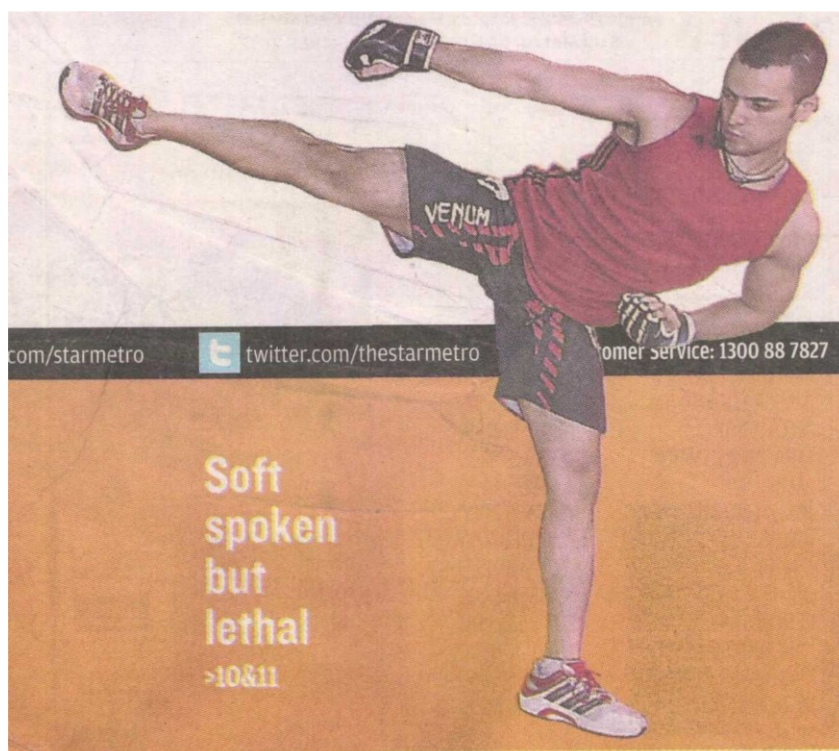




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Soft
spoken
but
lethal
>10&11

Kan get enough of fitness

Young fitness instructor becoming a hot favourite with gym members

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ON STAGE, he's a lean mean kicking machine. But when he's done, Mohammad Kanan (Kan) is a soft-spoken regular guy who, despite his slightly intimidating presence, is really friendly and approachable.

After all, this 27-year-old Iranian who dons mixed martial arts (MMA) gear and grappling gloves to portray the look of a lethal fighter, has to play his role as a body combat instructor.

Body combat is an MMA-inspired class to music and is a product of a New Zealand-based fitness company, Les Mills.

Though a class may appear as a disorganised affair where arms and legs are flailing everywhere, Kanan knows his stuff and does his best to demonstrate the best techniques to his participants.

The fitness buff has been doing karate and muay thai since his early 20s but his love for sports came at a much earlier age.

"I was always an active kid and became a swimming instructor when I was 18.

"But I always wanted to challenge myself and started competing in triathlons shortly after," he explained.

When most 18-year-olds were busy

partying and courting young ladies, Kanan enrolled himself in the Iranian military where he endured two grueling months of training in the desert.

"That really exposed me to danger because we used guns and practised simulated war fighting techniques but they seemed very real," he said.

When he was 23 and had enough of weaponry, Kanan decided to move to Malaysia to further his studies in information technology at UCSI University, but that didn't mean but he didn't have time to pursue his passion for fitness.

"I came to Malaysia because at that time, my friends who were already here told me that this was a great country.

"It was a good break to come to a country where I didn't have to worry about guns and grenades!" said Kanan with a chuckle.

In all seriousness, he feels like life is easier and safer here.

"I'm happy here because of the lifestyle and culture.

"I think that Malaysia gives me more opportunities to pursue my career in fitness and other interests."

But, when Kanan isn't shouting

orders at his students to jab, hook and uppercut, he still thinks about his home country often and wishes that his family could be here with him.

"I see them about once a year and my mother has come to visit me too. What I really miss from home is also my horse, Sandia, a beautiful black horse that I used to ride every day. She's still around and I don't think there's a way to bring her into Malaysia," he remarked.

While Kanan remains coy about his availability, he plans to stay in Malaysia for the foreseeable future.

"It's a beautiful country and the people are laidback.

"I've made many friends here and can say that I've adapted to the culture.

"I can now understand the local lingo when I initially thought it sounded funny during my first year here, but that's what makes this place special.

"I love the food because it's delicious and very affordable. However, that poses another problem for someone in my line of work — I need to eat healthy!" he exclaimed.

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Health focus for Iranian

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Most of the time, he does try to include a healthy array of food in his diet such as lean chicken, fish and beef with vegetables, as well as about five to six scoops of whey protein a day.

"I have to constantly keep the calories coming in to keep in shape.

"Mostly it is from the protein but I do supplement it with plenty of healthy snacks which I take in between my meals.

"I'd probably be as thin as a stick if I didn't take the time to feed myself properly!" he said.

Kanan's interest to become an instructor was sparked in 2008.

"I took the fitness courses and I developed further interest to pursue other fitness programmes. Now, I'm also a certified TRX suspension and abs, buns and thighs (ABT) instructor," he said.

However, becoming a group exercise instructor wasn't easy, especially when it was to teach people from another country.

Some participants were sceptical about his performance but he persistently underwent more training to improve himself.

As a result, he's become quite a hot favourite among the group exercise gym members.

He teaches about 11 classes a week and that adds up to a whopping 12 hours, not including his own training regime.

Yet, he still manages to find the

It's challenging because you have to maintain that great energy level and always be in high spirits as you're the one in the spotlight.

—MOHAMMAD KANAN

time between work and study (even though they both involve both physical and mental labour respectively).

"My daily routine is pretty much teach, study, eat and sleep. Having said that, 11 classes is just an average for most group exercise instructors because some teach up to 17 classes a week.

"It's challenging because you have to maintain that great energy level and always be in high spirits as you're the one in the spotlight; you have to motivate and inspire your participants to push further," he said.

One would think that Kanan may have done it all in terms of fitness and instructing, but this energetic chap who is addicted to the adrenaline highs of contact sports, wants to train professionally in MMA.

"It's a popular sport worldwide and seeing that I have some martial arts background, I really want to give it a go.

"After I finish my studies and if things go well, then I'll pursue it," he said.



Kan: My daily routine is pretty much teach, study, eat and sleep. It's challenging because you have to maintain that great energy level as you're the one in who has to motivate and inspire your participants to push further.



One, two: Mohd Kanan showing the right moves to the participants.