

'Rocket man' Kim Jong-il immortalised in North Korea
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SEOUL, Jan 12 — North Korea declared February 16 the "Day of the Shining Star" to commemorate the birthday of late "Great Leader" Kim Jong-il, using the same name as a long-range rocket developed under his trademark songun, or military first, policy.

North Koreans pay tribute at a statue of the late North Korean founder Kim Il-sung in Pyongyang, January 1, 2012, in this picture released by KCNA on Sunday. — Reuters supplied pic

During his 17-year reign, Kim oversaw major developments in the North's military — mainly a nuclear weapons programme and work towards building a long-range ballistic missile.

The secretive state also announced Kim's body will lie in state permanently at the same mausoleum housing his father's embalmed body.

"The great leader Comrade Kim Jong-il will be laid in state at the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, the sacred temple of Juche," state media quoted a declaration by the ruling party. Juche is the North's home-grown official ideology that fuses Marxism, an extreme concept of nationalism and economic self-sufficiency.

It said Kim Jong-il had been named as the "eternal leader of the party". His father, the North's founder Kim Il-sung, is referred to as the country's "eternal president".

The North will also erect Kim's statue and portraits and build towers across the country in what could be an attempt to strengthen his personality cult and help the dynastic succession of his son, Kim Jong-un.

Giant portraits and statues of Kim Il-sung already exist in cities, towns and villages across North Korea. There are believed to be more than 3,000 so-called "eternal life towers" dedicated to Kim Il-sung's godly status.

North Korea already marks April 15 as the country's greatest celebration, the anniversary of Kim Il-sung's birth, with musical performances, a nationwide festival of flowers named after him, and discussion of his exploits.

His son died of a heart attack on December 17, the North's state media said. A state funeral and a commemorative event capped 10 days of mourning and his son, Jong-un, believed to be 28, is hailed as the "great successor" who will carry on the revolution. — Reuters

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