



oneworld
media awards

International accolade for radio station at foothills of the Kathmandu Valley South Asia's first independent radio station wins prestigious award

To mark its tenth anniversary, broadcaster, Jon Snow will present Nepal's Radio Sagarmatha – the first independent radio station in South Asia – with the prestigious One World Special Award.

Based in the heart of the Kathmandu Valley, Radio Sagarmatha has irreversibly changed the landscape of broadcasting in the country.

Originally built from water pipes and tested by staff driving around the streets of Kathmandu on motorbikes clutching radios, this bold venture gave momentum to the pro-democracy movement, which eventually led to the restoration of parliamentary democracy in April 2006.

When Radio Sagarmatha launched in May 1997 - after five years of lobbying - it was a milestone not just for Nepal but for the whole of South Asia, marking the end of the government's radio monopoly. The station blazed a trail for broadcasting in the country, and in its wake hundreds of commercial FM and community-based stations were set up.

When the King's regime banned all independent broadcasters from carrying news in April 2005, the station continued its daily output. Seven months later, police raided the station, seizing all technical equipment and arresting five staff. But within days, public pressure led the Supreme Court of Nepal to issue an order to the government allowing Radio Sagarmatha to go live again.

Today Radio Sagarmatha is on air 18 hours a day, broadcasting over 70 different programmes, primarily in Nepali - with news updates also in Nepalbhasa, Tamang and Maithili - as well as English. Popular programmes include:

- "Thought for the Day" – a morning programme relating to spiritual and physical health.
- Daily national and international news with analysis of the day's issues and events.
- Children's Hour – interactive programmes encouraging children aged 4-15 to come to the station or phone in to do quizzes, read poems and/or sing songs.
- *Aaja ka Kura* (Today's Talk) – a hard-talk current affairs programme which covers a breadth of topics, including the environment, health matters, education and women's rights.

A team of roving reporters ensure that everyone gets their say, from city dwellers to those in the most remote regions of Kathmandu.

Radio Sagarmatha employs 40 staff and 29 freelancers, and has recently gained government approval to double its transmitter capacity from 500 to 1000 watts. Station manager, Mohan Bista, will travel to London to accept the award on behalf of his team: "We would like to dedicate this award to the Nepali people who fought for freedom of expression and democracy in the country, and thank them for their support through the good and bad times. We welcome the challenge and responsibility of the future."

Radio Sagarmatha has established a network of eight community radio stations across the country and offers technical support and in-house training for newcomers to Nepal's radio sector. The station receives sponsorship from local organisations including Eco-Himal, as well as international agencies. It also runs a Friends of Radio Sagarmatha scheme which has so far raised over \$10,000.

The **One World Media Awards** will take place on Thursday 14 June 2007 at the Porchester Hall, Bayswater, and will be hosted by Channel 4's Jon Snow. The 11 award categories cover television, radio, new media and print journalism.

Notes to editors:

Listen online via the Radio Sagarmatha website, visit: www.radiosagarmatha.org

The One World Broadcasting Trust's coveted annual awards, promote comprehensive coverage and analysis of all aspects of the developing world: its successes and achievements, as well as its problems and challenges, from as many different perspectives as possible. www.owbt.org

For **press information** please contact Sophie Toumazis or Jennifer Reynolds @ tpr media on 020 8347 7020 or 07974 428 858 or email enquiries@tpr-media.com

1 May 2007