



# Minister: Speech critical of Muslims

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THE "rethink strategy" advocated by Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was misconstrued by the foreign media due to their lack of understanding of the issue, said Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar.

"It was obviously misunderstood. They were trying to make it seem like we are anti-Jewish. That is far from the truth," he said when commenting on wire reports that the Prime Minister had called on Muslims to take up arms against the Jews.

Following the reports, Israel said Dr Mahathir was rallying a hate campaign against the Jews while the United States and the European

Union also criticised him.

Syed Hamid said Dr Mahathir's speech was in fact a call for people not to commit acts of violence.

"It was a wake-up call to the Muslims, with examples of the achievements of the Jewish community," he said.

Syed Hamid added that the speech was well thought out and very balanced as it included a historical perspective and was critical of Muslims.

Clarifying a report that he had apologised for Dr Mahathir's speech, Syed Hamid said it was untrue, adding he was sorry that the statement was misconstrued.

"I hope they do not spin it to the

extent of depicting Dr Mahathir as an unreasonable person," Syed Hamid said.

He said it was obvious that the foreign press did not bother to read the full text of the Prime Minister's speech when they drew their conclusions.

"This is what happens when you don't read the whole text," he said.

Asked about a report in an Australian newspaper that likened Dr Mahathir to Sept 11 mastermind Osama bin Laden, Syed Hamid said whatever Malaysia did would be misinterpreted.

He said this was because Australia had an agenda, adding that it was rude and ill mannered of the paper to make such a comparison.