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Malaysia Says Saudis Gave Najib 'Donation'

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KUALA LUMPUR—A transfer of nearly \$700 million to Prime Minister Najib Razak's alleged private bank account before a 2013 election was a "personal donation" from Saudi Arabia's royal family and not illegal, a Malaysian investigating body said.

The nation's top prosecutor, Attorney General Mohamed Apandi Ali, said all but \$61 million of the \$681 million transferred in March of that year was returned to the Saudis five months later.

Mr. Apandi said he ordered Malaysia's anticorruption body to close its investigation into the transfers, which sparked mass street protests against the prime minister after they became public last summer.

Tuesday's finding is unlikely to quell controversy about the funds.

"The notion that the Saudi 'royals' would 'donate' hundreds of millions of dollars to a foreign leader, as opposed to a government institution, struck me as suspect, to say the least," wrote Fahad Nazer, a senior political analyst at consultancy firm JTG who previously worked as a political analyst at the Saudi Embassy in Washington.

The attorney general's four-page statement didn't address several issues Malaysians have sought answers to, such as: Who specifically donated the money? Why was it donated? And what happened to the money that wasn't returned?

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