

## **We are keen for Japanese Aid to educate Rohingyas in Malaysia - Saifuddin**

**By Linda Khoo**

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BANGKOK, Aug 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysia is willing to work with Japan which has indicated an interest in providing education aid for Rohingya refugee children, Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said.

He added that while Japan had not outlined its proposals, it had shown its interest in wanting to provide education for the refugees currently housed in camps at Cox' s Bazaar in Bangladesh.

“It is in this regard that we want to seek Japanese aid in helping out Rohingya children in Malaysia,” Saifuddin said.

“I think Malaysia can negotiate with Japan (for educational assistance). I told Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono that we are looking for the best way to help Rohingya children in Malaysia.

“We believe the way to help educate the Rohingyas is through civil society organisations (CSOs). As a government, we can help facilitate CSOs in obtaining finances which includes (through) international funding,” he told Bernama here today.

Saifuddin had held bilateral meetings with Taro on the sidelines of the 52nd Asean Foreign Minister's Meeting (AMM) here today. The Japanese Foreign Minister is currently in Bangkok to attend the Asean-Japan Ministerial Meeting in conjunction with the 52nd AMM.

Taro, who had gone on a three-day working visit to Bangladesh earlier this week, visited the Rohingya camp south of Cox' s Bazaar to see for himself the conditions in the area.

Saifuddin said Japan was keen for the repatriation process of the Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar to be a success.

Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed a memorandum of understanding on the Rohingya repatriation. However, there have been concerns about security and citizenship status which is why the refugees are refusing to return.

Asked if handing out identity cards to Rohingya refugees would voluntarily bring them back to Myanmar, Saifuddin said that "for the Rohingyas, citizenship is probably the most important issue for them".

He reiterated that the process of sending back Rohingya refugees should have a Rohingya perspective.

“There is clearly a trust deficit and we need to overcome that. That would be premium.

"Malaysia has always been consistent, calling for consultation to be made together with the Rohingya refugees," he said.

According to Amnesty International, more than 750,000 Rohingya refugees, mostly women and children left Myanmar and crossed into Bangladesh after the Myanmar army launched an attack on the Muslim minority community in August 2017. It resulted in the increase of more than 1.2 million victims of oppression fleeing into Bangladesh.

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