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Use economic investment as leverage, says expert

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KUALA LUMPUR: Asean countries can influence the Myanmar government's approach to human rights by linking new economic opportunities to democratic reform, a noted scholar in humanitarian and refugee issues said yesterday.

Jacob Zenn, an analyst with Washington, DC think tank Jamestown

Foundation, said Myanmar was facing a period in its history when it is highly dependent on foreign investors to invest in its local resources and grow its economy.

"Myanmar is one of the few countries in Southeast Asia that has many natural and economic resources that has yet to be exploited.

"Right now, it's a good opportunity — which may not last for long — for the international community to tell Myanmar that it has to show a certain commitment to human rights to attract foreign direct investment," he said at the "Plight of the Rohingya: Solutions?" conference here yesterday.

Zenn was among five speakers at the conference's first plenary session, moderated by Global Movement of Moderates Foundation chairman Tan Sri Razali Ismail.

About 400 people attended the international conference, organised by the Perdana Global Peace Foundation.