Going 'Green' in 2009

The environment is at the forefront of many people's minds these days. Heeding the call, the ABU has pulled together a number of projects that will provide training for reporting on environmental issues, while seeing the production and the distribution of new member-produced content.

As is becoming more evident, global climate change is happening now. Developing countries and particularly the world's poorest people are affected first and worst by changes of climate and extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, heat waves and rising sea levels.

Addressing this, an innovative 'ADB-ABU Climate Change Initiative' proposes three workshops to be held in India, the Philippines and China respectively on the topic of climate change in early 2009.

The project will also hold a training workshop for ABU members at the 'Clean Energy Forum' at ADB headquarters in Manila in June 2009, in which ABU members will have the opportunity to cover the forum live and satellite feed the reports back to their home stations. Programming output from the project will include news features, documentaries and PSAs.

The project will also support 'Production Awards on Climate Change' for up to 15 grants of US$1,000 each and have it distributed on the MAE satellite feed.

In addition, the ABU's Development Projects department will partner with the ADB again in 2009 for the 'Coral Triangle Initiative'.

The coral triangle is a region that contains the richest and most varied coastal and marine environment in the world. While most of the coral reefs in the triangle are generally in good condition, significant coastal development, overexploitation of coastal areas and overharvesting of valuable and sometimes endangered species threaten to upset the ecological balance of the region.

This project entails a series of video-related activities focused on coral triangle challenges and programmes to address its related problems, it will also seek participation of ABU members from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Timor Leste.

Carrying on the environmental theme, the 'ABU-UNEP Ozone Initiative' in 2009 will also see production grants and satellite distribution via the ABU-MAE for programming on ozone protection.

Bridging environment and development issues, the 'ABU-UNISDR Disaster Awareness and Preparedness Project' in 2009 aims to promote awareness, understanding and training of broadcasters from the Asia-Pacific to better promote, address and engage in disaster risk reduction.

The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction has calculated that, of the 5,120 disasters recorded in the world between 1991 and 2005, 2029 (about 40 percent) happened in the Asia-Pacific region.

The project aims to educate broadcasters on their role in national early warning systems and to increase the public response rate to emergencies and natural disasters. The project will be piloted initially in Sri Lanka, India and Indonesia through a series of workshops which are currently being organised and will be held from January to March 2009.

For more information, contact francyne@abu.org.my

Rising sea levels is among the climate change problems facing especially poorer nations

Digitalising your newsroom? Put people first

People are more important than technology when it comes to creating a digital newsroom, a meeting of Arab broadcasters has heard.

Maintaining the support of newsroom staff during the transition from analogue to digital is essential, speakers told a two-day Arab States Broadcasting Union symposium in Tunis in November.

John Curzon of Avid, a former BBC journalist, said studies had shown that 20 percent of newsroom staff would accept new digital technologies at once, 20 percent would never accept them, and the rest would accept them with the right training and encouragement.

The symposium moderator, BBC TV Arabic Director of News Salah Negm, spoke of a psychological barrier that had to be overcome: if journalists did not have something physical in their hands, such as a tape, they did not trust the technology.

The symposium focused on the new digital newsroom technologies available and how best to introduce them. It featured presentations from service providers and European broadcasters.

A common theme was the need for training to ensure staff were comfortable with the big changes the new technologies would bring.

Uwe Ritter of Thomson Grass Valley said the effort involved in going digital should not be underestimated and it was essential to maintain the support of staff during the transition.

Another speaker was Brigitte Vermeersch of Belgian broadcaster VRT, which recently merged its radio, television and online newsrooms, with all news material becoming available to all news staff.

She said an important factor had been to involve journalists in the planning and help them see the vision behind the changes.

Hélène Rauby-Matta of the European Broadcasting Union said it was valuable for news and technical staff from stations planning to digitalise their newsrooms

John Curzon

to go on study tours to stations that had already done so.

Other points made by speakers:

- Some jobs will disappear and new ones will be created. Some people will want to learn new skills while others will not.

- Adapting to change is not a question of age. Some older staff will embrace new technologies while some younger staff might struggle.

- A station needs to be sure its new digital system is properly engineered before it throws away all the old tapes.

- Open communications are essential. If there's a problem with the new system, staff must be told.

- Pilot projects and dry runs are helpful in preparing staff for the switch to a digital newsroom.

- Broadcast organisations should share their experiences and learn from one another.

- Stations should find the right balance between progress and stabilisation. After a big change, they should have a period of stability. People need time to adapt. □

ASBU's headquarters

Egypt to host 2010 Robocon

The Xi'an Jiaotong University of China won the 7th ABU Robocon competition, held on 31 August in Pune, India. The Chinese team bagged its second consecutive trophy, narrowly beating an Egyptian team. China scored 21 points while Egypt 20.

Seventeen teams from 16 countries and regions in the Asia-Pacific took part in the robot contest this year. The host broadcaster, DDI-India, was supported by the Maharashtra Institute of Technology (MIT) in Pune.

More than 2,000 people watched the final, including about 200 supporters from Thailand. Mongolian students studying at Indian universities were also there to give support to their country's team.

Representatives from universities in Egypt, Japan, Indonesia and China competed in the semi finals. Egypt reached the final by beating Japan while China beat Indonesia.

The venue of ABU Robocon 2009 will be Tokyo, with NHK-Japan hosting the contest where the first ABU Robocon took place. In 2010, Robocon will go to Egypt and ERTU will be the host broadcaster.

Contestants giving their best (upper left) Winners of Robocon 2008 (above

KBS-Korea hosts 2009 TV Documentary screening

After an absence of four years due to budget constraints, the ABU TV Documentary screening,

exchange and workshop too place from 15 to 19 September Flamingo hotel in Kuala Lumpu

The return of the event saw th participation of nine participants fro seven organisations in seven memb countries. The focus of the meetir included discussion on concerns ov environmental issues, public healt poverty and public health.

In 2009, the same workshop w be hosted by KBS-Korea from 16 18 June.

MediaCorp delays new media hub

Singapore's MediaCorp is to delay plans for a new media hub because of construction costs and the global financial downturn.

The company's CEO, Lucas Chow, told Channel NewsAsia that the US$200 million construction plan would now be carried out in phases.

A 70,000-square metre piece of land in Bukit Batok in western Singapore was expected to be the new home for MediaCorp by 2011. But with high construction costs, the company was revising its plans.

Mr Chow said: "We are going back to the drawing board. For example, for phase one, we can say that we build brand new studios, so that production people will have brand new studios.

"We do not have a fixed timeline as to when phase one must start. It will depend very much on the building costs, the economy, and the financial situation that the company is in."

Mr Chow said the downturn had affected MediaCorp's advertising revenue, as companies had cut back on spending.

However, he said MediaCorp planned to continue to expand its regional investments, so that overseas contributions made up one third of its revenue.

"Because of this downturn, share markets have taken a severe beating. So maybe there will be opportunities for us to get into what previously were not opened to us.

"India is a market that we are always very interested to look at. We want to look at markets that basically have a good size of population, and a healthy growth potential."

MediaCorp's overseas investments include a 20 percent stake in a Vietnam media company and a 22 percent stake in a China advertising firm. Both were made in February 2008.

In 2007, the company invested over US$180 million in an Indonesian media firm.

Other opportunities include upgrading staff skills and current facilities, where necessary, through technology.

Mr Chow said: "In the newsroom, recently, we went all digital, we have gone to a tapeless environment, so that we can actually access the same piece of content coming in and do editing at the desktop.

"Regardless of whether we are going to move, I feel that those are the tools that will help us to be more efficient, and I think we should continue to invest in such things." □

MediaCorp headquarters in Singapore

New faces at the ABU

The ABU Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur has five new staff members. Ahmed Nadeem, Sidney Yap, Aizuddin Agil and Wong Mee Wah joined in early November and Abdul Rahman Salim in October.

Nadeem has joined the ABU Technical Department as Head of Studio Technology and Training on 1 November.

He has been a professional engineer for more than 11 years and is an experienced electronics and telecom specialist. He had also worked in the field of television broadcast engineering and in senior management.

Before joining the ABU, Nadeem was a Project Manager and Engineering Consultant with LSV Enterprise Pte Ltd, a broadcast systems integrator in Singapore.

He is a Maldivian and holds a Bachelor's degree (Hons) in Electronics and Electrical Engineering from the University of Hertfordshire in the UK.

Nadeem Ahmed

Sidney Yap

Aizuddin Agil

Wong Mee Wah

Abdul Rahman Saim

Sidney is the new Publications Officer. She has spent the past 10 years in the Malaysian lifestyle magazine and trade journals industries.

Her print media career started when she joined Bluinc (M) Sdn Bhd (a subsidiary of Bluinc Pte Ltd, Singapore), a regional media corporation, as an Advertising and Promotions Executive, before becoming Editorial Assistant.

During the past decade, Sidney had taken on the roles of a writer, an editor, an associate editor and most recently as the beauty editor for *Sisters*, a Malaysian women's magazine.

Sidney is a Malaysian and speaks several languages. She is currently pursuing her Master's degree in Mass Communications with the University of Leicester in the UK through distance learning.

A Malaysian, Aizuddin is the new Editorial Assistant cum Webmaster. He is currently undertaking his Bachelor's degree in Multimedia Systems offered by the Multimedia University in Selangor.

Aizuddin has been a freelance web developer for the past five years. Before joining the ABU, he was one of the web designers who took on the Malaysian Governmental Portal project, among other areas of experience.

He will be working with Sidney to revamp ABU News and the ABU website as well as handling the day to day maintenance of the website.

Wong Mee Wah is the new Accounts Assistant in the Finance Department. Mee Wah holds a higher certificate in LCCI and a Diploma in Business Administration.

She has worked in the food and beverage, banking and construction industries.

Another new face is Abdul Rahman Saim, the System Support Officer. Rahman has two years of experience supporting the network systems of clients in Europe, the US and Asia.

A Malaysian, he holds a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology, majoring in Business Information Systems.