

**US federal grand jury probes Najib and family**  
**MalaysiaKini.com**  
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A federal grand jury in the United States is examining allegations of corruption involving Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and a number of individuals close to him, reported New York Times (NYT).

According to NYT, the inquiry is focused on properties in the US that were purchased in recent years by shell companies that belong to the prime minister's stepson Riza Aziz as well as other real estates connected to a close family friend.

The inquiry is being held by a unit of the US Justice Department that investigates international corruption.

NYT said the investigators are also looking at a US\$681 million payment made from a bank based in the US to what is believed to be Najib's personal account in Malaysia.

Corroborating the report, The Wall Street Journal said those familiar with the probe state investigators are looking at Najib's personal assets.

This comes as Umno member Anina Saadudin filed an application to freeze Najib's assets, while her lawsuit against the PM and Umno is pending.

Anina is taking legal action over the US\$681 million, which Najib claims is a political donation.

NYT earlier reported that more than US\$150 million in luxury residential properties were connected to Riza and controversial businessman Jho Low.

Two of the luxury residential properties in the investigation were owned by shell companies connected to Low's family before they were transferred to shell companies connected to Riza.

One of the two properties was also transferred without any public filings, NYT said.

Low's spokesperson had defended those transfer decisions, saying that the sale of the properties to Riza was done at fair market value.

Shell companies are usually used in real estate for those who seek privacy in wealth transfer.

However, they also make it difficult to determine the real ownership of the properties.

Another condominium purchased by a shell company was also found to belong to an individual called Loo Ai Swan, NYT discovered.

Bank Negara Malaysia had earlier announced that Loo, a former executive involved with 1MDB, was wanted to help with their investigations into the firm.

### **No comment from PMO**

The prime minister's office did not comment on the new inquiry, while a spokesperson for the US Justice Department has declined to comment when contacted by NYT.

A representative for Riza (far left), as well as for Low (far right) replied that their businesses comply with all rules and regulations.

The investigation is said to have just started and could take years to determine if US laws were broken.

Former US ambassador to Malaysia John Malott said that the Justice Department unit investigating this issue, Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative, can freeze and seize illegal assets held by "corrupt foreign leaders".

They can also seize the properties of the leaders' children as well, Malott said, if it can show the purchase of these properties was made with public funds.

"That includes homes, condos, fancy cars, bank accounts, and other things.

"If the US government can prove that properties in the US were purchased by or on behalf of Najib, or any member of his family, using illicit monies, then the USG (US government) can seize the property and assets, even if the foreign government has not filed any case against the leader."

Malott had last month wrote that it was "game over" for Najib internationally.

"And today, with this latest article in the world's most prestigious newspaper, the New York Times, it's clear that is true. As far as the rest of the world is concerned, Najib is now toast," he told Malaysiakini.

International inquiries in Switzerland, Hong Kong and Singapore have already been opened to probe allegations that money from 1MDB, Najib's brainchild, have gone missing.

A US grand jury is a legal body that is authorised to conduct full investigations into any potential criminal conduct to determine if those involved should be charged.

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