

Hugh Leonard, gave me full responsibility for working with the host organisations to ensure the success of these rather complex events. This meant visiting the host countries months in advance, helping the hosts to choose hotels and facilities that could accommodate the delegates and the meetings, and advising them on staffing needs, protocol, excursions, activities for accompanying persons and the dozens of other things they needed to arrange. My responsibility continued throughout the long lead-up time to the annual meetings and as the dates drew near, I was in daily contact with the hosts over registrations, visa problems, last-minute changes and many other things. During the meetings themselves I managed the Secretariat and was the liaison person between the hosts and our own personnel, ensuring that they worked in unison and sorting out the inevitable problems and tensions. It was a hectic existence but immensely rewarding for many years.

**Q: How do you feel leaving the ABU after being with the organisation for almost 30 years?**

DL: Naturally I will leave the ABU with some sadness, as it has been a

dominant factor in my life for many years. Working for the members has been very rewarding and satisfying for me and I'll take with me many happy memories. And I'll leave with the satisfaction that throughout my service I've always done my best to uphold the objectives and principles of service on which the Union was founded. I wish the ABU and its members continued success and growth in the future and will follow its progress with much interest.

**Q: What will you miss the most at the ABU?**

DL: Without a doubt the many wonderful people among the members with whom I've worked so closely for so long. Many of them will remain my dear friends in the future and I'll stay in touch with them in the years ahead. No doubt I'll also miss the hectic life that I've had to lead to do my job, all the travelling, the new places and new people that were constantly part of my life. But I'm going to a new life that I'm sure will be just as rewarding.

**Q: What's in store for the future?**

DL: As you know, I was married earlier this year and am leaving Malaysia to join my husband, Tony Woo, who is an Australian citizen, at his home in that

country. This will be a complete change for me and will no doubt bring its own share of challenges.

**Q: Is there a possibility of you working in the broadcasting industry considering your lengthy and deep involvement with the ABU and its activities?**

DL: Anything is possible in this world, but I have no plans to look for a job of any sort in the near future. It's often said that broadcasting these days is a young person's game, and I'm afraid I no longer fall into that category! But who knows what the future might bring? □

**Note:** A Malaysian, Doreen joined the Union as the Secretary-General's Secretary in 1980, shortly after the headquarters was moved to Kuala Lumpur. In 1986 she became Personal Assistant to the Secretary-General, and in 1997 the Administrative Council upgraded her post to Executive Assistant to the Secretary-General. She is well known throughout the membership as the organiser of the General Assembly and other meetings, and for her broad knowledge of the ABU and the Asia-Pacific region.

## Free digital TV launched in NZ

**S**ky Television's monopoly on digital broadcasting in New Zealand has been broken with the launch of a new service, Freeview.

The NZ\$75 million (US\$55 million) government-backed project means the entire country can now watch free-to-air television using digital signals provided by satellite. The launch of Freeview promises an even greater choice of channels and programmes for consumers.

Freeview will initially broadcast TV One, TV2, TV3, C4, Maori Television, Radio New Zealand National and Radio New Zealand Concert. More channels will be added.

But the new digital era comes at a cost, and viewers will have to decide whether it's worth it. The basic requirement is a set-top box, and the Freeview consortium has certified two pre-tuned models which retail for almost NZ\$300 (US\$220.41) each.

It's being hailed as the most significant broadcasting event since the launch of colour television 30 years ago, reports *Television New Zealand Online*.

Broadcasting Minister Steve Maharey said it's financially important to make the shift. "We know that if we do this, within the next six to 10 years then the financial gain for the country is around NZ\$230 million (US\$169 million)," he said. □

# VTTF 2007 to film in Mongolian steppes

**T**he ABU's Voyage to the Future 2007 (VTTF) project will see a TV programme made about schoolchildren aged between 12 and 16 going on a 10-day expedition in Mongolia to study its grasslands.

The project aims to create awareness of the earth's natural resources, filming the current state of the environment for the future generation. Students taking part are from Japan, China, Hong Kong, Vietnam, Qatar, Thailand, Mongolia, Korea and Malaysia.

The expedition will visit the areas of Yunch, the Khustai National Park and Dhganakhad, where participants will get to study the Mongolian steppes, the day-to-day lifestyle of the nomadic people, the wildlife and the restoration process of the deteriorating grasslands.

Co-organised by MNB-Mongolia, the expedition will be filmed in HDTV and

made available to television stations from participating countries for a nominal fee. These include NHK-Japan, CCTV-China, VTV-Vietnam, Aljazeera-Qatar, NBT-Thailand, MNB, EBS-Korea, TVB-Hong Kong and RTM-Malaysia.

MNB and NHK will provide the crew for the filming of the made-for-TV production. Aljazeera will have its own film crew recording the entire event in Arabic.

"We hope the young participants will bring back with them a continuing curiosity from this experience about conservation issues in view of the fact that preservation of our natural environment is as crucial as ever," said Tatsuya Nakamura, Director of the ABU Programme Department.

The first series was filmed by RTM in the heart of the Borneo rainforest in 2005. Following the 2007 series which



The ABU's Tatsuya Nakamura (left) and Naranbaatar Myanganbuu planting a tree behind the MNB headquarters to mark the 2007 Voyage to the Future

explores the grasslands, the third series, scheduled to be produced in 2009, will focus on the oceans.

## Plans underway

The event organisers recently held a meeting in Mongolia, hosted by MNB, to finalise the itinerary, filming plans and logistics for this year's Voyage to the Future, which is themed "Deterioration of the Grasslands".

Among the decisions taken were to employ security personnel to look after the safety of the 28 participants, provide the students with insurance coverage, and have a medical team on standby for emergencies.



Students participating in the project will be staying in various locations, including these Japanese-style shelters at Nairamdal



The students will be filmed staying in the homes or yurts of the nomads in Yunch, where they will learn how to milk horses, make cheese and gather cow manure. They will even be involved in the construction of the yurts.

While there, they will study the problems related to overgrazing of livestock, due to the increasing number of goats being reared. They will also experience, first-hand, the lack of basic infrastructure such as schools and stores out in the grasslands.

The students will roughly spend about four to five hours daily embarking on the various activities, and their participation in these activities will be captured by four video cameras. The camera crews will try to devote equal attention to each student.

They will then move to the Khustai National Park to study the wildlife which is unique to Mongolia, as well as learn how the nomads are discovering new means of living, such as making felt.

The participants will also visit Dugan Had, where they will be involved in promoting the consumption of dairy products in the schools there, as well as compare the diversity of plants in the area.

The students will then return to the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar to present their findings and their impressions of the study tour in the form of drawings.

The VTTF secretariat will set up a call centre in Ulaanbaatar to gather reports of the daily activities and present them to the parents of the participants back home in their respective countries.

The two-day meeting ended with a tree planting ceremony led by MNB General Director, Naranbaatar Myanganbuu, in the compound of the broadcaster's headquarters. □



Meeting participants enjoying an authentic Mongolian barbecue lunch at the restaurant in Nairamdai



Aljazeera participants (right) being interviewed by an MNB reporter out in the Mongolian grasslands



The VTTF Secretariat members listening to a briefing

# Asiavision launches new initiatives



Shaun Seow (right) talking to delegates of the News Group meeting during lunch

**S**everal important new training opportunities have been launched for members of the ABU's daily news exchange, Asiavision.

The News Group has introduced an Asiavision Advisory Service under which US\$10,000 in Asiavision funds will be used to provide training and consultancies in the coming year for AVN members who request it.

The service will cover both editorial and technical areas. Members will be able to seek assistance in any field from, say, improving their newsroom to help with uplinking to satellites.

The service will be similar to those already offered by the ABU's Programme and Technical Departments.

The News Group agreed to launch the service at its annual meeting in

Singapore in May, hosted by Channel NewsAsia.

The group also allocated US\$30,000 for collective training for members in the year ahead. And it asked the Secretariat to look into the possibility of joint training for less advanced members of Asiavision and ASEAN Television News, a weekly news exchange among broadcasters of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

## Providing funding

In another first, the group decided to provide funding to enable the heads of news of AVN members to attend next year's News Group meeting.

The group oversees all the ABU's news activities and sets policy for Asiavision, a daily exchange of news among 18 Asian broadcasters.

The Chief Executive Officer of MediaCorp, Lucas Chow, opened the meeting. He spoke of the new delivery platforms that MediaCorp had launched, including Channel NewsAsia on 3G phones, broadband video-on-demand and visual radio.

"In the works are also e-learning capabilities and NexMedia, which is a multi-platform system that allows buyers and sellers to trade and manage digital content."

The News Group Chairman, Shaun Seow of Channel NewsAsia, said he was confident that the best was yet to come for Asiavision.

He believed it would grow in size and relevance, "so much so that people will come to value Asiavision as a mirror of Asia's politics, economics, business, lifestyle, arts, fashion – in



short, Asiavision providing a true vision of Asia".

Mr Seow said AVN's membership was the highest in its 23-year history. However, the challenge facing the news exchange was that not all the smaller, newer members were able to contribute news stories. Some did not have the technology to uplink to satellite.

Asiavision's Managing Editor, Alan Williams, said that since the launch of AVN's second daily satellite feed in May 2005, the number of stories contributed by members had risen from about 6,000 a year to more than 9,000.

"One of the big benefits of the second feed is that most of the stories are same-day coverage – stories that were contributed to Asiavision on the same day they were filmed. Since the launch, the number of same-day stories has increased by more than 80 percent."

At a reception for participants, the CEO of the Media Development Authority of Singapore, Chris Chia, urged Asian broadcasters to embrace the interactive digital revolution or face dwindling audiences.

For the first time, the News Group meeting including a day-long seminar with invited speakers. It was devoted to the new challenges faced by news directors in Asia (*see next page*).

The winners of this year's Asiavision Annual Awards were chosen at the meeting.

They are NHK-Japan, for the most news flashes over the past year, and CCTV-China, IRIB-Iran and MCOT-Thailand for the overall quality of their contributions to the news exchange.

Channel NewsAsia hosted the meeting graciously and efficiently, laying on a range of excursions for participants and making sure everything ran smoothly behind the scenes. □



News Group delegates enjoying a balloon ride over the Singapore skyline



CCTV and TVB delegates get better acquainted

## Samoan govt: Privatising SBC will lift standards

**T**he Samoan government has said privatising the publicly funded broadcaster, SBC, will raise broadcasting standards in the country.

In its new budget statement, the Samoan government announced the privatisation of SBC TV and radio is to take place in the first half of the new financial year 2007/2008.

Minister for Communications, Safuneituuga Neri, said plans have been ongoing for SBC's privatisation for years and now the necessary framework is in place for it to begin.

She said that the government feels it is best that it plays just the role of regulator, while the private sector provides the services.

"We believe that when SBC is privatised, they will be part of the competition that is going on with other broadcasting companies. And I think when there is competition, there will be a lift in the services that they will be providing."

She said the Ministry of Finance will evaluate all SBC assets before any final recommendations are made to cabinet regarding the sale price. □

# National media regulations 'under increasing threat'



**N**ational media regulations are under increasing threat from the new media, an international seminar of broadcasters in Singapore has been told.

"Technological advances are creating a borderless world," Ling Pek Ling of the Media Development Authority of Singapore told the ABU News Group Seminar.

Ms Ling, who is the MDA's Director (Media Policy), said the Internet in particular represented a challenge to the traditional way of regulating the media because it was very accessible but difficult to regulate.

She said Singapore's approach was to regulate the traditional and new media with a light touch. In the case of the Internet, the MDA's focus was on race, religion and issues harmful to minors.

At the same time, Singapore encouraged the media industry to take initiatives of its own against offensive content.

"We want to encourage our citizens to use the new media and we are

adopting a light touch approach towards regulation.

"While the government would set minimum ground rules of engagement, we want to encourage industry players to actively develop their own acceptable codes of conduct."

The Managing Director of MediaCorp Technologies, Mock Pak Lum, told the seminar that the rise of citizen journalism had placed new


demands on broadcasters to verify whether video footage offered to them was genuine.

"How do you trust whether the content being sent is accurate or whether it's biased or whether it's sent by someone who just wants to have a spoof?"

He said a filtering process was needed "to evaluate multiple sources of information to verify the authenticity of the images and the content".

The seminar brought together more than 70 people including senior representatives of 16 members of the ABU's daily news exchange, Asiavision.

Chimaki Sakai of NHK-Japan spoke of how digital broadcasting was making it possible to convey warnings and information on natural disasters much faster.

Channel NewsAsia anchor Chloe Cho was the seminar moderator. 



Singapore played host to the ABU News Group Seminar, which tackled the threat of new media, among other issues



## Covering conflicts: 'Telling the truth spurs us on'

**C**overing events in conflict areas may sound exciting, complete with a tinge of danger, but not all journalists may want to grab it with both hands whenever such an assignment arises.

A seminar in Singapore was told that agencies such as APTN and Reuters Television allow their correspondents to decline to do reporting in conflict areas. "All journalists have the right to say no, although everybody can go," said Andrew Braddel, APTN's Regional General Manager, Russia, the CIS and the Baltics, who is based in Moscow.

Speaking on, "Reporting under Pressure: Competing Realities" at a seminar in Singapore, Mr Braddel said APTN tended to send senior producers with experience to conflict areas.

The seminar was held in conjunction with the ABU News Group meeting. Sharing the podium with Mr Braddel on the subject was Reuters Television's Jahabar Sadiq, a senior producer who is based in Kuala Lumpur.

Mr Jahabar said for journalists on assignment in a conflict area, the



Jahabar Sadiq (centre) and Andrew Braddel were invited to speak on, "Reporting under Pressure: Competing Realities"

thought foremost in their minds was to stay alive.

Before being sent to cover events in conflict areas, Mr Jahabar said the journalists must first undergo an intensive hostile environment training course and then a refresher course after three years. A flak jacket and a helmet is the standard gear issued to journalists on such assignments.

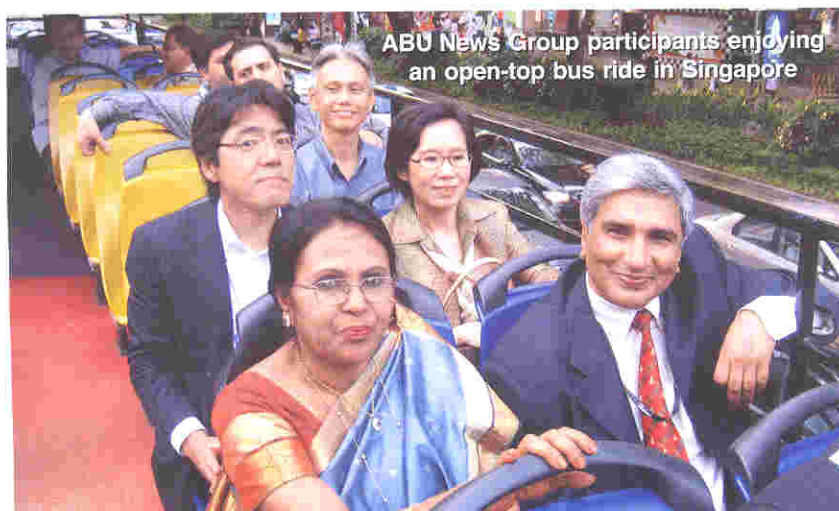
"And, we need people who are able to adapt to the situation and are also quick on their feet," he said.

"To put out a fair and balanced package, we cover all sides in a conflict with input from all the parties involved." Mr Braddel said his organisation provides insurance cover only to its journalists who have been certified after undergoing the hostile environment training course. Journalists also have to cope with the after-effects of covering a conflict or a disaster, and Mr Braddel said media companies were now beginning to realise the psychological impact.

"Journalists admit to being terribly affected," he said. "Our job is to tell the truth, and that spurs us on."

Mr Jahabar said the journalists were given a telephone number to call if they needed to talk to trained counselors.

He admitted that he does not talk about it, and just gets on with life. □



ABU News Group participants enjoying an open-top bus ride in Singapore

# Conflict coverage earns SLRC-Sri Lanka 3 awards

**C**overage of developments in the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka have earned SLRC three Asiavision monthly awards in the first five months of this year.

Other award winners so far include DDI-India, NHK-Japan and CCTV-China.

SLRC won the award for January with their visuals of two bus bombings to hit Sri Lanka within 24 hours. The first incident was on 5 January when a bomb exploded in a bus in Sri Lanka's western province, killing six people and injuring over 50 more. A second bombing of a bus took place less than 24 hours later in the south of the island, claiming the lives of 15 people.

The Asiavision award for February went to DDI for their coverage of a late night firebombing of a cross-border train on 18 February. The bi-weekly India-

Pakistan Samjhauta Express was attacked around midnight in Panipat in India's Haryana state after departing from New Delhi.

At least 66 passengers were killed after two of the train's coaches caught fire following several explosions.

NHK and SLRC were the joint winners of the Asiavision award for March. NHK earned the award for their fast response when a strong earthquake rocked Ishikawa Prefecture, facing the Sea of Japan, on 25 March. The earthquake left one person dead and about 150 injured, as well as a tsunami alert being issued for areas along the Sea of Japan coast.

SLRC won for their pictures of a Tamil Tigers air attack on Sri Lanka's main air base in Colombo on 26 March. The rebels used a light aircraft to bomb hangars at the engineering section of the air base

shortly after midnight, killing three Air Force personnel and injuring 16 others.

The Asiavision award for April went to CCTV for their coverage of an industrial accident in a steel plant in northeast China's Liaoning Province on 18 April. The early morning tragedy claimed the lives of 32 workers. The incident occurred when a steel ladle used for pouring molten steel became dislodged and fell from its iron rail, spewing white-hot molten steel into a room where workers had gathered for a change of shift.

SLRC won the May award for their coverage of a suicide bomb attack near Colombo on 28 May in which four people were killed. The rebel attack on a truck ferrying Special Task Force soldiers in Ratmalana was the second on Sri Lankan security forces in the capital following a similar incident four days earlier in which two people died. □

## Spotlight on safety of journalists

**A** slain Russian reporter has been awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize 2007, as World Press Freedom Day was observed in May in Colombia amid calls for improved safety of journalists.

Anna Politkovskaya was chosen by a jury of 14 journalists for showing "incredible courage and stubbornness in chronicling events in Chechnya after the whole world had given up on that conflict".

This is the first time the award – which is into its 10th year – has been

given out posthumously. Colombia was chosen to mark the anniversary as it is the country of newspaper publisher Guillermo Cano Isaza, after whom the award was named.

Mr Isaza was killed in front of his office, El Espectador, in Bogotá, in December 1986, by drug barons he exposed in his work as a journalist.

UNESCO Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura, in leading the call for the protection of newsmen, said there was a close relationship between securing the safety of journalists and realising freedom.

"Our ability to act as informed citizens of the world depends on a media that can work freely and safely," he said.

According to Reporters Without Borders, 75 journalists and 32 media staff were killed last year, making 2006 the deadliest year on record.

The large number of newsmen killed and the lack of action taken against their killers prompted the United Nations' Security Council to adopt a resolution late last year condemning and seeking to limit violence against journalists. □