



Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam being "mobbed" by Indian students clamouring for his autograph after he was awarded an honorary doctorate from NTU.

ST PHOTO:
LAU FOOK KONG

NTU honours India's former president

WHAT started off as a solemn ceremony to confer an honorary doctorate on the former president of India yesterday soon turned into the likes of a rock concert.

About 1,700 people, mostly students from India, turned up at a Nanyang Technological University (NTU) auditorium to catch a glimpse of their beloved Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

After the ceremony was over, about 100 people mobbed him, waving their cameras and autograph books.

Dr Kalam, 76, the president of India from 2002 till last year, shook some hands and thanked the people for coming. Flower pots were toppled as the crowd surged, calling out "Sir! Sir!"

President S R Nathan, the NTU chancellor, had just presented him with a Doctor of Engineering degree for his contributions to bilateral ties between Singapore and India, his leadership and global reputation in science and technology.

In the audience were Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Balaji Sadasivan.

Accepting the degree, Dr Kalam said it was "a great honour" because NTU was "internationally reputed".

The citation for his degree acknowledged his key role in India's technological advancement, the country's first satellite launch.

As Cabinet minister, he was also the

Indian government's principal scientific adviser from 1999 to 2001, and has written four bestsellers: *Wings Of Fire*, *India 2020: A Vision For The New Millennium*, *My Journey and Ignited Minds: Unleashing The Power Within India*.

NTU awards honorary degrees to individuals for achievements in their fields or for having made significant contributions to their country, the society or in international relations.

Indian national Hamimireddy Kallam, 23, a signal processing student at NTU, said: "He is a great person and did so much for my country. I read up on him intensively and I am happy because now I have some photographs of him."

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