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Youngsters talk the `Talk!'

Suraya Al-Attas

TELEVISION Airtime Services Sdn Bhd (TAS) is arguably the only local production company which has given young Malaysians the platform to express themselves.

Through such infotainment programmes as Golden Kids News, Golden Kids Club, Rice Mice, e-remaja and Golden Teen Stuff, the company has proven there's more to children's programming than cartoons.

And because it stays focused in what it does - producing television shows for young people - TAS has the luxury, to explore the many possibilities of children's programming.

One of its latest productions is Let's Talk!, an hour-long talk show a la David Letterman's The Late Night Show and Jay Leno's The Tonight Show, if you will.

Although the programme to be aired tonight over TV2 (8.30pm) is a one-off National Day special, TAS plans to subsequently develop it into a series.

Its president Sabri Abdul Rahman says: "Inspired by the good response of our other programmes, we've decided to come up with Let's Talk! We were looking for more programmes that would expose young people, even if they have no intention in pursuing a career in broadcasting.

"What we're doing is providing a training ground for the youth to become responsible, disciplined and confident in whatever fields they choose."

These young people who come into the studio on weekends and during school holidays are not only given the opportunity to be presenters but also trained to handle studio equipment as well as assist in post-production work.

On Let's Talk!, Sabri says it's a programme which features three presenters - Alene Jeyakumar, Khairul Azri Sabri and Noorjeehan Mohammed - speaking to 12 personalities from various fields.

The guests include hand and microsurgeon Dr V. Pathmanathan, syariah lawyer and Umno supreme council member Azalina Othman Said, Mount Everest climber M. Magendran, Malaysian AIDS Council president Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir as well as artistes Lo and Poetic Ammo.

Also featured are pre-recorded interviews with Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishamuddin Hussein and Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad took time off from his busy schedule to share his vision for the young people via e-mail.

"We were already at post-production stage when we received the reply from the Prime Minister. We were told he was on his way to Langkawi that day but he was kind enough to take the time to respond to our questions."

Playing around the National Day theme Keranamu Malaysia, the show, which is divided into three segments, discusses various topics concerning National Day and its history, careers, choices in life and ambitions with these personalities.

Studio director Rauf Abdullah says: "It was a very challenging show to do. We had to do a bit of juggling, trying to fit in 12 guests in an hour."

"Then there's also the fact that it was the first time the three presenters were taking on a major production. They've done smaller productions before but never anything as big as this."

He adds that the questions posed by Alene, Noorjeehan and Khairul Azri to the guests were essentially theirs and that the production team

assisted only by way of discussion and providing them with the profile of the personalities.

"They had only two weeks of training, after which they went through a series of mock interview sessions with some of us acting as the guests. I was quite worried initially but after seeing the finished product, I must say I'm proud of the way they handled it."

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