



Samsung leader apologizes for MERS missteps

←Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics, addresses the MERS outbreak during a press conference in Seoul on June 23.

- SEOUL -- The leader of South Korea's powerful Samsung group apologized for the outbreak of Middle East respiratory syndrome, more commonly called MERS, at a hospital it operates amid growing public criticism.
- Lee Jae-yong, vice chairman of Samsung Electronics and the de facto leader of the Samsung group, on Tuesday held a press conference in Seoul. He is the eldest son of Lee Kun-hee, chief of the Samsung group and chairman of Samsung Electronics, and is presumed to be the Samsung heir.
- As chairman of the Samsung Life Public Welfare Foundation, Lee deeply bowed and said the group failed to fulfill the public's expectations. He also said the group is keenly aware of its responsibility.
- In South Korea, it is highly unusual for even a de facto leader of a massive conglomerate to hold a press conference. Lee Jae-yong did not take questions from reporters.
- On the same day, South Korea's health ministry reported a total of 175 MERS cases in the country, 85 of them infected at Samsung Medical Center in Seoul, which is run by the foundation. Samsung Medical Center is considered one of South Korea's four cutting-edge medical institutions. It is where Lee Kun-hee has been hospitalized since he had a severe heart attack in May 2014.
- South Korea's MERS nightmare began sometime in the middle of May. On May 20, a 68-year-old man who had recently been to Saudi Arabia and was being treated at Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital, in suburban Seoul, was diagnosed with MERS. On May 27, a 35-year-old man with a chronic cough was transported by ambulance from Pyeongtaek St. Mary's Hospital to Samsung Medical Center.
- Doctors at Samsung Medical Center did not recognize that their new patient was carrying the MERS virus until May 29, when it was notified by the government. During those three days, numerous orderlies, nurses, doctors, other health care givers as well as patients and visitors contracted the disease.
- Even after it knew it was dealing with MERS, Samsung Medical Center failed to properly manage medical staff and isolate those at risk.
- A 55-year-old male orderly at the hospital developed a fever and muscle pain on June 2 but continued to work until June 10. A sick doctor also continued to work until June 10; he was later diagnosed as having contracted MERS.
- Samsung Medical Center has now been partially closed to prevent the virus from further spreading. It has suspended outpatient care and new hospital stays. It has also stopped performing surgeries, except in emergency cases.
- South Korean President Park Geun-hye on June 17 visited the Korea National Institute of Health. She summoned the head of Samsung Medical Center to the institute and called for tougher measures, saying many problems would be resolved if Samsung Medical Center could properly handle the situation.
- The Samsung group is involved in numerous businesses, including electronics making, construction, insurance, systems development and fashion. The group's core unit, Samsung Electronics, has a market capitalization of 194 trillion won (\$177 billion), accounting for 15% of the combined market cap of all listed South Korean companies.
- Though the Samsung group, a symbol of "the haves" in a country with a widening income gap, is always subjected to criticism, it is also a source of pride for South Koreans.
- The frail Lee Kun-hee is still recovering from his heart attack, and while Lee Jae-yong is seen as currently leading the Samsung group, he has yet to formally assume the chairmanship or take over his father's company stock holdings. 【6/24/2015/Nikkei Asian Review】

de facto : 事実上の heir : 相続人 the Samsung Life Public Welfare Foundation サムソン生命公益財団 conglomerate : 複合企業 chronic : 慢性的な orderly : 医療や看護の資格を持たない病棟付き職員 contract : (重い病気に)かかる market capitalization : 時価総額 frail : 弱い assume : ①想定する②責任を引き受ける

★Ice breaker for active discussion★

- Have you ever been to South Korea? What is your impression towards the country and its people.
- According to the article, it is highly unusual for big company leaders to hold a press conference. How is it different from Japan's case?
- Aside from MERS what other infectious diseases have you heard recently? What can we do to stop them from spreading?
- Samsung is one of the symbols of "the haves" in South Korea. What do you think are the responsibilities conglomerates?
- What do you think will Japan and South Korea's relationship going to be in the future?
- Make sentences using the following words: de facto, heir, chronic, contract, capitalization, frail assume and the haves.