

Beautiful speech,^(P) says Mugabe

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NASSAU, Thurs. — "Beautiful...brilliant." This was how an elated Zimbabwe Prime Minister Robert Mugabe described Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the opening session of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to the New Straits Times.

Indeed this general feeling of upliftment and enthusiasm at the popular level greeted the Malaysian Prime Minister's forceful delivery and uncompromising approach on apartheid and the Commonwealth.

Dr Mahathir did cause a stir, both during and after his speech which was described by an enthusiastic Third World journalist as "straight-out."

The Prime Minister was besieged by journalists at a Press reception held by the Commonwealth Secretary-General after the opening.

A Bahamian dignitary who attended the opening ceremony, quite unsolicited, remarked: "Your man from Malaysia... he was really something."

A happy President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia even elevated this journalist to the status of "my Malaysian brother."

Australian Premier Bob Hawke, however, was a little more circumspect in his response, implying though not quite saying it that the Malaysian Prime Minister was perhaps too blunt.

The British, perhaps understandably, were a little annoyed. British officials were tight-lipped, limiting themselves to observing that such "heavy posturing" by all the main speakers on the opening day was not the done thing.

British journalists covering the conference were swept by the force of Dr Mahathir's remarks and reacted favourably.

However, a number felt that Dr Mahathir's swipe at the Commonwealth as an institution was uncalled for.

The Prime Minister, meanwhile, is due to return home on Saturday evening before the conference ends on Oct 22 when the joint communique is expected to be released.