

ABU to governments: speak out on broadcasters' treaty

Discussions on a proposed broadcasters' treaty have reached a 'make-or-break' stage where governments have to voice their stand on the matter, the ABU has said.

The ABU's Legal Counsel, Fernand Alberto, gave this advice to government representatives who attended the WIPO (World Intellectual Property Organisation) Asia-Pacific Regional Symposium on Policies and Strategies for Copyright, held in Hangzhou, China, on 24-26 May.

He called on heads of ministries and government agencies in charge of copyright to support the holding of a diplomatic conference to expedite the treaty process.

"Considering how far we have discussed the need to upgrade the rights of broadcasters at the international level, failure to convene a diplomatic conference – the last step in the treaty-making process – would be an unfortunate missed opportunity,"

Instead of adopting a 'wait-and-see' attitude on the international discussions on the proposed international law, Mr Alberto said governments in the Asia Pacific must make their position known as the opportunity to do this may soon no longer exist.



Participants at the WIPO regional symposium listening to the ABU presentation

"Surely, WIPO would want to hear what the governments in our region have to say about the proposed treaty," said Mr Alberto, adding that within the ABU constituency, only Japan and Singapore had so far submitted treaty-language proposals to WIPO.

Good platform

Mr Alberto said an upcoming regional consultation meeting that WIPO is organising for countries in the ABU region would be a good platform for governments to present their views on the proposed treaty.

WIPO is set to hold the Regional Consultation for the Asia-Pacific Countries for the Protection of Broadcasting Organisations on 27-29 July, 2005 in Manila.

The ABU has been urging its members to speak to their government agencies in charge of copyright to secure

governmental support for the proposed broadcasters' treaty for quite some time.

The Hangzhou symposium provided an opportunity for the ABU to speak directly to the heads of various government ministries and agencies in charge of copyright issues.

The government delegate from Malaysia, Manisekaran Amasi – who is the Director of Copyright of the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia – declared his government's strong support for the treaty. He also urged others to agree to updating the rights of broadcasters at the international level.

Meanwhile, Mr Alberto told the government delegates that broadcasters needed an international treaty to give them up-to-date protection of their rights, especially since new technology continued to offer new ways of using broadcast signals without permission.



Panelists of the WIPO regional symposium in Hangzhou

"Governments and broadcasters must work together to curb transnational signal piracy. We all need to match wits with some of the most sophisticated thieves in the history of the world," he said in his presentation on Copyright in the Digital Age: New Perceptions, New Business Models and Future Trends.

Piracy problem

Yan Xiaohong, the Vice Minister of the National Copyright Administration of China, talked about the protection of copyright for the enhancement of social and economic development.

"Piracy harms investors' interests and hinders national economic development," Mr Yan said while emphasising that like other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, China was facing the arduous task of strengthening copyright protection.

WIPO Deputy Director-General, Geoffrey Yu, urged governments to participate in the international organisation's discussions to promote copyright and adopt treaties.

"We cannot any more talk about copyright without talking about technology," Mr Yu told the delegates.

He said that in the development of any copy control system, the traditional exceptions to copyright must be considered.

"Encryption technology is not sufficiently sophisticated to recognise and distinguish legitimate copying. It does not recognise users who are otherwise entitled to copyright exceptions," he said while suggesting that further studies on the issue must be conducted.

The WIPO symposium was organised in cooperation with the National Copyright Administration of the People's Republic of China (NCAC) and the Japan Copyright Office. □

CRA offering sponsorships for Australian Radio Fest

Commercial Radio Australia will sponsor up to 15 radio broadcasting staff among ABU members to attend the Australian Radio Fest 2005 which will be held at the Sydney Convention Centre from 14 to 15 October.

CRA Chief Executive Officer, Joan Warner, said conference fees will be waived for the selected representatives from ABU member organisations outside Australia.



Joan Warner

"We hope that the sponsorship would enable ABU members outside Australia to gain an insight into how commercial broadcasters here operate, as well as benefit from participating in the conference," Ms Warner said.

However, the sponsorship only will only cover the conference fees. Participants will have to take care of their own travel expenses.

ABU members who are keen to take up the sponsorship should contact the

Secretariat's Senior Radio Officer, Vijay Sadhu at vijay.s@abu.org.my.

The radio festival is a series of annual events celebrating commercial radio which include the National Radio Conference as well as the Australian Commercial Radio Awards.

Over 300 radio broadcasters are expected to attend this annual event, which is the largest gathering of senior commercial radio professionals in Australia.

The keynote speaker of the conference is Barry Humphries, one of Australia's best loved and funniest performers.

Apart from performing on-stage and on television, Mr Humphries has also written several books, novels, autobiographies and plays.

Topics to be covered over the two-day conference include sales and marketing, creative, research, electronic measurement, digital, programming and engineering.

The radio festival will end with the Australian Commercial Radio Awards 2005, which honours the best achievements in radio broadcasting in the country. Among the categories covered are news, talk shows, sport, music and entertainment.

There will also be three to four live radio shows or acts on the evening of the first day of deliberations.

More information on the radio festival can be obtained from commercialradio.com.au. □

The ABU News Interview

*When the Taliban conquered Afghanistan in 1996, it pulled the plug on the local broadcasting sector. Now, almost a decade later, much of the post-conflict nation is being reconstructed. ABU News talks to Radio and Television Afghanistan's Foreign Relations Director, **Abdul Rahman Panjshiri**, on the revival of his country's broadcasting scene.*

Q: How long have you been with RTA?

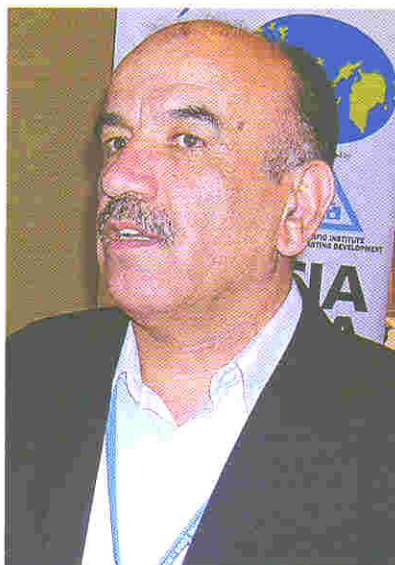
AR: I have been with RTA since 1978, but left in 1996 when I sought asylum in the Netherlands after the Taliban came into power. I was in the Netherlands for about four-and-a-half years. I came back in mid-2003 and took up the same position I was in before I left my country – head of planning and foreign relations.

Q: Why were you forced to leave Afghanistan?

AR: After the Taliban occupied Kabul, we had a meeting with its director. I knew then that they had no more need for us, the media. They asked everyone, especially those working in television such as journalists, to find other jobs because they wanted to ban the media. There was to be no TV, no Internet, nothing. I have four sons and a daughter, and there was not much of a future for them. So in the best interest of my family, finally we left everything behind. I remember one day at 6am, everyone took a bag each and we left Kabul in two taxis. We had to leave everything behind. It was very hard for me to leave my home and my country. It was the most painful time of my life.

Q: How did you manage to find your way to the Netherlands?

AR: First, we crossed the border into Pakistan. We stayed there for about one-and-a-half years. I worked in a relief foundation there as a technical assistant. From Pakistan,



Abdul Rahman Panjshiri

I then made arrangements to go to the Netherlands.

Q: Did you work in a similar capacity in the Netherlands?

AR: For the first few months, I did not have any work. I then found work at a factory manufacturing lamps. I was just a machine operator. It was tough having to start all over again.

Q: Why did you return to Afghanistan?

AR: After the fall of the Taliban, everything changed and a new government was formed by the coalition forces. Finally, I felt that I was needed more in my homeland than in the Netherlands. I discussed this with my family and everyone except two of my sons returned with me to Kabul. I was very happy to go back to my home country.

Q: What was the state of broadcasting when you returned to Afghanistan?

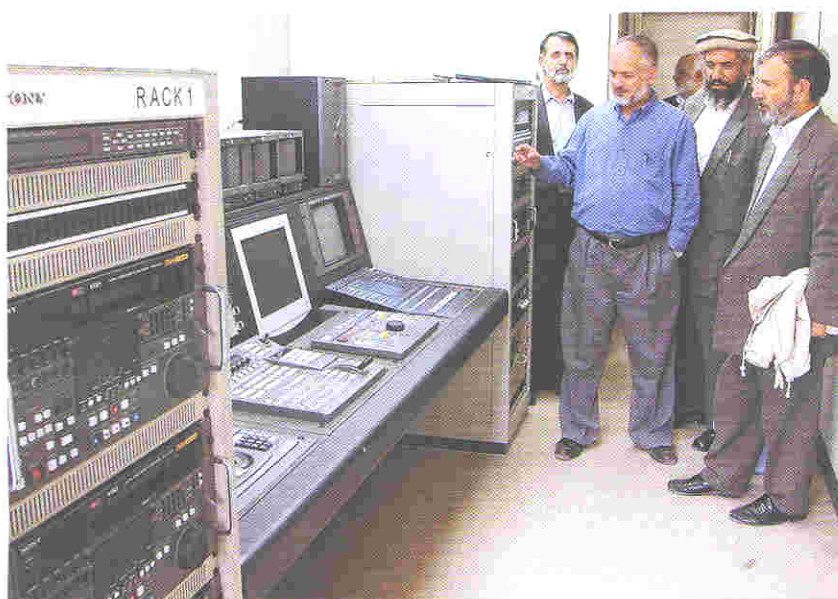
AR: Just when I came back, the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the broadcasting system had already started with donations from several countries. Now, we have completely restructured our TV studios and networks in Kabul. We managed to completely rebuild our TV studios and transmitters with the help of the Japanese who donated about US\$26 million for this purpose. It is much better than before. During the Taliban regime, there was not even one radio or TV transmitter. Everything was destroyed.

Q: What is the level of coverage now compared to the years before the Taliban regime?

AR: We have received another uplink system to send our TV and radio signals which are now available all over the region, and possibly as far as India. Before the Taliban, everything was in analogue. Now, our TV signals are in digital, but the input and output is still in analogue because the public do not have digital TV sets. We are definitely prepared for the switch to digital transmission. We just have to wait for our people to get digital TV sets.

Q: Have the new equipment and transmitter increased broadcast coverage?

AR: Afghanistan is a mountainous country, and therefore it is not possible to have complete



One of RTA's rebuilt editing suites

coverage. But it is much better. Currently, radio coverage is over 92 percent, while TV coverage is slightly lesser than that.

Q: What were the more difficult tasks you were faced with in terms of rebuilding RTA after the fall of the Taliban?

AR: One of the most difficult tasks is to change the management system which has been around since the Soviet occupation. At that time, we had a centralised organisation where everything was commanded by the government. The new government wants to give us some kind of independence and our journalists are not familiar with this. It is also difficult to apply good reforms when we don't have the knowledge to do so. We need to know the laws and the constitution for the public broadcaster. We also need some kind of general management training module for our senior managers. Another thing is that we still need journalism training. The majority of experienced staff who left Afghanistan when the Taliban came into power did not come back. Most of our present journalists are not able to communicate in foreign languages

and don't know how to use computers and the Internet. So, there is a very huge gap to fill.

Q: What are some of the other improvements made to broadcasting since you returned?

AR: There are a lot of changes. We did not have private radio and TV stations before. We now have special programmes, drama and

entertainment which were banned in 1992 until the Taliban fell. More than 65 percent of our content is locally produced, but we also have some programmes from India, Japan and Germany. We cannot fully use foreign programmes because of our local culture and other restrictions.

Q: Do you see more women working in the broadcasting sector now?

AR: There is a lot of interest by women in the broadcasting field. Now, we have women as commentators, producers, engineers and even in circulation. But this takes time because they are not familiar with the modern principles of journalism.

Q: Is this a good time to invest in broadcasting in Afghanistan?

AR: Yes, it is a good time, as long as the coalition forces remain in Afghanistan. The people need some kind of assurance to build their morale. I am sure we can have a good public and private broadcasting system in Kabul if the present situation remains. □



A deejay at work at an RTA radio studio

Awards proposal gets warm reception in China

The proposed Asia-Pacific Screen Awards received a positive response from key members of the Chinese film and television industry during a research mission by Australia's Queensland Events Corporation in June.

The Awards concept was presented to representatives from the China State Film Bureau, China Film Group, China Film Producers' Association and the Shanghai International Film Festival.

The mission by Queensland Events to China was part of an exhaustive feasibility study being carried out in collaboration with the ABU.

Queensland Events Senior Executive Development, Jane Hickey, said the two-week research mission into China (Beijing and Shanghai) provided some exciting insights to the impact the proposed awards could have on China's burgeoning film industry.

"With an estimated broadcasting footprint of 50 countries and an audience of nearly four billion people, the Asia-Pacific Screen Awards would provide Chinese cinema with access to a much greater regional and international profile," Ms Hickey said.



The Magnolia Awards ceremony includes some colourful entertainment

"During this research mission, we examined how the proposed awards could be made meaningful to the Chinese film and television industry and also the possibility of China hosting an awards ceremony.

"We greatly appreciate the input we received whilst in China. It has provided immeasurable help in the further development of the Screen Awards concept."

The Chinese visit was planned to coincide with the 2005 Shanghai International Film Festival and the 11th Shanghai International TV Festival.

Of particular interest were the Shanghai International Film Festival Awards, the Jin Jue International Film Forum (which is celebrating the 100th anniversary of Chinese film), and the Shanghai International TV Festival's Magnolia Awards ceremony.

Ms Hickey, who was invited to the Magnolia Awards, witnessed significant

wins by ABU member broadcasters. These included 'Becoming A Popular Song' by KBS-Korea which won the Best TV Film, and 'The Final Gift' by NHK-Japan which won the Magnolia Award Jury's Grand Prix for TV Drama.

The Screen Awards concept was introduced to the ABU by Queensland Events at its Administrative Council Meeting in Osaka in May 2004, and the feasibility study began soon after.

To date, close to 100 face-to-face meetings have resulted in wide encouragement and cooperation for the concept from leading film and broadcast industry figures in Japan, India, China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Australia and Korea.

The feasibility study for the Asia-Pacific Screen Awards is due for completion later this year. A progress report, preliminary plan, structure and ceremony concept will be presented to the ABU General Assembly in Hanoi, Vietnam, in November.



ABU members are regular winners at the annual Magnolia Awards

VTF 2005 promotes conservation

The organisers of the ABU Voyage to the Future 2005 co-production are hoping that the 23 high school students selected to participate in the event will be able to share their experiences in the rainforests of Malaysian Borneo with people in their home countries.

ABU Acting President Zainal Abidin Iberahim said he hoped the students will go on to help influence and create a new generation imbued with a greater sense of commitment in protecting the environment.

He said this year's event will take 23 students – aged between 12 and 16 years – from seven countries and regions to the tropical rainforests of Sabah, Malaysia, to learn more about the plant and animal life there.

The theme is in line with the United Nations' declaration of the next 10 years being the "Decade of Sustainable Development".

Biennial event

Mr Zainal Abidin, who is also RTM-Malaysia's Director of News and Current Affairs, said the Voyage to the Future was a biennial event, with the next two expeditions in 2007 and 2009 covering the deserts and oceans respectively.

"As we can derive from the sequence of voyages, we are concerned about the great natural environments that form the bulk of the planet we live in.

"This is our home, our only home. We owe it to ourselves to keep it intact for our future generations," said Mr Zainal Abidin at the launching of the ABU Voyage to the Future 2005 at the RTM headquarters in Kuala Lumpur recently.



The Malaysian participants of VTF 2005 pose with their souvenirs

Also present were RTM Department of Broadcasting Director-General, Abdul Rahman Hamid, and Prof Dr Mariati Mohamed of Universiti Sabah Malaysia – the Malaysian technical advisor to the VTF 2005 project.

The launching ceremony also featured the five Malaysian students selected for this year's expedition into the rainforests.

The participants were presented souvenirs such as caps and t-shirts to prepare them for their trip.

They were selected based on their interest in nature and wildlife, participation in nature conservation projects and fluency in the English language.

Amirah Rahmat, 15, said she was excited at the prospect of representing her country in an international environmental conservation project.

Yasmin Ahmad Munir Lane, also 15, agreed with her, saying: "It is such an honour to be selected. There were so

many applicants for the five places. This is a great opportunity to learn more about nature close up."

The Malaysians will be participating in the first Voyage to the Future project along with students from Bhutan, China, Hong Kong, Japan, Thailand and Uzbekistan.

Findings presented

At the end of the expedition, the students will gather together and present their findings and raise environmental issues with the relevant authorities.

RTM and NHK-Japan will be sending camera crews to film the students in action during the 10-day study period which covers the Binsuluk/Klias peat swamps, Mount Kinabalu, the Sepilok Forest Reserve, the Kinabatangan River and the rainforests of Danum Valley.

The footage will be made into a television documentary and distributed among the participating broadcasters as well as other ABU members. □

ABU-UNESCO documentary exchange attracts quality programming

This year's ABU-UNESCO Television Documentary Exchange is showing signs of being one of the best yet, judging from the number of participants and the quality of materials presented at a recent workshop in Hong Kong.

Producers from 16 organisations in 14 countries gathered at the workshop hosted by RTHK-Hong Kong to view and discuss the potential of the programmes for the exchange, and were pleased to note the increased quality of the entries submitted.

The event moderator, Michel Gelinas from Socite Radio Canada (SRC-CBC), was also impressed with the quality of the materials submitted – signalling that ABU television broadcasters clearly saw the value of participating in the documentary exchange.

"Compared to the previous years, there is a big improvement in the quality of programmes offered for the exchange," said Mr Gelinas, who has been the moderator for the documentary exchange for the past three years.



Michel Gelinas speaking at the workshop's opening ceremony

The theme for this year's exchange is Personality profile: How to go beyond character to portray a community's history, hopes and aspirations.

The broadcasters involved are RTHK, BBS-Bhutan, RTB-Brunei, CCTV-China, TVB-Hong Kong, Metro-Indonesia, IRIB-Iran, NHK-Japan, KBS-Korea, RTM-Malaysia, TV3-Malaysia, MRTV-Mongolia, MediaCorp-Singapore, NBT-Thailand and TRT-Turkey.

In his welcoming speech, RTHK's Director of Broadcasting, Chu Pui Hing,

said the broadcasting industry in Asia Pacific was concerned with the development of new programming trends.

He said the workshop was meant to address these concerns.

Screening documentaries

The first two-and-a-half days of the meeting involved screening the documentaries submitted by each producer and discussing how they could be improved.

Participants decided that the length of each documentary would be between 20 and 60 minutes.

Mr Gelinas led the discussions which were held in between the screenings, and was effective in getting the participants to speak up and present their views on each of the documentaries screened.

The meeting concluded with a half-day visit to TVB's new broadcast centre.

The visiting producers were impressed with the latest technology employed by the television broadcaster in its news studio and newsroom.



Michel Gelinas explaining to participants how to improve their documentary productions



Documentary exchange participants visit TVB's news studio

The excursion was followed by a two-day workshop which was themed "Innovative programmes and new programme trends".

The workshop provided an opportunity for the producers – from the smallest broadcasting organisations to bigger, more technologically advanced ones – to learn about producing unconventional programming content.

It used the short-listed and winning entries of ABU Prizes 2004 as well as RTHK's list of innovative programmes as case studies. About 10 university students were also invited to attend the workshop.

The session on ABU Prizes 2004 involved screening programmes which were short-listed for the finals, allowing the organisers to showcase the best works of ABU members. This was

done to encourage better television programme production through healthy competition.

RTHK's Innovative Programme project – which enabled the broadcaster to come up with 12 unconventional programmes last year – was also featured. The RTHK programmes were screened at the workshop to give participants new ideas for programme production.

In addition, producers of these programmes were brought in to talk about how they saw through the development process of their projects from programme proposal stage to the final broadcasting stage.

The final session of the workshop involved screening programmes from other parts of the world that were

considered innovative and set new programming trends.

This session, which was chaired by Mr Gelinis, allowed the participants to compare their own work with programmes produced outside of the Asia-Pacific region.

The workshop concluded with a discussion on administrative matters. Participants gave encouraging feedback on this year's documentary exchange and said they were looking forward to participating again next year. □

RTHK to host WTO event

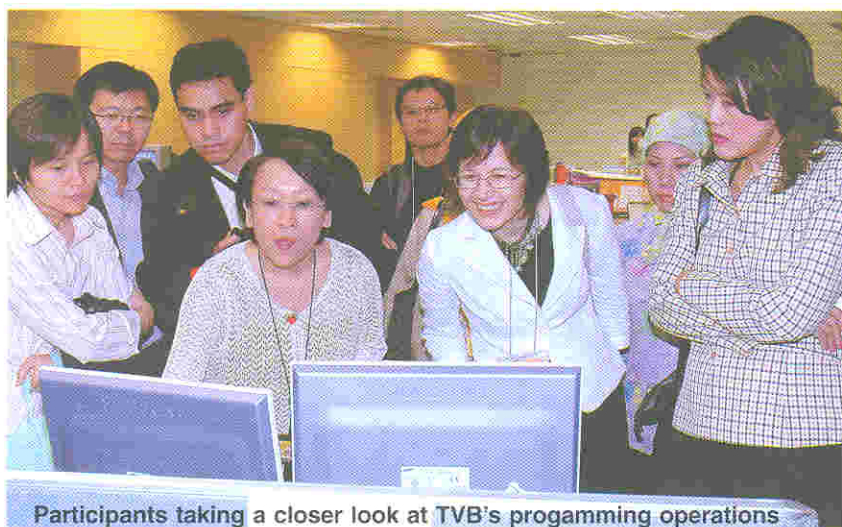
Radio Television Hong Kong has been appointed host broadcaster for the World Trade Organisation's Sixth Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong on 13-18 December.

The broadcaster will provide live television and radio coverage of the opening session, plenary sessions, closing session and the closing press conference.

The conference will take place at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Eighty booths with audio and video feed will be set up for broadcasters. Free satellite signals will be provided for the opening and closing sessions and the closing press conference on PanAmSat's PAS-2, PAS-9 and PAS-10.

For more information, contact Cheung Kwai-yeung, the Principal Programme Officer at:
Tel: (852) 2339-6562
Mobile: (852) 9688-6541
Fax: (852) 2194-3520
E-mail: cheungky@rthk.org.hk



Participants taking a closer look at TVB's programming operations

ABU members' content on UNESCO e-Platform

The ABU and UNESCO's Programme for Creative Content have formed a partnership which will see content from the union's 102 member broadcasters promoted and exchanged online via the UN agency's Audio Visual e-Platform.

The e-Platform provides global online contact between filmmakers, broadcasters and distribution outlets, enhancing the promotion and distribution of the culturally diverse audio-visual content.

It contains original documentaries, short films and TV magazines which go

beyond the conventional forms of film-making. The productions, which capture the genuine expression of different cultures, can be viewed at <http://creativecontent.unesco.org>.

Those browsing the e-Platform will be able to read about the work of producers and watch samples online before contacting the rights' holders to purchase the content.

However, access to the platform is restricted to professionals in the film and television industry.

ABU Secretary-General David Astley said UNESCO's E-Platform was an

important initiative for aiding television, film and documentary producers by providing a vehicle for promoting, marketing and exchanging content.

"It will help in providing access and visibility to producers and content that otherwise find it difficult to compete in international markets," said Mr Astley.

The partnership fulfils the objectives of the UNESCO in enhancing the promotion and distribution of culturally diverse audio-visual content. It also enables the ABU to support its member broadcasters and producers to gain greater visibility and interaction in the international market place. □

TVNZ reinvestment boosts local drama

Television New Zealand's US\$8 million (NZ\$11.4 million) dividend reinvestment from the government has largely been spent on new local drama.

Approximately US\$6.3 million (NZ\$9 million) will be spent on two dramas, with the remaining funds committed to a documentary series and several other programming initiatives.

Last year, TVNZ paid the government US\$26.3 million (NZ\$37.6 million), of which US\$8 million (NZ\$11.4 million) were returned and tagged for the development of local programmes.

TVNZ Head of Content, Stephen Smith, said local drama was identified as an area in need of support through the broadcaster's Charter funding.

"At the outset, we made it clear that every cent of the dividend reinvestment

would go onscreen. We chose drama as the genre where we could make a significant impact," Mr Smith said.

He also said that while New Zealanders were very keen on local drama, the high cost of the genre was not widely known outside the film and television industry.

"Despite the apparent high cost, New Zealanders are getting extremely

good value for money. It may help to put things in perspective to know that studios in the United States commonly spend US\$3.5 million (NZ\$5 million) on a drama pilot which may be cancelled after a few episodes," added Mr Smith.

TVNZ publishes an account of all programmes made with Charter funding every six months, in either its Interim or Annual Report. □

Television New Zealand's headquarters



International film fest to complement green summit

The city of Kuching in Sarawak will become the first host of the News World International-ASEAN Film Festival, a showcase of international award-winning environmental films.

The screenings will take place in a theatre on the grounds of Kuching's former courthouse – a colonial complex in the heart of the city which sits on the fringes of rainforests on the Malaysian side of Borneo Island.

An integral part of News World Nature's International Media and Environment Summit (IMES), the film festival will run from 1 to 2 December.

Award-winning documentaries, shorts and promotional films from the United Kingdom, France, India and Japan are slated for viewing alongside the best of wildlife programmes by Southeast Asian filmmakers including Malaysia and Singapore.

These films will include material from ABU members who have been invited to submit films with environmental themes.

"A Southeast Asian wildlife and environmental film festival is long overdue," said Alexander Thomson, News World's Managing Director.

"Within the context of an international film festival, it will be a great celebration of Southeast Asia's rich and diverse ecosystems and considerable filmmaking talent."

The award-winning documentaries shown at the festival will add another dimension to the debates, plenary sessions and workshops of the International Media and



Environment Summit which will be held over the same period.

Endorsed by the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and receiving the support of ASEAN Secretary-General, Ong Keng Yong, the News World International-ASEAN Film Festival will become an annual ASEAN event.

Malaysia's Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, Rais Yatim, will open this year's event.

IMES sponsors and supporters include the United Nations Development



The colonial complex in Kuching is the venue for the film festival

Programme, ASEAN, Malaysia Airlines, DHL, Astro-Malaysia and Animal Planet.

For more information on the film festival or the environment summit, visit www.newsworldnature.com. □

Indonesia to resume 24-hour broadcasts

The Indonesian government has allowed radio and pay-TV stations to resume broadcasting 24 hours a day, *The Jakarta Post* has reported.

The country's Ministry of Information and Communications issued a directive in July commanding all TV and radio stations to cut broadcast by four hours daily to help save energy.

The newspaper quoted an official at the ministry as saying that radio stations are now allowed to

broadcast 24 hours a day as they use less energy than TV stations, while pay-TV stations have been exempted from the limited broadcast times because customers are paying for the 24-hour service.

Local TV stations, however, are still required to go off the air from 1 am to 5 am. The stations will only be allowed to stay on the air 24 hours a day in an event of emergency, such as natural disaster.

The new directive will run for five months. □