One year after Kallang slashings...

They were the victims of one of the most vicious robberies in recent times, in which a gang of seven Sarawakians went on a rampage on May 29 last year, slashing three men and killing one. The attack was so brutal that one lost four fingers while another almost had both hands severed.

Seven have been arrested for the attacks while one remains at large.

The Straits Times speaks to the three survivors one year on.

‘The doctor said I’d never do push-ups. I proved her wrong’

By MAVIS TUIH

HE HAD survived a vicious attack by a gang of Sarawakians robbers that cost him four fingers on his left hand.

But for athletic 20-year-old Ang Lun Hong, one of the worst moments after the horrific ordeal was when his doctor told him he would never be able to do push-ups again.

A year on from the attack, the full-time national serviceman has proved her wrong.

Not only did he manage 10 push-ups on his first try in January, he also went on to complete the demanding week-long basic diving course under the Naval Diving Unit.

As well as diving, the course involved running, swimming and circuit training.

Last month, Mr Ang was also singed out by Chief of Defence Force, Tan Sin Hong in the Ministry of Defence’s monthly Pioneer magazine for pushing himself to complete the gruelling course “despite the odds being stacked against him”.

His achievement came in spite of the horrific injuries he suffered after the robbers pounced at around midnight on May 29 last year.

The attack took place while he was walking home from Kallang MRT station, just three minutes from his Sims Drive home, after an evening out with friends.

Seven members of the gang have been arrested and four have been dealt with - one was given two years’ jail and six strokes of the cane for attempted robbery while three were each sentenced to six years’ jail and 13 strokes of the cane for gang robbery. Three of the seven face murder charges.

An eighth man remains at large.

Mr Ang, a former captain of Raffles Institution’s canoe team, was hacked in multiple places, and had half his palm cut off. The cuts missed his spinal cord by a mere 0.1cm and he was left with scars - scars as long as four fingers - on his back, neck and head.

He lay bleeding for seven hours on a grass patch along Sims Way before he was spotted.

Mr Ang endured a 27-hour operation to patch his palm, but doctors had to amputate his fingers two weeks later when gangrene set in. During the six weeks in hospital, he went through three operations to close his wounds. A year on, the wounds have healed but the scars remain.

A faint mark now runs across half his face, from the nose up to the outer corner of his left eye. Deeper, raised scars are found on his head, neck and back.

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Downgraded to a clerical staff after the attack, Mr Ang fought to complete the basic diving course - going through all the rope climbing component.

He was also exempted from push-ups - but thought why not try, and when he could do it, he was so happy," he recalled, breaking into a smile. "I also thought 'Doctor, I proved you wrong.'"

Now, he can even do chin-ups using a special hook attached to his left wrist, a weight-lifter's dream.

"I can do almost anything now," he said. "The benefits of the operation may not be enough to outweigh the physical recovery and the stress it'll put on my parents again."

If he were to undergo the transplant, it would be to help him type, get a driver's licence and hopefully fulfil his childhood dream of becoming a pilot.

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