

Undergrads show support for PM

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BANGI: More than 4,000 university students gave Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad a rousing welcome at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia yesterday.

Despite some people anticipating jeering and anti-Government slogans from students, most of them rushed up to shake the Prime Minister's hands at the end of the session while others waited until after tea to get his autograph.

Some students even shouted *Hidup Mahathir* at the gathering. The students represent all the universities in the country.

Beaming and smiling, Dr Mahathir told reporters after the dialogue: "I have always believed that not all students are against the

Government. But we have one bad apple and all the rest of the apples go bad if we mix them together."

He said he was grateful that the students gave him a rousing welcome and were very friendly.

"All accusations that university students are against the Government are not true, and although there were complaints, as I believe they have too high a hope, their questions were valid and logical.

"I hope I have given them fair answers and explained to them so that they will be satisfied," he said, when asked about the closed-door dialogue with the students.

The Prime Minister said that most of the issues brought up during the dialogue were specific matters pertaining to students' welfare, financial support

and study loans.

He said he gave his views on corruption, the rule of the Government and political, economic and social issues.

Asked whether the issue of the Universities and University Colleges Act was brought up, he said: "They didn't actually ask the question. They asked about the role of students.

"I explained that they must be aware of political developments in the country. But they must be patient because they have spent lots of money on their studies and this should not be wasted.

"Once they graduate and have jobs, they should get involved in politics, either directly or indirectly, to ensure they can influence (the decision-making process of) the country's administration."

Dr Mahathir said he would like to have more dialogues with students but they should be an open meeting, and not attended by students who were close-minded or refused to accept opinions different from theirs.

However, he said the students with him yesterday had shown they were open-minded, brave to ask questions and willing to listen to explanations.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir admitted he was not very close to students because he had assigned someone else to do it, as he was planning to retire from politics.

However, he said that unforeseen circumstances had forced him to continue serving the Government, and now he would be with students as he was with other sections of society.