

# Co-productions 'a way to weather downturn'

Co-productions, joint ventures and free exchanges of programmes are ways for broadcasters to tackle the economic downturn, the ABU General Assembly in Ulaanbaatar heard.

At the annual Professional Discussion, representatives of three ABU members described the steps their organisations were taking to weather the downturn and remain successful.

Murray Green, Director of Australia's ABC International, described a joint venture project with a commercial broadcaster to set up a playout and presentation centre in Sydney.

The project would reduce ongoing capital and investment costs, enable the ABC to put out material in a range of formats and allow new services to be added without heavy investment.

The decision to enter into the joint venture was taken because presentation was a non-competitive, non-core activity among the networks and it was not necessary for the ABC to own its presentation infrastructure, he said.

The joint venture was announced in June 2009 and the centre was expected to be operational by early to mid 2010.

Mr Green also described a full review the ABC had undertaken of how it made TV programmes. This included the need to digitalise the broadcasting of programmes, the fragmentation of audiences, cross-platform production and audience participation, including blogging.

The review had changed the way the ABC made TV. Among the changes were an increase in co-productions, a move to totally file-based syndication, news studio automation, desktop PC editing, improved strategic planning and the centralisation of news graphics



Datuk Ibrahim (second from left) with speakers Jun Ogawa, Ali Darabi and Murray Green

production centres in Sydney and Melbourne.

Ali Darabi, First Vice-President of IRIB-Iran, identified co-productions and programme exchanges as areas where broadcasters could reduce costs without affecting services.

He described how IRIB was cutting costs by creating programmes which required only a modest budget, reducing paper work and cutting back on trips abroad by its staff.

The ABU Programme Department could help expand the free exchange of programmes, he said. ABU member states had a rich variety of cultures and exchanging programmes would allow them to become more familiar with each other's cultures.

"Certainly, ABU members can embark on joint production of programmes, making use of all facilities and potentials of other institutions and the domestic organisations of member countries through collective measures and sharing of expenditures."

Dr Darabi also suggested that broadcasters promote a culture of

austerity in programme production and make programmes that showed the audience ways to confront the economic crisis.

Jun Ogawa, Director of International Affairs for TBS-Japan, noted that TBS, a private network, had responded to the economic downturn by cutting salaries, and that more salary cuts were possible.

He said the network had increasingly moved into movie production using digital facilities. This had been possible because the film industry was using more TV compatible digital technologies.

The move into film making had not only brought greater profits and enabled staff to learn new skills, but meant the films could be recycled and shown on TV or turned into drama series.

In 2009, TBS's film 'Departures' had won the Oscar for best foreign film.

Mr Ogawa also spoke about TBS's multipurpose 'Sacasa' complex in Tokyo's Akasaka district. Opened in March 2008, it included a broadcast centre, shops, restaurants and a cultural area embracing a theatre.

It had proved popular with the public, drawing big crowds, and had helped increase TBS's income.

"It is a reality that the broadcast part of the business is declining," he said.

In the discussion that followed, RRI-Indonesia asked how joint productions could be carried out most effectively. Dr Darabi said agreement could be reached on common points. He noted that IRIB was engaged in programme exchanges with Japan, Korea and India. RTM-Malaysia said it too had begun cooperating with IRIB.

SART-Saudi Arabia said the MENOS exchange network introduced by the Arab States Broadcasting Union was reducing costs for members, and suggested the ABU adopt similar technology.

The Acting Secretary-General, David Astley, said the ABU Content Exchange Network working party was looking into the feasibility of a network like MENOS for ABU members.

Datuk Ibrahim Yahaya, Director-General of RTM-Malaysia, moderated the discussion. ●

# Honours for 3 Asiavision members

**Compiling comprehensive coverage and making it available speedily in the Asiavision news exchange programme has earned rewards for MCOT-Thailand, NHK-Japan and IRIB-Iran.**

The Asiavision Award for September went to MCOT for its visuals of an anti-government rally in Bangkok to mark the third anniversary of the military coup in Thailand. The MCOT coverage included preparatory steps taken by Thai security forces, the rally by thousands of protestors and the clean-up operations the next morning.

The 19 September rally in the Thai capital was held amid tight security and was brought on by the so called Red Shirt group. They were supporters of Thaksin Shinawatra who was ousted as Prime Minister in the military coup of 2006.

NHK was the winner of the Asiavision Award for August for its series of up-to-date reports on Japan's Lower

House elections. NHK provided news items starting from the election campaigning to polling day and culminating in a newflash on the results on 30 August.

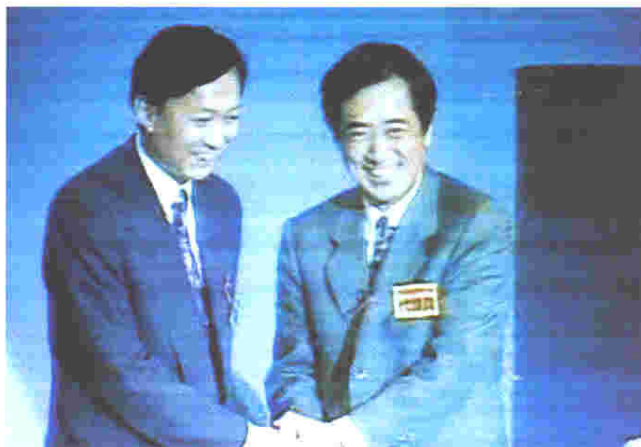
In the elections, Japan's largest opposition group, the Democratic Party, won a landslide victory, taking 308 seats in the 480-seat chamber. The Democrats taking over power ended the Liberal Democratic Party's almost unbroken rule of Japan for over half a century.

IRIB took the Asiavision Award for July for quickly making available visuals of a passenger plane crash in the Iranian provincial city of Qazvin and updates of the tragedy in the days that followed.

The Caspian Airlines plane crashed on 15 July, claiming the lives of all 168 people on board. The Tupolev aircraft went down near Jannat-abad village at 11:45 am local time during a flight from the Iranian capital Tehran to Yerevan in Armenia.



MCOT's coverage of the protests



NHK's winning election coverage

## NHK wins top AVN award



Mongolia's TV5 interviews NHK's Hideyuki Kosuda after he accepted the Dennis Anthony Memorial Award

**Japan's public broadcaster, NHK, has won the 2009 award for the best news coverage of the year by a member of the Asiavision news exchange.**

It received the Dennis Anthony Memorial Award for its coverage of the dramatic crash landing of a FedEx cargo plane at Tokyo's Narita Airport in March.

The American pilot and co-pilot died when the plane crashed off the runway in strong winds and caught fire after a flight from Guangzhou in China.

NHK sent Asiavision a newflash that included visuals of the moment when the mishap occurred.

The award, named after a former ABU Senior Officer, News, who died in 1996, was announced at the General Assembly in Ulaanbaatar on 5 October.

The winner was chosen by a panel of three judges representing CNN, the European Broadcasting Union and the Arab States Broadcasting Union.



# Programme Committee approves new initiatives



The ABU Programme Committee and participants enjoy a photo opportunity after the four-day meeting

**Two new initiatives were approved at the meeting of the Programme Committee in Ulaanbaatar on 1-2 October. Participants also discussed a wide range of other activities, both radio and TV.**

The meeting was chaired by Clara Choi, Executive Producer, RTHK-Hong Kong, with Rajendra Sharma of Radio Nepal and Niken Widiastuti of RRI-Indonesia as Vice-Chairs.

KBS-Korea proposed setting up an ABU TV Documentary Working Party (ADWP) to oversee TV documentary activities in order to create new ideas. KBS hosted the ABU Documentary Screening and Exchange meeting in June this year and is keen to promote this activity among members. The proposal gained the full support of other members.

The first meeting of the ADWP is expected to be held in June 2010 during the TV documentary and exchange meeting in Seoul.

NHK-Japan proposed a new TV project called 'ABU Digista Teens'.

This aims to provide a new platform for the youth of the Asia-Pacific who are interested in digital content creation.

Nowadays the increasing popularity of digital art is a worldwide trend and this project will attract the Asian youth who wish to show their original digital work to TV viewers of other countries.

The ABU will play an active role in locating and educating capable young Asian creators who can compete in the international digital media industry. According to the roadmap of NHK, the organising committee will be formed early next year by five or six members.

The first meeting will take place in March or April 2010 to discuss and determine guidelines and rules for the event. The official launch of 'ABU Digista Teens' is scheduled for 2011.

Among the activities of the Programme Department, one event relating to natural environment reached its end this year. The third and final ABU Voyage to the Future,

**“ The ABU will play an active role in locating and educating capable young Asian creators who can compete in the international digital media industry ”**



Tatsuya Nakamura

hosted by NBN-Philippines, gave young Asians opportunities to do 'on the spot' studies of the marine life and its eco-systems in the Philippine ocean.

This event had earlier taken young Asian students to tropical rain forests in Borneo in 2005 and Mongolian deserts and grasslands in 2007. The Director of the Programme Department, Tatsuya Nakamura, said: "Although the project is over now, the ABU should keep its eyes on environmental issues. The Programme Department would like to see more environment-conscious programmes in the future."

Among radio activities, the 'Green Radio' programming which has been implemented and is currently being promoted by RRI-Indonesia since last year, received many compliments from other ABU members.

The chairperson of the Programme Committee encouraged participants to undertake similar initiatives.

## “ ABU Digista Teens aims to provide a new platform for the youth of the Asia-Pacific who are interested in digital content creation ”

Other new initiatives were also proposed, such as increasing the exchange of information among members regarding disaster reduction, epidemics and fighting terrorism. And participants agreed to continue the 'Lights-off' campaign next year as well.

In his presentation Mr Nakamura referred to two rights-free content distribution offers for members, both of which are classical music concerts. One is the Vienna New Year's Concert to be performed by a world famous orchestra on 1 January 2010. The other will come from Tokyo on 15 January 2010. This will be a concert performed by the NHK Symphony Orchestra which will be provided exclusively for radio members.

During the meeting Mr Nakamura emphasised the importance of preserving audiovisual archives. He suggested that ABU members who still keep 3/4 inch U-matic video tapes in their archives should make use of a U-matic player/recorder that is still working in good condition in Tokyo.

He said the Programme Department should explore ways to help members to save their valuable archives recorded on 3/4 inch tapes.

He added that the Programme Department is keen to provide a wide range of services for members so that they can feel the benefit of being member of the ABU. ●



Participants at the Programme Committee meeting

## MTV EXIT wins Child Rights Award

**MTV EXIT's (End Exploitation and Trafficking) campaign has won this year's ABU/CASBAA/ UNICEF Asia-Pacific Child Rights Award for producing a music video for Radiohead's 'All I Need'.**

The music video is shown in split screen: one side depicting a day in the life of a young boy from an affluent country; the other showing the day in the life of a boy being forced to work in a sweatshop.

The music video's director and MTV EXIT Campaign Director Simon Goff said: "The reaction of the audience has been extremely positive. It has also created a debate about the issue, a social dialogue, which is incredibly important and demonstrates

that the power of the video has motivated people to discuss the issue."

The UK's alternative rock band Radiohead gave MTV EXIT the right to use 'All I Need' off their 'In Rainbows' album and to produce the official video for the single as a way to reach a large audience of young people and show them the realities

of trafficking and exploitative child labour.

David Astley, ABU Acting Secretary-General, said: "This music video was a very creative production, and by leveraging a popular band like Radiohead for broad youth appeal, it was able to deliver a message to its target market that we hope will help stop the exploitation of children in developing countries."

The runners-up included NTV-Mongolia's 'Skylark', TVB-Hong Kong's 'The Pearl Report: Our Parents Are Prisoners' and 'Sunday Report: The AIDS Orphans of China', and Edu TV-Mongolia's 'Children With No Home Address'.

The organisers this year received nearly 40 entries from 15 countries.



Screenshots from the winning music video 'All I Need'