



“ joining Earth Hour was a way for the citizens of the world to send a clear message – they want action on climate change ”

reflects growing global concern over climate change and the inability of the world so far to craft an effective global response.” WWF International Director General, James Leape, said.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, said that joining Earth Hour was a way for the citizens of the world to send a clear message. “They want action on climate change,” he said.

House and landmarks in dozens of other Australian cities.

Next were the bridges over the River Han in Seoul, South Korea, and then it was China’s turn to join Earth Hour.

The Bird’s Nest Stadium and Water Cube at Olympic Park were blanketed in darkness, and not to be outdone, Shanghai matched the capital’s commitment by switching off the

Symphony of Lights display on Victoria Harbour was suspended.

WWF China country representative Dermot O’Gorman said the statement for action on global warming was being made “loud and clear” in China.

“What’s most impressive about Earth Hour in China is how many ordinary people across the country signed up to switch off their lights. This sends a powerful message to the world

we face,” Bollywood actor and filmmaker, Aamir Khan, said.

Mumbai’s best known landmarks, the Reserve Bank and Air India buildings and the Indian Tourism Development Corporation’s flagship Ashok Hotel, went dark along with hundreds of other buildings across the city.

Activities to support Earth Hour were also held in Delhi, Bangalore, Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram, Dehradun, Shimla, Chandigarh, Hyderabad and many smaller communities across the sub-continent.

“ The Philippines took the honours for the most active participation in Asia with 15 million Filipinos turning off their lights in 647 cities and towns ”

As Earth Hour started moving across time zones, Auckland’s Sky Tower, the Parliament buildings in Wellington and Christchurch Cathedral were among the first of 996 famous landmarks which went dark around the world.

They were followed by the Sydney Harbour Bridge, the Sydney Opera

iconic Oriental Pearl Tower, Shanghai World Financial Centre, and district and municipal government buildings across the city.

More than 1,800 Hong Kong buildings and landmarks including the International Finance Centre, Cultural Centre Complex and Tsing Ma Bridge turned off their lights, and the nightly

that people in China want action on climate change now,” he said.

In India, Bollywood stars appealed to the public through radio and TV spots to turn off their lights.

“Climate change is undoubtedly and regrettably the biggest immediate long-term environmental challenge

WWF’s Global Climate Initiative Director, Yanli Hou, said the strong support for Earth Hour in China and India undermined one of the central arguments used in parts of the developed world to resist taking strong action on climate change.

“For too long people have been saying that they can’t tackle climate change until China and India do so too. The success of Earth Hour shows that the people of these countries are in fact ready and willing to take the lead on climate change,” said Ms Hou. ●





## Industry Debate – Bringing HDTV to the Asia-Pacific

# Plan for HDTV now, broadcasters told

Broadcasters in the Asia-Pacific region have been urged to plan for high-definition television (HDTV) now even if they do not intend to introduce it yet.

Speakers in an industry debate at the ABU Digital Broadcasting Symposium in Kuala Lumpur in March said HDTV was inevitable and the only question for broadcasters was when to go ahead with it.

"Having a long-term plan is a key factor to make sure the tools are in place," Richard Redmond of Harris Broadcast Communications said.

Chris Jaeger of Broadcast Australia said a decision on introducing HDTV was "all about timing, about focusing on what consumers want". It was

a case by case, country by country consideration, he said, but the two common denominators for all broadcasters planning the move were cost and content.

He said the take-up of HDTV in Australia had been slow for a number of years but the country was now seeing a substantial take-up, because of the Beijing Olympics among other factors.

Australian broadcasting consultant John Bigeni said each country should choose its own timetable. What was good for the UK or Japan was not necessarily good for the Philippines or Indonesia, he said.

Philip Nottle of Sony Australia said broadcasters needed to take a calculated risk about when to introduce HDTV if they wanted to stay solvent in the future.

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll go nowhere," he said.

Sony was now producing only a few cameras that were standard definition (SD) because there was little demand for SD around the world.

Affordable, user-friendly set-top boxes and compelling content were essential, especially in less

“ In some countries in the region, particularly Pacific island nations, it could be 20 years before HD programmes will be seen ”



David Astley listens to a question in the industry debate

wealthy countries, Erina Tobing of Indonesia's national broadcaster TVRI said. Unless the content was different, interest among viewers would remain limited.

A slow, step-by-step transition might work well, she said. Broadcasters should plan carefully and wait until the compression technology became affordable.

Graham Stephens of Malaysian pay-TV operator Astro said broadcasters needed to build content protection into their set-top boxes when they made the move to HD, to future-proof their material.

Mr Nottle agreed. He said advertisers were also a driver of HD, but without content protection the material

# BROADCASTING SYMPOSIUM 2009

## REDEFINITION IN RADIO & TELEVISION

13 March 2009  
 Star Plaza Lumpur



The panel of speakers at the 2009 ABU Digital Broadcasting Symposium industry debate session

they were sponsoring could be siphoned off.

He suggested launching an HD service for higher income viewers and showing the same material in SD for other viewers.

"If you're going digital and you're not thinking HD, then you need to go back and think again," he said.

Mr Nottle said that whatever technology broadcasters chose, content remained king. "I remember good old Bruce Springsteen: 57 channels and nothin' on."

Mr Redmond agreed, saying broadcasters should make compelling HDTV content and switch on the service when the demand was there.

Andrew Yeo of *Asia-Pacific Broadcasting* said visually attractive programmes such as travel shows were important for HDTV.

Frederico Rosario of TDM-Macau said broadcasters had to go ahead with HDTV to promote their image and keep up with others in the region. All broadcasters needed to start producing in HD.

The ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, moderated the debate.

He said that in some countries in the region, particularly Pacific island nations, it could be 20 years before HD programmes will be seen.

However, broadcasters had no choice but to go HD: it was just a question of the timing. ●



Graham Stephens makes a point

"If you don't know where you're going, you'll go nowhere"

"HDTV is all about timing, about focusing on what consumers want"



Andrew Yeo adds his views

# India 'speedy' digitalisation underway

About 1,500 people took part in the BES Expo and Conference 2009, held over three days in New Delhi in February. The exhibition featured 70 booths.

In an opening speech, a representative of the Indian Minister of Information Broadcasting assured the broadcasting industry that "it will keep on investing in providing more broadcasting services to the people and in supporting public and private initiatives in achieving its objectives".

He said the government had decided to speed digital broadcasting and that implementation was underway.

Ruxandra Obreja of the BBC and Chairperson of the Digital Radio Mondiale consortium (DRM), in a keynote address, encouraged broadcasters to take up digital radio services so that "the audiences could benefit by the superior sound quality and several types of interesting services which add value to radio listening experience".

A highlight was a half-day workshop where seven DRM representatives explained the use and technologies of the DRM system and the newly developed DRM+ system for digital radio broadcasting in the FM bands.

The conference also discussed issues of digital platforms for delivery of TV and mobile services, for delivery of radio service in several banks, business strategies in broadcasting, migration to digital broadcasting, spectrum and the regulatory framework, studio and newsroom automation and cable and IPTV delivery. Many of these focused topics focused on the broadcasting landscape in India.

The Broadcast Engineering Society of India (BES) organised the event. It came at a time of opportunity and challenge for the Indian broadcasting industry, given the convergence between broadcasting and mobile communications. ●



A total of 70 booths were featured at the BES Expo 2009



Participants at the BES Conference

## GOING DIGITAL 'NOT A CHOICE'

It is essential for broadcasters to go digital in the production and delivery of contents, a conference in Dubai has heard.

The CEO of Abu Dhabi Media Company, Edward Borgerding, made the remark in an opening address to the CABSAT MENA 2009 Broadcasting Conference in Dubai.

He said going digital was essential for broadcasters because players in other industries had started focusing

on how they could distribute content on different platforms.

A roundtable panel discussion for chief technical officers looked at the uptake of technologies in challenging times. Technical directors of several broadcasting unions and heads of technical departments of several local and regional organisations took part.

Among other topics discussed at the three-day conference were digital TV broadcasting technologies, content production technologies, applying TV



business strategies in the Middle East, strategies for mobile broadcasting and value addition to digital services. ●

Booths at the CABSAT MENA 2009 exhibition

## Asiavision Award Monthly Winners

Major happenings in the first month of 2009 in Thailand and Brunei saw MCOT and RTB respectively coming out as joint winners of the January Asiavision Award.

MCOT earned its award for its coverage of a deadly nightclub fire in Bangkok during a party to welcome the New Year. MCOT was quick to offer early visuals of the tragedy as a newflash and later with an update.

Fireworks used to highlight the New Year countdown were believed to have set off combustibles in the nightclub premises. The club was packed with several hundred people when the fire broke out after midnight.

Brunei was hit by floods and landslides in the later half of January and RTB won the Asiavision award for the month with its coverage of the wet season. The Borneo island nation experienced a much heavier rainfall than usual which triggered landslides and flash floods around the country.

RTB also provided follow-up visuals of the inundation in various parts of the country for Asiavision members.

## NTV-NEPAL LAUNCHES ASIAN NEWS PROGRAMME

Nepal Television (NTV) has launched a new programme, 'Asia Today', focusing on news from around the region.

The 10 minute Nepali-language programme goes to air every day except Saturday. It is based primarily on material from Asiavision,

the ABU's daily news exchange.

'Asia Today' is broadcast at 4 pm local time and repeated at 10.30 in the evening.

Established in 1985, NTV is Nepal's national broadcaster. It operates two channels, NTV and NTV2. ●

RTM won the Asiavision Award for December 2008 for its prompt coverage of a deadly landslip incident on hilly terrain near the Malaysian capital Kuala Lumpur. The Malaysian public broadcaster also provided regular updates on the search and rescue efforts in the days that followed.

The early morning landslip on 6 December buried 14 bungalows in two housing estates under rubble. The landslip claimed four lives and also forced the temporary evacuation of several thousand residents living in the vicinity. ●

## Fears over US\$628 million FA TV deal

The Football Association's broadcast partners, Setanta and ITV, are seeking to renegotiate the terms of contracts worth £425 million (US\$628 million) in response to major financial pressures.

Telegraph Sport reports that satellite broadcaster Setanta delayed making a scheduled payment on their £150 million (US\$221 million) contract and it emerged that ITV are seeking to reschedule payments on their £275 million (US\$406 million) deal.

Setanta had been due to make a payment of more than £10 million (US\$14 million) but have withheld the money as they attempt to renegotiate the terms of their deal.

ITV are also hoping to reschedule their payment schedule as they seek to address a short-term cash-flow problem. While ITV are understood to have met all scheduled instalments so far the broadcaster are seeking to smooth the payment schedule, which is front-loaded to the opening years of the deal.

ITV's coverage of the FA Cup has been troubled, attracting widespread criticism when many viewers missed the decisive goal in the fourth-round tie between Liverpool and Everton when the channel switched to an advert.

The FA's four-year deal with the broadcasters, which began this season, is worth £425 million (US\$628 million) and delivered a huge boost to the organisation when it was signed in 2007.

News that both broadcasters are actively seeking to renegotiate their contracts will raise fears about the financial position however. The FA rejects such concerns and will resist attempts to reschedule payments. They remain confident that their contracts are robust and that the major commercial properties, the England team and the FA Cup, will retain their value and appeal.

Under the terms of Setanta's deal the broadcaster are understood to have more time to pay before they are in breach of contract.

Earlier this year, Setanta lost the rights to one of the two packages of Premier League matches they own, prompting questions about the viability of their business model. Management at the broadcaster subsequently instituted a major

review of the business, prompting concerns among sports that have signed deals with the station.

Not long ago, a Setanta source insisted they would continue to meet their commitments. ITV sources stressed that they have met all their payments to date and remain committed to their deal with the FA. The FA declined to comment on confidential contractual issues.

As well as the Premier League and the FA, Setanta has a deal with Premier Rugby that starts in 2010, the Indian Premier League and the US PGA Tour.

ITV's position will become clearer soon when they reveal their results for the last financial year. ●

# Embrace change Embrace the digital age

As more and more countries are considering or taking up the digital transition in terrestrial services, another set of concerns has emerged. Chris Laeger, Managing Director International Business at Broadcast Australia, talks to ABU News about the challenges, benefits, and confidence broadcasters ought to have in the digitalisation process.

**Q. As a terrestrial service provider, what do you have to offer and how do you cater to the diverse needs of broadcasters in the Asia Pacific region?**

Every country is different. Every country has its economic and social factors that come into play. There is no single approach that caters for all. In terms of the digitisation process, some countries are already through the transition phase, some are in the planning phase and some haven't even got to the planning phase.

We all know that digital TV is coming or has arrived, but each country needs to think carefully about issues such as the state of the industry, the cost to the industry and the overall cost to the country, in particular consumer cost. We also need to understand the many benefits of digital, including the cost of not converting.

What we do is step in to evaluate the country's landscape, industry structure, spectrum and the aspects of contribution, distribution and transmission, etc, before making a plan for a broadcaster or a regulator. We then look at ways of how we may provide service or partnership on the transition in the transmission areas in which we have expertise.

**Q. What kind of service or help you would be able to provide in the case where a country has difficulty getting funding from its government?**

The complications with going digital due to cost in each country can be addressed in a number of different ways. For transmission, one business model that would work is a consortium of players that each bring some value to the table. Such a consortium could include operators who own critical site infrastructure, suppliers of core network infrastructure products and services and possibly financing. Ideally one partner would be a digital broadcast network specialist who can contribute expertise, management and some equity.

As a result each broadcaster is then relieved of the capital burden on the transmission network. They can focus on the high cost in studio and content production. This business model may solve the problem in some countries as it helps a broadcaster to spread its capital expenditure cost over a long period of time, say 15 years for example.

**“ The important thing is to make the first step – but broadcasters should make that first step soon ”**



**Q. How do you see the digital transition in the Asia Pacific region?**

I don't think it is a choice to stay analogue anymore because in a digital marketplace where competing platforms are all going digital, when others are offering digital services with a wide range of extra features, staying analogue would mean one would become largely marginalised to the point where business proposition will no longer be viable.

In some countries, the need to go digital as soon as possible is becoming paramount because the competing pressures of alternative platforms and programmes are getting to the consumers. The longer a traditional broadcaster delays going digital the more it would be exposed to these competitive pressures.

**Q. How do you see the digital transition in the Asia Pacific region in five years time?**

In five years time it will be important for broadcasters to be able to produce content in 16-by-nine format in SD and in many cases preferably in HD.

**“ It’s not about technology for technology sake, it’s what the consumer want, or they’re going to want, and already showing that they want in various market places ”**

The market for four-by-three analogue programming will be significantly diminished. The path for broadcasters to go digital, in studio production conversion, should be high definition (HD). The cost difference between converting contents to standard definition (SD) is small after all, and helps to future-proof their business.

*Q. A speaker from TVRI-Indonesia at the ABU Digital Broadcasting Symposium in Kuala Lumpur said because of the wide gap between the rich and poor in the country, it is only practical to take one step at a time. What do you have to say to this scenario?*

It has to be a step by step process. At the end of the day it's all about consumer take up. As I said, each country is different; it is only practical for a country like Indonesia because of its per capita income to address digital in a phased-way starting out primarily with an approach that looks at how most people will watch TV through low cost set-top-boxes and how digital transmission can lower the transmission cost per programme. So initially an SD, multi-channel approach will fit best in many countries. The ability for many markets to be able to have large scale take-up of HD services onto large flat screens is limited at the outset. This can come later and there must be a vision for this in the initial plan.

The important thing is to make the first step and to plan well, with vision.

*Q. What about public broadcasters that are very comfortable with where they are and are under no commercial pressures to go digital soon?*

Public broadcasters too have some responsibilities in following the technology path of the global industry. If content of a public broadcaster in a country are sources for overseas' markets, and they haven't converted into digital format yet, the chances for that country (through content) to be seen in other parts of the world, be it cultural programmes, news and affairs, would be diminishing too because the rest of the world would have converted into digital format.

The public broadcasters do need to follow the technology path, in a meaningful way. I think a lot of them do want to go digital and on multiple platforms.

It's not about technology for technology sake, it's what the consumers want, or they're going to want, and already showing what they want in various market places.

*Q. Then there has to be education in place for more consumers to realise the importance of going digital.*

Sure, that's a big part in the consumer conversion process. We enlighten them with the value of this proposition, which basically boils down to cost, content and quality. The education to convert consumers has been carried out many times in different countries. The proposition of low costs and more content will drive consumer take up. At the end of the day, the consumer is what matters in any business.

*Q. Based on your day to day dealings with a large number of traditional broadcasters coming from different backgrounds, what are the main problems facing them in going digital and how are you helping them in these issues?*

There are a number of challenges. One is cost – once you get past the point where there's no alternative, minimising the cost and maximising the potential business is the way to go – innovate around the investment made, and after investing in digital equipment, new studios and so on, some may ask: "What else can we do with that?". Well, digital market opportunities may well be more numerous and somewhat different.

The challenge is for an industry to have skills that deliver the digital plan. High skill levels are required to deploy and operate the digital networks, which are far more complex than the analogue ones.

It requires a high level of planning expertise. If planning is not well established, everything will become difficult i.e. schedules will be delayed, and it may involve higher cost of deployment and operation; however, if we provide them with quality planning services and help to get the planning right from the beginning, then the risks of cost overruns, schedule overruns and low quality outcomes are dramatically reduced.

**“ The public broadcasters do need to follow the technology path, in a meaningful way ”**

It's critical to be fast and ensure quality is met during the roll out phase. Also, acquiring new skills, bringing expertise from countries which have done these things before, is just as important.

*Q. I know it is very much a case-by-case scenario, but what is a rough estimation on time needed for such a transition?*

To create a national plan like Australia, you'll need around 12-18 months. Some of the planning keeps going after that; meanwhile you start with the implementation.

In Australia, we had the luxury of having more time for the digital transition because we started 10 years ago before the market was asking for it. Other countries don't have as much time now because the market is already asking for a digital outcome, the alternative platforms are going or have gone digital and analogue switch-off dates have been identified. New markets can learn from the experiences of some markets that implemented digital earlier.