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Prime Minister Najib tapped wealth fund to ease ruling party's election victory

By TOM WRIGHT AND BRADLEY HOPE

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia—Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak was fighting for his political life this summer after revelations that almost \$700 million from an undisclosed source had entered his personal bank accounts.

Under pressure within his party to resign, he called together a group of senior leaders in July to remind them everyone had benefited from the money.

The funds, Mr. Najib said, weren't used for his personal enrichment. Instead, they were channeled to politicians or into spending on projects aimed at helping the ruling party win elections in 2013, he said, according to a cabinet minister who was present. "I took the money to spend for us," the minister quoted Mr. Najib as saying.

It still isn't clear where the \$700 million came from or where it went. But a six-month Wall Street Journal examination revealed that public entities spent

hundreds of millions of dollars on a massive patronage machine to help ensure Mr. Najib's United Malays National Organization stayed in power. The payments, while legal, represented a new milestone in Malaysia's freewheeling electoral system, according to ruling-party officials.

The UMNO has led every Malaysian government since the country's independence from Britain in 1957, making it one of the world's longest-ruling political par-

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