

THE Malaysia-India Heritage Foundation, established to build a corpus of knowledge on important aspects of heritage shared by the people of Malaysia and India, takes great pride in memorialising Tun Hussein Onn (pic), the country's third prime minister, on the occasion of his centennial birth anniversary (Feb 12, 1922).

He joined the Johor Military Forces as a cadet in 1940, and trained to be a soldier at the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun.

The military training instilled in him survival skills in the battlefield such as discipline, integrity and loyalty, and the importance of everyone working together irrespective of race or religion.

He was impressed by an inscription on the wall of the Academy that read: "The safety, honour and welfare of the men under your command come first, always and every time. Your own safety, comfort and welfare come last, always and every time."

His military ethos put the nation in good stead when he became

Remembering Tun Hussein Onn and his strong ties with India

prime minister in 1976.

Upon completing his military training, he returned home and decided to switch his battleground to the legal field, a move that helped strengthen the sense of moral leadership that he brought to the nation.

During an official visit to India in January 1979, Hussein expressed fond memories of his stay there, saying: "What had been taught to me at the Academy made a lasting impression on me. It has been a constant guide and inspiration in my later life.

"It not only taught me military service but what is more important, it taught me the art and quality of leadership, loyalty to one's country and responsibility for the welfare



and well-being of those who have placed their trust in you."

He also highlighted similarities in the legal systems of the two countries: "India and Malaysia have many things in common... both believe in and practise parliamentary

democracy; many of the provisions of the Malaysian constitution are borrowed from the Indian constitution.

"The Malaysian Penal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Law of Evidence, and the Laws of Contract and Specific Performance are based on the Indian ones.

"The decisions of the Indian Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal and High Courts will have persuasive authority and in some cases

are followed by the Malaysian Courts."

Hussein combined the various influences of his earlier life in his role as PM. His military training imbued in him a sense of inclusiveness and efficiency while his legal training sowed the values of moral courage, integrity and a sense of justice.

The saying goes, "Old soldiers never die; they just fade away."

This soldier will continue to live on in our collective consciousness for the values that he represented and, no less significant, as a link in the heritage shared by the people of Malaysia and India.

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