

Settle dissent openly, East and West told

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia believes that all differences that exist between the East and West should be thrashed out in the open and not swept under the carpet.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said the differences were a reality, with diplomats and investors now asking how all parties could understand each other as a result of all the differences and the "we versus them" attitude.

He said interaction through dialogues was important to achieve understanding and lauded the recent G8 Summit in Evian, France, where developing nations were invited to

give their feedback.

"My answer is that the gap between the Europeans and the East is a reality and it should not be swept under the carpet.

"Instead, we should voice the matter and it is through this process that we can identify the areas of differences and work towards strengthening ties," he said at the Malaysia Regional Forum which was attended by about 30 corporate executives and officials from embassies.

The concern was raised at a closed-door session, with references made to a speech on "war-mongering" Europeans being the source of all prob-

lems by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Umno general assembly.

Swiss ambassador Dr Peter Schweizer, when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's speech, said diplomacy had many facets and one speech alone could not determine the stand of a nation.

"The West is not a bloc of unanimous (untheir decisions). In fact, there are rifts among the North nations as well.

"Perhaps, the confrontation between the North-South nations is partly due to the rifts among the North nations, which have very stark differences in approach.

"The North nations, mainly

those in the position to provide financial support, would have to sort out their own differences first," said Dr Schweizer.

In his speech, *Global Challenges: Malaysia's Perspective*, Syed Hamid touched on Malaysia's position and foreign policy on globalisation, terrorism and the unipolar world.

He said Malaysia, as a globalised economy with exports totalling RM355bil and imports worth RM303bil last year, needed to maintain good relationships with all countries, yet remain strong and confident in making itself heard.