

Fireworks. displays welcome dawn of year 2000

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat: It was a celebration befitting the start of a new century

Hundreds of thousands cheered as the clock struck 12, and the skies above cities across the nation lit up with spectacular fireworks displays that ushered in the new millennium.

Revellers jammed streets, towers, hotels, restaurants and other places to party as the clock ticked into the year 2000.

In the federal capital, more than 200,000 people joined the celebrations at KLCC, many of them gathering as early as 8pm.

Celebrations began at about 9pm in the packed concourse area of the mall with a concert by local sensation Amy Mastura. At the same time, a laser display showcasing the country's economic and other achievements was also held at KLCC park.

The events at KLCC, which were carried live by Astro, included cultural shows and an aquatic dance.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad joined the people in the countdown at the Petronas Twin Towers.

Arriving at 11.25pm with his

Malaysians turn up in full force across the nation to party the night away

02 JAN 2000

wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasman Mohd Ali, Mahathir was accompanied by Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister datuk Kadir Shcikh Fadzir, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah and KL mayor Tan Sri Kamaruzaman Shariff.

In Bukit Bintang, a breathtaking five-minute fireworks display was witnessed by 60,000 people at the YTL Millennium Concert of Celebration.

The crowds, which stretched from Sungai Wang Plaza to the main stage in front of Starhill Centre, had begun gathering as early as 4pm. As dusk approached, eating outlets along Jalan Bukit Bintang were packed with patrons preparing to party.

Broadway singer Michael Ball, soprano Gillian Humphreys and flautist Andrea Griminelli entertained the ocean of people with their operatic renditions of songs backed by the Italian Symphonic Orchestra.

The countdown to 2000 was equally boisterous in **PENANG**, with thousands gathering at various landmarks such as the Esplanade, Gurney Drive and Bellisa Row in Pulau Tikus where party makers spilled out onto the street for a jig at the stroke of midnight.

At the budget travellers' haunts in Chulia Street, Campbell Street and Little India, a few thousand merrymakers jammed the streets popping champagne bottles, singing *Auld Lang-Syne* and shouting greetings.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon joined Penangites at the Esplanade and attended a concert of modern and classical dances.

At the stroke of midnight, fireworks streaked through the night sky as people released balloons.

About 500m away, St Georges Church held a midnight mass with an endless stream of vehicles outside caught in a traffic

crawl converging towards Lebuh Masjid Kapitan Keling.

Traffic came to a standstill for almost seven hours in **MALACCA** as residents came out in force to celebrate.

Thousands of merrymakers including tourists joined in the partying at the various hotels and resorts till 3am.

In **SABAH**, thousands gathered at popular beaches for a symbolic "midnight dip" to greet the New Year and millennium.

Rivers and waterfalls also became focal points of Sabahans on the eve for a traditional cleansing to rid themselves of bad luck.

In a departure from the celebrations witnessed across the country, **SARAWAK** greeted the new millennium with the opening of its state library.

At the stroke of midnight, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud struck a gong to mark the opening of the state-of-the-art RM53 million Sarawak State Library in Petra Jaya.

The atmosphere was then livened up by a fireworks and laser display watched by thousands of city folk.