

STEPS TO CHANGE

The origins of **Radio Taiwan International** go back to 1928 but the last five years have brought momentous changes. Leaving behind its image as a propaganda tool to broadcast to China, RTI now faces increasing competition in the wake of Taiwan's liberalisation of the media after 1987. RTI president **Shao Li-chung** says the media landscape has gone beyond any previously imagined horizon



There have been many major changes over the last five years. RTI's role has changed from a KMT-party-owned broadcaster to a national radio station that serves the interests of Taiwan. There is diversity: apart from the conventional way of broadcasting, RTI is developing Internet broadcasting and the station is increasing its cooperation with other broadcasters in the area of programming and personnel exchange. Also, to serve the growing number of migrant workers and Taiwanese new immigrants, RTI has been broadcasting in Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese since January 2006, in conjunction with the Voice of Han FM broadcasting network.

What are your priorities?

Firstly, the integration of our 9

“ Since the lifting of martial law in 1987 Taiwan's media landscape has gone beyond any previously imagined horizon ”

transmission sites will help to put resources to better use and at the same time, RTI will modernize equipment and facilities. We are also building a virtual studio and a professional internet news portal. Other projects are developing partnerships with more international partner stations, establishing a 24 hour domestic foreign language station, and inviting our listeners to participate in the production of programming on the internet.

How do you reach your audience?

Some of our programmes are broadcast directly from Taiwan from our nine transmission sites, while others are relayed by our partner stations. In terms of international broadcasting, our reception quality in South Asia has been greatly improved through the relay of programmes by RFI. Some of RTI's programmes are available on mobile phones in Taiwan and we are hoping to make this service

available in other countries as well. We are looking at the European and US markets now. Our audience via the internet has increased tremendously over the last few years – RTI is currently increasing its broadband bandwidth so that it can be more interactive and more video clips of an interview or an event can appear on the web site.

You broadcast in 13 different languages – which ones are the most important in terms of audience share?

Mandarin - since we believe China is one of the most important markets for us. For our international audience, English is definitely one of the most important. Taking up a large share also includes languages that I mentioned earlier, Indonesian, Thai and Vietnamese.

Are you planning to start broadcasting in Arabic too?

It is undeniable that Arabic is an



KEY FACTS

Launched 1928, restructured Jan 1998
Chairman Cheng Yu
President Shao Li-chung
Vice President Chang Cheng-lin
Vice President Lee Wen-yi
Secretary General Sun Wen-kuei
Funded by the government, annual budget US\$20m
Staff over 100 journalists
Mission To broadcast accurate and up-to-date information about Taiwan to the international community including China

important language. Due to budget constraint, we can, at this moment, only prioritize some languages based on the government's policy.

You broadcast news and features – what is your mission?

We, of course, hope to market news about Taiwan to the world. That is why we hope to increase our presence in the international community for example by exchanging our programmes with other partner stations. We also hope to co-produce programmes with other broadcasters, for instance, we have worked with Radio Australia's "Breakfast Club".

How is the media landscape changing in Taiwan?

Taiwan has just been ranked as number one in terms of freedom of speech and the press in Asia. Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, the media in Taiwan has gone through gradual liberalisation, for example call in radio stations were

all legalized in 1994, making the sky of Taiwan the busiest in the world with about 200 radio stations serving the public today. Taiwan, a country with a population of only 23m, now has more than 600 newspapers (during the martial law era there were only about 31) and the public can now access hundreds of cable channels broadcasting both domestic and international programmes. The digitization of both radio and TV is underway and all TV stations will be digital in the next few years. Audiences in Taiwan today have access to news, programmes and movies on demand either on the computer or TV at home. The media landscape has gone beyond any previously imagined horizon and developed into a plural media environment.

That means more competition?

Competition among broadcasters has become fierce. We believe only through competition can

▲ Far left: Mount Alishan, a popular beauty spot in Taiwan
Top: RTI Chairman Cheng Yu (centre) and President Shao Li-chung (left)
Bottom: Shao Li-chung

broadcasters achieve the best quality. So what we are trying to do is to increase our domestic and international influence so that we can beat the competition.

Is that your goal for the next few years?

We hope to become a more influential radio station both in Taiwan and abroad. We are also trying to engage in more public service work. I believe more efficient management and healthier finances will allow us to provide better public service. What I also hope to do is to step up our professionalism in the face of changing technology so that all colleagues at RTI are able to cope with the demands of our changing times.

Shao Li-chung, thank you very much. ■

www.rti.org.tw