

Ranaviru: Real Star From Heroes To Stars



‘Ranaviru Real Star’ the world’s first military reality show was initiated under the patronage of Gotabaya Rajapaksa, the Secretary of Defence, whose concept was implemented with the blessings of President Mahinda Rajapaksa to highlight the creative and musical talents of military personnel. Business Today met with those who are making this reality show a success.

By Kamalika Jayathilaka | Photography by Menaka Aravinda

“The Defence Secretary who has been a member of the Armed Forces for more than 20 years was aware of the capabilities and the capacity of military personnel and wanted to create an opportunity for them to display their aesthetic, creative abilities. He wanted to show the world that they could do more than just fight wars,” said Lakshman Hulugalle, Director General of the Media Centre for National Security, who is the strength behind the implementation of the programme,

explaining the concept behind the reality show.

Thus, this television reality show was initiated in October 2010 having received more than 22,000 applications from military personnel belonging to all three forces. After the preliminary selection the number of contestants was brought down to 2,500 and thereafter to 500 – consisting of 300 Army, 125 Navy and 75 Air Force personnel. The reality show was staged in different areas of the country with a permanent panel of judges to select the best. “We went to Trincomalee, Jaffna, Anuradhapura, and finally came to Ratmalana, where a special studio was set up inside the airport hangar for the final few rounds,” added Lakshman Hulugalle.

The contestants included personnel belonging to various ranks of the three forces, and also included those disabled during combat. “We have always been singing at military camps at various functions in the past. But this is the first real occasion where we have been given an opportunity to demonstrate our creative talents to the wider society, this has shown how talented military personnel can be, and so we are grateful to the Secretary of Defence, Gotabaya Rajapaksa,” said Naval Commander Damien Fernando, one of the contestants of the Ranaviru Real Star, who aspires to win the grand price. “This is a very good programme that identifies some of the hidden talents of the military forces. I have been singing for a long time while serving the forces especially in fund raising programmes, but this is my first ever competition. If I look at the journey so far, I can say I have won, and I hope to improve further for the final rounds of the show. I am thankful to Secretary of Defence, Gotabaya Rajapaksa for giving us this opportunity,” said Brigadier Rajitha Ampemohotti, another contesting member of the armed forces. Representing the Air Force, Flying Officer Saranga Krishantha expressed his appreciation to the Defence Secretary to have been given an opportunity to demonstrate his singing talents to the country. “For the first time in history the war heroes of Sri Lanka have been given a cha nce to be popular in society for their artistic talents and this has shown the whole world that their talents and abilities are multifaceted”.

The singing capabilities of the Real Star show are assessed by a group of veterans from the Sri Lankan entertainment industry. They include Edward Jayakody, musician, singer and composer, Jackson Anthony, actor and singer and Champa Kalhari, singer. This panel of judges is committed to generating proper judgment and just decisions giving attention to every minute detail of each of the

performances. “We are honoured to have been selected to judge this contest, which I would like to call ‘sacred’. Now, the whole world will notice our heroes for a second time and this time everyone will realise that sensitive and creative human beings live inside these military combatants and that they possess not only a rich taste in art and music but also a proper discipline that is admirable,” said Champa Kalhari, one of the judges.

The grand finale of the reality show, which will be held on May 29, 2011, at the Sugathadasa Indoor Stadium, intends to find the ‘real star’ among the contestants and award the winner with a new house worth 15 million rupees, second place winner with a Toyota car worth three million from Toyota Lanka and a million rupees in cash, and award more cash prizes for the third to the tenth place winners. Nushad Perera, Group Chief Marketing Officer of Dialog Axiata, speaking about Ranaviru Real Star stated, “Dialog Axiata is the principal sponsor of this programme and we are extremely proud to be a part of it. No sooner did Secretary of Defence, Gotabaya Rajapaksa inform us about this initiative, everything was put together within 30 days. All prizes including the cost of the house, which totals to approximately 30 million rupees have been given by Dialog Axiata, while the land and the construction of the house is being done by the Ministry of Defence.”

“We have had to overcome many problems as this was our first variety show. The journey so far has been challenging. However, today it has become the most popular reality show with a great public response. Now it has become so popular that at least 450,000 to 500,000 families watch it every Friday and Saturday when it is aired,” stated Lakshman Hulugalla, concluding that together with the host the national television station Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation and the sponsor Dialog Axiata, the Ministry of Defence plans to take this concept forward to continue through to the next few years.










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