

17/06/2004

Tunku had brief stint at MCKK

By Tunku Yusuf Jewa

IT appears that there is a bone of contention between Abdul Razak Ali's letter "Tunku old boy of Malay College" (NST, June 3) and Tunku Ismail Jewa's letter "MCKK should check with historians" (NST, June 6). The real position is something that I wish to put in order now so that the matter can be put to rest.

I remember a few years before my father, Tunku Md Jewa (elder brother of Tunku Abdul Rahman), died in 1977, he did mention to me about the Tunku attending MCKK just for a few days and leaving after a misunderstanding with some members of the Perak royal family because they were rather "war-like" when it came to playing football.

It is better for me to give a flashback regarding the Tunku's early years in school.

His formal education started when he was around six years old, when he attended the only Malay elementary school in Alor Star in 1909.

Later, he progressed to the English-medium school which was opened by Mohamad Iskandar, the late father of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Right from the beginning, the Tunku's mother (Manjalara) was trying hard to keep him out of mischief by sending him to a proper school but sad to say, he spent more time outside the school than inside.

Another older brother, Tunku Yusuf, who had just returned from England in 1913, suggested to his mother that "Awang", as the Tunku was called by his mother, be sent to a boarding school in Bangkok to ensure better discipline.

His mother agreed and so he was sent to Debsurin School in Bangkok and there he was to remain until the end of 1914. While in Bangkok, he was fascinated with the bright lights and night life rather than with his studies.

He was recalled home by his mother who finally had to decide what to do with the "little rascal". A discussion was held and my father finally chose two schools - the Malay College Kuala Kangsar (MCKK) and Penang Free School.

In those days, MCKK was the better choice for sons of aristocrats.

So the Tunku was sent to the MCKK, but much to the disappointment of everyone, he was there only for a few days for reasons which I just disclosed.

After that, the Tunku never mentioned MCKK or claimed to be associated with that school.

Even the late Tan Sri Mubin Sheppard, who wrote the Tunku's autobiography, did not mention anything about the Tunku's brief encounter with MCKK.

Tunku was later admitted into the Penang Free School and stayed there from 1915-1919. In 1920, he sailed for England and soon landed at the St Catherine College - one of the 17 colleges that formed Cambridge University.

Judging from the letter by Razak, it obviously appears that MCKK is proud to be associated with a celebrity like Tunku Abdul Rahman as he was the first Prime Minister, even if he had attended MCKK for just a day.

TUNKU YUSUF JEWa

Kota Baru

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