

UN, MYANMAR RAPPED FOR INACTION

PM urges international community to join Malaysia, Bangladesh to end crisis

NEW YORK

THE United Nations and Myanmar government came under fire on Tuesday for their inaction in resolving the Rohingya crisis, which has displaced more than a million people in the country.

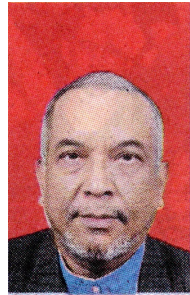
The UN's silence on the crisis was deafening, Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, adding that the 75-year-old organisation had not fulfilled its purpose of preventing such man-made atrocities.

"Without (UN) Security Council's action, others must do their part to resolve the crisis and bring the perpetrators to justice," he said at a high-level side event on the "Rohingya Crisis — A Way Forward" at the United Nations headquarters here on Tuesday.

Present was Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed.

The prime minister is here to attend the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly.

Myanmar's military has been accused of murdering thousands of Rohingya in western Rakhine State since 2017, which resulted in the mass exodus of Muslim minorities to neighbouring countries and led to the world's



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largest refugee camp in Cox Bazar, Bangladesh.

Dr Mahathir said what happened in Rakhine State was genocide.

"What took place were mass killings, systematic rape and other gross violations of human rights."

He commended the Organisation of Islamic Conference's (OIC) effort to bring the matter to the International Court of Justice, and hoped that other countries would support OIC to ensure the perpetrators did not get away with the heinous crimes they had committed.

"Malaysia, on our part, has tried to do all it can.

"Apart from rendering humanitarian assistance, Malaysia is operating a field hospital in Cox Bazar.

"We are also hosting close to

100,000 registered Rohingya refugees."

Dr Mahathir said the longer the Rohingya stayed in camps, the more desperate their situation became.

Some are vulnerable to other forms of exploitation, including human trafficking and sex slavery.

He said the Myanmar authorities had also denied access to some UN officials and humanitarian aid workers.

"If Myanmar has nothing to hide, why bar others from seeing the situation in Rakhine State? Let these officials and aid workers visit, inspect and assist those living in the camps."

Dr Mahathir said if Myanmar was serious about alleviating the crisis, repatriation should be the main priority.

Two attempts have been made to repatriate some of the refugees. Both have failed.

"Reasons for this are obvious. No one would return if they do not feel that their safety is guaranteed. On this, Malaysia will continue to insist that repatriation be done in a safe, voluntary and dignified manner.

"This can only be done by granting full citizenship to the Rohingya.

"However, the Myanmar authorities have manipulated the Rohingya issue to incite fear, hatred and violence.

"Thus, merely considering the

idea of granting citizenship is unacceptable," Dr Mahathir said.

He said none of the atrocities committed in 2017 had been accounted for.

Even those convicted for the Inn Dinn mass killings, for example, were released after serving barely one year of their 10-year sentence.

"The conviction was an attempt to deceive us into thinking

that they are holding perpetrators accountable," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to help the Rohingya within its means and capacity.

"We hope others would also join us and Bangladesh in our resolve to end the miseries that have befallen the Rohingya.

"We need to put an end to the crisis and we need to do it now."

Dr M, Dutch PM seek better cooperation in agriculture sector

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad held a bilateral meeting with his Dutch counterpart, Mark Rutte, on the sidelines of the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UN-GA) on Tuesday.

Economic Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Azmin Ali said it was an engaging bilateral meeting between Malaysia and the Netherlands.

"Both countries seek closer cooperation in the agriculture sector using high technology to help smallholders become more productive as smart farmers," he tweeted.

Azmin said Rutte invited Dr Mahathir to visit the Netherlands to boost bilateral relations between both countries.

He expressed confidence that there was economic potential to be unlocked through closer relations between Malaysia and the Netherlands.

Present was Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Tuesday to lead the Malaysian delegation at UN-GA, held talks with Google senior vice-president (global affairs) Kent Walker.