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PM to highlight Rohingya issue

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WASHINGTON: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak will push for United States' support to end violence against the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar when he meets President Donald Trump tomorrow.

Najib, who is due to fly into the capital here today, will raise concerns over the atrocities in Myanmar during his meeting with Trump at the White House.

The Rohingya issue will be among the regional and global issues to be raised at a private one-on-one meeting between the two leaders at the Oval Office.

The meeting will be followed by an expanded delegation meeting with cabinet members and senior advisers of the Trump administration.

At a briefing for the Malaysia media on Saturday, Malaysian Ambassador to the United States Tan Sri Zulhasnan Rafique said Najib, who is here until Wednesday on the personal invitation of Trump, would seek the US president's assistance in bringing about a resolution to the Rohingya issue.

"This will be among the regional and global issues to be raised by the prime minister with Trump," he said.

Malaysia has been at the forefront in demanding for the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar to be stopped.

Najib had, in December, categorically condemned the atrocities against the Rohingya, sending a clear and strong rebuke to State Counsellor of Myanmar Aung San Suu Kyi that "enough is enough".

More than 10,000 people had gathered on Dec 4 at the Solidarity Assembly for Rohingya at Stadium Titiwangsa in Kuala Lumpur, including Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang.

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since Aug 25, bringing tales of mass killings and systematic burning of villages by Myanmar security forces.

This came after Rohingya insurgents carried out attacks on police posts, killing 12 officers.

Concerns have been raised over Myanmar's alleged crimes against humanity, with United Nations special adviser for the prevention of genocide, Adama Dieng, describing it as potentially an act of ethnic cleansing.

"In fact, it can be the precursor

to all the egregious crimes and I mean genocide."

On Saturday, Najib sent off a humanitarian mission to aid Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

The mission, which departed from the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang, comprised 12 personnel from the armed forces and Defence Ministry.

Six army personnel, a ministry officer and a Malaysia For Youth volunteer boarded an RMAF Airbus A400 military transport aircraft, loaded with 12 tonnes of canned food, rice, biscuits, milk powder, hygiene products and water purification tablets.

They arrived at the Hazrat Shah Amanat Airport in the coastal seaport city of Chittagong, where Rohingya refugees had fled to, on Saturday.

The team had received permission from the Bangladeshi government to deliver the aid directly to the refugees.

Najib had said: "We cannot let the Bangladesh government (alone) shoulder the burden of sheltering the increasing number of Rohingya refugees.

"We have been informed that they (the Bangladeshi government) have taken in more than 350,000 Rohingya refugees."