

Don't bow to Najib, Financial Times tells Obama
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Financial Times has urged US President Barack Obama not to bow to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak amid the 1MDB imbroglio.

"As he nears the end of his tenure in the White House, Obama should encourage all US agencies to pursue the 1MDB case to the full extent of American and international law.

"That applies not only to potential charges against Najib and his associates, but also those involving banks and companies that have abetted the alleged laundering of more than US\$3.5 billion stripped from 1MDB," it said.

The UK publication also called on Najib to step down until the investigations are completed and he has cleared his name.

Najib, it said, should do this for the "sake of the people and the country he professes to serve".

According to the Financial Times, Malaysia received little airtime in Washington.

"If the topic crossed Obama's desk at all it was usually in the context of Najib's strong support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA) trade deal or his role as a moderate Muslim bulwark against extremism in Southeast Asia.

"On Christmas Eve, 2014, the two leaders played a round of golf in Hawaii, something Najib has touted ever since as evidence of his American backing.

"He has also cleverly courted China in what analysts say is a warning to Washington that he could move Malaysia into Beijing's sphere of influence if US support wavers," it added.

The publication pointed out that TPPA is no longer a US priority and is opposed by both major presidential candidates.

"A Malaysian alliance with China is very unlikely, particularly given Umno's patchy record when it comes to relations with its own large Chinese minority," it said.

The US Department of Justice (DOJ) had recently filed civil suits related to the alleged abuse of 1MDB funds.

The department named Najib's stepson Riza Aziz and businessman Jho Low, who is said to be close to the prime minister's family.

Among others, it is alleged that 1MDB funds were used to purchase lavish properties, expensive artworks, settle gambling debts as well as to buy a plane and a yacht.

In the filings, the DOJ claimed that a total of US\$731 million traceable to 1MDB went to the account of "Malaysian Official 1".

Though the authorities have been silent on this issue, the opposition claimed that it referred to Najib.

The prime minister has denied abusing public funds for personal gain and blamed such allegations on those conspiring to topple him.

His supporters have also cast aspersions on the DOJ's action.

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