

US expected to seize 1MDB-linked assets, possibly biggest in history
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The United States Justice Department is expected to act to seize assets linked to 1MDB, which could be the largest of such seizures in US history, reported *The Wall Street Journal* reported today.

Citing sources, *WSJ* said the Justice Department's Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative is expected to file civil lawsuits seeking to seize the assets as soon as Wednesday morning in the US.

It claimed the seizure would involve properties and other assets bought with "money allegedly misappropriated from the Malaysian fund."

Malaysiakini cannot independently verify the *WSJ* report, and is attempting to contact 1MDB for its response.

The publication also pointed out that the asset seizures would be the US government's first action tied to the 1MDB investigation.

"It is unknown what assets will be seized, but the action is expected to surpass civil suits filed since 2015 seeking to seize \$850 million in assets involving three telecom companies in an unrelated case, according to people familiar with the matter," it said.

WSJ said the expected action also threatened to affect ties between US and Malaysia, which is regarded as an important ally of the superpower in Southeast Asia.

"Asset seizures in the US will be a culminating moment for at least six global investigations into allegations of fraud and money-laundering related to 1MDB," it added.

US President Barack Obama has visited Malaysia twice, and even played golf with Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak in Hawaii.

WSJ had previously reported that money from 1MDB had been used to fund the movie "The Wolf of Wall Street", which was produced by a company headed by Najib's step-son Riza Aziz.

It claimed investigators in two countries believe US\$155 million from the Malaysian state fund 1MDB, ended up in Red Granite Pictures in 2012 through a circuitous route involving offshore companies.

Red Granite Pictures had stressed that its funding is from legitimate sources.

WSJ also claimed that 1MDB funds had also been used by Riza to purchase two properties in New York and Los Angeles, allegedly belonging to Penang born tycoon Low Taek Jho, better known as Jho Low.

Najib, the former chairperson of 1MDB's board of advisors, has denied abusing public funds for personal gain, while his supporters have blamed *WSJ* of being part of a campaign to topple him from power.

The prime minister also heads the Finance Ministry, which is the sole shareholder of 1MDB.

Attorney-general Mohamad Apandi Ali has also cleared Najib of any wrongdoing based on the investigations by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

However, detractors such as former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad had claimed that there was a cover-up, which the authorities have denied.

Malaysiakini has emailed the Prime Minister's Office and the US Justice Department for comment and confirmation.

Last week, whistleblower website Sarawak Report published the Auditor-General's Report on 1MDB, which has been classified under the Official Secrets Act 1972.

Mahathir and the opposition have claimed that the report was placed under the OSA to prevent its findings from becoming public knowledge.

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