

South Korean President Park Geun-hye removed from office

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Seoul: South Korean President Park Geun-hye was removed from office on Friday after the country's constitutional court upheld his impeachment.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye

In a televised announcement, the Constitutional Court's acting Chief Justice Lee Jung-mi said that the negative effects of the President's actions and their repercussions are grave, and the benefits to defending the Constitution by removing her from office are overwhelmingly large.

The ruling made Park the nation's first democratically elected leader to be ousted, Yonhap News Agency reported.

The court's eight justices voted unanimously for the impeachment.

Of the charges brought against the former President, the court acknowledged the illegality of Park's actions in letting her close friend and confidant Choi Soon-sil meddle in state affairs.

It dismissed the others, such as her abuse of power to appoint government officials, citing a lack of evidence.

On Park's alleged neglect of duty during a 2014 ferry sinking that killed over 300 people mostly students, Lee said the charge did not warrant deliberation by the court.

She was impeached by parliament on December 9.

An election to pick her successor must be held within 60 days, the court ruled.

The President's supporters and detractors rallied outside the court as police officers and police buses were deployed to prevent a possible clash.

The court's decision strips Park of her immunity from criminal prosecution, which will force her to undergo interrogation by prosecutors over her alleged crimes.

Park was the first female President of South Korea. She took office on February 25, 2013. Her father, Park Chung-hee, was the President from 1963 to 1979 after he seized power in 1961.

- (With IANS inputs)