

Don saw football as the best unifying tool

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PETALING JAYA: More than a highly regarded academician, the late Emeritus Prof Tan Sri Dr Khoo Kay Kim is remembered as a true Malaysian who saw football as a crucial piece of the nation's heritage, and a champion of unity.

Education Minister Dr Maszlee Malik said he was deeply saddened over Prof Khoo's death.

"He was a great man whose contributions to the country will still live on in each and every Malaysian.

"When students recite the Rukun Negara in schools, or when they quietly debate or discuss our history in university corridors – his spirit of inquiry and zest for life will remain with us all," he added.

New Era University College deputy vice-chancellor Prof Dr Lee Kam Hing was Prof Khoo's colleague at Universiti Malaya's (UM) History Department for over 20 years.

He said as a historian, Prof Khoo sought to re-interpret 19th-century Malaysian history.

"He led a generation of young historians in the 1970s and 1980s to ask new questions and offer fresh perspectives in understanding society's responses to changes brought by colonial rule.

"Later, Prof Khoo wrote about

sports, especially football, which he believed was an essential part of our country's social history."

Prof Khoo is known to be an ardent football fan.

UM vice-chancellor Datuk Abdul Rahim Hashim described Prof Khoo as a local and international legend in his field.

"We have lost someone great and will always keep him in our minds and hearts."

UM Arts and Social Sciences Faculty dean Prof Datuk Dr Danny Wong Tze Ken said "we lost a Malaysian historian of our time".

"Prof Khoo lived through all major events of our country's history. He helped shape the documentation of our past. He helped to pen the Rukun Negara after the May 13 riots (in 1969). Even when he fell ill recently, he was still active," he said, adding that Prof Khoo redefined how history was written.

Prof Datuk Dr Awang Bulgiba Awang Mahmud, from UM's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine, described Prof Khoo as a true Malaysian at heart.

Tunku Abdul Rahman University College vice-chancellor Prof Dr Lee Sze Wei said he studied history in secondary school using textbooks co-written by Prof Khoo.

"His way of presenting history taught us to think critically as there could be different perspectives in

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viewing and interpreting events," he said.

Former UM vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Ghauth Jasmon said Prof Khoo was a towering figure in the country's oldest university.

Prof Khoo's friendliness, openness and respect for others were exemplary, he added.

Universiti Putra Malaysia vice-chancellor Prof Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris, who chairs the selection committee for the Tokoh Anugerah Akademik Negara, called Prof Khoo "a dedicated historian".

He received the award in 2017.

Asia e University vice-chancellor Emeritus Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said said Prof Khoo was very supportive of its higher education initiatives.

"I met him many times when I was the director-general of the Higher Education Department.

"We lost an eminent person who championed unity in our country,"

he added.

Former Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia vice-chancellor and National Council of Women's Organisations Malaysia (NCWO) president Prof Tan Sri Dr Sharifah Hapsah Syed Hasan Shahabudin said she knew Prof Khoo well and respected his wisdom in the interpretation of the country's common history.

Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) vice-chancellor Emeritus Prof Dr Mohd Azraai Kassim said Prof Khoo's efforts to strengthen unity among Malaysians and shape national identity must never be forgotten.

Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute Centre for Public Policy Studies chairman Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam said the "scholar, sportsman and gentleman" was an icon of the Merdeka generation.

Sunway Education Group and Sunway University senior executive director Elizabeth Lee said Prof Khoo was a legend before his time, and a human Wikipedia of Malaysian history.

"At Sunway we were blessed to have had Prof Khoo provide the leadership and help develop our compulsory subjects when we were upgraded to university college.

"His wealth of knowledge when it comes to the development of our nation was phenomenal."