

US not upset over closer Malaysia-China ties

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The US State Department has appeared unmoved by the warming bilateral relations between Malaysia and China, following Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's ongoing state visit to China.

US State Department spokesperson John Kirby said there was no evidence of a "landslide" in the Asia-Pacific region away from the US towards China, since the US was also enjoying strong and improving relationships in the region.

In addition, he said this is not a zero-sum game where Asia-Pacific countries would have to choose between the US and China.

"So again, this is not - it's not - they don't have to be binary choices. And we don't - we have nothing to fear from the peaceful, productive rise of China, and we have nothing to fear from nations establishing better and warmer and more productive relationships with China," he said.

This is according to an official transcript of a press briefing Kirby gave in Washington DC yesterday, where he was asked about a defence pact recently signed between Malaysia and China, and whether this is bad news for the US' "Pivot to Asia" policy.

Kirby in his reply stressed that the policy is not about posturing US foreign policy to deal with China's rising influence, but to ensure the security and prosperity of US allies and partners in the region.

He said it is in the US' interest for countries in the Asia-Pacific region to develop closer bilateral relations, as it would help reach a peaceful resolution to tensions in the region including the South China Sea dispute. This should be welcomed, he said.

"This idea that there are several nations who are reaching out and to develop warmer relations with China - I'm not disputing that.

"But the notion behind that, that that is something to be feared, that that is some sort of worrisome trend, that that is something that is not in keeping with the whole idea of the rebalance, that is an inaccurate reading of it," he added.

'We don't care what US thinks'

Meanwhile, Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein reportedly said that Malaysia does not care about what the US thinks of Putrajaya's latest defence deal with China.

According to *Sin Chew Daily* today, Hishammuddin said Malaysia would consider a deal

with the US should the latter provide a better offer for the four Littoral Mission Ships (LMS) that China is offering.

Najib said two of the vessels would be built in China while another two would be built in Malaysia. If the vessels prove satisfactory, more orders may be placed.

However, Hishammuddin said the government has yet to determine the cost of the vessel, but would ensure that it would be cheap.

The vessel would be finance through the Royal Malaysian Navy's reserve funds, and the government will keep a close eye on it to ensure it is not abuse, he reportedly said.

The Chinese-language daily also quoted Najib saying that building site and contractors of the four vessels are still being discussed and have yet to be determined.

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