

In South Korea, some praise North's departed 'Dear Leader'
Reuters
December 28, 2011

SEOUL, Dec 28 — Despite growth that has propelled South Korea to become the world's 13th largest economy, a powerhouse that makes computers, mobile telephones and cars, there are some in the capital of Seoul who believe life is better in the impoverished North.

South Koreans at a railway station in Seoul watch a TV broadcasting the funeral of Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang. — Reuters pic

As the world watched today's funeral of dictator Kim Jong-il, who presided over famine, a nuclear arms push and military skirmishes with the South, Choi Dong Jin, 48, told Reuters that Kim was "a great and outstanding person" for resisting US imperialism.

Choi is editor-in-chief for the Pan-Korea Alliance for Reunification, a body that promotes the North and unification of the Korean peninsula.

He sits in his office in Seoul's financial district, a smartphone on his desk, beneath a picture of Kim Jong-il in 2000 meeting former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung, whose engagement with the North, known as the "Sunshine Policy", has been halted by the current conservative government in Seoul.

"The presence of Kim Jong-Il had prevented the US from waging a war on the Korean Peninsula," Choi told Reuters.

Sympathisers like Choi risk arrest and imprisonment in South Korea even though they appear to be a fringe group.

Under the conservative administration of President Lee Myung-bak, 151 people were questioned for offences involving praising North Korea last year, up from 39 in 2007, according to the National Police Agency data.

By contrast, some 200,000 North Koreans are in forced labour camps for crimes against the regime, according to human rights group Amnesty International.

One member of a body campaigning against South Korea's six-decade old national security law told Reuters that the succession process that will see the 20-something son of Kim

Jong-il, Kim Jong-un, take power looked more "efficient" than South Korea's democratic presidential elections.

In South Korea, a president can serve only one five-year term under the country's constitution that was enacted since the advent of democracy in 1987.

Military first, juche

"The military-first policy and Juche ideology have been protecting the Koreans from the corrupt US power," said a 58-year old construction worker, who wished to be known only by

his last name of Kim as he feared arrest.

Juche is the North Korean policy of economic self-reliance.

According to United Nations data, North Korea's economic output is now smaller than in the 1990s under the administration of Kim Jong-il's father, Kim il-Sung, who founded the state in 1948.

Kim Jong-il took power from his father in 1994.

Kim believes the line from North Korea's state media that made the death announcement and said the 69-year-old died on December 17 on a train going to give "field guidance", advice given out to the armed forces, factories and farmers.

"I was impressed by the revolutionary leader as he was working together with people to the end of his life," he said.

He believes most news reports of North Korean hardship are fabricated as news organisations are biased towards the United States.

"Even if North Koreans are materially poor, I think they are mentally rich with their political system," Kim said. — Reuters

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright© 2011 The Malaysian Insider

Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/world/article/in-south-korea-some-praise-norths-departed-dear-leader/>