

# Managing nation's politics a fulltime job: PM

MANAGING the politics of the country is a full-time job and not something of a sideline, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He disagreed with suggestions that academic staff were not doing as good a job as they should partly because they were unhappy with the Universities and University Colleges Act, which forbids their involvement in politics.

Dr Mahathir said the Act had nothing to do with academic skills and was not a burden to the teaching staff.

In fact, the Prime Minister said, the Act should contribute to academic standards because it encouraged focus on learning rather than extra-mural activities.

He was sure that many university staff and students thought themselves "as qualified as anybody else to manage the politics of the nation."

"But politics is only a sideline for them," he said, adding that they could quit their varsity posts to enter politics.

Dr Mahathir also said the Government could not just increase the salaries of university staff without doing the same for all its other employees.

The Prime Minister said they might not be paid all that well, but the Government was, all the same, spending \$1 billion on local universities a year.

He believed that fresh graduates should spend time learning the ropes.

He said that Japanese graduates began on the assembly line before they became executives.

This developed good work ethics and better understanding of the people who would work under them, he said.

Because of the demand and expectations of Malaysians, it had been very difficult to persuade them to begin at the bottom, Dr Mahathir said.

He said this was one reason for the stress on more vocational subjects like living skills to prepare Malaysians for an industrialised environment.