

ABU news



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News of ABU activities and the broadcasting industry in the Asia-Pacific



AFP photo by William West

Country Fire Authority staff monitor a huge fire outside Melbourne in February

Australian fires highlight role of radio in disasters

The deadly bushfires in Australia in February highlighted the key role of public service radio in providing emergency coverage and information.

When the bushfires tore through communities in Victoria, killing more than 200 people, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Melbourne station, 774, took on special responsibilities.

It dedicated its entire line-up to the fires, providing not only news coverage and emergency warnings but becoming a place where people affected by the disaster could share their experiences.

The ABC's Manager of Emergency Broadcasting, Ian Mannix, said 774's

coverage had been in line with the ABC's role as Australia's emergency services broadcaster.

"We know that our communities want as local a voice as they can possibly get," he said in an interview on 774 after the fires.

"Strong local voices are important in the times when people are under anxiety. They need people they can trust, and so we'll try to be as local as we can.

"It's not only what we say on air and our relationships with the emergency agencies, it's understanding what the community requires and finding a way to give it to them. We do it all around Australia.

"We put warnings to air when they come from the weather bureau. We elevate the number of warnings as the situation increases. When there is direct threat to human life we go to rolling coverage so we're live in the studio to take any update either from an emergency agency or from the public to tell us exactly what's happening."

The Australian newspaper reported that both new and traditional media found themselves taking on special roles and responsibilities as those affected by the fires attempted to make sense of the tragedy:

"Local radio stations in particular found themselves at the eye of the storm. Around the clock, victims rang in, the

airwaves becoming a kind of virtual town square, where people could share their stories and their advice, and let members of their communities who may be listening know where they could go to find help."

Mr Mannix said disasters such as bushfires, earthquakes and tsunamis, because they happened so quickly, were the areas where broadcasters had to scramble to get information.

"And the media units of all of the emergency agencies are trying to keep up with our demands for information. Bear in mind that just 10 years ago there was no warning system."

He said that in the wake of the fires, Australia needed to look again at the introduction of a phone-based warning system, where people would receive calls telling them to switch on their radios. The system underwent trials in 2004 but was not introduced because of the costs involved.

The ABC won praise from listeners for its radio coverage of the bushfires. One said: "The ABC has done a wonderful job covering the fires. You don't just give information out. You are living the whole ordeal."

A Maiden Gully woman who lost her home in the fires, Maree Stockdale, told the *Bendigo Advertiser* newspaper that the ABC had saved her life.

"What saved me and my husband was having ABC radio on and listening to the warnings. If we hadn't had that on we wouldn't be alive.

"We heard the warning and got out, and 10 minutes later our house went up." ●

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'Green Radio' campaign launched in Indonesia



(From left) Parni Hadi of RRI-Indonesia and the Indonesian Forestry Minister M S Kaban together launched the 'Green Radio' campaign in Wonogiri

Together with the Indonesian government, RRI-Indonesia has launched a 'Green Radio' campaign in the country after the initiative was adopted by the ABU Programme Committee at its annual meeting last November.

More than 10,000 trees were planted on 4 February when the environmental campaign was launched.

This nationwide campaign was launched by M S Kaban, the Forestry Minister, and Parni Hadi, President Director of RRI-Indonesia, in Wonogiri, Central Java.

Thousands of people attended the launch. The event was broadcast live on RRI.

A series of nationwide live and interactive radio programmes were aired before the launch with the participation of Mr Kaban and other government officials.

Themed 'Lestari Alamku' (Preserving My Mother Earth), the awareness campaign aims to promote the reversal of climate change throughout Indonesia. Sixty RRI radio stations are participating in the campaign along with environmental groups and radio listeners.

To show their commitment, all RRI station chiefs were asked to plant trees in their neighborhoods, RRI compounds and public grounds.

The 'Green Radio' campaign bears a motto of 'green and clean' and is a year-

long programme aimed at transforming RRI "to be promoter, educator, watchdog, as well as actor in nature preservation to combat global warming and climate change", Mr Hadi said.

Several RRI stations have since set up public gardens and parks for weekly or monthly tree-plantings and treatments. ◆



A traditional cultural show with strong environmental messages

Arming journalists not the answer, RNZ CEO says

Proposals that journalists should carry weapons for their own protection would almost certainly be counter-productive, a broadcasting conference in Tonga has been told.

Peter Cavanagh, Chief Executive and Editor-in-Chief of Radio New Zealand (RNZ), said the proposal was "a sad but vivid illustration of the growing threat to the personal security of working journalists and the desperation many in international news journalism are now feeling".

Mr Cavanagh was speaking at the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association's regional conference in Nuku'alofa in February.

He said that following the recent murder of a young Moscow journalist, an official approach had been made to Russian authorities to allow journalists to arm themselves.

"In my 35 years as a journalist... I never for one moment thought I would see the day when such a chilling proposal was being seriously debated within our industry," he said.

"But over recent decades the lines between arms-length reporting of news – and inadvertently becoming caught up in the news – have blurred considerably.

"Increasingly, journalists do not have the luxury of standing on the sidelines

“ It seems not only are journalists becoming innocent victims of the stories they're covering, but their very status as reporters marks them out – in the eyes of some – as legitimate targets for attack ”



Peter Cavanagh (centre) discusses a point with Javad Mottaghi of the AIBD whilst Joseph Ealedona of NBC-PNG looks on

enjoying the professional respect and personal protection that comes from a position of neutrality.

"It seems not only are journalists becoming innocent victims of the stories they're covering, but their very status as reporters marks them out – in the eyes of some – as legitimate targets for attack."

Mr Cavanagh said no-one was suggesting that the lives of journalists in the Pacific region were seriously at risk, but they did face enormous day-to-day challenges.

These included personal threats and intimidation – in some cases instances of physical violence – designed to either prevent news being covered or as retribution for work already published.

The reality of life for at least some Pacific journalists, broadcasters and news executives were instances of physical assault, criminal property damage and, at times, violent interrogation.

Mr Cavanagh said that in the past 12 months, things appeared to have got worse as far as media freedom in the region was concerned.

He cited the situation in Fiji, where three newspaper publishers had been deported, a newspaper editor jailed for three months and a reporter arrested after writing a story critical of a government minister.

"And only a week ago, a female reporter in Vanuatu was punched and kicked by a local identity who didn't like the story she'd written about him.

"There's been an assault on a journalist in the Solomon Islands, a threat to expel journalists from Papua New Guinea, media censorship in Samoa and sedition charges against journalists here in Tonga.

"And it's probably fair to say that this represents only the tip of an iceberg

– those instances of threat or attack that have been serious enough to attract international news coverage.

He said news organisations that enjoyed editorial independence and freedom of information had an obligation to support their colleagues in the Pacific who were operating under far greater pressures and restrictions.

"When journalists and broadcasters are prevented from reporting without fear or favour, we have an obligation to bring their plight to the attention of a global audience.

"We also have an obligation to tell the stories they themselves are prevented from telling.

"As all of us here know the media can be a very powerful tool – and governments and other powerful institutions and individuals are not immune to public opinion.

"Publicly exposing threats and intimidation experienced by Pacific journalists might not stop the problem – but it will force the perpetrators to think very carefully before they do it again." ●

Climate proofing news reporting

Journalists need to look at solutions reporting when covering climate change. ABU-ADB Climate Change Production Workshop participants in New Delhi and Bangkok have been told.

"Think of solutions – instead of pointing out what's wrong in the hope that someone can fix it – solutions journalism points out what's right, hoping that someone can imitate it," explained ADB Consultant, Virginia Moncrieff.

The workshops in February formed part of the newly launched ABU-ADB Climate Change Initiative which entails a series of capacity-building activities for ABU-member broadcasters in Asia and the Pacific and the creation and distribution of broadcast and electronic media items

on the issue of climate change, its manifestations and impact on the region. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is funding the project.

"Climate change is a growing threat to the Asia-Pacific region, with potentially catastrophic consequences for families," said Jason Rush, ADB Media Relations Specialist and Project Leader for the Initiative.

"Broadcast journalists have an important role to play in helping policymakers and the public appreciate the extent of this threat, and encouraging them to take cost-effective actions that can preserve the environment, save communities and improve lives," he said.

According to the ADB, climate change will have many manifestations in Asia

Climate change is a growing threat to the Asia-Pacific region, with potentially catastrophic consequences for families



These extraction tanks at Tesco are used to convert used vegetable oil to bio-diesel as recycled energy

and the Pacific and measures are needed to protect the most vulnerable from the adverse effects of sea level rise, melting glaciers, more frequent and severe storms, greater variability of rainfall, and other predicted impacts. Millions could become climate refugees, and the poorest people in the poorest countries are likely to experience the earliest and greatest suffering.

What makes the region more vulnerable is its unique physical and socio-economic attributes, including high population density, still relatively low income levels, long coastlines, and the prominence of agriculture and fishing in providing livelihoods for the rural poor.

which was facilitated by Rajendra Sharma of Radio Nepal.

TV participants included producers from DDI-India, NTV-Nepal, MNB-Mongolia, TV9-Mongolia and UBS-Mongolia. For radio, RN-Nepal, AIR-India and VOV-Vietnam formed the core group.

In Bangkok, the three-and-a-half day workshop focused on climate change and megacities. Participants were from PBS-Thailand, TV3-Thailand, NBT-Thailand, TPT-Thailand, PBS-Philippines, RPN-9 Philippines and TVRI-Indonesia.

"ADB looks forward to working with the ABU and broadcasters throughout

Millions could become climate refugees, and the poorest people in the poorest countries are likely to experience the earliest and greatest suffering

With a focus on climate change and water-related issues, the New Delhi Broadcast Production Workshop was facilitated by Matt Walsh of Media Advisors Asia and included a parallel track on day three on radio production,

the region in contributing to the global fight against climate change," Mr Rush said.

For more information, contact Francine Hamgan at francine@abu.org.my.



The ABU-ADB Climate Change Initiative participants visited the Tesco Lotus Green Store in Bangkok

Ocean needs media attention

Reef destruction, overfishing, illegal fishing, coral bleaching and the effect of on-land pollution were among the topics broadcasters discussed at the ABU-ADB Coral Triangle Initiative Co-Production Workshop in Manila.

The Coral Triangle Initiative has been adopted by six countries – Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste and the Solomon Islands – to address the challenges facing the marine region with well-coordinated policy, institutional and technical aids.

The coral triangle sustains more than 120 million people in the region and beyond because it is the most diverse marine region on the planet. However, the area is now under constant pressure due to the destructive fishing activities and the effect of climate change. Steps are needed to save the livelihoods of millions of people. Media can play an important role in reversing these harmful consequences.

"Media can be the 'voice' to the local community," says Barend Frieling, from the Regional Cooperation, Southeast Asia Department at the Asian Development Bank. An example would be the fishermen who



The livelihood of fishes is threatened by overfishing in that area

are usually the poorest and most neglected part of the community. The policy makers will then start to see and take notice of all the problems they are facing.

Echoing these sentiments, Paolo Mangahas, Communications Manager of the WWF Coral Triangle



Filming during the Hamilo Coast site visit

Programme said, "It is important for media to give the Coral Triangle and its associated issues much needed exposure because of their direct impacts on food security and economic stability."

"We want the policy makers to be aware of the potential loss if they don't take action now. We want them to work together to protect their valuable marine resources," says Ahmad Fuadi, Director of Communications, The Nature Conservancy who was also a speaker at the workshop.

The workshop was held from 21st to 24th January 2009 at ADB Headquarters in Manila, Philippines. Eight ABU members, TV3, RTM and Astro from Malaysia, NBN from

the Philippines, TVRI and TPI from Indonesia, EMTV from Papua New Guinea and RTTL from Timor Leste as well as two other broadcasters from the Philippines – ABS-CBN and Net 25 – participated in this workshop.

"This topic is very interesting, I haven't thought much about the coral and the issues surrounding it before. Now that I'm exposed to it, I am more aware and will start to do more reporting on it," said Nanizza Reginaldo, a programme producer from Net 25.

“ It is important for media to give the Coral Triangle and its associated issues much needed exposure because of their direct impact on food security and economic stability ”

the Philippines, TVRI and TPI from Indonesia, EMTV from Papua New Guinea and RTTL from Timor Leste as well as two other broadcasters from the Philippines – ABS-CBN and Net 25 – participated in this workshop.

The workshop concluded with a site visit to Hamilo Coast in Nasugbu, Batangas where the developer of the area is working with WWF and local governments to help ensure the project is environmentally sustainable including providing livelihood opportunities, with a focus on preserving natural resources.

The site visit underscored for participants, the challenges and possible solutions faced by developers of these types of projects.

Each participant will produce two news feature items of three to five minutes. The items will be compiled and post-edited by the ABU and distributed to all ABU members on a rights-free basis. Some of the items will also be featured at the World Ocean Conference in May 2009 in, Manado, Indonesia. ●

Workshop stirs interests among producers

An ABU Prizes Backpack Workshop in Beijing in February saw many high quality entries from ABU members.

The two-day workshop, hosted by CCTV-China, catered solely for its TV producers.

Several new topics were added and a new discussion format introduced to the workshop. The Programme Committee earlier announced a new category in the ABU Prizes – Climate Change Reporting in TV and radio respectively.

On top of that, two more winners from last year's ABU Prizes were invited to share their experiences with the participants at the workshop.

Four winning programmes from 2008 were subtitled in the Chinese-language. They were screened over two days with lengthy discussions initiated by the moderator Nawiyah Che Lah, Director of TV Training at IPPTAR in Malaysia.

Dr Nawiyah encouraged participants to exchange ideas. The discussions were lively and productive, bringing up significant problems faced by many producers today.

Among the four winning programmes was 'Kinkakujji Sound Stage' by Atsuhito Sumoto and Hitoshi Takada of NAB/MBS-Japan. It (Entertainment category) showed a challenging new musical genre with the intention of creating a universal artist in Asia. The producers explained ways to bring creativity out of their team members, the production procedures, the concept of the programme and technical know-how on camera angles.

The 'Sound Stage Series' is an annual event that takes place at temples in ancient cities of Japan. The event is a gathering of performers from the all over the world. Performing for the 20th milestone were Russell Watson, Kiyokazu Kanze, Iwao Furusawa and Takashi Kako.

The producer of another programme, 'Surging Cities Dhaka – The Miracle of Micro-Credit' (News category), Asako Kume of NHK-Japan, said: "I would



NHK-Japan's producer Asako Kume at the Q&A session

“ It’s a very good experience because we (at NHK) have no opportunities to listen to the ideas of other countries ”

like to discuss this longer. It's a very good experience because we (at NHK) have no opportunities to listen to the ideas of other countries."

Ms Kume's programme featured the struggle to achieve prosperity of two inhabitants of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The two try obtaining loans from a giant NGO based in Dhaka, which assists qualified borrowers with strategic loans without securing collateral.

'East and West' (Documentary category) by Lee Jeong Ook of EBS-Korea on the other hand analysed and compared differences in ways of thinking between Eastern and Western people in aspects of psychology, philosophy and aesthetic.

Another winning programme which received high ratings was 'Japan Swimming Championship-Beijing Olympics Trial' (Sports category), also produced by Asako Kume of NHK Japan. The dynamic images captured with the latest technology allow viewers to witness the dramatic moments more graphically.

Everyone agreed that the programme achieved high technical standards and quality.

Most participants found the workshop very useful as it enabled them to see techniques and skills used, and exchange and share ideas with the winning producers. ●



(Right) EBS-Korea's producer-director Lee Jeong Ook with his scriptwriter