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thesundaytimes April 29, 2012

Trapped man dies in burning flat

Neighbour alerted 62-year-old to escape, but victim couldn't find keys to door and gate

Ng Kai Ling

Sales executive Teddy Sim called out frantically to his 62-year-old neighbour to leave his burning flat early yesterday morning.

But the man replied that he could not find his keys to open the door and gate.

The man, who lived alone in

the two-room flat in Block 18, Jalan Sultan, died in the incident at about 2am yesterday. His identity could not be confirmed as of last night.

Mr Sim, 34, said he had smelled something burning, and left his 16th-floor flat to check.

Realising that the fire was in the flat next door, he banged on

the door and yelled to the occupant to come out.

"He said, 'Coming, coming.' He sounded like he was going to come out, so I went to alert the other neighbours," said Mr Sim.

When the man did not emerge, Mr Sim shouted for him to hurry, and tried to open the door.

"He was still inside. He said he couldn't find his keys," said Mr Sim, who added that both the gate and door to the flat were locked.

By then, the smoke had grown so thick that he and other residents were forced to retreat to the far end of the corridor.

Firefighters from the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) put out the flames in about 10 minutes using a fire extinguisher and water jet.

The man was found dead in the living room. The SCDF is investigating the cause of the blaze, which did not affect neighbouring flats.

"I feel sorry for him. I really wanted to help him but I couldn't do much," said Mr Sim.

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Top Japan honour for Jayakumar

Phua Mei Pin

Former senior minister S. Jayakumar is being conferred Japan's highest award for foreigners.

He will receive the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on May 8.

The award is being presented to Professor Jayakumar "in recognition of his significant contributions" to strengthening bilateral ties in the political, economic and cultural spheres, the Japanese Embassy in Singapore said in a statement today.

Prof Jayakumar will be one of five recipients of the award at the ceremony.

The others are former British prime minister John Major, Vietnam's former deputy prime minister and foreign minister Pham Gia Khiem, former director-general of the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation Jacques Diouf, and chairman of Tata Group Ratan Naval Tata.

Prof Jayakumar is the fourth Singaporean to receive the prestigious award.

Former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew received the honour in 1967, followed by former ambassador to Japan Lim Chin Beng in 2004 and Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong last year.

The statement noted that Prof Jayakumar played a key role in negotiations for the Japan-Singapore

Economic Partnership Agreement, which were concluded in 2002.

The trade pact is the first for Japan, and led to an increase in trade between the two countries.

Prof Jayakumar also played a leading role in the 1994 launch of the Japan-Singapore Symposium.

At the regional level, he supported stronger ties between Japan and Asean.

While he was foreign minister, Singapore helped push for the launch of the Asean Regional Forum, which brings together Asean members and dialogue partners, including Japan, to discuss regional security issues and build mutual confidence.

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Mr Lim Siong Guan, 65, who headed the Singapore Civil Service from 1999 to 2005, received a Distinguished Alumni Award from his alma mater, the University of Adelaide, for his long service to the nation, yesterday at the National University of Singapore Cultural Centre. He is now group president at Government of Singapore Investment Corp.

Lim Siong Guan gets award from alma mater

Former head of the Singapore Civil Service, Mr Lim Siong Guan, has received a Distinguished Alumni Award from his alma mater, the University of Adelaide, for his long service to the nation.

Mr Lim, who is now group president of the Government of Singapore Investment Corp, graduated from the South Australian university in 1969 with a mechanical engineering degree.

He was honoured at a graduation ceremony for some 180 graduates of the school yesterday at a packed National University of Singapore Cultural Centre.

In giving the award to Mr Lim, the university highlighted his 40-year career in the civil service.

He started in the sewerage branch of the then Public Works Department as an engineer after graduation. He subsequently rose to become permanent secretary of various ministries, including those of defence, education and finance.

Mr Lim also headed the civil service from 1999 to 2005.

"His life has been one of continual service to the people of Singapore based upon the learned skills he attributes to the University of

Adelaide - that of being a hard-working individual whose potential went beyond the attainment of a degree in one field," said a university representative at the ceremony.

Mr Lim told the graduates yesterday that earning a degree was not the end of their hard work.

The 65-year-old confessed to not knowing anything when he was posted to the Singapore Armed Forces and the then Junior Flying Club in the 1970s, but he was willing to learn and was able to gain the confidence of others through his efforts.

"Build a reputation for hard work, integrity, trustworthiness and reliability. Opportunity comes to those who are able, ready and prepared," he said.

Ng Kai Ling