

BY MARK MATHEN VICTOR

HAVING recently graduated from Universiti Putra Malaysia, 23-year-old Narresh Paramanathan is a growing presence on the digital landscape as a fitness advocate that has taken the road less travelled in the form of “street workouts” and calisthenics; fitness disciplines that incorporate gymnastic movements.

“In Malaysia, street workouts consist of acrobatic movements on the bars. I’m not keen on that. I’m interested in the other half of street workouts; building muscles and a good physique.”

Using social media not only as a tool to document his street workout fitness journey, Narresh hopes that he will also influence youngsters into adopting a healthier lifestyle.

“My goal is to influence youngsters to stop with excuses like ‘I don’t have time to go to the gym’ or ‘I don’t have money to go to the gym,’” he says.

“You don’t have to go to the gym; there are parks everywhere. You don’t need anything to do a push-up, just a floor.”

Is your family athletic?

Not at all. My father used to take care of himself when he was younger. As in, he’ll jog, do push-ups, lift dumbbells, etc. He was a karate and aikido practitioner, with a black belt in both. He was also a prison officer, so he had to keep himself fit. That’s the only background that he had; no coaches or anything. Just martial arts. So, I’m not really from an athletic background, and I was never an athlete either. I moved like a ghost in school. Up until the age of 14, I was a bit overweight.

When did you start getting into calisthenics?

I got into fitness when I was 16 years old. When I was overweight at 14, I started to do a lot of jogging and I lost weight. Then I started doing push-ups, here and there, as I didn’t know anything much. Until I was 18, exercise was inconsistent; I often started and stopped, before repeating the cycle.

After I started at UPM, I resumed again. It was at this point that I started researching more into fitness. I went through countless trials and errors to find the right diet, exercises, etc. In 2015, I finally understood the inner-workings of calisthenics.

Why did you choose to go with exercising outside of the gym instead of inside?

When most who go to the gym ask me for advice, I share. So, I’m not against getting a gym membership, but it goes back to how I started. I practised calisthenics because it was free. I was

Fluid like water

> Narresh Paramanathan is pushing calisthenics towards the younger generation as an alternative to gym memberships



Narresh explains that the fitness aspect of street workouts is not widely seen in Malaysia.



After several years of working out, Narresh has stopped counting calories.



Most of Narresh’s workouts are done on the ground and in the confines of his house.

TRIVIA

Favourite cheat meal: Nasi lemak goreng kambing, pizzas and white chocolates.

Hobby: Sleeping and eating.

Favourite source of protein: Chicken breast.

Favourite workout music: PSYCHO.unit and ‘epic’ music.

Biggest inspiration: Paramanathan, his father.

seeing changes with just calisthenics, and I wasn’t hitting the gym. Then I began asking myself, “What would happen if I did more?” If I can get the same results by not going to the gym, I don’t have to go to the gym.

How do you come up with exercise routines? Do you target a specific area? Or is it just a manic, random combination off-the-top of your head?

I split the workouts accordingly over seven days. One day will be cardio, and my cardio is not jogging, cause I really hate to run. So I’ll do full workouts in a cardio manner: this is called High Interval Intensity Training (HIIT). HIIT is very subjective, there are many ways of doing it.

How I do HIIT is I mix up squats, push-ups, and whatever else that involves calisthenics. That’s just one day. For the rest of the six days, I focus on different parts of my body.

How do you stay motivated?

Frankly speaking, I’m not a motivated person.

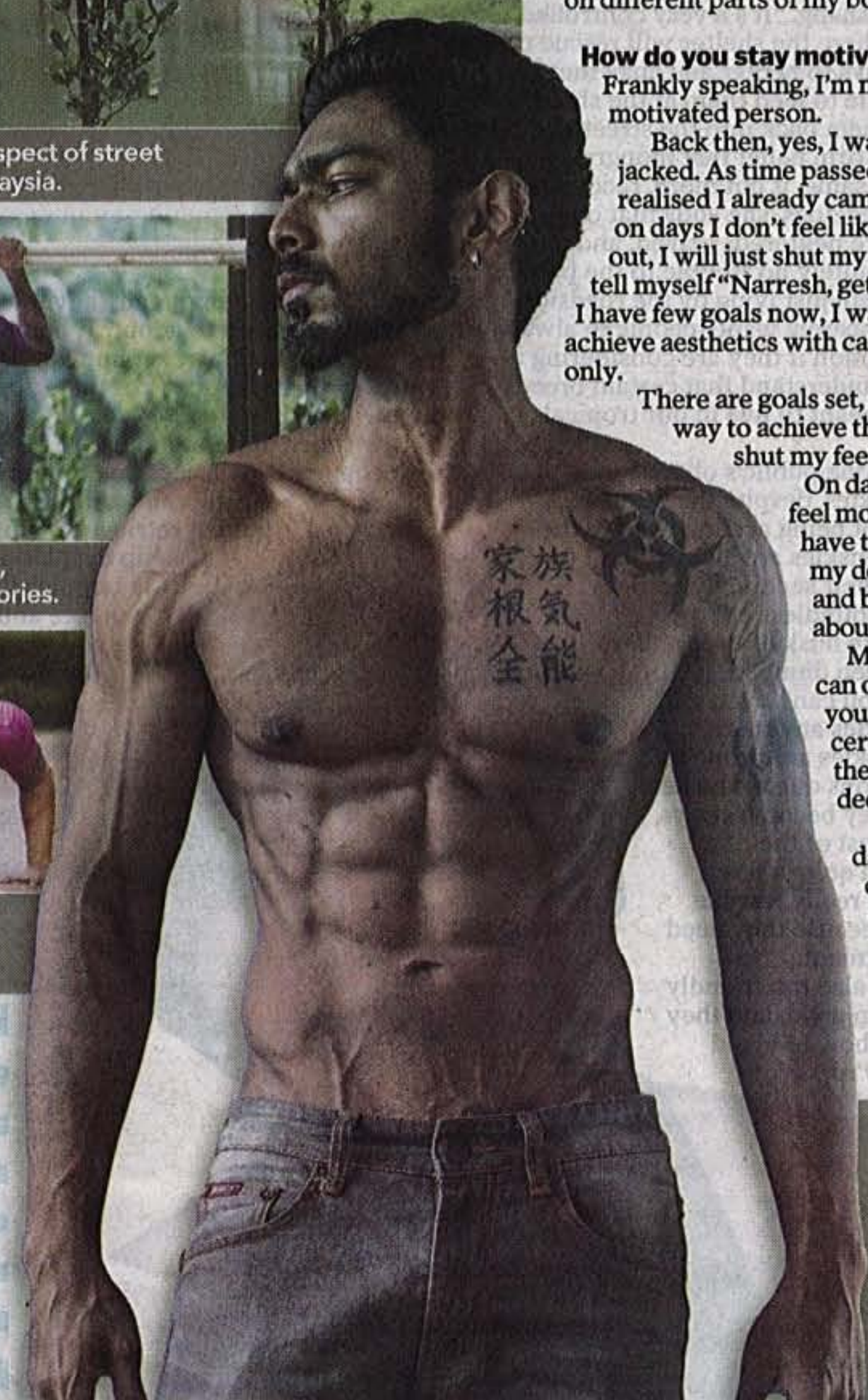
Back then, yes, I wanted to get jacked. As time passed by, I realised I already came so far, and on days I don’t feel like working out, I will just shut my feelings and tell myself “Narresh, get this done”. I have few goals now, I want to achieve aesthetics with calisthenics only.

There are goals set, and the only way to achieve them is to shut my feelings.

On days I don’t feel motivated, I just have to switch on my dedication and be disciplined about it.

Motivation can only bring you up to a certain level, but the rest is dedication.

There are days I really don’t feel like doing any thing, but if I skip this day, I’m a step behind my goals.



ZULFADHLI ZAKI / THE SUN

‘I don’t lead a healthy lifestyle.’

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