

**MH17 gives Najib second chance to show leadership, says WSJ**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
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The tragic loss of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 has given Malaysia and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak a second chance to demonstrate his leadership, the Wall Street Journal said today.

The international newspaper said Najib, steering the country through its second international disaster in less than five months, was playing a more direct role from the start in handling the loss of the Malaysia Airlines plane that was shot down over eastern Ukraine on Thursday.

Najib's administration's handling of the mysterious disappearance of MH370 four months ago had been severely criticised by the families of the passengers as well as the international media.

In the wake of the tragic incident, Najib had communicated with US President Barack Obama, Russian president Vladimir Putin as well as leaders from the Netherlands, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the United Nations.

The daily said Najib had also taken the lead to personally make the first announcement of the plane crash before dawn on Friday morning and by Saturday afternoon was meeting with families of the passengers.

Putrajaya had also quickly released the cargo manifest, passenger list and flight path of the Boeing 777 aircraft.

However, WSJ noted that the loss of MH17 in Ukraine threatened to entangle Malaysia in a clash with Russia.

"Malaysia finds itself in a situation that has rapidly become one of geopolitical significance. So you have to be very measured and judicious in what you say and

how you respond," the newspaper quoted an unnamed person close to Putrajaya as saying.

The Kuala Lumpur-bound carrier had departed from Amsterdam on Thursday, shortly after noon, with 298 people on board, including three infants.

It went down a few hours later in the middle of a conflict zone between Ukrainian forces and Russian-backed separatists after being shot by an surface-to-air missile.

Those responsible for downing the jet have yet to be identified, with Russian and Ukrainian authorities blaming each other and pro-Russia separatists for the disaster.

WSJ said President Obama had called Najib in the early morning hours of Friday to discuss the tragedy and gaining access to the wreckage and victims.

The newspaper said Najib called President Putin late Friday night and asked him to use his influence with the separatists to ensure international investigators could reach the wreckage site.

"The Russian president indicated he would assist in getting access, according to one person familiar with the conversation. The Kremlin said in a statement afterward that both men had called for an objective international investigation," said the WSJ, noting that both countries have a warm relationship as exemplified by Malaysia sending its first astronaut to work on the International Space Station in 2007 with the help of Russia.

However, WSJ also noted that apart from pressuring larger and more influential nations and lobbying international groups to ensure investigators can gain access to the crash site, Malaysia's influence is limited.

"There's not much Malaysia can do because it is a small nation," the paper quoted Faisal Syam Abdol Hazi, an analyst from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, as saying. "If Russia refuses to give full cooperation, it could affect relations in the longer

term."

This time around, WSJ noted Putrajaya was quicker to respond compared with March when Beijing-bound MH370 vanished. To date, there has been no sign of that wreckage despite a multi-nation search. The aircraft is believed to have crashed in the southern Indian Ocean.

It said the government's unwillingness to provide information about MH370 had angered the families of many passengers, especially those from China, who formed two-thirds of the 239 on board.

"Najib is more hands-on this time around and it is a welcome development compared with the MH370 crisis," Wan Saiful Wan Jan, chief executive of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) was quoted saying.

"For now, people are still expressing anger and not evaluating how the government handled the crisis.

"But the real test is in the coming weeks when people will begin to demand justice for those killed."

WSJ also quoted Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who was the acting transport minister during the MH370 crisis, saying that although Malaysia knew where MH17 lies, it did not make things easier as new problems have cropped up.

"There are different mechanics and dynamics in this one," Hishammuddin told The WSJ.

"It's a bit more complicated, too. We are negotiating. It's not easy. We need help. One thing good about Malaysia, like with MH370, is that we have many friends." – July 20, 2014.

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