

Hasmah) before graduating in the first batch in 1946. "Our Chancellor at that time was Malcolm Macdonald," he says (not to be confused with the Arsenal and England centre forward) "the Commissioner General of Southeast Asia and the son of Ramsay Macdonald, Britain's first Labour Prime Minister. He was a very flamboyant and informal character who would come out to play badminton with the students in the quad."

Bloody sucker!

His first job was as a houseman at KL's General Hospital, working under the beady gaze of the State surgeon, Jack Cameron and Chief anaesthetist, Dr Allen. It was a form of on-the-job training that would make modern medics groan with disbelief. "We worked in a very make-do environment because the equipment was simply unavailable," he says. "I remember one of the first operations I helped with. It was a hysterectomy and there was a problem with staunching the blood flow. We tried three different suction machines but they were all out of order. Finally, the surgeon turned to me and exclaimed in exasperation, 'Well, Majid, it looks like the only sucker working in this bloody hospital is me!'"

After becoming a Registrar he applied to Edinburgh to do his fellowship of surgeons. Despite receiving a Queen's Scholarship the application became bogged down in bureaucratic red tape (proving that some things never change). When he finally arrived in Scotland he claims that the culture shock was not that great. "We were pretty used to the Scots already because there were so many of them in Malaysia, especially in the Railway Department where my father worked. In fact, my introduction to golf came via caddying for the Scottish engineers at the old course in Sentul."

Tan Sri Majid had one more spell in the UK from 1956-58, specialising in Orthopedics at Liverpool. So he was away from home during the Merdeka celebrations in 1957, although he did do his bit by being outside Malaysia's newly opened High Commission in Trafalgar Square and getting his 'photo taken for London newspaper the Evening Standard. It was during this time that he realised his biggest challenge on returning would be tackling Polio, TB and trauma cases. "We started a mass vaccination programme and although medically it was a simple matter, the scale of the effort was a major achievement," he says.

From public to private

After retiring from the Ministry he turned his considerable energies to the private sector and in the early 1980s became linked with Malaysia's fledgling private education industry. "My involvement with Inti was a fairly minor one," he says modestly, "but I'm very proud of the way it's taken off." The college, which is now listed on the Main Board of the KLSE, started out with a small office in Brickfields and just 39 students. "All credit has to go to INTI's President, Tan Yew Sing. He's very shrewd and hardworking," observes Tan Sri Majid. He also believes that private education will continue to grow in tandem with the government's efforts. "As the national pie expands, the days when higher education was just for the lucky