

Programme Committee:

Radio news exchange to be launched

The ABU is to launch a daily radio news exchange. The decision to do so was taken by the Programme Committee in Almaty. The news exchange will enable members to contribute audio material for free use by others and is expected to start early next year.

In January, a working party was established to evaluate ideas for new radio activities. It comprised five members: ABC Radio-Australia, RTPRC/CNR-China, AIR-India, RTM-Malaysia and MediaCorp Radio-Singapore. Jean-Gabriel Manguy, Head of Radio Australia, was appointed Chairperson.

The working party discussed possible radio activities that the ABU should consider. These included an online radio programme exchange; online exchange of text news; co-production of a radio documentary series; a series of "live" public debates to be known as "Youth Asia 21"; and a listing of members' websites in one location

where interested members could select suitable programmes for exchange.

The working party recognised the diversity of the ABU radio membership in terms of reach. Some radio members are domestic, some are public, others are commercial while some are international. Language requirements also vary.

Bearing this in mind, it was recommended that the first activity be an audio news exchange in English.

Exchange initiatives

"Once this simple, daily and readily automated activity is operational, it will represent a major development in terms of regional cooperation. It will then lead to further initiatives relating to programme content exchanges of audio materials in other major regional languages," Mr Manguy said in his report.

In order to gauge the members' interest in this activity, the ABU Programme

Department sent a questionnaire to radio members in August this year. Key members were asked about the ideal frequency, content and duration of items. The members were also asked about the most suitable way of retrieving and contributing audio files and whether they were willing to host the file exchange.

Seventeen members responded to the questionnaire. A majority said that they would definitely join the project while the rest expressed keen interest. Most of the respondents expressed a preference for daily exchanges while others wanted exchanges more than once daily.

The news exchange will be hosted on the ABU web server which will contain the audio files with scripts in English. Participating members will be able to upload their contribution and download or retrieve audio files for exchange.

Each participating member will need to ensure that all the necessary copyright licences are cleared. □

Asiavision's decision to launch a second daily satellite feed of news stories was an exciting challenge, the News Group Chairman, Johari Achee, told the Programme Committee.



Johari Achee

'Exciting challenge' for AVN

The new feed, to be launched in the New Year, will take place almost four hours after the existing daily transmission. The News Group, which sets policy for the news-exchange, gave the go ahead at its annual meeting in Kathmandu in July.

"The feed (from 1215 to 1230 GMT) will continue for one year and if it's a success, members will decide on making it permanent," Mr Johari said.

The feed would probably be of most value to AVN's most westerly members, particularly those in South Asia, since it would come well in time for their main evening news bulletins, he said. □

"One of the likely benefits of the second feed is that there'll be more same-day coverage.

"Items from late in the day, which until now were kept for the next day's feed, will go into the second feed, reaching Asiavision members much more quickly."

Mr Johari welcomed the growth in Asiavision's membership during 2004. He noted that MCOT-Thailand had joined in January and that TV5-Mongolia had also been approved for membership. □

Technical Committee meeting:

Interactive sessions set new direction

The Technical Committee has set a new direction for itself with three sessions in Almaty devoted to identifying and debating issues currently facing the industry, and Asia-Pacific broadcasters.

The regular status reports session has transformed over the past three years into a more interactive format in the meetings.

Led by Colin Knowles from the ABC, this session draws out from the members status reports and the current developments and issues facing ABU members, setting the scene for valuable and informative debate amongst members.

This year the Committee decided to allocate more agenda time to issues arising from the status session plus additional key issues of interest to members. These two sessions were also led by Mr Knowles, who was assisted by a number of experienced members of the Committee.

Topics discussed included:

- Certification of broadcast engineers. A significant number of Asia-Pacific countries have no framework to recognise the level of competence of technical staff. Such staff who are not professional engineers have differing types of formal and non-formal qualifications and often have spent many years gaining on-the-job experience, but with no opportunity for recognition. The Committee agreed to carry out studies into how the Union could assist the development of suitable certification processes.
- Progress on implementing digital TV and, in particular, the growing interest in developments with High Definition in Europe and the accompanying debate on emission formats. The

Committee recognised the need to assist many members on appropriate technology and business related decision factors for implementing digital TV services.



Colin Knowles

- Working towards setting up regional VHF/UHF frequency plans for digital broadcasting services in the region and to encourage members to consider this and advise their national spectrum regulators. The Committee also supported further efforts to seek protection of broadcasting services against enhanced interference resulting from the ITU's RRC planning conference in member countries adjacent to the borders of the RRC planning area.
- Awareness and opportunities to gain practical experience with the DRM digitalisation over the MF bands.

The Committee's new direction includes a second year of informal get-together sessions run in parallel with the Developing Broadcasters and Digital Radio Forums. This year's first session included presentations from NHK on their Antarctic HDTV Broadcasting Station, and the history of NHK's HD broadcasting in the Olympic Games.

The second session included a presentation from MediaCorp Techno-

logies on achieving cost and operational efficiencies in newsroom operation and from TRT on research and development.

Highlights included the technical details of how NHK kept their camera equipment operational in the sub-zero temperatures of the Antarctic, how they managed to produce television (and survive!) during the constant dark environment over the winter months; the in-depth experience of NHK's HD experience over so many Olympic Games events; and a discussion on experiences in achieving efficiencies in newsroom operations following digitalisation.

There was also a lengthy discussion that highlighted the many different approaches by broadcasters throughout the ABU membership to retaining R&D facilities. These ranged from 'no-need' among many members to some such as TRT, who continue to operate R&D facilities to the benefit of their organisation and to the wider industry within Turkey.

In a formal recommendation, the Committee drew the attention of the ABU General Assembly to responsibilities required of broadcasters to understand and avoid programming which could cause photosensitive epileptic seizures in vulnerable individuals, particularly children. The ABU will monitor international studies and exchange information and results of research into ways of reducing the severity of flickering television images, which are understood to be the main trigger for seizures. □



NHK's presentation on their Antarctic HDTV Broadcasting Station

Technical Committee meeting:

Broadcasting to audiences on the move

The emerging markets presented by audiences on the move offer attractive new propositions to broadcasters.

Technologies that make this possible are DMB, DVB-H and ISDB-Tm, which have captured interest in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe and Japan respectively.

A symposium organised by the Technical Committee in Almaty addressed the theme "Broadcasting to Mobiles", outlining these technologies and the service applications that could be derived.

Video and audio programming for mobile audiences needs an entirely different presentation and creative treatment; as such programmes are short in duration, with very crisp storyboards and lower picture resolution.

Speaking at the symposium, Juhyun Oh and Chun-sub Kwak, both from KBS-Korea, introduced the DMB technology and strategies employed in Korea. This solution offers diverse services like video, music, audio programming, and lifestyle information about traffic, news, stock and weather.

DMB receivers will also have the facility of mobile phones, which can also be employed for interactive services. This was augmented by a live demonstration at the DMB broadcasting suite.

Tsutomu Shimizu of TBS-Japan described the ISDB-Tm mobile broadcasting system which provides sufficient capacity for MPEG-4 compressed video, audio and data services. Receivers will be integrated with mobile phones for interactivity, providing Japanese audiences with highly popular shopping and lifestyle services.

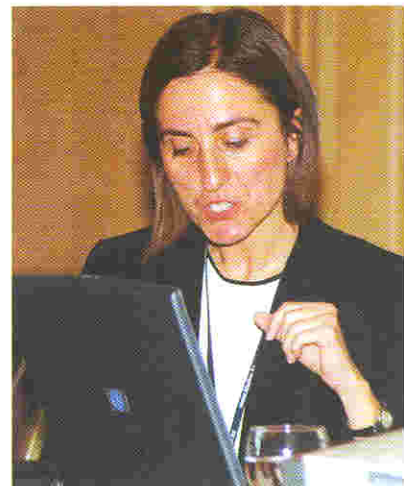
A status report on video streaming to mobile phones by telcos in Turkey was presented by Meltem Ergun of TRT. As any productive partnership between the telcos and the broadcasters who provide content is yet to materialise, the latter are not deriving any revenues from these ventures.

Asaad Bagharib of MediaCorp Radio-Singapore presented a new concept of visual radio, where FM broadcasting and GPRS can be employed to deliver still images, graphics and soundbites to mobile phones. This enables mobile audiences to purchase merchandise,

download soundbites and ringtones.

The DVB-H system, presented by Sharad Sadhu of the ABU on behalf of the DVB, broadcasts services to hand-held and mobile receivers. Based on an IP platform, innovative techniques are employed to transmit 25-80 video streams for small screen mobile receivers.

Broadcasting to mobiles offers an entirely new multi-channel experience to audiences on the move, and promises to be a challenging and rewarding venture for broadcasters. □



Meltem Ergun

Rules tweaked for engineering awards

The Technical Committee in Almaty polished up some of the rules governing the ABU Engineering Excellence Awards.

This was done to overcome some shortcomings that were observed during the last two years.

The Engineering Excellence Award, now known as the **ABU Broadcast Engineering Excellence Award**, has also been opened to the former staff

of ABU broadcaster members within the ABU region. Additionally, contributions made by the nominees within the last five years will be considered for the purpose of the award.

The Engineering Industry Award is now known as the **ABU Engineering Industry Excellence Award**. In addition to being open to all segments of the broadcasting industry including the staff of all ABU members, former staff of members and affiliates within

the ABU region have been made eligible.

In the future, nominations for this award will be sought from all members, including those outside the ABU region.

The panels of judges for the awards will be appointed every three years and are expected to develop their own judging criteria. The awards will be made only if the contributions meet a certain standard. □

Sports Group meeting:

Athens 2004: 'The Beautiful Games!'

By John Barton, Head of Sport



Twenty-five minutes before the Opening Ceremony of the Athens Olympic Games, I received a call in the ABU office from one of our members. His voice was shrill. It was obvious that a calamity was about to unfold and, because of the language problems, he was not able to make any headway: "They won't let our cameramen into the main stadium. They don't understand!"

Earlier that afternoon ABU staff had painstakingly checked and issued armbands, tickets, passes, and stickers for all personnel going to the ceremony. We had put in place a fail-safe system of 'three' checks, ably assisted by the redoubtable Yosuke Fujiwara of NHK.

What we had not counted on was that some of the 76,000 security personnel were not familiar with the various symbols on the Olympic Identity and Accreditation Pass (OIAC).

So, with a stadium packed with 75,000 people, the athletes and officials already assembled behind their national flags, and with billions more around the world ready to watch the 'beautiful games' on television, there was more than a sense of impending disaster.

Countdown begins

The tell tale signs had been there for weeks. Now it was real. What to do?

Twenty minutes to go..!

Rather than attend the opening ceremony I had decided to stay and man the office in case there were last minute hiccups. It proved a fateful decision.

We had been getting reports from around the stadium that there were pockets of confusion, approaching chaos. A producer was despatched to the 'front line' to negotiate with security while I took to the phones. Fifteen minutes to go!

Suddenly, where once there had been stern disapproval, the demeanour of the security people changed palpably.

Our cameramen were passed and recorded one of the more moving ceremonies at a Summer Olympic Games.

Ten minutes to go!

In the weeks prior the Greeks had cajoled us into believing that no matter how things might have looked at the time, 'everything would be OK on the day'.

We had little alternative but to accept their assurances. After all, only a few months earlier it had seemed that though the Games would go on, very few of the venues would be completed to their original design and specifications.

For instance there would be no roof for the swimming venue. There simply was not enough time. As it turned out the venue was an outstanding success,

especially at night with cool zephyrs blowing in from across the Aegean.

At the main stadium the pace of building was frenetic. Would the centre-piece of the stadium's remodelling by renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava be ready?

Our drawn looks at various daily briefings belied our deep suspicions. But once again they were to be unfounded.

Early in July, only weeks before the start of the biggest sporting event in the world, the giant roof frames were slid into place. The reputation of Greece was saved and so, too, their motto: Leave it to the last minute.

Elsewhere venues were being cleared of rubble; trees and grass planted. In 12 weeks the Athenians had transformed the city. They were ready.

Problems and miracles

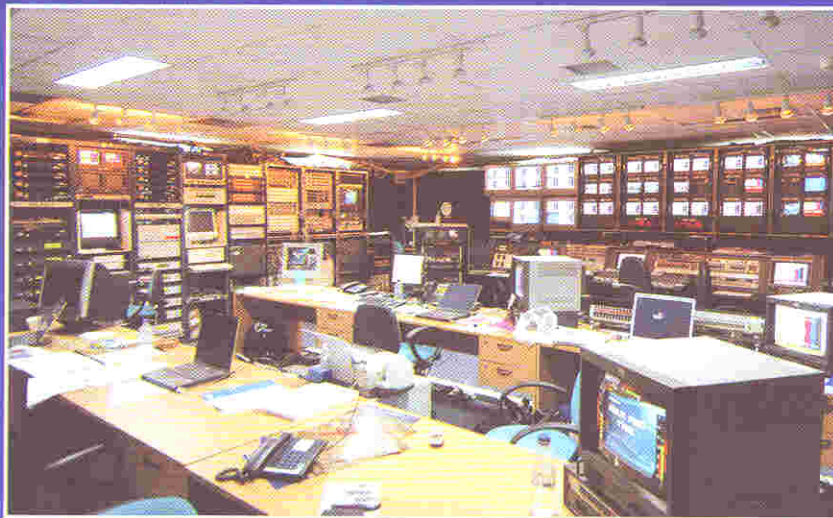
While the construction gangs – many of whom had been drafted from Britain and Germany – were performing miracles there were major technical and communication problems still to be overcome.

Inside the IBC, the second largest building in Greece, there was an issue of primary concern: communications.

OTE, the giant Greek telecoms company, was having considerable difficulty meeting the expectations of their many clients (there were 12,500 broadcast personnel at the IBC).

Another statistic is useful in illustrating how difficult their task was to become. In total there were 1,850 business phone lines installed at the IBC by OTE; the quality was at best poor. Connections were slow in being processed, capacity was insufficient, especially for mobile phones, and complaints were not readily addressed.

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The TVNZ-New Zealand facility where the ABU multi-feeds were monitored



CCTV-China staff conduct a daily conference in their studio space



All India Radio staff (l to r) Mukul Goswami, Suresh Nayak, Rajiv Saxena and Anil Kumar Dabas prepare for the day's work

The organising committee – ATHOC – had sold ISDN services to India and Hong Kong broadcasters through the broadcast ratecard on the assumption that there was an inter-connect agreement in place between the respective Telecoms. There wasn't!

But, cometh the hour, cometh the man. Our gifted engineer L S Ng assumed responsibility for the problem, was able to provide alternative circuits for both broadcasters, and effectively dug ATHOC out of a considerably large hole.

OTE had planned to open an office within the IBC to assist rights holders with problems as they occurred. However the early indications were such that it was going to be inundated with requests for help.

Rather than face the 'heat' on site, they decided against opening the office and relied, instead, on a not very effective help desk located some kilometres away.

Still, it would be unfair to criticise their staff who, like us, had become victims of the Greek penchant for 'leaving it to the last minute'.

For the ABU membership Athens was a sporting watershed.

We were represented by more than 2,000 broadcasters from Mongolia (four) to Japan (700) and the deep south to New Zealand (100). The ABU took direct responsibility for 562 personnel from 15 nations, by far our largest representation at any Olympic Games.

In partnership with TVNZ we packaged eight channels, which included six full-time programme streams of Olympic material. The remaining two were used as overflow and these, too, were full-time.

In total we put out almost 4,000 hours of programming, around 2,500 of which was live. The number also included unilateral Olympic material that was transmitted on five channels in India, Thailand and Malaysia. It is fair to say that our signals were seen by more people in the world than any other.

The technical improvement over Sydney 2000 was due to the excellent work put in by the TVNZ crew including Denis Harvey, Murray Needham, Keith Catchpole and John West.

I cannot recall one complaint in the 17 days of programme transmissions that related to our technical performance. There was an occasion where some of our channels were destabilised for a short period, but that was due to the

unseasonably strong winds which whipped through the satellite farm and everyone had the same problem.

The multi-channel concept, pioneered by TVNZ and the ABU, has become the most important cog in our production wheel. It gives our members a bouquet of channels with absolute choice of events. The 'value' of the multi-feed has not been lost on the International Olympic Committee, which recognised how vital was the ABU's contribution to the Asia-Pacific Region:

- 22 countries
- 4,000 hours of events
- 2,500 live
- Five countries received the broadcast rights and signals free

The President of the International Olympic Committee, Dr Jacques Rogge, said Asian broadcasters had led the world in boosting Olympic television coverage and viewing hours.

Speaking at Sportel in Monaco recently, Dr Rogge said China best illustrated the huge demand for Olympic programming.

"China celebrated its best ever medal haul in the Athens Games. There was a total of nine billion viewer hours with



TPT-Thailand staff celebrate their country's first gold medal



TV Asahi was of four ABU members from Japan at the IBC

The KBS-Korea studio



TBS-Japan staff preparing for the first day's broadcast



each person watching over eight hours of coverage," Dr Rogge told the delegates from around the world.

Compared with Sydney 2000, coverage had more than doubled with Japan showing over 700 hours of the games. Each individual in Japan had watched around 29 hours of Olympic events.

Dr Rogge said around the world the Athens Games had broken all records. He quoted a vast array of statistics to support the IOC's claim that the Summer Olympics was the most popular sports event on the planet.

- 3.9 billion people had access to the games compared with 3.6 billion for Sydney 2000
- 35,000 hours were telecast out of Athens. Sydney had produced 29,600 hours
- Prime time coverage was up by 55%
- 300 TV channels in 220 countries

Athens had also created some new technological firsts: live streaming of Olympic events on mobile phones, access to video highlights also on mobile telephony, and streaming via the Internet.

The IOC President repeated the key elements of its broadcast policy by saying that there were two guiding principles.

"First, to reach the widest possible audience, hence the emphasis we put on the free-to-air broadcast: and, second, to ensure an open, fair and transparent negotiation process," Dr Rogge said.

Copyright abuse

From New Zealand to Mongolia disreputable broadcasters picked off our signals, or those of others, and put them to air.

They defied international laws and conventions, and the rights of fellow broadcasters in their sovereign lands.

These were not wanton acts of 'broadcast vandalism' but they were deliberate and calculated. Their purpose was to eviscerate the standing of their competitors in the eyes of the television public, and to advance their commercial standing.

We had confirmed reports by IOC media watchers of copyright abuse in Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, the Philippines, Mongolia and India.

The abuses were revelatory, not just because our colleagues, if we can call them that, would do such a thing, but also because of the lack of a powerful deterrent.

Sharp letters from the IOC and the ABU had little or no effect. And why would they?

Where a broadcaster makes a conscious decision to subvert the rules, implicit in that is the understanding that 'nasty letters from lawyers' will follow.

I received a text message from one cable operator which said: "Speak to my lawyers!"

The contract to which we are signatories contains many clauses as to the various responsibilities of each party: the IOC, the ABU and its members.

The IOC talks of providing 'exclusive' coverage in the designated territory. The ABU agrees to encrypting its signals so that rogue operators cannot easily intercept and replay Olympic material.

But recent history bears out the fact that 'exclusivity' cannot be guaranteed; it is not some inviolate principle to which all are bound.

No, it is repeatedly and successfully transgressed, and the violators go unpunished!

A blast of hot air from Lausanne does not make anyone tremble! □

RTM-Malaysia technicians undertake final testing of their systems



Samsung Group chairman Lee Kun-Hee makes a visit to MBC-Korea at the IBC



The Fuji TV-Japan studio



DDI-India staff checking incoming feeds



SBS-Korea used a projector system for its preview monitors

Sports Group meeting:

Big sports events 'becoming too costly'

The ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, has warned the owners of major sporting events not to price the event out of the reach of medium to smaller broadcasters.

Addressing the 35th Sports Group meeting in Almaty, Mr Astley said if the property owners did not address the costs spiral seriously there was a very real danger that a growing number of countries would simply say they could not afford them.

Cost limits

"There is clearly a disproportionate amount of money going into rights acquisition. That might make organisations like the IOC wince, but there is a limit to what even the NBC can pay for an Olympic event.

"In some of our markets it is double the amount spent on coverage and transmission.

"Obviously this is an equation out of step with the times," Mr Astley told delegates.

While it was true that the Olympics had become the biggest multi-sport event in the world, it did not necessarily follow that they should be the most expensive.

"Today's Games are a function of market dynamics and commercial enterprise.

"The seismic shift happened in Los Angeles in 1984, considered to be the first 'commercial games' and where the organising committee first exploited

the intrinsic value in the television free-to-air broadcast. LA recorded a profit of US\$25 million. The modern Olympics has never looked back.

"But before the dollar signs blurred our vision of the sporting world, before the professional athlete was paid scores of millions, and long before the emergence of the sports marketing agent, the cost of producing an Olympic coverage – rights and production – were within a tolerable range.

Clear roles

"The Olympics in those days was largely the preserve of national broadcasters, many of which were supported by licence fees, and where their roles were clearly defined by the public interest.

"But with amateurism vanishing from global sport and the rise of commercialism, fuelled by sponsors, a new chapter was written in the history of the Olympics and it is one redolent of money.

"Broadcast rights have risen to unprecedented levels, figures which only a few years ago would have been unthinkable," he said.

Mr Astley said the ABU was very mindful of its role in supporting smaller members manage major sporting events, which was why at the recent Athens Games five countries were provided the broadcast rights and technical costs free of charge.

These were Afghanistan, Laos, Mongolia, North Korea and Timor Leste. □



Mongolia was represented at the Olympic Games for the first time by TV5. Clockwise from top left are: Adija Temuulen, Khaidav Monkhtulga, Davaajantsan Sarangerel and Baatar Oyun



IRIB-Iran staff pose for the camera



The NHK-Japan facility in Athens



The ATV and TVB-Hong Kong areas



Doha picks Asian Games host broadcaster

Trans World International (TWI), one of the biggest producers of sport in the world, has secured its second major host broadcast contract in a few months after winning the bid for the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne.

In partnership with Host Broadcast Services (HBS), Trans World International will also provide the host broadcast for the 15th Asian Games to be staged in Doha in just over two years.

The Doha Asian Games Organising Committee (DAGOC) said it wanted to deliver the highest possible standard of television coverage and broadcast facilities to its broadcast partners.

The Director General of DAGOC, Abdulla Khalid Al Qahtani, said the Games would be a focal point for Qatar in the coming two few years and would bring major benefits to the country.



The modern Doha skyline

"Both companies are recognised as world leaders in their respective fields, and we think this dynamic combination will deliver the best ever host broadcast coverage of an Asian Games," he said.

TWI is the television arm of IMG, the world's largest independent producer, packager and distributor of sports programming.

Last year it distributed nearly 9,000 hours of live events and original programming across 200 countries, covering more than 200 sports.

TWI has produced sports events in

Qatar for more than 10 years including tennis, athletics and golf.

Host Broadcast Services (HBS) is a dedicated host broadcast organisation, set up in 1999 to produce the television and radio signals for the 2002 and 2006 FIFA World Cups.

DAGOC aims to provide more than 3,000 hours of TV coverage of 40 sports on the current competition schedule.

The Qatar government is spending US\$2.8 billion on the Asian Games and other sports in the hope of creating the most modern sports venues and facilities in the world. □

Collaborative approach for Asian Games rights

Negotiations for the broadcast rights to the Asian Games in Doha are progressing well, the Secretary-General, David Astley has said.

"I am very happy with our submission to the agents for the Games, Dentsu Inc.," Mr Astley said.

"Initial reactions are very encouraging, which is in stark contrast to the difficulties we had at previous Games," he added.

The ABU has devised a 'three tier' marketing plan that encompassed all territories and all broadcast assets.

"Our idea was to work collaboratively with the Olympic Council of Asia so that we could dramatically increase the number of countries taking the Doha Asian Games, and the number of transmission hours," Mr Astley said.

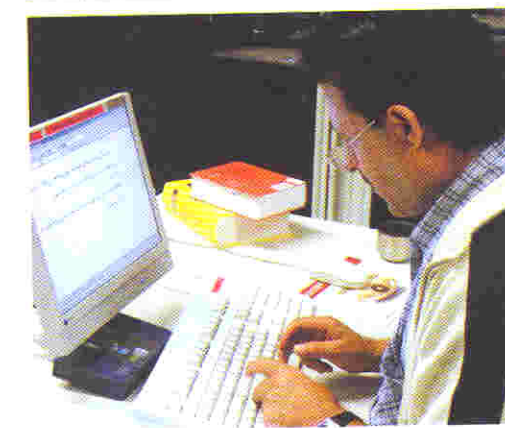
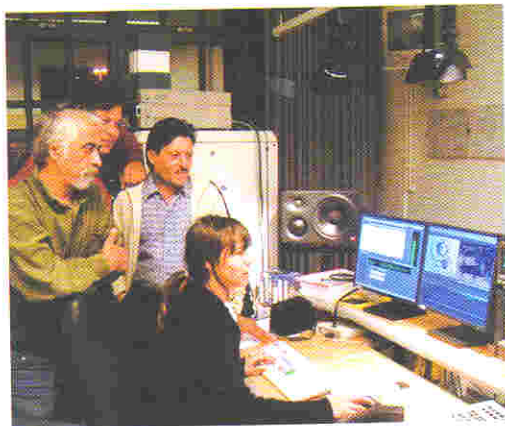
The ABU's Head of Sport, John Barton, had lengthy meetings with

representatives of Dentsu at Sportel in Monaco recently where the details of the idea were fully canvassed.

"Our proposal covers around 30 countries which, if successful, would be represent a huge increase in the rate of participation," Mr Astley said.

At the last Asian Games in Busan the ABU pool comprised 11 countries out of the total of 17 who took the Games. □

Deutsche Welle TV and their Afghan desk staff at work



Afghanistan sees the Olympic Games

By Rodrigo Villarzú, DW-TV, Afghan and Arabic desk

Ibrahimkhail Safiullah, or Safi as we call him, has just arrived. It's one o'clock in the morning. For the past two weeks, together with other Afghan colleagues, as well as reporters and producers from the sports desk, Safi has been producing a special programme for Afghanistan.

"Bringing the Olympic Games to my homeland is worth the effort. We are all tired but we know that our fellow citizens are waiting to see what's happening in Athens. And we're bringing them the pictures!" he said.

Combined effort

The ABU, EBU and DW-TV, joined forces to bring the Olympic Games to Afghanistan. The ABU granted the broadcast rights free of charge.

The EBU provided free access to daily highlight images of almost all Olympic events. DW-TV produced a 90-minute programme in both Dari and Pashtu and transmitted them to Afghanistan via satellite.

All this was done at no cost to the Afghan people. Kabul, Herat, Mazar-i-Sharif, Faizabad, Kunduz, Sherbergan, Kandahar, Jalalabad and Ghazni were all equipped with the necessary receivers by DW-TV.

The phone rings. It's Stephan, the producer. He informs Safi that the German script is ready for translation.

Stephan has edited the pictures and worked together with a sports reporter

to get the product done so their Afghan colleagues can get to work at DW-TV's headquarters in Berlin. The first phase of production is complete.

Now the translators and presenters can get on with their work.

At three o'clock in the morning, Stephan visits the Afghan desk. Safi has difficulties translating some sports terminology.

Lost in translation

Many sports are not known in Afghanistan and must be explained; sometimes the local staff have to coin new terms and phrases, or to simply use the English word.

Fazel Hazem and Wahab Shadan arrive at four o'clock. Fazel presents the Pashtu programme and Wahab the Dari.

Both have television experience and have worked for the Afghan desk since it began producing news for Afghanistan in August 2002. The viewers know and trust their voices.

At nine the programmes are ready for transmission. A DW-TV engineer calls his counterpart in Kabul. Yes, they are receiving the signal. The tape is rolling.

Abdul Rahman Panjshiri, the director of International Relations of Radio and Television Afghanistan in Kabul calls DW-TV: "Thank you for these wonderful images. They are very important for our people. Thanks to your efforts we are connected to the world." □

CNN-ABU TV News Seminar:

Wider coverage, lower costs

Making the best use of new technology to expand news coverage – and cut costs – was a key focus of a major regional seminar for journalists in Hong Kong in October.

The three-day CNN-ABU Television News Seminar, an annual event, brought together 29 senior journalists from 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

This year's seminar took the form of a management retreat on "The Broadcast Revolution: What it means to journalists, news crews and news managers".

Participants met for one-and-a-half days at the historic Foreign Correspondents' Club, made a field trip to test new newsgathering technology, and ended with a day at CNN's Hong Kong's headquarters.

Top CNN news managers, correspondents and operations staff led the discussions, which saw lively input from participants.

The field trip to the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club was a highlight, with a demonstration of how to transmit



Participants check out the latest digital editing equipment

news stories from remote areas via the Internet, using a video phone and a laptop computer for editing.

CNN described how it had sent laptop-based editing equipment to its bureaus around the world after using it successfully during the Iraq war. As a CNN man put it, the equipment leads to "smaller crews and more coverage in more places".

Field correspondents are now able to feed their packaged news stories

directly into the CNN server in Atlanta, where they can be easily accessed by other news staff.

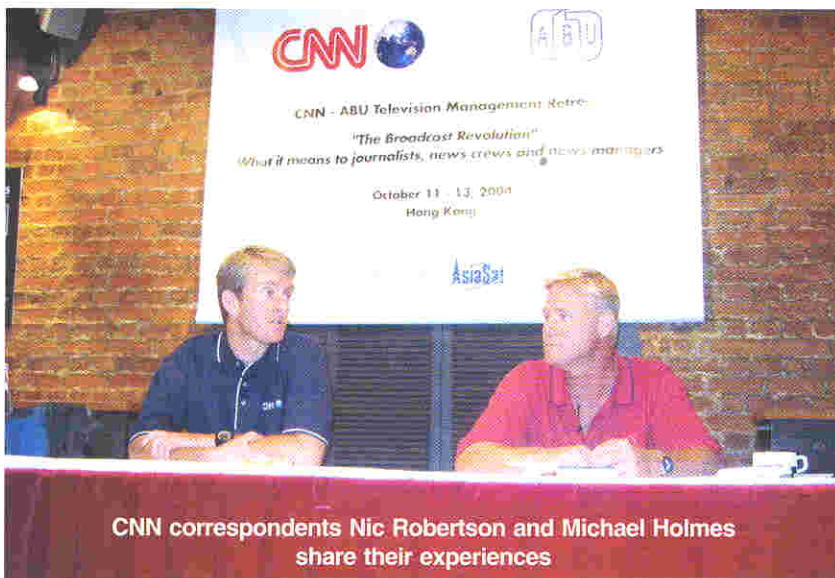
The safety of journalists in conflict zones was also addressed, with Andrew Kain of the security firm AKE on hand to talk about the kind of training needed. CNN correspondents Michael Holmes and Nic Robertson spoke of their experiences in covering wars.

The question of whether news crews should have armed security guards in war zones, or whether this made them legitimate targets in the eyes of combatants, sparked a lively debate.

The ethics of reporting from areas of conflict, especially live coverage, also came under the spotlight. This included how much footage to show of bodies, and whether airing demands by armed groups was playing into their hands rather than simply covering the story.

On a more mundane note, dealing with the demands of big advertisers was discussed. One Asian journalist described how some stories at his station became

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CNN correspondents Nic Robertson and Michael Holmes share their experiences

(from previous page)

"must cover, must use" stories because advertisers requested it.

AsiaSat, an ABU affiliate member, ran a session on the use of satellites for newsgathering and hosted a dinner for participants.

AsiaSat's Lachlan Ma said competition among satellite operators was high, and prices had dropped significantly. But he predicted that prices would pick up again as demand for satellite space grew.

Other senior CNN staff leading the seminar included Paul Cutler, Paul Ferguson, Richard Stokes, Chris Goacher and Scott Clotsworthy. □



CNN's Hong Kong newsroom

News content 'key to mobile delivery systems'

The demand for news content will play a key role in pushing the growth of new delivery systems such as hand held devices, according to the CEO of AsiaSat, Peter Jackson.

He said that video content was already available on so-called Third Generation mobile phones, and as this technology developed, it would lead to new generations of mobile services.

Addressing a dinner for participants in the annual CNN-ABU Television News Seminar in Hong Kong in October, Mr Jackson said this technology would allow real time video to be available over a wireless connection wherever the viewer was.

"The question will remain the screen size and what are we comfortable in carrying around.

"The type of broadcast content shown on such devices will be generally that which has relevance for viewing in real time – news, sports and even those reality shows that apparently you have to be

able to talk about in the office the following day.

"When you look at this service, news is always the most obvious.

"You will be required to produce, store and distribute the content for this application in a suitable format with such additions as sub-titling dimensioned for the small screen size."

At the same time, Mr Jackson said, the demand for larger, flat-screen television sets was growing, particularly in Asia. Because standard television signals looked grainy on these screens, the answer was to convert to high definition television, HDTV.

"In Asia we are experiencing a boom in large flat screen television sales that is faster than in the rest of the world. Factories in Asia are either no longer producing conventional televisions or are planning a rapid migration to flat screen production.

"One impact of this trend could be that customers will demand the better

quality that HDTV provides and we will see HDTV introduction pulled into Asia.

"So very shortly your challenge will be to produce, store and distribute your programming in a format suitable for small screens and high definition. Life is not fair!"

Mr Jackson said satellites were able to cope with the demands of these new formats, and would continue to play an important part in broadcast services. This was because of their ability to reach every point under the satellite's footprint and to the most remote locations where terrestrial infrastructure was non-existent.

"In addition, satellite is also very good at meeting ad hoc transmission needs of today's broadcast industry, serving television broadcasters, wholesale news agencies and video services providers for real time broadcast of news, features and sports events.

"I cannot think of any recent world event that satellites have not been involved in," he added. □

ASEAN TV News expands

A weekly news exchange by satellite among the 10 national broadcasters of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations has expanded its service.

The weekly ASEAN TV News (ATN) transmission increased by 10 minutes in early October and is now 40 minutes long.

The decision to extend the transmission was taken at a meeting of ASEAN journalists and broadcast engineers in Bali three weeks earlier, hosted by TVRI-Indonesia.

The satellite news exchange was launched in March 2003, replacing an exchange of news tapes by courier.

The package is coordinated and transmitted by RTB-Brunei. The other members send their material to RTB by satellite or courier.

ATN is transmitted each Wednesday on AsiaSat 2 and is made available free to members of the ABU's daily news exchange, Asiavision, and the European Broadcasting Union's news exchange, Eurovision.

RTB's Head of News, Current Affairs and Sport, Johari Achee, chaired the Bali meeting. He described the extension of the weekly feed as "an important development" for the young news exchange.

Information exchange

"This is our contribution to the free flow of information," he said. "The news exchange is a kind of bridge linking Southeast Asia with the Asia-Pacific region and Europe."

Asiavision's Managing Editor, Alan Williams, told the meeting that ATN had made impressive strides forward since its launch, thanks to the commitment of its members. The packaging of news items for the exchange was continuing to improve steadily.

Asiavision sponsors an annual trophy for the ASEAN broadcaster contributing the best coverage to ATN. The first winner, announced in April this year, was VTV-Vietnam.

Nine of the 10 ASEAN national broadcasters are ABU members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. The other broadcaster is MRTV-Myanmar. □



ASEAN broadcasters in Bali

NHK, CCTV grab latest AVN awards

NHK-Japan has earned another Asiavision monthly award for its coverage of the September 9 suicide attack outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

The bombing killed at least 10 people and injured scores, damaging the embassy gates and walls as well as several nearby buildings.

NHK's coverage was prompt, precise and of a high professional standard, earning the Asiavision September award.

Coverage of another disaster, an underground gas explosion that ripped through a coal mine in China's central Henan province, earned the AVN October award for CCTV.

The October 21 blast, which claimed more than 140 lives, was one of the day's top headlines. CCTV acted quickly to receive pictures from the remote area and make them available to Asiavision through a news flash shortly after the tragedy.

The excellent content and coverage added to AVN's list of exclusives. □