

North Korea close to testing intercontinental ballistic missile: Kim Jong-Un

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Pyongyang: North Korea is in the "elast stage" of preparations to test-fire an intercontinental ballistic missile, Kim Jong-Un said Sunday, refusing to bow down to international pressure on nuclear-arms development.

North Korea refuses to bow down to international pressure

"We are in the final stages of test-launching the intercontinental ballistic missile," Kim said in a 30-minute televised New Year's speech, pointing to a string of nuclear and missile tests last year.

Pyongyang had "soared as a nuclear power," he said, adding it was now a "military power of the East that cannot be touched by even the strongest enemy."

The country carried out two nuclear tests and numerous missile launches in 2016 in pursuit of its oft-stated goal of developing a weapons system capable of hitting the US mainland with a nuclear warhead.

"We have seen marvellous feats for bolstering our military power including the fact that our preparations for test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile is in the final stages," Kim added.

Analysts are divided over how close Pyongyang is to realising its full nuclear ambitions, especially as it has never successfully test-fired an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM).

But all agree Pyongyang has made enormous strides in that direction since Kim took over as leader from his father, Kim Jong-Il who died in December 2011.

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