

Newly inaugurated President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva paid his respects at Santos' Vila Belmiro, the stadium where Pele played for most of his career.

Pele died last week at age 82 and was laid to rest in Santos, the city where he became famous after moving there at age 15 to play for Santos FC. The funeral Mass was held at the team's Vila Belmiro stadium before his black casket was driven through the streets of Santos in a firetruck.

It was taken into the cemetery as bands played the team's official song and a Roman Catholic hymn. Before the golden-wrapped casket arrived, attendees sang samba songs that Pele liked.

Pele in the 1960s and 1970s was perhaps the world's most famous athlete. He met presidents and queens, and a civil war in Nigeria was put on hold so people could watch him play. Many Brazilians credit Pele with putting the country on the world stage for the first time.

Rows of shirts with Pele's No. 10 were placed behind one of the stadium's goals, waving in the city's summer winds. A section of the stands filled up with bouquets of flowers placed by mourners and sent by clubs and star players — Neymar and Ronaldo among them — from around the world as loudspeakers played the song "*Eu sou Pele*" (I am Pele) recorded by him.

The crowd was mostly local, although some came from far away, and many mourners were too young ever to have seen Pele play. The mood was light, as people filtered out of the stadium to local bars, wearing Santos FC and Brazil shirts.

Among the people was FIFA President Gianni Infantino who told journalists that every country should name a stadium after Pele.

"I am here with a lot of emotion, sadness, but also with a smile because he gave us so many smiles," Infantino said. "As FIFA, we will pay a tribute to 'the King' and we ask the whole world to observe a minute of silence."

Pele had undergone treatment for colon cancer since 2021. The medical centre where he had been hospitalised said he died of multiple organ failure as a result of the cancer.

Pele led Brazil to World Cup titles in 1958, 1962 and 1970 and remains one of the team's all-time leading scorers with 77 goals. Neymar tied Pele's record during this

year's World Cup in Qatar.