

Mass rally kicks off in Seoul calling for Park's ouster



SEOUL, South Korea – Tens, and possibly hundreds, of thousands of South Koreans marched in Seoul on Saturday demanding the **ouster** of President Park Geun-hye in what one of the biggest protests in the country since its **democratization** about 30 years ago.

Police **anticipated** about 170,000 people to **turn out** near City Hall and an old palace gate while the protest organizers **estimated** as much as a million are taking part. It's the latest of a wave of massive **rallies** against Park, whose presidency has been shaken by **suspicion** that she let a **shadowy** longtime confidante to **manipulate** power from behind the scenes.

Park's friend, Choi Soon-sil, the daughter of a late **cult leader** who **emerged** as Park's mentor in the 1970s, is also **suspected** of **exploiting** her presidential ties to

bully companies into donating tens of millions of dollars to foundations she controlled.

Despite rising public anger, opposition parties have yet to seriously push for Park's resignation or **impeachment** over fears of negatively impacting next year's presidential race. However, they have threatened to campaign for resignation if she doesn't **distance** herself **from state affairs**.

The protest on Saturday is expected to be the largest in the capital since June 10, 2008, when police said 80,000 people **took part in** a candlelight **vigil denouncing** the government's decision to resume U.S. beef imports **amid** persisting mad cow fears. Organizers then estimated the crowd at 700,000.

Prosecutors have arrested Choi, one of her key **associates** and two former presidential aides who allegedly helped Choi **interfere with** government decisions and **amass** an **illicit** fortune at the expense of businesses. Prosecutors also on Friday **summoned** the chairman of steelmaker POSCO over **allegations** that Choi and her associates tried to forcibly take over the shares of an advertisement company previously owned by the steelmaker. On Tuesday, they **raided** the headquarters of smartphone giant Samsung Electronics, the country's largest

company, which is under suspicion of spending millions of dollars illicitly financing the **equestrian** training of Choi's athlete daughter.

There is also a possibility that prosecutors will eventually **investigate** Park, who in a **televised** apology last week said she would accept a direct investigation into her action. The president has immunity from **prosecution** except in cases of **treason**, under South Korean law, but she can be investigated.