

Cuba will ban naming of monuments after Fidel Castro, says brother Raul

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Santiago: Cuban President Raul Castro announced on that his government would honour the wishes of his brother Fidel and would prohibit the naming of streets and monuments after him and bar the construction of statues of him in keeping with the former leader's desire to avoid a cult of personality.

People hold pictures of Fidel Castro during a last homage to him in Santiago

The country's National Assembly would pass in its next session a law fulfilling the wishes of his brother, who died last week at 90 but remains a revolutionary icon, the younger Castro told a crowd gathered to pay homage to Fidel in the eastern city of Santiago.

"The leader of the revolution rejected any manifestation of a cult of personality and was consistent in that through the last hours of his life, insisting that, once dead, his name and likeness would never be used on institutions, streets, parks or other public sites, and that busts, statutes or other forms of tribute would never be erected," Raul Castro said.

The National Assembly generally holds a meeting in December and under Cuba's single-party system, parliament unanimously or near-unanimously approves every government proposal.

Fidel Castro, who stepped down in 2006 after falling ill, kept his name off public sites during his near half-century in power because he said he wanted to avoid the development of a personality cult. In contrast, the images of his fellow revolutionary fighters Camilo Cienfuegos and Ernesto "Che" Guevara became common across Cuba in the decades since their deaths.

Mourning for Castro has been fervent and intense across the country since his death, particularly in rural eastern Cuba, where huge crowds have been shouting Castro's name and lining the roads to salute the funeral procession carrying his ashes.

"All of us would like to put Fidel's name on everything but in the end, Fidel is all of Cuba," said Juan Antonio Gonzalez, a 70-year-old retired economist. "It was a decision of Fidel's, not Raul's, and I think he has to be respected."

Raul Castro, 85, spoke at the end of a second massive rally in honor of Fidel as Cuba neared the end of a nine-day period of public mourning. Castro's ashes arrived Saturday afternoon in Santiago, ending a four-day journey across Cuba that began after a massive rally in Havana's Plaza of the Revolution.

He expressed gratitude for his supporters for the love and respect he said they have shown his late brother Fidel, the island's former leader, who died on 25 November.

Castro addressed crowds gathered at a massive televised rally held on Saturday at Antonio Maceo Revolution Square in the eastern city of Santiago.

Thousands of people welcomed the leader's remains to shouts of "Fidel! I am Fidel!" Hundreds of thousands more gathered in Santiago's Revolution Plaza Saturday night, cheering speeches by the heads of state-run groups of small farmers, women, revolutionary veterans and neighborhood watch committee members.

The event was attended by Bolivian President Evo Morales, Nicaraguan leader Daniel Ortega and Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, along with former Brazilian presidents Dilma Rousseff and Lula da Silva.

Castro's ashes will be interred on Sunday morning in Santiago's Santa Ifigenia cemetery,, ending a nine-day mourning period and a four-day journey across Cuba.

Mourning for Castro has reached near-religious peaks of public adulation across Cuba since his death, particularly in rural eastern Cuba.

Huge crowds have been shouting his name and lining the roads to salute the funeral procession carrying his ashes from Havana to Santiago.

- (With AP inputs)