

An alternative name

Jun Ogawa of TBS-Japan also expressed opposition to the use of the name. "Many of us feel they are taking our pride away," he said.

The President Director of RRI-Indonesia, Parni Hadi, backed Mr Ogawa. He said the song contest should be a joint ABU-EBU event; if not, the ABU should say: "No, sorry."

The Chairman of the Planning and Strategy Group, Tai Keen-Man, noted that Asiavision members had also strongly objected to the use of the name for the song contest. However, he said it would be difficult to stop the name being used.

The EBU President, Fritz Pleitgen, said he wanted to apologise in the presence of ABU members for the clumsy way the EBU had handled the issue.

"We do not want to steal this valuable name from you. We know what it means," he said.

The EBU's Assistant Director General, David Lewis, said the EBU had no wish to hijack the name, and felt its use for the song contest would be an extremely good way of promoting the ABU.



Parni Hadi

The Secretary-General, David Astley, said the ABU had been approached to lend its support to three different song contests in the region.

He told the General Assembly that in addition to Asiavision Pte Ltd, a large events management group, IMG Media, was planning a region-wide contest called 'Asia Pacific Sings!'

Also, Vietnam's public radio, VOV, had staged the ASEAN Golden Melodies Festival 2008 in October and had suggested that it could be expanded into an ABU song contest in future years.

Mr Astley said the ABU was holding discussions with the organisers of all three contests.

"There is no reason why we can't support more than one song contest," he said. □

General Assembly – News

Lending a smile to the occasion

They were the smiling assistants – a group of students hired to help ensure the ABU meetings went smoothly.

The event management company assisting RRI to run the meetings brought in about 15 students as freelancers to assist delegates, prepare documents and generally help out wherever needed.

Among them was Netty Haryono, who is nearing the end of three years of study for a diploma in tourism management. She described it as a “good experience” and said she enjoyed meeting people from all over the Asia-Pacific region. □



Netty Haryono (fourth from left) and her fellow students pose for the camera while preparing documents

Mini-studio on the go



RRI mini studio station head
Bagus Sudhyatmaka Sugriwa

RRi set up a mini-studio at the Bali International Convention Centre, the General Assembly venue.

To enhance publicity for the ABU's annual event, a number of key speakers were interviewed live by RRI's radio production crew.



Live interview by the RRI's radio crew

The person in charge of this ‘mobile station’ was RRI's station head Bagus Sudhyatmaka Sugriwa.

He said: “Our programmes are broadcast from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., 19 to 23 November over PRO2 English channel. Apart from than the normal

news, entertainment and songs, we include interviews with some of the ABU delegates, live from this mini-studio.

“We are working closely with other RRI stations in Denpasar and Jakarta to produce our programmes from Nusadua,” he said. □



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ABU News interview

*After 240 years of monarchist rule in Nepal, the Maoists came to power in May 2008 at the head of a coalition government and the monarchy was abolished. Radio Nepal's new Executive Director, **Ram S Karki**, tells ABU News what this means to the Nepalese broadcasting industry, the changes it brings, and his determination to see Radio Nepal become a true public service broadcaster.*

Q: What was your educational background and how did you start in the broadcasting industry?

Radio Nepal is a state-owned radio station. It was under the Department of Broadcasting before converting to the Radio Broadcasting Development Board in 1984. Since then we have had to self-sustain financially. We are partly owned by the government, and broadcasting content that the government asked for is what we have had to do. But the new government has a new objective – to educate, inform and entertain people.

Radio Nepal is the best medium to do so as we broadcast in 20 languages, reaching everyone in the country.

I have proposed to the government that Radio Nepal be a public service broadcaster. I am hopeful that the government will approve the proposal as we are airing programmes for the people's good. For this reason, we will have to be funded by the government, but free from its control as what we are achieving, essentially, is not profit-oriented and non-commercial.

Through various meetings, I have collected methodologies of corporations making a similar switch such as the BBC, Radio Japan the South African Broadcasting Corporation and Radio Switzerland, and submitted them to the Nepalese government along with a set of recommendations for reforms.

the 'new Nepal' needs a new Radio Nepal. We are the voice of the voiceless



I am seeking the assistance from the ABU and AIBD on the official procedures to make such a shift.

I and my staff are on the same page. We want to be free from the government but not become another commercial station. If the proposal fails, Radio Nepal will remain semi-government, which will put us in a difficult situation as the competition among radio stations in Nepal is stiff.

There are more than 260 small commercial and community radios licensed in Nepal and they are free to run any programme they like.

Q: How is Radio Nepal coping with the competition?

We offer high quality programmes; programmes with the people in mind. Since the launch of various people-

oriented programmes, our business is improving. In an audience survey in 2006, there was 68 percent of listenership. In 2007, it increased to 78.2 percent and in 2008, it roared to 83 percent. I am confident that in the latest survey we will have an even greater listenership.

We are in a good position, as we broadcast in all media, shortwave, medium wave, FM frequencies and the latest, on the Internet since 1997.

If Radio Nepal becomes state-funded, we will be free from the worries of budget constraints, and be able to focus on improving its quality in programmes. I have introduced new programmes for children, minorities and the disabled.

Our bottom line is to serve all. Before the republican government came on