

Mahathir thanks Chirac for support

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has thanked his French counterpart Jacques Chirac for blocking the European Union from condemning his tirade that "Jews rule the world by proxy."

While other European leaders drafted a resolution denouncing the remarks as "false" and "offensive," President Chirac and Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis nixed the proposal on Thursday, saying there was no place in an EU summit for such a declaration.

"I think he understands better. Anybody who reads the whole speech through will understand what I said. In fact, I was worried that the Muslims would be against me but it was the Europeans who were against me. I

can't understand them.

"At least I know Chirac understands," he told reporters at the Putrajaya Convention Centre yesterday after having dinner with government staff who helped in the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit.

Dr Mahathir has maintained that his opening speech was meant to be a wake-up call for Muslim nations but was instead construed to be anti-Jewish by most Western governments.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Syed Albar said there seems to be a concerted move by certain countries to vehemently "attack" Dr Mahathir's speech.

He noted that Malaysian diplomats in several countries had been summoned by foreign governments over the matter although the real issues at hand were the Palestinian problem,

threats of an attack on Syria, the invasion of Iraq and the situation in Afghanistan.

"These are the issues which have to be given serious attention, not unwarranted polemics which don't help anyone," he told newsmen in Kuala Lumpur yesterday after hosting a high tea for journalists involved in covering the summit.

Syed Hamid was responding to

questions about the summoning of Malaysian diplomats by foreign governments over claims that Dr Mahathir had made anti-Semitic statements.

He said Western countries and their media had their own agenda now that the OIC had regained its vigour and was starting a new chapter.

"They are just taking sections of Dr Mahathir's speech and interpreting them their own way," he added.