

Saluting Real Heroes: A spirit of whatever it takes

CNN-IBN



REAL HONOUR: Aamir Khan (L) honours Haneef Lakdawala.
Also seen: Rajdeep Sardesai, Nita Ambani.

Mumbai: To commemorate 60 years of Indian independence, CNN-IBN and IBN-7 launched a unique initiative called Real Heroes in 2007.

The initiative was an effort to recognise, acknowledge and celebrate ordinary Indians who made a difference to people's lives.

The 24 shortlisted candidates represent India's unsung heroes who showed great courage and perseverance in silently and selflessly contributing to the betterment of society.

They were ordinary people with extraordinary endeavours who dared to stand up and swim against the tide.

Simply because they believed in the power of will, hard work and faith.

On Monday evening, in a ceremony attended by the country's who's who, the triumph of human spirit was celebrated and the real heroes were awarded.

"This is truly a very special day for us. For much too long, Indian media has been criticized for being celebrity chasers and for being negative about everything," said CNN-IBN Editor-in-Chief Rajdeep Sardesai.

Spread across eight categories including, education, environment and wildlife conservation, 24 real Heroes, handpicked by the CNN-IBN's editorial team were honoured for their selfless efforts.

Said one of the awardees, social worker Haneef Lakhdawala, “Overarching purpose of our endeavour is to bring two communities together and to ensure there is peaceful coexistence. For that we create platforms where people and communities can come together. They can interact with each other.” [\[Read Haneef's Story\]](#)

Another achiever, Dr Subroto Das, said, “My wife and I suffered an accident in 1999 and were left to die on a highway for four-and-a-half-hours. But we survived and that’s when my wife said in the hospital that we were lucky to be alive and let’s ensure others do not die on highways. That’s what has driven us for nine years and in five states – ensuring others do not die on highways.” [\[Read Suboroto's story\]](#)

It was a ceremony befitting of the effort and was attended by pioneers from various fields. They included Reliance Industries’ Limited Chairman Mukesh Ambani, actor Aamir Khan and cricketer Sunil Gavaskar among others.

Music composer Pritam enthralled the crowd with some foot-tapping music.

And while the awards, the glamour and the music might just fade away from public memory, what will last is the spirit of these 24 men and women.