

US investigating Hollywood links to Najib's financial scandals, says report
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The US Department of Justice (DoJ) is investigating the money flowing to and from Red Granite Pictures, the Hollywood production house owned by Riza Aziz, the stepson of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

According to entertainment portal Deadline.com, the investigation is part of the DoJ's probe into Najib and tycoon Low Taek Jho (also known as Jho Low).

"At this point, the Justice Department is in fact-gathering mode and interested in real estate transactions by both Low and Riza as well as the financials of Red Granite. We've been told that a number of people have been questioned already," the report said.

"There has never been anything inappropriate about any of Red Granite Pictures or Riza Aziz's business activities," a spokesman for Red Granite Pictures and Riza, was quoted as saying.

"What they have done and will continue to do is develop and produce successful and acclaimed movies that have to date generated more than US\$800 million in worldwide box office revenues."

Since its gala launch three years ago at Cannes, Red Granite has backed several movies which have done well. One of its most famous titles is the Wolf of Wall Street, with a production budget of US\$100 million, and which took in US\$392 million worldwide and nominated for five Oscars, including Best Picture.

Red Granite has said before that it was backed by money from Asia and the Middle East, and Riza specifically told The New York Times (NYT) in February 2014 that the biggest financier of Red Granite was a man named Mohamed Ahmed Badawy al-Husseiny.

Ahmed Badawy is chief at Aabar Investments, a company that has a strong relationship with Low. Ahmed Badawy told the NYT that he and private investors were helping to finance Red Granite, and a spokesman said that none of the money was from Malaysia.

In September last year, NYT reported that a unit in the US Justice Department was investigating Najib over properties purchased by Riza and Jho Low.

Quoting an anonymous source, NYT said the inquiry focused on real estate purchases in the US in recent years by shell companies.

NYT reported in February about these purchases using shell companies by various international figures, including Riza and Jho Low.

Ever since the exposes by The Wall Street Journal and Sarawak Report alleging that RM2.6 billion went into Najib's personal account, the prime minister has come under tremendous pressure, especially over his handling of state investment vehicle 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

But after close to six months of investigations, Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamed Apandi Ali last month said there was insufficient evidence to implicate Najib. – February 10, 2016.

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