

**Int'l press keenly watching Najib's China visit**  
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Najib Abdul Razak has visited China seven times since becoming prime minister but his latest trip appears to have attracted the most attention from the international press.

A recurring theme in recent foreign news reports on the visit is that Malaysia and China are now courting each other on the military and economic front, while spurning the United States.

Moreover, there is the 1MDB factor and the fact that the company - set up by Najib in 2009 - is the key component of the on-going US Department of Justice (DOJ) forfeiture suit against proceeds from 'The Wolf of Wall Street' motion picture.

According to *The New York Times*, Najib was "miffed" by the DOJ investigations, which claimed that 1MDB monies were embezzled in the US and that a large sum of 1MDB monies ended up in the bank account of one "Malaysian Official 1".

The daily claimed that Najib has been described as "particularly bitter" about the publicity surrounding the DOJ suit after spending years forging ties with the Obama-administration.

"Najib is said by his aides to be angry and to feel humiliated by the Justice Department's investigation of him under US kleptocracy laws," said Murray Hiebert, a Southeast Asia expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

"This is prompting him to tilt toward China in order to burnish his image, restore his international standing and provide aid and credits ahead of upcoming elections expected next year."

**'Thirst' for Chinese money**

The "thirst" for Chinese money, according to *The Washington Post*, is another key part of the visit.

According to the daily, the DOJ suit and the 1MDB saga had made "Najib unwelcomed in Western capitals and depressed Western investment in his country".

Najib is scheduled to discuss a high-speed rail project, real estate, energy deals and a naval ship deal during the visit.

One major result of the China visit so far is a deal involving the East Coast Rail Link - a RM55 billion project that will link Klang, Kuantan and Kota Bharu by rail.

China will build and provide financing for the project. Both the builder and the lender are state-owned companies.

Moreover, China is already a major investor in Malaysia's manufacturing sector.

"Beggars can't be choosers," James Chin of University of Tasmania told *The Washington Post*, adding that Najib faces elections soon.

"It looks very good for domestic purposes if a world power like China is willing to see him and give him five-star treatment, a red-carpet welcome."

### **South China Sea dispute**

International media organisations are also keenly watching how Najib's visit would affect the ongoing South China Sea territorial dispute.

*The Washington Post* notes that Najib had called himself a "true friend" of China while his Philippines counterpart Rodrigo Duterte had proclaimed a "separation" from his country's US-oriented policies.

"The twin nods toward China reinforce the regional narrative of American decline and China's inexorable rise.

"They also showcase Beijing's apparent ability to buy off rivals for disputed territory in the South China Sea," read *The Washington Post* report.

According to *Financial Times*, should the proposed deal to procure coastal patrol ships from China - the first defence deal between Malaysia and China - would "ruffle feathers" among the US and its allies.

"This is in direct competition with US and Japanese attempts to sell this kind of defence technology," said Alex Neill, an Asia-Pacific security fellow at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in Singapore.

Najib's China visit began on Oct 31 and he will return to Malaysia on Nov 6.

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