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Western media comes under fire

WESTERN media covering the OIC summit drew flak from their non-Western counterparts for twisting and distorting Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's opening speech on Thursday.

The non-Western media representatives felt that the Western media had deliberately labelled the Prime Minister as anti-semitic to suit their agenda.

Syrian Channel 2 television manager Yahya Al-Areidi said the West, including its media, would be quick to label anyone who dares to criticise Israel as anti-semitic.

"The Jews are quite sensitive when being criticised, what more if it is true. Right away the person will be labelled anti-semitic."

He said the Western media chose to highlight things that suited their agenda while conveniently ignoring the message Dr Mahathir wanted to convey.

"We are not in the position to patronise the Western media or to teach them. They always consider themselves highly sophisticated and fit to teach everybody.

"But, we should tell them one thing - if someone has views opposite theirs, they should be tolerant enough to accept them."

Yahya said Dr Mahathir's speech should be viewed in totality. If this was done, one would discover that the message he wanted to convey was for Muslims to be united, knowledgeable and progressive.

In fact, he said, Dr Mahathir was criticising Muslims for being backward and that they should build their strength in all fields.

Throwing a poser, he said: "But isn't it true that the Israelis are committing crimes against the Palestinians, slaughtering men, women and children? When someone points these atrocities, can he be regarded as anti-semitic?"

"The answer is `No'. He is just telling the truth. Dr Mahathir should not lose sleep if people label him as anti-semitic because he is speaking the truth."

Bangladesh television news editor D.K. Fuad Hassan said it was not surprising to note that the Western media had twisted Dr Mahathir's speech.

"They should look at the speech carefully because what Dr Mahathir had stressed was Muslim unity. He wanted Muslims to be economically strong and united."

A Japanese journalist also agreed that the speech had been taken out of