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## **MALAYSIA NEEDS TO BE READY FOR THE WORST IN SOUTH CHINA SEA: FOREIGN MINISTER**

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CNA (17 October 2019)

Malaysia needs to boost its naval capabilities to prepare for possible conflict in the South China Sea, its foreign minister said on Thursday (Oct 17), even as Southeast Asia's third-largest economy pursues non-militarization of the disputed waterway.

Tensions have escalated in recent weeks, especially after a US Navy destroyer sailed near islands claimed by China last month as a challenge to what the US Navy described as excessive Chinese territorial claims in the region.

Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said Malaysia could issue protest notes if a major power were to encroach on its territory but the lack of naval and maritime enforcement assets left it at a disadvantage in the event of a conflict.

Saifuddin said Malaysia's naval assets would struggle to even match up to the Chinese Coast Guard, which he said has a near 24-hour presence around the South Luconia Shoals off the east Malaysian state of Sarawak.

"Our naval ships under the Royal Malaysian Navy are smaller than the Coast Guard vessels from China," Saifuddin told parliament during question time.

"We would not want (conflict) to happen, but our assets ... need be upgraded so we are able to better manage our waters should there be a conflict between major powers in the South China Sea," he said.

Read more at <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asia/malaysia-south-china-sea-saifuddin-abdullah-12008402>

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