

APPLAUSE AND PRAISE FOR PM'S SPEECH

NASSAU (Bahamas), Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave the Commonwealth a jolt when he spoke his mind on the past and future of the organisation and the problems bedevilling the world at the opening of Commonwealth heads of government meeting here yesterday.

Pulling no punches, the Prime Minister stated in clear terms Malaysia's stand on the Commonwealth, apartheid, Namibia and the world economy.

His characteristic frankness, his propensity to call a spade just that, drew applause from the gathering at least four times.

Delegates interviewed after the opening ceremony described Dr Mahathir's speech as the "most open."

"He said what everybody wanted to say but did not say," said an African delegate.

"I'm proud of him," said a journalist from an African country.

Another delegate, from the Caribbean, said Dr Mahathir gave the CHOGM a "jolt" and set the tone for the discussions which begin

today. "This is going to be a hot meeting," said another delegate.

The consensus was that Dr Mahathir was forthright and said what needed to be said.

Dr Mahathir and most of the heads of delegation attended a reception given by Commonwealth Secretary-General Sir Shridath Ramphal for the Press to get to know the leaders soon after the opening ceremony.

He was among the leaders mobbed by pressmen at the reception, many offering congratulations on his speech while others requested interviews.

He said he was merely giving his opinion and this was what the forum was for.

There has been a deluge of requests for interviews with the Prime Minister from journalists gathered here to cover the meeting. Some of the requests were made through Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen.

Dr Mahathir is scheduled to return home on Saturday. — Bernama.