Master of Technology in Knowledge Engineering puts graduate David Low on the right track in setting up his own business

BY JUNE MAK

Imagine a chatbot that not only have the answers to frequently-asked questions, but can also continuously build its knowledge base by keeping track of questions it cannot answer.

This smart chatbot was developed by Pand.ai, a Singapore-based artificial intelligence (AI) start-up, for an insurance company in Singapore in 2017.

Pand.ai was co-founded in 2106 by Mr David Low Jia Wei, a graduate of National University of Singapore's Institute of Systems Science's (NUS-ISS) Master of Technology (MTech) in Knowledge Engineering. The MTech programme is now known as MTech in Intelligent Systems.

Mr Low, 33, who took the MTech degree course part-time, recalls how the course had prepared him in terms of technical capabilities and business thinking. The course, which involves hands-on coding, focuses on application and case studies. Students learn how to think outside the box in coming up with solutions.

Students are also encouraged to participate in competitions and hackathons to put what they have learnt in the classroom into practice. A hackathon is an event where programmers, students and other experts come together for a short period of time to collaborate on a project.

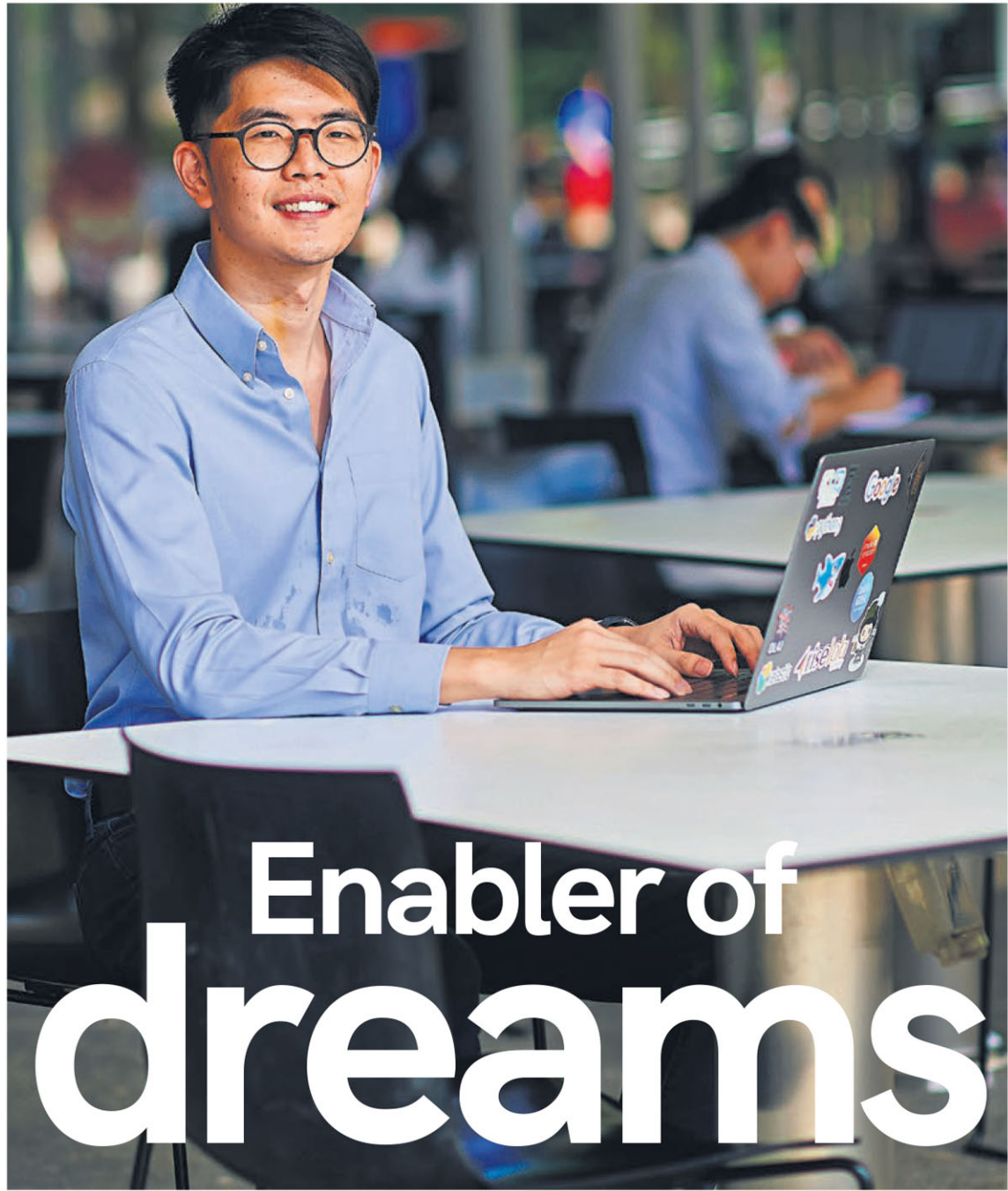Mr Low and his classmates represented NUS and Singapore in an international data science competition in Paris in 2016. They emerged the top among Asian and American teams.

Mr Low believes he was able to land a job with Government Technology Agency (GovTech) five years ago because of the knowledge and experience he gained from the postgraduate programme.

During his one-and-a-half year's stint at GovTech, he noticed the trend of companies starting to appreciate the usefulness of AI. That was also when he met Pand.ai co-founder Mr Chuang Shin Wee. The two of them had exchanged ideas for over a year before deciding to start the company together in 2016.

Besides the full- and part-time duration options of the course, there is also a stackable route through the NUS-ISS Stackable Graduate Certificate Programme in Artificial Intelligence for those who prefer taking modular courses towards an MTech degree at their own pace.

Enabler of dreams

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