

## The M.M.A. House

*by A. A. Sandosham*

WITHOUT DOUBT, the greatest single achievement of the Malaysian Medical Association since its foundation 13 years ago has been the erection of Bangunan MMA which was declared open by our Prime Minister, YAB Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Datuk Hussein, S.M.N., K.O.M., on 6th April, 1973, the laying of the Foundation Stone having been performed on 5th March, 1972, by YAB Tun Dr. Ismail Al-Haj bin Datuk Haji Abdul Rahman, the Deputy Prime Minister, himself a Life Member of our Association. We were particularly happy that the Official Opening Ceremony of MMA House was also witnessed by the illustrious foreign Delegates and Observers from Australia, Hongkong, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Philippines and Singapore who were then attending the 8th Congress of the Confederation of Medical Associations in Asia and Oceania which was hosted this year by M.M.A.

As can well be imagined, the Association owes a debt of gratitude to the many people, members

and non-members alike, for the part they played in conceiving the idea and bringing it to fruition. They are too many to be enumerated in full but it gives us pleasure to place on record the names of a few of those who have been especially instrumental in helping us attain our goal.

The idea of an MMA House was first mooted by the first Council of MMA under the presidency of Dr. S.G. Rajahram, which set aside for building our headquarters the sum of \$18,134.00 generously handed over by our predecessor, the Malaya Branch of the British Medical Association. Among the early advocates of a building really worthy of the profession, despite the scepticism of some of us, were Dr. S. Parampalam, our Hon. General Secretary for several years; Dr. Tan Chee Khoon, a former President; and Datuk Dr. P.T. Arasu, the Chairman of the House Committee, who with the backing of the Ministry of Health, managed to persuade the State Government to alienate

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26,800 square feet of land opposite the entrance to the General Hospital at nominal cost; and Mr. Lim Jo Yan, of the Overseas Chinese Banking Corporation, to give us the necessary overdraft. Datuk Dr. P.T. Arasu, together with Dr. S.G. Rajahram, Dr. Chong Yew Chong and Datuk Dr. Abdul Majid bin Ismail, as the Trustees of the MMA House, laudably accepted personal liability for the sum involved in building till everything was settled.

The MMA Hon. General Secretary, Dr. Pius Martin, and Hon. General Treasurer, Dr. Syed Mahmood bin Syed Hussain, acted as secretary and treasurer of the House Committee as well.

Although there were some generous donations from members who did not stand to gain in any way, the total sum to the credit of the MMA House Fund was too low until Dr. Lim Chong Eu introduced the idea of Life Membership subscription as a means of augmenting our funds. When this was also found flagging, Y.B. Tun Tan Siew Sin, the Minister of Finance, came to our rescue by giving life members income-tax rebate for a period of three years on their payment of \$1,000.

The Association was fortunate also in having as its architect Mr. Tham Chan Wah of Messrs Hoh Tham and Partners. His genial personality and his patience at the meetings of the Council and House Committee during the chopping and churning of the Building Plan were greatly appreciated.

The MMA House is a compact 6-storey structure built at a cost of about \$750,000 in close proximity to the General Hospital, Kuala Lumpur,

and the Institute for Medical Research. Part of the fourth floor has been reserved for the MMA secretariat and the conference room cum library. The top floor consists of 14 self-contained flats of which two have been reserved for outstation MMA members at a nominal daily rental. The pressing need now is to rent out all other accommodation to help maintain the premises and pay back the bank overdraft as quickly as possible and release the mortgage. This will absolve the Trustees of their personal responsibilities they have undertaken, and the management of the MMA House could then be transferred by the House Committee to the Council of MMA.

When that has been achieved, it is proposed to persuade other medical organisations, like the Academy of Medicine and the College of Surgeons, to move into the MMA House and to extend to them as far as possible such facilities of the MMA secretariat that they may wish to use. In this way, it is hoped that the different bodies representing the various disciplines of medicine could work together with MMA and enable the profession as a whole to speak with one voice for the benefit of members, the government and the public. It is also envisaged that in due course we will be able to erect on the roof a conference hall to seat about 300 people for the use of the Association and other bodies.

Thus, the MMA may now claim to have its headquarters in premises befitting its status and that it can look forward to playing a greater role in building a united Malaysian nation as embodied in its Constitution.



(above): Y.A.B. Tun Dr. Ismail Al-Haj bin Datuk Jahi Abdul Rahman, the Deputy Prime Minister, lays the foundation stone of M.M.A. House. Looking on (from left) are Dr. Pius Marin, Dr. V. Thuraisingham and Mr. Tham Chan Wah.

(right): Y.A.B. Tun Haji Abdul Razak bin Datuk Hussein, the Prime Minister, declares open M.M.A. House.

