

UMS graduate proves disability no barrier to education

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By Shalina R.

KOTA KINABALU: Thanks to his late grandfather's words, Sarawakian Maluwis Maratis became the first in his family to obtain a degree despite having cerebral palsy.

"What pushed me was my grandfather. He used to tell me that he felt left out because he did not take the opportunity to study. So as his grandchild, I felt a sense of responsibility," he said whilst trying to hold back tears.

The 27-year-old Kampung Silat boy from Lawas did not once mention about his cerebral palsy, a brain malformation condition occurring among children, throughout the interview.

He only reminisced about his parents who lived a quiet farming life after leaving behind the path towards gaining a higher learning education.

"For me, our background is not a barrier, the most important thing is we have the spirit, that is all.

There will be challenges that we might have to face but if we just set our mindset to that level and just focus, then the rest will be history," added the fourth child out of five siblings.

In primary school, Maluwis read of how academic opportunities were awarded to students who were involved in sports.

He then set that as his future goal, began to participate in sports with the best of his capabilities before eventually developing a niche in the 100 and 200 meters athletics.

Maluwis did not let his poor educational performance in primary and secondary school steer him away from his target, and eventually, he represented Sarawak in the East Malaysia Paralympic Sports circuit championship at Labuan in May 2007, represented Sabah in para circuit sports championship at Likas Sports Complex here in April



Sarawakian Maluwis was one of the main sources of inspiration for Johorean Nurul to complete her studies in Bachelor of International Business at UMS.

2016, and represented Sarawak at the 18th Malaysian Paralympiad Games in Kuching on August 2016.

"To me that is my chance because opportunities that are not used well will be missed just like that. I am still young so that is probably the only chance I have. If I let go of it, I may not be able to get it again," he said.

"This is just the beginning as there is still a long way to go. Am just a fresh graduate with no experience yet. Just believe in yourself. It is important to have efforts because without it there will be failure," added Maluwis who accepted his Bachelor of Business (Hons) International Business scroll from Chief Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Musa Aman during the UMS 18th Convocation Ceremony here yesterday.

The Sarawakian, who also acquired a Diploma in Business Studies (Management) from Mukah Sarawak Polytechnic, hopes to become a lecturer one day.

"I don't know if I can be a lecturer, but if I just push, then maybe I can. Just take the chance," he added.

Maluwis inspired journey also became the source of motivation for

his course mate, 23-year-old Nurul Afiah Abdul Karim from Ulu Tiram in Johor.

The sports girl almost gave up her higher learning education dreams after a life-altering injury that permanently affected both of her knee caps at the age of 19 during her first semester at UMS.

"For a sports person like me, when the legs can no longer be used, I felt there was no more hope for me," shared Nurul.

However, the eldest child out of four siblings, aged between 13 to 20, kept her chin up as she did not want to disappoint her parents and waste the money invested in her education in Sabah.

A week after giving birth, Nurul bravely left her child with her mother in Johor,

her husband in Kuala Lumpur and went back to Sabah to complete her studies in UMS alone.

"I wanted to give up but when I look at my siblings... I wanted to be an example," said the Johorean, whose parents run a family restaurant business.

After losing a semester because of her injury, Nurul ended up in the same batch as Maluwis and became fast friends.

"I was born normal, but for me Maluwis is more than good. Maluwis is my junior. When I first joined his batch, I didn't have anyone. He has been beside me a lot. During a group presentation he will include my name first," she said.

"Everyday, even with his legs, he will go jogging," shared the Johorean.

"It's just exercise," Maluwis quickly added whilst looking at Nurul, who simply smiled back at him.

Nurul hopes to become a lecturer or motivational speaker in the future.

"I am interested to share so that others will not drop their spirit," she said.