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# Rousing welcome for medallists

Paralympians treated to spirited reception and victory ride around KL

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysia's four Paralympics medal winners – Mohamad Ridzuan Mohamad Puzi, Muhammad Ziyad Zolkefli, Abdul Latif Romly and Siti Noor Radiah Ismail – came home to a rousing welcome at the airport before being hailed as heroes at the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Pavilion KL in Bukit Bintang.

When they arrived at the Bunga Raya Complex in the KL International Airport, the large crowd there broke into loud cheers.

The medallists stepped onto the ceremony's main stage after touching down at about 4pm yesterday and the crowd, mostly comprising Government servants, sports students and special needs people, shouted "Malaysia Boleh" and "Mereka Luar Biasa" (They are extraordinary).

They also held up signs and played the *kompang* to show their support as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak led ministers in welcoming home the national team.

The athletes then met up with their families outside the complex, where they hugged and took pictures.

The entire contingent, including coaches, were garlanded by Najib who led the crowd in singing *Negaraku*.

The Prime Minister praised the



**Triumphant return:** Najib, his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Khairy along with the Paralympics medal winners at the Bunga Raya Complex in the KL International Airport.

contingent for a job well done.

"The story of the Rio Paralympics contingent is one that can serve as a strong motivator to all Malaysians.

"Make them an example and role models for all of us," he said.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin said his ministry would

expand the talent searching programme and encourage more individuals with disabilities to look to sports as a career option.

"I will work with the Education Ministry to bring our athletes to schools to meet our students.

"This is an inspiring story for all

Malaysians," Khairy added.

After the welcome at the airport, the four were taken on a celebratory procession around Kuala Lumpur organised by the Youth and Sports Ministry.

They were met at their 15-minute stop at KLCC by a crowd of suppor-

ters that included contingents of children from several primary schools across the Klang Valley.

More than 400 people cheered when the bus carrying the Paralympic athletes and officials then made its way to the entrance of the Pavilion shopping mall.

Some had waited patiently at the mall's entrance since 4pm although the bus, scheduled to arrive at 6pm, only made it an hour later.

All four athletes looked elated as they greeted the crowd, who sang the patriotic tune *Inilah Barisan Kita* and then chanted "Malaysia Boleh" as the athletes got off the bus.

The medallists spent about 15 minutes taking selfies and signing autographs for the public.

There were about 270 students and coaches from four Akademi Tunas in Kuala Lumpur there. The students, from the Under-12 league, are part of the National Football Development Programme.

Jendre Brandeny, 12, who is from the Bandar Tun Razak Akademi Tunas, was one of the lucky few who caught a lapel pin thrown by one of the athletes.

His friend Muhammad Nurhakim Abdul Latip said the athletes had inspired him to be a better footballer.

"I want to be the best footballer in the world," said the 12-year-old.