

‘Do your freaking job’: S. Korean protesters frustrated by failing impeachment vote

AFP- Gasps of frustration. Shouts of rage. Tears. Many of the tens of thousands of protesters outside South Korea's parliament were overcome with emotion Saturday, as a presidential impeachment motion looked set to fail. Nearly 150,000 people were estimated by police to have filled the streets around the National Assembly on Saturday, demanding that lawmakers impeach President Yoon Suk Yeol for his shocking imposition of martial law four days earlier, which plunged democratic South Korea into turmoil.

For hours, people poured into the area around parliament where on Tuesday night soldiers were helicoptered in as part of Yoon's short-lived bid to subvert civilian rule.

Ahead of the vote on the opposition-led impeachment motion, giant screens to show parliament livefeeds were set up across the eight-lane road by the National Assembly, which had been closed off to serve as a rally site.

Many protesters held banners saying: "impeach Yoon" and "insurrection criminal" and sang songs with lyrics such as "South Korea is a democratic Republic".

The atmosphere was festival-like, with some people bringing small children, or coming in large groups, with jaunty music punctuated by anti-Yoon chants.

But as MPs formally opened a session to determine Yoon's fate, the vast crowd fell silent, fixated on every move of the lawmakers.

A gasp of disappointment rippled through the crowd when a special probe bill to investigate suspicions surrounding First

Lady Kim Keon Hee was struck down.

Of the 300 MPs, 198 voted in favour of the probe – only two shy of the 200 needed.

Signs of frustration became more visible as ruling People Power Party MPs began leaving the main chamber to boycott the impeachment motion, which also required 200 votes to remove Yoon from office.

“I feel terrible that it has come to this today,” said An Jun-cheol, 24, at the rally.

“What the ruling party lawmakers did today – walking away from the vote – is nothing more than an attempt to cement their power and status, with no regard for the people.”

But An was resolute, saying he would keep attending the rallies until Yoon was impeached.

“I am sure more people will come here for the next vote,” he said.

Jo Ah-gyeong, a 30-year-old from Seoul, shared his determination.

“I’m neither discouraged nor disappointed,” she told AFP, despite the apparent failure to secure enough votes to impeach Yoon.

“Because we’ll get it eventually. I’ll keep coming here until we do.”

And she had a message for ruling party lawmakers: “Please do your freaking job.”

Four days after the martial law declaration, a sign of the event remains at the National Assembly. A white paper taped to one of its gates reads: “This is the gate which the Assembly Speaker climbed over to vote down the martial law.”

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