



HISTORY CHANNEL PHOTOS

*Mankind*, the compelling story of the human race.

## The story of all of us unfolds on Asian screens

**SINGAPORE** – The story of man began to unfold last month in *Mankind: The Story of All of Us*. The six-part series held its world premiere on November 14 on the History Channel.

*Mankind*, which took two years in the making, has acclaimed actor and Oscar nominee Josh Brolin as the narrator for the English-language version. Datuk Jalaludin Hassan, a Malaysian actor and host of the Malaysian version of *Who Wants To Be a Millionaire?*, narrated the Malay-language version.

History Channel said *Mankind* is the first TV series in a generation to look at the history of the human race through the ages. "Jaw-dropping" CGI technology and dramatic reconstructions of the most critical events in human history brought to life as never seen before leave viewers spell-bound to the compelling story of our race.

Through geology, astronomy, meteorology and physics, the series delves into the forces of nature, exploring human's ability to harness these natural powers through engineering, science and innovation to assure their survival.

# Govts must ensure spectrum for PSBs

**SEOUL** – Do not cast public broadcasting into the spectrum wilderness, was the clarion call issued at the closing of the recent Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU) General Assembly in South Korea.

Spectrum space being freed up from the existing analogue spectrum should not be simply auctioned off to the highest bidders but part of it must be allocated to public service broadcasters, the ABU declared.

In passing the Seoul Declaration, ABU secretary-general Dr Javad Mottaghi noted that, in recent years, the upper portion of the UHF frequency band, which traditionally has been allocated for terrestrial broadcasting, has been increasingly sought by mobile telecommunication operators for their use.

"In allocation of the newly available spectrum, the national spectrum regulators and governments in the Asia-Pacific [should]



ABU secretary-general Dr Javad Mottaghi: "In allocation of the newly available spectrum, the national spectrum regulators and governments in the Asia-Pacific [should] consider the legitimate needs for frequency spectrum of the TV broadcasting industry."

consider the legitimate needs for frequency spectrum of the TV broadcast industry," said Dr Mottaghi, urging ABU members to call on their governments to ensure enough spectrum will be allocated

for public interest broadcasting when switching to digital TV.

The European Broadcasting Union (EBU) as well as the World

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## Asia forges on as switch-off dates loom

**NEW DELHI** – While analogue switch-off from various part of the region is expected to free up spectrum, other concerns are confronting Asian countries currently in the midst of digital migration.

India, for example, has begun the countdown for the second

phase of digitisation in 38 cities in 15 states, the deadline of which is set for 31 March 2013.

Following the successful switchover in Mumbai and Delhi, India's Information & Broadcasting Secretary Uday Kumar Varma recently chaired a meeting to review

Phase II of the government's plan to digitise the country completely by December 2014.

Digitisation in Kolkata took place after the Diwali festival last month, as was the case in Chennai,

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### WORLD IN BRIEF

#### UK prepares for 4G spectrum auction

**LONDON** – December 11 is the provisional deadline for the submission of applications from prospective bidders for 4G spectrum. Dubbed the "largest ever" sale of mobile-phone spectrum in the UK, the UK regulator Ofcom has also determined a reserve price of £1.3 billion (US\$1.65 billion) for the auction, which is due to take place next month.

#### Intelsat signs long-term agreement with Fiji TV

**SUVA** – Fiji TV will be using capacity on the *Intelsat 19* video neighbourhood, located at 166°E — via a new MPEG-4 platform — to offer direct-to-home services to customers across the Pacific Ocean region.

#### EBU shares integrated news production practices

**BARCELONA** – Cooperation and mutual assistance are key in integrated news production, delegates to last month's EBU News Assembly in Barcelona heard. The seventh meeting organised by the EBU discussed some of the best practices in integrated news production, while EBU members shared some of the new approaches adopted in this domain.

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# Critical to engage your regulators now, not during WRC-15

As more and more countries in the Asia-Pacific region are overhauling their workflow and transmission systems in preparation for the big switch to digital TV, they must seriously engage their regulators now to ensure that enough spectrum will be allotted to the broadcast industry.

The Seoul Declaration, passed at the recent ABU General Assembly 2012 in South Korea, is a timely reminder to all broadcasters that they should make a concerted effort to lobby their governments to carefully consider the needs of the broadcast industry and that they must make a strong case at the upcoming World Radiocommunication Conference 2015 (WRC-15) on how the "digital dividend", or excess spectrum freed up by the analogue switch-off, is to be allotted.

One of the worrying issues is the constant demand for more spectrum for IMT, or International Mobile Telecommunications. Indeed, on the agenda of WRC-15 is an item calling for the consideration of additional spectrum allocations to IMT — which is proving to be a major challenge for the International Telecommunications Union (ITU).

Already, during the WRC-07 conference, it was agreed that the frequency band 790-862MHz in Region 1 be allocated for mobile service; there was also a move to identify parts of 698-960MHz in Region 2 and 790-862MHz in the Regions 1 & 3 for IMT use. And in many countries, these bands are being used for terrestrial broadcasting.

This is why public broadcasters should be banding together to remind governments not to simply 'auction off' excess spectrum to the highest bidders. In any auction, telcos can easily outbid broadcast operators.

Of grave concern is the upper portion of the

UHF frequency that seems to be the target of mobile telecommunications operators, because more bandwidths are needed to feed the growing demand brought about by smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices.

Indeed, as social media becomes ubiquitous, so will interactive TV, judging by the number of new multi-platform deployments (such as over-the-top, mobile TV and hybrid TV) being propagated across the Asia-Pacific region. The competing demands for more spectrum will intensify as WRC-15 draws near.

It is prudent for national regulators and regional/global industry groups to consider carefully how the digital dividend should be allocated, and also to look more closely to new technologies like LTE, which is touted to maximise bandwidth usage for telcos. Therefore, it is critical that national regulators themselves should band together to make their voices heard before WRC-15 takes place; they must prevent telcos, with their vast resources and lobbying power, from seizing a huge chunk of the freed-up spectrum.

Hopefully, there will be adequate bandwidths left for broadcasters, who would also want to utilise some of the digital dividend for their own enhanced service offerings — and for public service broadcast purposes.



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# ESS now fully owned subsidiary of News Corp

**SINGAPORE** – News Corporation, through a wholly owned subsidiary, has completed its acquisition of ESPN's partnership interest in ESPN Star Sports (ESS), pursuant to an agreement with ESPN announced in June this year.

With that, ESS becomes a wholly owned subsidiary of News Corporation, and this marks the end of a 16-year equal joint venture that was formed between News Corp and Disney's ESPN to explore sports broadcasting in Asia.

Today, ESS is one of the biggest sports content providers in the region, showcasing a diverse array of international and regional sports from around the globe, and delivering premium sports content across multiple platforms to sports fans across Asia.

ESS broadcasts to viewers



ESS broadcasts to viewers across 24 countries in Asia and through its 25 TV networks and three broadband networks.

across 24 countries in Asia and through its 25 TV networks and three broadband networks, each localised to deliver differentiated programming.

The programming is broadcast from a 73,000sqf state-of-the-art production facility and earth station in Singapore. ESS has offices in China, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Taiwan and Singapore, and employs more than 650 employees across the region.

## New HBO service on the go

**HONG KONG** – HBO Asia is launching a brand-new Internet streaming service in Asia known as "HBO Go". The service allows subscribers to enjoy their favourite HBO Original programmes 12 hours after going on air in the US, across multiple devices anytime, anywhere.

HBO Go draws on a vast library of some 1,000 hours of HBO Original programmes, including series, films and other special programming such as documentaries, entertainment specials, family content and stand-up comedy. These cover the latest seasons of award-winning and critically acclaimed series, *Game of Thrones*, *Girls*, *True Blood* and *Veep*.

Jonathan Spink, CEO of HBO Asia, said: "This announcement

further demonstrates HBO Asia's commitment to introducing value-added services that provide flexibility, compelling content and increased customer satisfaction."

Spink continued: "HBO Go will meet the demand of changing consumer viewing habits, offering subscribers quick access to a wide variety of award-winning and critically-acclaimed content 12 hours after the US, which will help with the ongoing fight against illegal copying, distribution and piracy."

Hong Kong's Now TV will be the first broadcasters in Asia to launch HBO Go in the first quarter of next year. HBO Go will be available to Now TV's HBO Max Pak Premium subscribers.

# ABU rallying members to urge regulators to safeguard spectrum for public broadcasters

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Broadcasting Union (WBU) have taken up the ABU call to urge their own members to lobby their governments on the spectrum issue.

In addition, the ABU has brought the Seoul Declaration to the attention of the secretary-general of the ITU (International Telecommunication Union).

According to Sharad Sadhu, technical director of ABU, the Seoul Declaration will empower broadcasters in the region to go ahead and engage with their national spectrum regulators on the spectrum issue.

"The Seoul Declaration is a watershed decision by the ABU," reiterated Sadhu. "I believe that the Seoul Declaration lays the foundation for the broadcast industry, both for the near term and the future."

In a blog post entitled *Broadcasters' Spectrum Requirements*, the EBU states its position clearly: "For most EBU members, terrestrial broadcasting is a key delivery platform and their main concern is the future viability of the DTT platform in a competitive media delivery landscape."

"It is therefore essential to ensure that a sufficient amount of spectrum remains available for broadcasting in the long term."

While governments around the world are keen to appease the popular demands for more spectrum for connected mobile devices and broadband services — and in the process increasing their coffers by auctioning off the spectrum — more attention should be paid to the ability of broadcasters to outbid the telecommunication operators, most of whom have very deep pockets.

A notable development on the issue is the announcement by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the US that it has voted to auction off broadcast spectrum.

This decision, argued FCC chairman Julius Genachowski, would free up "badly needed" spectrum for the rapidly increasing number of connected mobile devices on the market.

The proposed auctions in the US will involve a three-pronged approach: a "reverse auction" where broadcasters can offer up the spectrum they want to sell; a "repacking" of available spectrum for other uses; and a "forward auction" of newly available spectrum.

While declaring that it will work with the FCC on the spectrum auctions, the National Broadcasters Association (NAB) has warned that the FCC is entering "uncharted territory".

The NAB maintains that, ultimately, broadcasters must only give up spectrum on a voluntary basis and not be coerced into it.

Broadcasters in Asia are also monitoring developments in Australia. It seems that the digital dividend arising from the switch from analogue to digital TV broadcasting looks increasingly likely to be allocated for 4G LTE deployments.

The digital dividend refers to 126MHz of spectrum (694-820MHz frequency range), which the Australian government directed the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) in 2010 to reallocate for "new uses", following the digital switchover.

In a recent media statement, Chris Chapman, ACMA's chairman, defended the decision to grant public safety agencies (PSAs) half of the spectrum — or 5 + 5MHz segments out of the 800MHz band.

Previously, Australian PSAs had asked for 10 + 10MHz of spectrum.

According to Chapman, the spectrum allocation is "more than sufficient, scalable and strong", and is part of ACMA's continuing efforts to "expand the capacity and capability of spectrum for PSAs".

The ACMA said it would also provide PSAs with an additional 50MHz of spectrum from the 4.9GHz band to support capacity beyond the 800MHz band.

Australia is also expected to carry out a spectrum auction in April next year, where spectrum in both the 700MHz and 2.5GHz bands — currently used primarily by public broadcasters for electronic news gathering — will be auctioned off to telcos for 4G LTE networks across Australia.

The spectre of losing more and more spectrum to telcos is haunting Asian broadcasters, especially the FTAs. Thus, the call by ABU to its members to engage their regulators on the spectrum issue is timely; it is to be taken up without any delay in the new media landscape, ensuring enough availability of spectrum is a matter of survival.

## Australia's digital economy shows positive growth: ACMA

**SYDNEY** – Australia's digital economy continues to grow at a rapid rate, according to research released by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA), with mobility an increasingly key element.

ACMA said that the report, called *Australia's Progress in the Digital Economy: Participation, Trust and Confidence*, shows that Australians are deriving real benefits from going online, with nearly three-quarters of adults believing that the Internet has improved their daily lives, and one-third of Australians aged 14 years and older accessing the Internet via their mobile phone — a 52% increase in the 12 months to June 2012.

"Going online is about getting things done no matter where you are," said ACMA chairman Chris Chapman. "Being able to access information, shop, bank and stay in touch with friends at any time is becoming easier and easier to do. What's more, most Australians see

themselves as pretty savvy in using the Internet, with almost two-thirds confident they have the skills necessary to do everything they want to do online."

The use of cloud computing to support services such as e-mail and social networking is also increasingly significantly, with 71% of adult Australians using cloud-based apps as at May 2012.

According to the report, the growth in online activities mirrors the increasing intensity of online participation. Activities relating to shopping and entertainment experienced the highest proportional increases in the number of people performing these activities online.

While many Australians have concerns about the sharing of their personal information (70%) and the possibility of online fraud (73%), the level of online participation shows that, for most, the benefits of going online outweigh these concerns.

## Two more Asian countries gear up for full DTV

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the fourth metropolitan covered in the first phase.

In preparation for the next phase of digitisation, the Information & Broadcasting Ministry has asked multi-system operators (MSOs) to conduct a thorough assessment of the number of set-top boxes (STBs) needed.

In a statement, the ministry said: "MSOs have also been provided information about the estimated number of STBs and their plans for procurement of STBs to ensure that the deadline of 31

March 2013 is met in these Phase II cities."

Meanwhile, in Taiwan, the government has announced a date for the analogue to digital TV switchover.

According to local reports, the Executive Yuan, the executive branch of the Taiwanese government, is planning for all TV services to become digital by 2014. All county and city governments will hold their National Cable subscriptions until the end of next year, when services will make the switchover to digital.

In Thailand, all six of the na-

tion's free-to-air (FTA) broadcasters are preparing to bid for commercial digital TV licences, which regulator National Broadcasting and Telecommunications Commission (NBTC) will issue early next year.

According to reports, the NBTC is also going to extend its regulatory reach to cable and satellite TV operators. All existing operators must file for licences before this December 15, or face sanction.

NBTC said broadcasters require a licence for the spectrum for each operating channel. Commercial broadcasters will be able to bid for the spectrum in March next year.