

Screening Of Common Differences

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The screening of Common Differences, a documentary film produced by Video Image was held recently. The production and the direction of the film were undertaken by Suren De Silva, Managing Director of Video Image and Daniel Ridicki, a well known director of documentaries from Croatia. Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development participated as the chief guest while prominent officials in the armed forces as well as other distinguished invitees graced the occasion.

Common Differences attempted to provide a balanced insight to the Sri Lanka ethnic conflict. It explored the reasons for and the development of conflict in Sri Lanka through interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. The film also opened up the question as to how Sri Lanka should proceed after end of the conflict.

The production team made a conscious decision of refraining from commentary, solely basing the documentary on the interviews that involved many political, academic, media and NGO stakeholders of Sri Lanka. The interviewees included Dr Rayappu Joseph, Bishop of Mannar; Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Secretary to the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development; Dr Jehan Perera, Executive Director at National Peace Council of Sri Lanka; Javed Yusuf; Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu, Executive Director at Centre for Policy Alternatives, Jeevan Thiagarajah, Chairman of the Institute for Human Rights; Journalists, Iqbal Athas and C A Chandraprema; Academics Dayan Athukoralage, Imran Furkan, CEO at Sri Lanka Press Institute, Stanley Samarasinghe, Professor at Tulane University in

Louisiana, USA; Politicians such as Vinayagamoorthy Muralitharan, Deputy Minister of Resettlement, Rajiva Wijesinghe, □Member of Parliament and Eran □Wickramaratne, Member of Parliament.

“The Idea Behind The Film Was To Simply Provide The Basis For A Sound Rational Discussion As To Where Do We Go From Here.”

Addressing the gathering during the beginning of the screening, Suren De Silva, Managing Director of Video Image said, “the war in Sri Lanka is over, Sri Lanka is a post war country. But is it a post conflict country as well? There are many different opinions about this question, ranging from claims that reconciliation is in progress to the quite opposite claims of nothing has been done in respect. As usual when there are polarized opinions in place, the focus is somewhere in between.” He went onto say that though a lot has been done, certain issues still remain and the question is ‘who is responsible in bringing about final reconciliation’. Though the Government acts as the first stakeholder in providing the framework for the reconciliation process, he stressed that all citizens of Sri Lanka, should also share in the responsibility.

“We decided to enter this arena to contribute to the process of reconciliation by producing a film that will provide a rational basis for further discussion. Discussion that will cultivate and pave the way to final reconciliation,” he further affirmed. “We make no accusations in our film, we do not give lectures. We do not even use our own words to tell the story. We simply provide the platform for different stakeholders to give us □their views.”

Daniel Ridicki, Director of the film moreover attested by saying, “the idea behind the film was to simply provide the basis for a sound rational discussion as to where do we go from here.”

The 52 minute long documentary was followed by a panel of discussion where the two directors along with some of the stakeholders who participated in the film answered questions from the gathered audience. Here Daniel Ridicki and Suren De Silva mentioned that they are planning on further distributing the film in other countries to create awareness while contemplating on creating a sequel for ‘Common Differences’ by focusing on the development of the country.

