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Be firm, put pressure on Myanmar, urges Dr M

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ALOR STAR: Malaysia should be firm and put pressure on Myanmar in tackling the issue of human trafficking and influx of ethnic Rohingya refugees into the country, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said that as the current Asean chair, Malaysia should bring the issue to the Asean level as the problem is Myanmar's own to solve, to avoid other countries in the region from being dragged into it.

"We (Malaysia) can only provide temporary shelter for the Rohingya refugees and after that, they should be repatriated; otherwise it will create problems for other Asean countries.

"This is its (Myanmar's) problem, you cannot kill your own people," he told reporters, here, yesterday.

Recently, Mahathir had reportedly said that Myanmar should leave Asean if it continued to be cruel to the Rohingyas, which he deemed as violating human rights.

He said Malaysia, as the Asean chair, could only provide assistance that is within its means,

but the international community should also shoulder the burden by extending appropriate aid to the Rohingya refugees.

"If all the Asean countries are agreeable, a decision can be reached in tackling the issue," he said.

Earlier, at a gathering with Sultan Abdul Hamid College students, here, Mahathir said the English language should be mastered by all students, whether schooling or at college and university, to enable Malaysia to compete with the developed countries.

He recalled that when he was prime minister, he had introduced the use of English for the Maths and Science subjects as he felt this was important.

"In Maths and Science, things are always changing compared to History where the contents remain as facts.

"While we want to introduce our culture and language (Bahasa Melayu) to the world, proficiency in the English language should also be stressed upon for our own benefit," he said. -
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