

SL has good potential to join global 4x4 circuit - RFC Chief

By Deepal V. Perera

The Chief Organizer of the world's number one hardcore off road sporting event, the Rain Forest Challenge (RFC) of Malaysia, announced that Sri Lanka has great potential to join the international Rainforest Challenge circuit.



The RFC's chief organizer, Luis Wee, was in Sri Lanka recently to witness the '4x4 Thulhiriya Jamboree'. He told Daily FT that he was amazed to observe Sri Lanka's terrain, which was perfect for RFC events, and the talent available among the participants.

Sri Lanka has all the natural settings needed to hold RFC events. However, there are certain vital factors that Sri Lanka should look into before joining the world circuit.

"It should be borne in mind that those who take part in RFC are mostly high end people. They spend a lot of money in preparing their vehicles and other things in order to take part. Therefore, the number one priority should be to ensure that, when they come into the host country for RFC competition, there should be a mechanism to ensure that the vehicles they import to the country are released on time. And when they leave the country after the event, the vehicles should be released for export as they leave." According to Lee, this is the main secret for the Rain Forest Challenge of Malaysia becoming world famous. The government of Malaysia has given its fullest cooperation, through the ministry of tourism, to ensure that mechanisms were in place for the needs of the competitors and their vehicles to be looked after.

Speaking on the Sri Lankan 4x4 talent, Mr. Luis said that he first came to know about Sri Lanka in 2005 when a Sri Lankan team took part in RFC in Malaysia.

"What I saw this year in this country is that the way your participants prepare their vehicles for the event is brilliant. I saw a forward trend in the way their vehicles are modified. By looking at this current trend, I am sure that within five to six years, Sri Lanka will be near the top of 4x4 racing. If you ask me about the Malaysian experience, we took many years to reach our present standard. Sri Lanka has reached that position in a short time.



Speaking of the Rain Forest Challenge, Mr. Luis said that RFC is the world's number one off road event, one in which, every year, people from the world over dream of participating.

"RFC came into being in 1996 at a time when the sport, and competition for the world famous Camel Trophy, were seen to be in decline. Today, after 13 years, RFC has become the global pinnacle of 4X4 sports, and every 4x4 sportsman's dream of participating and winning. We organize the RFC with three main motives in mind: to promote it as an adventure sport, to provide a world class competition, and to promote tourism," he said

According RFC, last year alone, 450 participants in 120 vehicles took part in the event. Each year, the RFC also attracts many foreign tourists, which brings in good revenue for the country.

Speaking of damage to the environment that can be caused by RFC events, Mr. Luis said that Sri Lanka and Malaysia are both situated near the equator, in monsoonal climates. RFC events do not cause much damage to the environment in such climates, as the rains help in reversing any adverse effects caused.