

Grief-Stricken DPRK People Bid Final Farewell To Kim Jong Il
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PYONGYANG, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- People of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) bid their final farewell to the nation's late leader, Kim Jong Il, in snowy weather Wednesday.

A ceremony to bid a last farewell to Kim Jong Il began in the plaza of the Kumsusan Memorial Palace at 1 p.m. local time (0400 GMT), reports Xinhua news agency.

DPRK Central TV footage showed columns of troops standing in the snow on the square as a limousine carrying a huge portrait of a smiling Kim followed by a motorcade escorting his hearse moved slowly along the street.

DPRK national flags were lowered to half-mast and somber funeral music was played by a military troupe on the square in front of the palace.

Kim Jong Un, the late leader's third son, walked at the right front of the hearse, followed by Jang Song Thaek, vice chairman of the National Defence Commission. Ri Yong Ho, chief of the General Staff of the Korean People's Army (KPA), walked at the left front.

The motorcade then entered downtown Pyongyang, where hundreds of thousands of tearful people lined the 40-km route.

Heartbroken Pyongyang residents broke into wailing with the approach of the hearse, beating their chests and chanting the name of their late national leader. Some people were so overcome with grief, they fell to the ground.

"Snow fell over streets nonstop as if the sky had shared the sadness with the Korean people who grieve over the loss of the sun of the nation," the official KCNA news agency said.

In Pyongyang streets, there were streamers reading "We mourn the demise of the great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il in humblest reverence" and "The great leader Comrade Kim Jong Il will live forever."

The people lining the streets cried: "Fatherly General, don't go please!", "Never, never!" "Come back please!"

People chased the hearse carrying Kim's coffin draped with a red flag on a bed of white flowers, and security guards stood hand-in-hand to maintain order and keep the crowd clear of the motorcade.

After a three-hour procession that included circling the capital, the motorcade returned to the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, where the funeral proceedings continued.

Born in 1942, Kim studied at the politics and economics department of Kim Il Sung

University in 1960.

He started working for the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in 1964.

From December 1991 to April 1993, Kim was successively supreme commander of the KPA, first vice-chairman and later chairman of the National Defence Commission.

In 1997, Kim was elected general secretary of the WPK.

The 69-year-old leader died from "great mental and physical strain" on Dec 17 during an inspection tour, according to the DPRK media.

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