

# Film fest: Get more wildlife content on terrestrial TV

**H**ow to bring local stories about wildlife to an international audience was the main topic of discussion among wildlife conservationists, natural history filmmakers and broadcasters attending the Wildlife Asia Film Festival held in Singapore in March.

Apart from satellite and cable channels, getting wildlife programming onto more terrestrial channels and new media platforms was key to disseminating the conservation message far and wide, delegates were told.

"In the current multimedia age, (filmmakers) play an instrumental role in raising appreciation of Mother Nature, and awareness of environmental and conservation issues.

"Whether through satellite technology, cable TV or the Internet, the visual images captured in your films, and the messages that they carry, are transmitted to people all over Asia today," said Professor Leo Tan, Chairman of the Singapore National Parks Board in his opening speech.

"I look forward to seeing (the festival) eventually becoming an important platform for professional networking and knowledge sharing among various filmmakers and truly giving nature a voice," he added.

The inaugural event aimed to nurture new Asian filmmakers and provide a platform to discuss issues relating to conservation communication.

Networks supporting the film festival included ABC-Australia, BBC, NHK-Japan, CCTV-China, PTS-Taiwan, Discovery Networks and National Geographic.



Chris Johnson

The festival's first session, 'East Side Story', took an in-depth look at the current state of wildlife filmmaking in Asia, the story angles that were being covered and those that needed to be covered, as well as the crucial conservation messages that should be highlighted.

The 'Indie Scene' session touched on the independent filmmaking scene in the region, while 'Forecasting the Future' predicted how technological advances and the changing styles of programme-making will influence the development of the genre over the coming years.

On the second day of the festival, 'East Meets West' analysed the different ways of story telling between the East

and the West. Delegates were also given a sneak peak of an elemental co-production between the BBC and CCTV in the 'Making of Wild China'.

One of the festival highlights was the shooting of a live interview at the Singapore zoo with Dr Brady Barr, TV presenter; Valmik Thapar, tiger specialist, author and TV presenter; and Wong How Man, explorer and author.

Workshops on the latest advances in video camera technology, high definition filming and scriptwriting, film screenings, pitching sessions and youth outreach programmes were held parallel to the conference.

The festival culminated in the Lion Awards honouring the best wildlife and conservation productions. A special tribute to conservationist Steve Irwin – who died last year – was made at the award ceremony.

Chris Johnson, founder of Wildlife Asia, said: "It is hoped that the film festival will pave the way for more Asian wildlife filmmakers to highlight conservation issues in Asia." □



Professor Leo Tan (right) presenting a token of appreciation to a speaker, Shinichi Murata

CABSAT 2007



# 'More training needed in Middle East'

**M**iddle East broadcasters must create their own content as opposed to remaining a consumer of foreign programmes if they want to be global market leaders, delegates at the CABSAT2007 Middle East Broadcasting Conference were told.

In a session exploring the question of how broadcasters can embrace the digital environment, the need for meaningful research data as well as training in both digital technology and creative content development was highlighted.

Mike Whittaker, Director of Technology and Engineering of Showtime, said that while new delivery platforms support and enhance the content creation process, it is creativity that will take it to the next level.

"What the viewers see is not the technology behind it but the content that comes onto their screen," said Mr Whittaker.

"Skill shortage in the Middle East is a critical issue that needs to be addressed," said Kevan Jones of AV Specialist. Mr Jones reiterated that the focus should be increased especially in the area of creative content development.

On the Middle East digitalisation plan, Dr Riyadh Najm, Assistant Deputy Minister, Engineering Affairs in the Ministry of Culture and Information of Saudi Arabia, said that the Middle East set-top box (STB) strategy would allow viewers the widest possible access to STBs and would not be limited to specific manufacturers.



Mike Whittaker making his presentation

He added that the ministry will issue guidelines to meet technical specifications for STBs suitable for the DVB-T and the ITV market followed by a certification process.

The CABSAT conference is organised by the ABU in association with the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), the Global Satellite Forum (GVF) and the International Association of Broadcasting Manufacturers (IABM) to discuss the common concerns to the satellite broadcast and satellite communications sectors in the Middle East region.

## DTH preferred

Delegates also heard that the free-to-air direct-to-home (DTH) distribution platform for commercial TV is popular in the Middle East as opposed to terrestrial offerings.

The Middle East region currently has over 200 satellite channels compared to

only one in the 1990s, brought on by the deregulation of the industry. This, in turn, has contributed to the rise in demand for local content.

This development in the Middle East region varies from the United States where cable television dominates, said Jaafar Najdi of Streamlink Communications.

Addressing concerns from a symposium participant that the influx of so many satellite channels into the scene may cause the industry to collapse if there is no check and balance, Jawad Abbassi from the Arab Advisors Group said: "Satellite channels in this region are predominantly state-owned or driven by political parties."

"This is the key factor contributing to (the sector's) sustainability," Mr Abbassi added during the plenary session of the Middle East Broadcasting and Satellite Symposium on the second day of CABSAT2007. □



# ABU gets broadcast rights for Asian Football Cup

**T**he ABU has acquired the broadcast rights for this year's Asian Football Cup which will be hosted in four countries – Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and Thailand.

ABU Secretary-General, David Astley, said the purchase was an important acquisition for ABU members.

"We will hold the free to air and pay/cable rights for 32 territories, from the South Pacific through to Central Asia," Mr Astley said.

"It greatly increases our coverage over the agreement we had for the same event in 2003 and reinforces our commitment to provide high quality sports events at low cost," he added.

The rights deal was done with WorldSportGroup (WSG), the Singapore based sports marketing and production company. The company represents the Asian Football Confederation for its entire football product throughout Asia.

Tom Smith, Vice-President Media at WSG, said the rights deal was the result of a successful partnership which had blossomed with the ABU over recent years.

"We have seen the event grow enormously since the ABU first televised the Asian Cup. It is a wonderful result for the membership to have live access to all 31 games in the cup featuring such strong teams as Japan, China and Australia," Mr Smith said.

All games would be provided live and with full English language commentary.

## Cup history

Mr Smith said that the Asian Cup, which began in 1956, had developed into the continent's premier football tournament. It brought together the top national teams from the length and breadth of Asia.

The tournament had its roots in the formation of the Asian Football

Confederation in Manila in 1954. The 12 founding members of the AFC wanted to shape the development of the game in Asia.

A key goal was to organise a regional competition for the continent's international teams.

Two years later, the first Asian Cup was staged in Hong Kong with seven of the 12 affiliated national associations vying for the title of Asia's best football team.

Fifty years later the Asian Cup had grown to encompass teams from throughout the continent and had become the barometer by which the continually changing balance of power in Asian football was measured.

From the dominance of South Korea in the early years of the competition, the Asian Cup became the province of the mighty Iranians who won three consecutive tournaments from 1968 to 1976.

During the 1980s, the Gulf states asserted themselves with Kuwait becoming the first Arab side to win the competition in 1980 before Saudi Arabia claimed three of the next four championships, reaching the final five times in a row.

Japan's Asian Cup victories in 1992, 2000 and 2004 signalled a shift in power back to East Asia at the turn of the millennium, although the highly competitive nature of the most recent tournament hosted by China is a clear indication that competition remains keen among the sides looking to be crowned Asia's top national team. □



The 2004 Asian Cup in China was enthusiastically supported by the Chinese

# Money matters

*The cost of watching your favourite sport: why administrators will be forced to put the brakes on ticket prices – by John Barton*



**T**he athletics programme at the Olympics in Athens three years ago was entering its most exciting phase: the finals.

On show were the best athletes the world had to offer. Maybe that's an exaggeration. Missing were two of Greece's finest – Kostas Kederis and Ekaterina Thanou. Only days before the games began the two stars had fallen off a motor scooter, slightly injuring them.

Conveniently, their injuries prevented them from going through a routine drugs test. Both had a reputation for never being around when the drug testers turned up, without notice, at their training facility.

Thus the men's 200 metre champion from Sydney 2000 (Kederis) and the women's 100 metre gold medalist from the same games (Thanou) were dumped

from the Athens Olympics, a national scandal. The press was hysterical. There were calls for them to be charged with crimes against the state.

But the games had to go on, even without two Olympians who would have certainly brought in the local crowds.

Sport is about acute emotion. Sinew, tissue, neurons, blood, whirling together in a dance so intense it is irresistible theatre. Television sport dies without being witness to its intensity, the conflicting feelings of all the participants; athletes striving and achieving against expectation, spectators rising as one as they share the moment.

It's graphic stuff. Compelling and unforgettable.

But there is one serious flaw in the above description. What happens when

the public is not moved to be a spectator. To be 'there' when the triumph is played out, or tragedy unfolds. Where the stands are bare of people, almost silent.

The camera doesn't lie. You can't conceal the empty seats, and the lack of noise.

In the final days of the athletic programme in Athens 2004 the cameras that were trained on the final bend could not but capture the endless rows of empty seats clearly seen.

"Go tight," was the call to the event director. "Don't go wide! There are acres of space out there!"

Sure. As if you could conceal from viewers a self-evident truth. Too few people in the stands, no cacophony of riotous cheering, no atmosphere.

Why did it happen, and why does it continue to dog international sport?

Simply it is a question of price. Fans can no longer buy tickets to an event as one buys a coffee. Today it is a budget exercise. Tickets are so expensive that other sacrifices have to be made to fund the gate price.

Just look at the English Premier League and the wastelands that now lie behind goal in all but the leading clubs.

Let's face it. The fans are voting with their hip pocket and are staying away from the richest sports league in the world, the EPL.



The ABU's Thai members at the International Broadcast Centre in Athens



Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair has warned:

"Anyone who watches the Premiership can just notice, in the past year or couple of years, the rows of empty seats.

"It's something I do not recall seeing in the same way four or five years back so I think there are very sensible market-based reasons for people to make sure the ticket prices aren't beyond the reach of the ordinary fan," Mr Blair said recently.

The clubs have listened with many now freezing prices or reducing them for next season. But maybe the damage is already done.

The focus of federations and property owners has long been raising revenues from television broadcast and licence fees. We now seem to be paying a big price.

Nothing better illustrates the big 'walkout' than cricket's World Cup in the West Indies.

Not even the best television sports director could disguise the complete absence of atmosphere in the game between the hosts, the West Indies and reigning champions, Australia.

In all other games gone were the crowds, the traditional whistling and calypso music, and chanting fans. The ground at St John's was half full, half empty.

In spite of the cloud that fell over the tournament following the murder of the Pakistani coach, Bob Woolmer, the real concern for the game's administrators was the complete lack of public support.

At US\$100 a ticket who could blame them. But the International Cricket Council had already banked its money: television rights ran to hundreds of millions of dollars.

But television, the broadcasters who cough up the hard cash and, ultimately the sponsors and advertisers who make it pay, could be the major casualty.

Without atmosphere generated at grounds by the crush of fans, sport loses an essential appeal: emotion. □

## South Korea's Incheon wins 2014 Asian Games bid

**T**he South Korean port city of Incheon has won the right to host the 2014 Asian Games, fending off a challenge from India's New Delhi to hold the lucrative multi-sport event.

It is the third time Korea has been picked following Seoul in 1986 and Busan in 2002, reports Radio Australia.

Incheon bid leader Shin Yong-Suk was ecstatic as his team burst into raucous celebrations after months of lobbying and pledged the world would see the best ever Games in seven years' time. Guangzhou in China will host the 2010 event.

The New Delhi delegation was devastated after insisting all week that it was the frontrunner and had a right to win, having been overlooked since it was last selected in 1982.

The vote swung in Incheon's favour after frantic last-minute canvassing by both sides of the 45 Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) nations that make up the body that controls sport in the region.

In announcing the decision, OCA president Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah said: "Incheon is a well organised economic city and they have worked hard to market their city. It was very close. They both had weak points and strong points. From a marketing viewpoint Korea had the edge."

The Asiad is expected to have a massive economic impact on Incheon with officials forecasting it will create 270,000 new jobs and attract huge foreign investment.

The city currently has 11 Olympic-standard sports facilities with four more being upgraded and five new stadiums

in the planning phase. Another 17 facilities are to be built before the event, including new aquatics and tennis complexes.

Korea will now organise an inter-ministerial support committee headed by new Prime Minister Han Duck-Soo, appointed in March, to mobilise resources for the Games.

Prior to the final vote, Incheon promised to raise US\$20 million dollars to support Asian countries that have not yet won medals in the Asian Games. New Delhi was unable to match that figure.

Incheon, a commercial and logistics hub for Northeast Asia with a population of 2.4 million, is the country's key gateway. South Korea's main international airport opened near the city in 2001. □



# ASIA-PACIFIC BROADCASTING UNION

## DIRECTOR – ABU TECHNICAL DEPARTMENT

The present Director of the Technical Department will complete his contract with the ABU this year. Applications are therefore being sought to fill this important position with a view to having the new Director take over the role in July 2007.

This is one of the most senior positions in the ABU Secretariat, reporting directly to the Secretary-General, and responsible for a permanent staff of seven, and temporary staff that are employed from time to time to work on special projects.

### POSITION DETAILS

The key responsibilities of the position are:

- The overall management and supervision of the Technical and IT departments, liaison with the ABU Technical Committee, the Technical Bureau and its working parties, and taking action on decisions of the General Assembly on technical matters.
- The preparation of an annual activity plan and budget for the Technical and IT departments to meet the requirements of the ABU Strategic Plan.
- The planning, management and implementation of activities, a key focus of which will be projects to assist ABU members in raising the standard of their technical/technological skills from early planning, development and implementation, and operational aspects.

Further information on this vacancy, and requirements for application, are available in the 'Positions Vacant' section on the ABU website (<http://www.abu.org.my>). A full Position Description is linked to the website advertisement.

### REQUIREMENTS

Applications will only be considered from candidates with a recognised degree in a relevant broadcast engineering or multimedia technology, and a minimum 20 years' experience with broadcasting technologies of which at least 5 years should have been spent in a senior management position. The applicant should be a citizenship of a country within the ABU region, and should have experience in organising events such as conferences, seminars and training workshops.

### REMUNERATION & BENEFITS

The salary for this position will be in the range US\$64,800 – US\$74,400 per annum, depending on qualifications and experience. If the successful applicant is a non-Malaysian citizen, salary and allowances will be free of income tax in Malaysia. Salaries are subject to an annual cost-of-living adjustment.

Details of additional benefits and allowances are shown in the website advertisement.

### APPLICATIONS

Applications should be sent by either post to:

**The Secretary-General  
Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union  
P O Box No 1164  
Jalan Pantai Baharu  
59700 Kuala Lumpur  
Malaysia**

or by email to: [david.astley@abu.org.my](mailto:david.astley@abu.org.my)

by **31 May 2007**.



# Staff changes to Development Projects

**T**he ABU's Development Projects Department has a new manager. She is Francyne Harrigan.

Francyne will be responsible for expanding relations between the ABU and international organisations.

She replaces Craig Hobbs whose contract with the Secretariat has ended.

Francyne will be assisted by Malaysians Anom Sani and Lisa Mohamad, both of whom joined the ABU in 2003 and were recently promoted.

Originally from the UK, Francyne has spent the bulk of her professional life in the US and Asia working with multilateral organisations such as the World Bank and a variety of non-government organisations.

For the past six years, she has been based in Bangkok, Hong Kong and Kuala Lumpur where she has continued to work as a media and communications consultant with organisations such as



Francyne (seated) with Lisa (left) and Anom

the International Finance Corporation and the European Commission.

She holds a Masters in International Communications, and also writes for a number of publications.

Anom joined the ABU on contract in 2003 as Team Project Assistant, and was made permanent staff two years later. She is now Development Projects Officer and will be responsible for managing capacity-building projects which are externally funded, such as the ABU/UNESCAP – Millenium Development Goals collaboration.

Lisa started her career with the ABU as Editorial Assistant at the ABU's Publications Department in 2003, and was part of the team that revamped the ABU website and initiated work on the weekly electronic newsletter, the ABU Weekly News Digest.

In her new role, she will be working with Francyne and Anom in developing partnerships and proposals with international organisations, coordination of projects with international organisations and coordination of participation with ABU member broadcasters. □

## New faces in Publications and Info Systems

**T**he ABU has new additions to its Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur. Izzatul Akmar Abdul Karim has joined as Editorial Assistant. She takes over from Lisa Mohamad, who has moved to Development Projects.

A Malaysian, Izzatul holds a Bachelor's in Mass Communication from the Mara Technological University and majored in the field of Publishing.

She has experience using various design software and has been tasked with designing various publications for the Secretariat, including the bimonthly magazines, ABU News and Technical Review.

Kalaiselvam Palaniappan has joined as Information Systems Officer. A Malaysian, Kalai has a diploma in Information Technology and has several years experience as an IT support personnel and web content developer. He replaces Reynolds Chua.

Among the companies he has worked for include Shell as Customer Technical Support Analyst, Hewlett-Packard as Technical Support Representative, and Malaysian Internet service provider Jaring as a Technical Assistant.

He will assist in running the ABU's IT systems, including the website operations. □

