

Photos by ASRI ABDUL GHANI, GARY CHEN, CHAN BOON KAI, LIM BENG TATT, ZHAFFARAN NASIB, GEORGE CHEAH and LOW BOON TAT

# Malaysians can expect a brighter year, says Najib

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysians can look forward to a brighter year as the country chalked up impressive growth that Europe and North America could only dream of, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

Despite global turbulence and strengthening of the US dollar, Malaysia's estimated growth rate was between 4.3% and 4.5%, he said.

Even the International Monetary Fund concurred that the Malaysian economy continued to perform well despite headwinds, and that it had made progress towards achieving high-income status, he said.

"Our economic plan is working. We have kept the budget deficit, inflation and unemployment low, and the resilience we have been building in our economy has seen us through times of global turbulence," he said in a statement.

Najib said the assessments made by the world's top experts

reflected the true picture of Malaysia.

"That is the reality, and I urge all Malaysians not to fall for lies that are spread.

"Fake news and the proliferation of false stories have become a worldwide phenomenon," he said.

He also said that large-scale infrastructure projects would promote sustainable growth.

"And we want it to be shared equitably," Najib said.

MIC president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam pledged that the party would continue to focus on agenda that would improve the livelihood of the community.

"MIC will work hard to ensure policies drafted in the National Blueprint for the Indian community are carried out for the welfare of the people," he said.

As Health Minister, he said the ministry would strive to ensure Malaysians continue to enjoy high quality healthcare.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong said the people should hold on to an optimistic outlook for 2017 by ending old chapters and starting anew.

It was time to reflect, learn and resolve pressing issues with honesty and practicality while keeping the country on track for further transformation and development.

He said multiracial Malaysia must remain united to overcome divisive socio-political challenges.

It was important for the people to renew commitment to support nation-building initiatives instead of engaging in irresponsible or counter-productive actions against national interest, Mah said.

To stop the vicious cycle of divisive political bickering, he said there should be a sense of togetherness and maturity.

"Malaysians have shown resilience and resourcefulness in difficult times, overcoming constant bickering," he said in a statement.

Cheerful welcome: Happy revellers ushering in 2017 at Straits Quay in Tanjung Tokong, Penang.



# Ushering in 2017 with fun and fireworks

## Crowds come together to celebrate New Year

**GEORGE TOWN:** Revellers bade farewell to 2016 on a high note atop Komtar Tower with an exclusive New Year's Eve dinner, a splendid view, band performance and a countdown party.

Guests came thronging in numbers at the CocoCabana Bar and Bistro, perched at the tower's Level 68 rooftop for the exclusive seven-course dinner.

The main highlight was a laser light show where part of the Komtar Tower facade was brought to life with imagery.

Cuddly mascots George and Pearl also made a special appearance during a parade at Level Five of The Top@Komtar.

Over at Kompleks Bukit Jambul, four-member Korean girl group Six Bomb wowed the crowd with their sizzling performances while local five-piece band Northern Jazz Unit, Malaysian Astro artiste Jacqueline Ng and Malaysian rapper SonaOne pumped up the mood of the revellers at the countdown party there.

The crowd at Queensbay Mall were treated to live music by DJ Kyori and live performances while Malaysian band Acidic Bunch and other local dance acts entertained the merry-makers at Gurney Plaza.

There were also much fun and excitement at the Straits Quay Retail Marina promenade in Tanjung Tokong, with an electrifying show by Russian group Delirium and other performers.

At the Festive Square in Gurney Paragon Mall, songbird Dayang Nurfaizah delighted the crowd with her songs. The mall also rang in 2017 by dropping hundreds of colourful balloons at Festive Square, transforming the place into hues of gold, blue and white.

Over at the Penang mainland, Auto-City in Juru came alive as locals gathered there to usher in the New Year. Among the highlights



Yummy treat: Guests enjoying the delicacies at Kompleks Bukit Jambul's New Year's Eve party.

were dance performances by the United States of Monarchy troupe and live band performances.

Countdown celebrations were also held at M Mall O2O in Penang Times Square.

At the stroke of midnight, fireworks lighted up the skies in many places, including at Queensbay Mall, Kompleks Bukit Jambul, Straits Quay Retail Marina and Gurney Plaza.

In Kuala Lumpur, thousands of Malaysians welcomed 2017 with a party-like atmosphere in the Klang Valley and other places.

People of all ages turned up in huge numbers at various tourist

spots such as KLCC, Bukit Bintang and Dataran Merdeka.

They were treated to entertainment shows before fireworks lit up the skies at the stroke of midnight.

At KLCC Park, many people brought electronic hairbands to wear on their heads to light up the area. Some bought vuvuzelas to make a noisy welcome to 2017.

In Johor Baru, huge crowds of revellers enjoyed watching the fireworks display and cultural performances which showcased the strength of Bangsa Johor.

Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) football club fans - the Boys of Straits showed off their drumming skills

just before the fireworks brightened the skies at midnight.

In Sibul, people thronged the town square to witness a dazzling 15-minute display of fireworks to usher in the New Year at the stroke of midnight.

In Kota Kinabalu, an afternoon downpour kept away crowds from the popular Tanjung Aru beach for a midnight swim in conjunction with the New Year.

Watch the video [thestartv.com](http://thestartv.com)



On top of the world: Tourist Phang Ting Hong, 22, with his girlfriend Liaw Mun Theng, 23, celebrating the New Year's countdown at Rainbow Skywalk at The Top@Komtar in George Town, Penang. (Left) Colourful laser lights projected by The Top@Komtar during the celebration.



Carnival atmosphere: Liow spraying artificial snow the moment it crossed into the New Year in Bentong.

# Thousands welcome New Year in Bentong

**BENTONG:** A large crowd gathered at the town centre in this small rural town to ring in the New Year.

Hundreds of revellers turned up for the celebration in the late evening and by 9pm, more than a thousand people were at Jalan Chui Yin to witness the passing of the old year.

Besides the bustling weekend market - what locals call the Bentong Walk - adding to the usual congestion over the weekend, many have come to watch the performances by various troupes, including dancers, singers and even a magician.

Of particular interest was a group

of acrobats from Kuala Lumpur, which amazed the audience with balancing and juggling acts.

There were lots of stalls selling a range of goods, including local delicacies such as *siew pau* and even the famous Bentong ginger.

Later, MCA president Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai, who is Bentong MP, arrived to welcome the New Year and mingle with the crowd and watch the fireworks display that went off at the stroke of midnight.

The celebration was organised by the local Chinese Town Hall and MCA.

In his New Year message to his

constituents, Liow said that 2016 was a year fraught with challenges for Malaysia.

He said the country's revenue dipped last year due to the global oil crisis coupled with the world economic slowdown.

"However, our economy is predicted to grow between 4% and 5% in 2017. This is very good growth despite that global uncertainty is set to continue throughout next year.

"Even so, as long as we stand united, I believe we can overcome any challenge thrown at us.

"I wish everyone health and prosperity. Happy New Year," Liow said.

# 'Make registering as a voter your resolution'

**PETALING JAYA:** Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail wants those who have yet to register as voters to make this their New Year resolution.

"If you or your family members are over 21 years of age and have yet to register as voters, please do so immediately. Voting determines the future of the country.

"Change won't happen if we don't

unite our energy and resources," she said in her New Year message released yesterday.

The PKR president said 2017 should be the year to remind people that the Barisan Nasional's duty was to serve the rakyat and the Opposition to ensure there was check and balance.

Wan Azizah also called on the Government to ensure taxes collect-

ed were used responsibly. DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng called on Malaysians to unite to defend common values that made the country great.

He said the people should be freed of the culture of fear and corruption.

Lim also expressed concern over the gloomy world economy and urged Malaysians to stay united to face the challenges.