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'We'll observe the law over 1MDB'

> This is what PM has always maintained, says Najib's press secretary

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KUALA LUMPUR: The law will be enforced without exception if any wrongdoing is proven with regard to government investment fund iMalaysia Development Berhad (iMDB), said the prime minister's press secretary, Datuk Seri Tengku Sariffuddin Tengku Ahmad.

He said this is what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak has always maintained.

Tengku Sariffudin said iMDB had been the subject of multiple investigations within Malaysia itself, including by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission, the Auditor-General and the bi-partisan Public Accounts Committee.

"Malaysian authorities have led the way in investigations into iMDB. After a comprehensive review, the Attorney-General found that no crime had been committed. iMDB is still the subject of an investigation by the Royal Malaysian Police," he added in a statement issued here yesterday.

Noting that the US Department of Justice (DOJ) had brought civil lawsuits pertaining to various assets, he said as previously stated, the government would fully cooperate with any lawful investigation of Malaysian companies or citizens in accordance with international protocols.

Meanwhile, iMDB said in a

statement it was not a party to the civil suits, did not have any assets in the US, and had not benefited from the various transactions described in the civil suits.

"iMDB notes a press conference led by the US Attorney-General relating to a civil court action filed by the government of the United States of America.

"Furthermore, iMDB has not been contacted by the US Department of Justice or any other foreign agency in relation to their investigations.

"As previously stated, iMDB will fully cooperate with any foreign lawful authority, subject to international protocols governing such matters and the advice of the relevant domestic lawful authorities," it said.

The DOJ on Wednesday filed civil suits to seize assets in the US that were allegedly purchased using funds siphoned from iMDB, and return the proceeds of the sale of these seized assets to Malaysians.

US prosecutors alleged that more than US\$3.5 billion in iMDB funds were misappropriated by high-level officials (of iMDB) and their associates between 2009 and 2015.

The funds were later allegedly used to buy luxury properties in New York, Los Angeles and London, paintings by Vincent Van Gogh and Claude Monet, a US\$35 million jet, as well as to pay off

gambling debts in Las Vegas.

In a press conference in Washington DC on Wednesday, US Attorney-General Loretta Lynch said the move was part of an effort to combat global corruption and ensure the US did not serve as a safe haven to those who use public funds for private gain.

"This case should send a signal that the DOJ is determined to prevent the American financial system from being used as a conduit for corruption. And it should make clear to corrupt officials around the world that we will be relentless in our efforts to deny them the proceeds of their crimes," she said.

Special Agent Darryl Wegner, chief of the FBI's International Corruption Unit (US), said the alleged fraud went on around the world, and that at least US\$1 billion traceable to the conspiracy was laundered through the US and used to purchase assets there.

"And because these corrupt individuals used the US banking system to hide or launder their criminal proceeds, the FBI took a lead role in investigating this matter."

Wegner also noted that the leadership of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission showed "tremendous courage" in pursuing the investigation, which was led by the FBI's international public corruption squad in New York.