

THE STRAITS TIMES | 08 MAY 2017

From street fighter to top S'pore Poly graduate

Growing up, Mr Muhammad Alfiz Kambali never took an interest in his studies. Due to troubles at home, he often found himself mixing with the wrong crowd and was a fixture in street fights during his teenage years.

"Fights over various issues were common between my parents. The atmosphere was tense at home and I sought comfort in bad company," said the former Bedok South Secondary School student. "Street fights served as a means to channel my anger."

Mr Alfiz, now 28, has come a long way since, emerging as one of the top graduates at Singapore Polytechnic (SP) this year.

Last week, he graduated from the integrated events and project management diploma course with a perfect 4.0 grade point average (GPA), and was awarded the Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal and Cityneon Events Gold Medal.

"I am not as young as my classmates, and I knew what I wanted to achieve when I enrolled in this course," he said. "For me, I did not have the luxury of time to repeat or go back to school again. I knew that I had to put in more effort compared with my secondary school days in order to succeed."

Mr Alfiz left secondary school with an O-level certificate in 2006, but did not fare well at the national exam. He needed to re-take some subjects in order to qualify for a polytechnic course. Finding it troublesome to do so, he decided to work instead.

For two years before his national service commitment as a firefighter, he took up various jobs such as sorting letters and parcels, as well as working part-time at a coffee shop in Beach Road. After NS, he continued to work for another year.

Desiring a better future for himself and his family, he eventually decided to go back to school.

At 22, he did a Higher Nitec course in business studies (events management) at the Institute of Technical Education, where he graduated with a perfect GPA of 4.0.

Mr Alfiz was motivated to further his studies, after seeing how hard his father worked to support the family. "I thought that I could do my part and help him," he said.

He took up the integrated events and project management diploma course at SP

in 2014, at the age of 25.

Unfortunately, his father died of an illness before Mr Alfiz could begin his polytechnic education. "It did affect me, and I was not sure if I should carry on with my further studies," he said.

"However, my family and friends encouraged me, and I carried on."

Despite receiving offers from Nanyang Technological University and Singapore Management University, Mr Alfiz plans to work first before pursuing further studies.

He said work experience is important in the events management line.

"Working also allows me to better utilise the skills I have picked up in the classroom," he added.

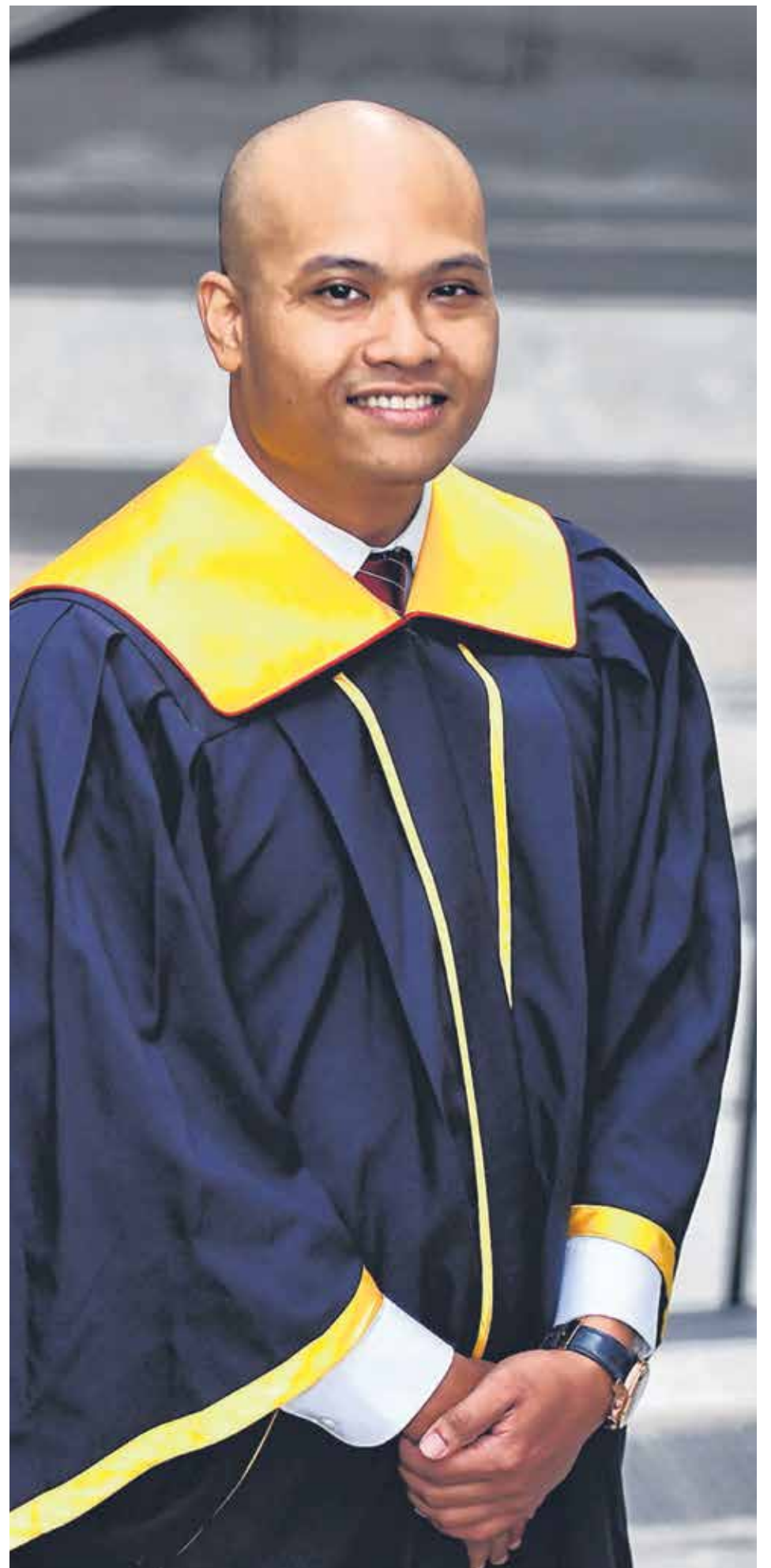
calyang@sph.com.sg



STAYING FOCUSED

I am not as young as my classmates, and I knew what I wanted to achieve when I enrolled in this course. For me, I did not have the luxury of time to repeat or go back to school again. I knew that I had to put in more effort compared with my secondary school days in order to succeed.

MR MUHAMMAD ALFIZ KAMBALI, on starting a diploma course at SP in 2014, at the age of 25.



As a teenager, Mr Muhammad Alfiz Kambali was not interested in school and often got into street fights. Last week, the 28-year-old graduated from Singapore Polytechnic with a perfect 4.0 grade point average, and was awarded the Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal and Cityneon Events Gold Medal. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI