



PETALING JAYA: Leftenan Muda Chan Ming Youn beat all the odds to achieve his aim to become a member of one of the world's toughest military units – Gerup Gerak Khas or Special Service Group. The 25-year-old from Setapak, who graduated from Tunku Abdul Rahman University of Management and Technology (TAR UMT), earned his “green beret” on Sunday after passing 12 weeks of harsh and gruelling training.

“My parents were deadset against me joining the military, otherwise I would have done so soon after my SPM. They wanted me to get a degree and a job related to what I studied. “I had constant arguments with them when I insisted on joining the armed forces because it is my childhood dream. “I want to serve and protect my country in the most noble way I know,” he said in an interview yesterday.

To appease his parents, Chan, who is the youngest of three siblings, took up accountancy at TAR UMT and obtained a bachelor's degree. While studying for his degree, he signed up as a reservist with the Territorial Army Regiment to fulfil his yearning to be a serviceman. As the longing grew with his stint as an army volunteer, he decided to apply to join the army as a cadet officer in 2022. Upon passing the interview and undergoing regular army training for nine months, he was briefly posted to the 2nd Royal Ranger Regiment before he set his mind to enrol in February as a candidate in the commando unit, which is known through its Malay acronym GGK.

He was then put through the GGK's basic training, an exercise that determines whether a candidate qualifies to make it as an elite member of the special forces before he is assigned to undergo other specialised skills in weaponry, parachuting and close-quarters combat to become a full-fledged commando. Recounting his experience during his 12-week training stint at the Sungai Udang Army Camp in Melaka, Chan said it was the toughest moments he had ever undergone in his life despite his love for the military. Soon after the exercise began, his body was in immense pain and aching all over and then riddled with blisters, bruises and torn skin. He said the most difficult task he faced was a 160km run with other recruits that left the soles of his feet inflamed and torn.

“In the jungle, we were to survive on very little food, and went hungry. When we ran out of supplies, we had to feed ourselves with whatever we could find in the forest such as monitor lizards and pythons. “It was beyond what I had ever imagined. “The training will break you both mentally and physically but that is what it takes to be an elite member of the special forces and to make us resilient. “I almost lost my mind and had thoughts of giving up halfway through the training but the comradeship of my fellow recruits and the constant support of my trainers kept me going.

“The camaraderie was amazing. We were united as a unit and there was no differentiating anyone by race. “We were like brothers who watched over each other's backs and ensured we stayed sane. This was the greatest thing I will never forget,” he said.

On Sunday, Chan received his green beret, blue lanyard and a dagger, which qualified him as commando, from 21st GGK commander Mejar-Jen Adi Ridzwan Abdullah in a graduation ceremony at the Sungai Udang camp. Chan said his parents who were present were pleased to see him in good health.

“I know they are proud of me although all they asked me was if I had eaten and in good health. Those words were enough to affirm their support. “During the tough training, my thoughts were also on my parents who had raised me and I just did not want to let them down. “That too kept me motivated,” he said.

When contacted, Mejar-Jen Adi Ridzwan said Chan is the first Malaysian Chinese in decades to pass out as a commando. “He had applied to undergo the tough training moreover, and was not assigned to it. This is very admirable and he proved himself very well. “The last time we had Malaysian Chinese commandos was almost 20 years ago. There were many of them in the 1970s and 1980s. “Hence, we are seeing a revival of Malaysian Chinese returning to serve the army like how their predecessors did. “We are happy to see this and we hope more non-Malays will join the armed forces,” he said.