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PM leads tributes to 'the greatest'

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CONDOLENCES:

The world lost more than just a legendary boxer, says Najib

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak offered his condolences to three-time world heavyweight boxing champion Muhammad Ali as tributes from Malaysians poured in for the late legend.

"The world lost more than just a legendary boxer. We lost the greatest of all time. Al-Fatihah #MuhammadAli," he wrote on his Twitter and Facebook accounts.

Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan described Ali as "a truly inspirational man who touched the hearts of millions in every nook and cranny of the world".

"I was a little boy when he demolished Joe Bugner in Malaysia in 1975.

"I cheered every time his left hook landed on Joe's chin and cringed every time Joe's upper cut wobbled his head. Such is #MuhammadAli. He was bigger than life, with influence so unimaginably far reaching," he said on Twitter.

Rahman said Ali was the hero of the underprivileged and a source of strength for millions who faced incredible challenges in their lives.

"Al-Fatihah to my champ. You will be forever remembered. May Allah bless your soul and grant you Jannah (heaven)," he said.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy



Muhammad Ali in his presidential suite at **Hilton Kuala Lumpur** on June 20, 1975. File pic

Jamaluddin called the legendary boxer by his nickname, "the greatest".

"May Allah bless your soul. The greatest. Ali! Ali! Ali!" he said on Twitter with a photo of Ali raising his fists in the air.

AirAsia group founder Tan Sri Tony Fernandes also offered his condolences.

"Sad news. Greatest boxer that I knew has passed away. Legend RIP Muhammed Ali," he tweeted.

He said Ali would "float like a butterfly and sting like a bee" in heaven,

citing the late boxer's most memorable quote.

Ali died on Friday at the age of 74 at a hospital in Phoenix, Arizona, following a respiratory ailment.

He was in Kuala Lumpur in 1975, for a fight against European champion Joe Bugner at Stadium Merdeka. The event, organised by Tinju Dunia Sdn Bhd, was under the patronage of Malaysia's second prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, and under the auspices of Umno Youth.

A Facebook user by the name

Hulubalang Langgun shared his thoughts on the legendary boxer via NST Online, which dedicated a special tribute to him on Facebook.

He praised the boxing icon for wearing a songkok when planting a rambutan tree near the compound Masjid Negara in 1975.

Mohd Khata Jabor recalled how he met Ali and shook hands with him in 1989 in Michigan, the United States.

"Met him, shook hands with him back in 1989 in Michigan and he said to me, 'be a good Muslim,'" wrote

Khata, who also shared his thoughts with NST Online.

Ouga Rosidah Ahmad wrote: "A great man and a great fighter. Al-Fatihah and may he be with his Creator in Jannah. Amin."

A fan, Rozaidin Yazid, recalled how he waited for Ali twice to shake hands with him during his visit here, but was unsuccessful.

"The first time was at the Hilton Hotel, Jalan Sultan Ismail, where he stayed, and the second was at Stadium Negara, where he had his boxing practice.

"He left through the backdoor to escape from fans who waited for him at the main entrance. May Allah bless you, Ali. Al-Fatihah."

Another fan, Pusparani Subramaniam, said she remembered the televised fight between Ali and Joe Frazier at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Jan 28, 1974.

"I was in Form 5 and our headmistress of Convent Kajang, Sister Emily, gave us permission to watch the fight on TV in our common hall.

"We were very excited. Our headmistress was a very strict lady and we didn't really expect her to allow us to watch the historic fight on TV."

Jamilah Abdullah also remembers that fight.

"I was in primary school. My school actually opened up our classes into a dewan and we all watched the fight!" she wrote.

Facebook user Muhammad Firdaus Christopher also shared his tribute to Ali with NST Online.

"Today, we lost a hero of epic proportions. Muhammad Ali was the greatest athlete of the 20th century and, more importantly, one of the century's greatest human beings."

Page 1 pic: Muhammad Ali during his fight with Joe Bugner in Kuala Lumpur on June 29, 1975. File pic