



BIG GAME HUNTING... Majid (standing fourth from right) on one of his hunting trips

of Malaya – the first local person to hold the post.

His career continued to develop and in 1969, he was appointed the director of planning and research in the Ministry of Health. Two years later, he became the director-general of Health.

It happened rather unexpectedly as it was Ungku Omar, then director of the Institute for Medical Research, who was being groomed to be the next director-general. But he died suddenly of a heart attack at the age of 39.

As director-general, he was set the task of developing rural health service under the Second Malaysia Plan. He set up about 1,000 midwife clinics, 64 sub-health clinics and 26 main-health centres all over the country's outback areas.

Not an arm-chair operator, he made frequent trips to check on the progress on which he had to give a monthly report to Tun Abdul Razak who had succeeded Tunku Abdul Rahman as Prime Minister in 1971.

Such trips involved riverine boat rides and helicopters to access the interiors of Sabah and Sarawak.

He recalls a flight by helicopter in Sarawak when smoke seeped into the aircraft. There was apparently a short-circuit and only the quick reaction of the pilot saved the day – and his life.

Majid was also involved in a big way in the development of the General Hospital.

Understandably, it is with great sadness that he watches the GH, which is the largest hospital in the region, being decentralised. He feels strongly that money consideration due to the value of the land where

the GH is sited does not justify the move.

Its mammoth size has drawn both criticisms and compliments since its opening. Majid was director of planning and research in the Health Ministry in 1969 and therefore was involved in the planning of the hospital.

He offers no apology for its size which, he says, was meant to be big because it was to be the nation's medical referral centre. "Even today, the GH is the only hospital in the country that has a radiotherapy centre."

Burrowing into his mental recesses, he remembers that the GH took years to build beginning in the 1960s during Tunku's time.

The 800-bedded hospital cost \$52 million.

Majid is the best person to throw some light on the GH which has a multitude of patients – from the poorest to the country's top leaders and rulers.

It was designed by a UK architect firm, Joyce and Wells. The partners were David Joyce and Mark Wells. Their design was the best, chosen in an international competition.

Joyce graduated from St Catherine's College, University of Cambridge, where Tunku Abdul Rahman studied. Wells was the son of a professor of surgery in Liverpool University where Majid did his Master's degree in orthopaedic surgery in 1957.

While on the project, Joyce developed more long-term ties with this country. He met and fell in love with a secretary of the GH who happened to be Majid's sister-in-law. They later married.

Joyce stayed back to super-



I CAUGHT A FISH THIS BIG... Tunku has his own "big catch" story to tell to Tan Sri Majid (right) when they met at the West Pacific Orthopaedic Association Meeting in 1973

vised the construction while Wells left for home. Hijias Kasturi, an established architect now, worked for Joyce in those days.

MAJID could have become an academic as vice-chancellor of the UKM. Prime Minister Tun Razak, who wanted him to set up its medical faculty, offered him the position but Majid did not see the need to relinquish his post as director-general of Health.

He recalls: "UKM was spawned at a meeting in the Institute for Medical Research. Among those present were Tun Razak, the late Ungku Omar, the director of the Institute for Medical Research; the late Tun Dr Ismail who was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs; the late Tan Sri Syed Nasir, who was the director of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and myself.

"I told Tun Razak that I could set up the medical faculty from my position as DG of Health. There was no need for me to be the VC of the university."

Thus, he played a major role in the setting up of the Basic

Sciences Department which encompassed Anatomy, Physiology, Bio-chemistry and Pathology. "All these were located within the GH compound in Jalan Raja Muda.

"The hospital assistants' quarters had to make way for them. And the students' hostel was built on the plot of land that used to be the burial ground for unclaimed bodies from the GH mortuary."

Majid also designated GH as a teaching hospital. He says: "The set-up was not new. Singapore GH was already being used as a teaching hospital. It was ideal as a teaching hospital because it has patients cutting across all levels of society. So, students were able to study, first-hand, a wide range of diseases."

The architect for the UKM's Basic Sciences Department was Tengku Robert Hamzah, the younger brother of Tengku Razaleigh, former Finance Minister and Parti Semangat Melayu 1946 leader. UKM opened in the early 1970s.

Besides the Edward VII's Medical College, Majid has