

S. Korea presidential probe starts

by UPI

SEOUL -- A special counsel probe against South Korean President-elect Lee Myung-bak in an alleged stock manipulation scam opened Tuesday. Chung Ho-young, the independent counsel looking into the case, has said he will be fair and just in collecting evidence and making judgments, Yonhap reported. Chung must determine whether Lee collaborated in the 2001 stock manipulation scam, which Lee has denied. Lee was cleared of the allegation earlier when he was still a presidential candidate. The independent counsel investigation was later ordered by the National Assembly. Lee's former business partner has been indicted for stock manipulation, embezzlement and forgery of documents. Chung's mandate will expire before Lee's inauguration set for Feb. 25 and there were concerns whether the probe can be completed before then. Lee will get immunity after his inauguration as under Korean constitutional laws, an incumbent president can be indicted only on charges of treason, the report said. "The investigation can somehow help Lee Myung-bak to make a fresh start and then run the country," a political science professor told Yonhap.

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