

Samsung family in public spat over inheritance

April 24 2012, By YOUKYUNG LEE , AP Technology Writer



In this July 6, 2011 file photo, Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-hee, right, greets people from the South Korean delegation in Durban, South Africa, for the 123rd International Olympic Committee (IOC) session that will decide the host city for the 2018 Olympics Winter Games. A feud over the riches of South Korea's Samsung business empire has erupted in public as family members prepare to take an inheritance battle to court. Lee, chairman of Samsung Electronics Co., which is the flagship company of the Samsung conglomerate, is facing off against his older brother, a sister and a nephew's wife who all want a bigger piece of the Samsung cake. (AP Photo/Schalk van Zuydam, File)

(AP) -- A feud over the riches of South Korea's Samsung business empire has erupted in public as family members prepare to take an inheritance battle to court.

Lee Kun-hee, chairman of [Samsung Electronics](#) Co., which is the

flagship company of the Samsung [conglomerate](#), is facing off against his older brother, a sister and a nephew's wife who all want a bigger piece of the Samsung cake.

The court battle might upset a dynastic succession in Samsung's leadership as it could result in the unraveling of a cross-shareholding structure that allows Lee Kun-hee to control the group as a minority shareholder.

Lee, who is South Korea's wealthiest individual, on Tuesday took the rare step of publicly attacking his brother, Lee Meng-hee, declaring on YTN television that the 81-year-old "has been already kicked out from our home." Lee Meng-hee had earlier called his brother "greedy" and "childlike."

Battles for control of Chaebol, South Korea's family-controlled industrial groups that wield immense power over the economy, are not uncommon but it is unusual for the internal wrangling to become public.

Lee Meng-hee filed a lawsuit in February, demanding more than 700 billion won (\$613 million) of shares in Samsung Life Insurance Co. and other companies. Similar claims followed by Lee's older sister and the wife of a dead nephew.

Lee Kun-hee, the third son of Samsung founder Lee Byung-chull, was tapped in 1979 by his father to lead what would become South Korea's most valuable company. The decision apparently disappointed Lee Meng-hee who later wrote in his autobiography that he had thought his father would turn over the throne to him.

The 70-year-old Samsung chairman has refused to settle the dispute out of court. A date for the first hearing in the case will be announced after the court reviews responses from Samsung, said lawyer Jeong Jin-su of

Yoon & Yang LLC, which represents the three plaintiffs.

The family members have taken to public denunciations that are being lapped up by local media.

"I'm trying to retrieve my property that Lee Kun-hee has been hiding for 25 years," his sister Lee Suk-hee said in a statement released by the law firm.

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Citation: Samsung family in public spat over inheritance (2012, April 24) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-samsung-family-spat-inheritance.html>

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