Sands China deals probed by U.S. for possible bribery violations: WSJ

By **Reuters**

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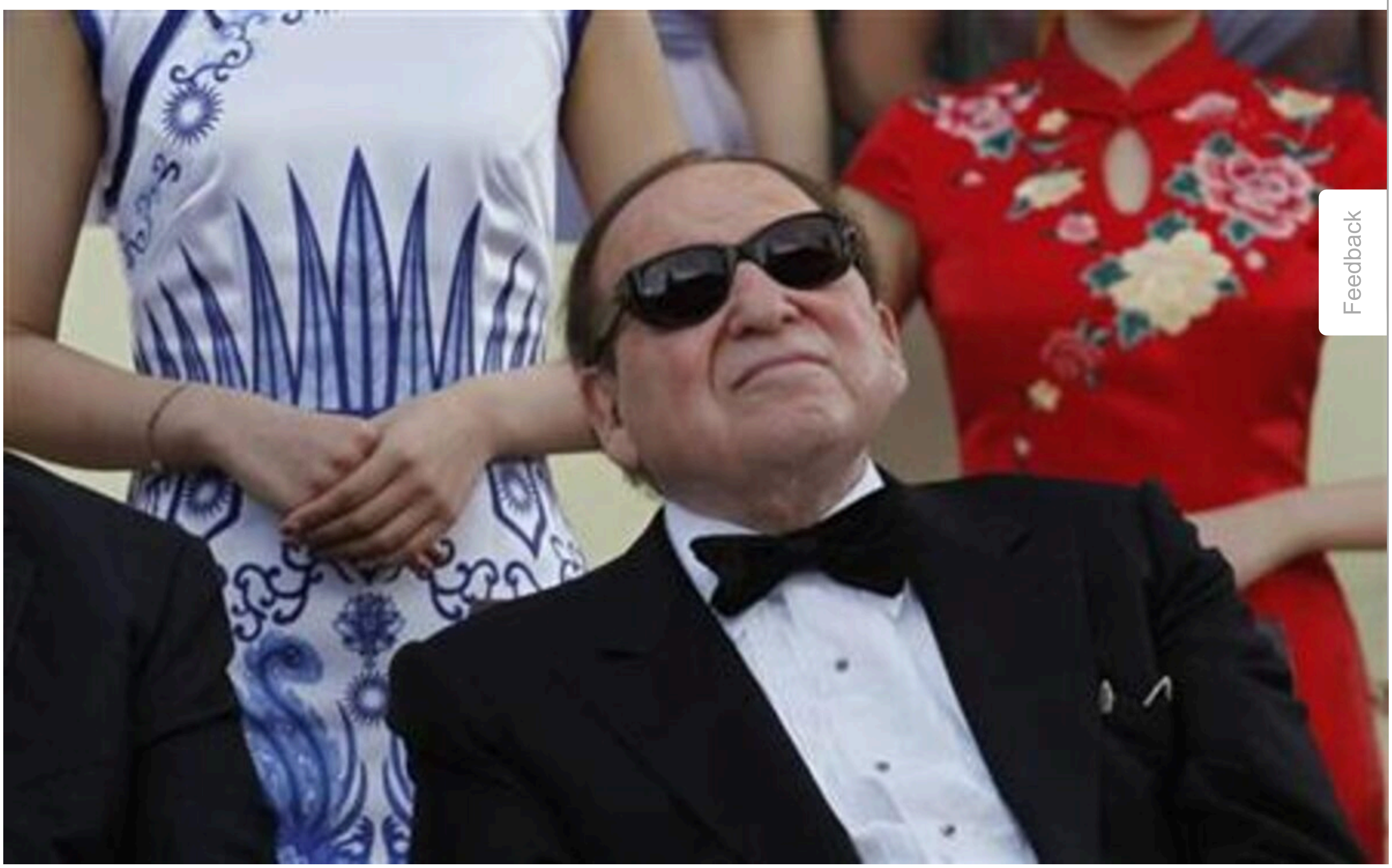

Las Vegas Sands Chairman and CEO Sheldon Adelson attends the opening ceremony of Sands Cotai Central, Sands' newest integrated resort in Macau April 11, 2012. REUTERS/Tyrone Siu Purchase Licensing Rights

HONG KONG (Reuters) - U.S. authorities are investigating Macau casino operator Sands China Ltd, controlled by Las Vegas gambling mogul Sheldon Adelson, on possible violations of antibribery regulations, the Wall Street Journal said on Friday.

The U.S. Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission are investigating whether Sands China violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, the Journal reported, citing documents and sources.

The investigation comes after allegations made by the former head of its Macau operations, Steve Jacobs, in a wrongful-termination lawsuit. Jacobs was ousted after he questioned the company's relationship with a politically connected Macau lawyer, the paper said.

The U.S. government and the company itself are also conducting investigations into at least three transactions in China, the paper reported, citing documents from the audit committee of the Sands board of directors.

The transactions include a $50 million payment for real estate for the Adelson Center, a business development operation that was never opened. Also under scrutiny is Sand's sponsorship of a Chinese basketball team and a contract for ferry service between Macau and Hong Kong, the paper said.

Sands China officials were not immediately available for comment to Reuters.

Sands China's shares were down 1.77 percent in early trade in Hong Kong, underperforming the main Hang Seng Index's 0.3 percent decline.

Reporting by Lee Chyen Yee; Editing by Matt Driskill

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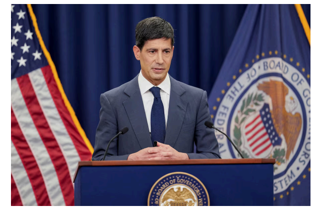

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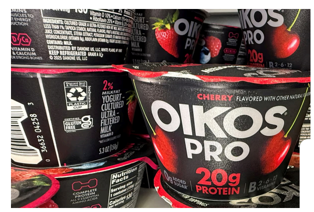

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