

## **Myanmar should have emulated Malaysia on people of foreign origin - Mahathir**

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**By Massita Ahmad**

SINGAPORE, Nov 13 (Bernama) – Myanmar should have emulated Malaysia in accepting people of foreign origin after the latter became independent 61 years ago, Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here Tuesday.

“Rohingyas should be treated as (its) citizens,” he said at a press conference after attending the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit 2018 held in conjunction with the 33rd ASEAN Summit here Tuesday.

He was asked what ASEAN, the 10-member nation, should do to help the Rohingyas.

“You see, when Malaysia became independent in 1957, we had people of foreign origin. We accepted all of them. They are now citizens. They play a role in the politics of the country. They are free. They are not detained. They are not detained because of race or anything like that. They may be detained for wrongdoing but not because of being of a different race,” he said.

Dr Mahathir, 93, who is the oldest head of government at this ASEAN summit, said the grouping would like to have the issue resolved and have the Rohingyas back in their part of Myanmar.

When asked on his assessment of how Myanmar dealt with the Rohingya issue, especially Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Dr Mahathir said: “We are very disappointed because someone who has been detained before should know the suffering. It seems Aung San Suu Kyi is trying to defend what is indefensible.

“They are actually oppressing these people to the point of killing them ... mass killing ...

burial in graves dug by them ... that kind of thing may be relevant in ancient times but not in modern days," he said.

Currently, more than 100,000 Rohingya refugees are in Malaysia but not all of them are registered with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNCHR).

It was reported that about 700,000 people from the Rohingya Muslim minority fled to neighbouring Bangladesh since last August following an army crackdown that the United Nations said amounted to ethnic cleansing.

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