UN chief Ban Ki-moon hints on running for South Korea's presidency

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Seoul: UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has indicated that he may keep running for the presidency of his native South Korea when he returns home early next year.

Ban's term as the world's top diplomat expires at the end of December.

In his final press conference as UN chief, Ban said that after some rest he will return to South Korea and consider how best to help his country, BBC reported.

South Korea's next presidential election is scheduled to be held in December 2017.

However, a poll could take place within two months after the country's parliament voted to impeach current President Park Geun-hye over an influence-peddling scandal -- allowing a close friend to profit from her connections with the presidency.

If the country's constitutional court upholds last week's impeachment vote, she will become the first South Korean President to be deposed in the country's democratic era - and a new presidential election will be held within 60 days.

The constitutional court has 180 days to make a final ruling.

The UN chief's comments came amid ongoing protests here in the South Korean capital.

Large crowds are expected to gather this weekend to demand that Park resigns immediately, and to urge the constitutional court to formally remove her from office.

This will be the eighth consecutive week of protests against Ms Park.

While the rallies have been largely peaceful, there are fears that demonstrators could clash with thousands of the president's supporters who have planned their own protest near the court.

Park's lawyer, Lee Joong-hwan, has said the court should restore the President's powers because there is insufficient evidence to justify her removal.

The case against Park rests on her relationship with long-time friend Choi Soon-sil, who faces charges of coercion and abuse of power.

It is alleged that after Park became president in 2013, Choi, 60, used their friendship to pressure powerful corporations into donating to foundations she controlled and then siphoned off funds for her personal use.

Prosecutors say Park had a 'considerable' role in the alleged corruption. The President has denied that, but apologised for putting her trust in her jailed friend.

Choi's criminal trial will begin on December 20.

- (With inputs from IANS)