

South Korea slaps travel bans on more top officials

AFP- South Korean authorities banned more top officials from leaving the country Tuesday, Yonhap reported, in the wake of President Yoon Suk Yeol's bungled attempt to impose martial law.

A day after Yoon himself was hit with a travel ban, his party was forging a "resignation roadmap" that reportedly could see him step down in February or March before fresh elections.

Yoon suspended civilian rule a week ago and sent special forces and helicopters to parliament, before lawmakers forced him to rescind the decree in a country assumed to be a stable democracy.

Investigators are probing the president and a cabal of allies – many from the same school – for alleged insurrection over the sequence of extraordinary events.

On Tuesday Cho Ji-ho, commissioner general of the Korean National Police Agency, and two other top police officials became the latest to be banned from foreign travel, the Yonhap news agency reported.

Already confined to South Korean territory are the former defence and interior ministers, martial law commander General Park An-su and defence counterintelligence commander Yeo In-hyung.

– All my fault –

Kim Yong-hyun, the former defence minister, was detained on Sunday and late Monday prosecutors filed a formal arrest warrant against him.

Charges included "engaging in critical duties during an insurrection" and "abuse of authority to obstruct the exercise

of rights”.

A Seoul court will hold a hearing later Tuesday to rule on whether to issue the warrant for Kim, the first court decision to be made related to the martial law chaos.

Kim issued contrite comments Tuesday saying that “all responsibility for this situation lies solely with me”.

Kim “deeply apologised” to the South Korean people and said that his subordinates were “merely following my orders and fulfilling their assigned duties”, in a statement made through his lawyers.

– ‘Second coup’ –

Yoon narrowly survived an impeachment effort in parliament on Saturday as tens of thousands braved freezing temperatures to call for his ouster.

Civic groups held further candlelight vigils across the country on Monday, with several thousand outside parliament in Seoul.

The motion failed after members of Yoon’s own People Power Party (PPP) walked out of parliament, depriving it of the necessary two-thirds majority.

The PPP says that in exchange Yoon, 63, has agreed to hand power to the prime minister and party chief, prompting the opposition to accuse it of a “second coup”.

Local media reported on Tuesday that the PPP will announce a “resignation road map” soon in order to head off a new impeachment motion, which the opposition wants to put before lawmakers on Saturday.

The party’s task force was also reportedly reviewing two options, including for Yoon to resign in February with an April election, or to step down in March with a vote in May.

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