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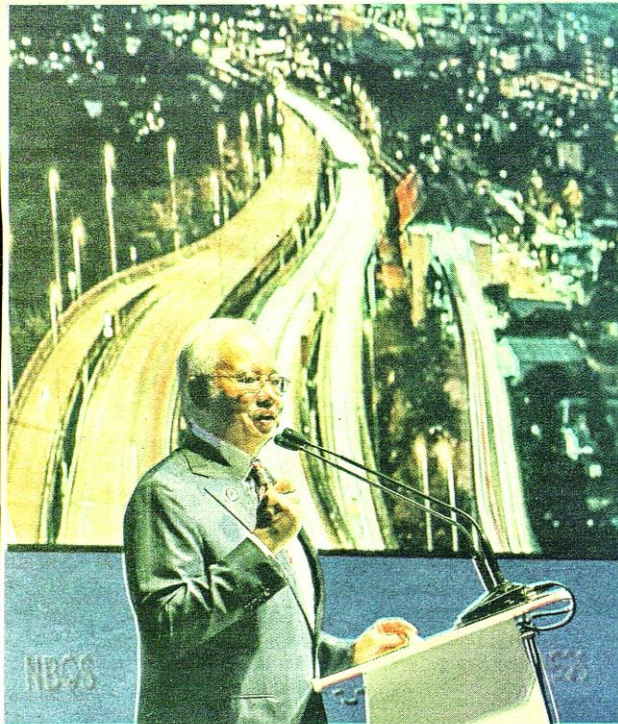
An ocean of opportunities awaits us

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CHALLENGING: Some 90 NBOS initiatives have been implemented to address economic and social issues

THIS Sunday marks the start of a new calendar year, a year where many of us would be hoping for fresh beginnings, renewed hopes and new aspirations.

It is that time again when we rehash the old weather-beaten "to-do" list that has been recycled as often as our bleached Christmas tree or draw up a whole new list of far-fetched resolutions, including going scuba diving despite not knowing how to swim.



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak speaking at the International Conference on Blue Ocean Strategy in Putrajaya in August.

These customary resolves, which often mean increased revenue for thrilled gym operators and health food outlets, at least for the next two months, are reflective of our need to constantly be better in our personal life and occupational endeavours.

As it would likely take nothing less than two pages in this newspaper if I were to write about personal resolutions and its habitual regression, such as fitting into size zero jeans, run the marathon, eat healthier, smile more or learn to swim — maybe handy this rainy season — this time around, I shall limit myself to anticipated resolutions coming out of Putrajaya in 2017.

Even before the last of the Christmas carols have faded into the silence of the frosty nights, several

merciless retailers in shopping malls in the Klang Valley, including Putrajaya, have started putting up Chinese New Year decorations on their premises.

Yet, as cold-hearted and opportunist it may seem, these entrepreneurs' buccaneering approach is what surviving in today's competitive marketplace is all about.

As the Gong Xi Fa Chai banners start to roll off the printers, today's business environment does not permit Santa and his elves to sit back, slowly digest their egg-nogs and reminisce about their postal accomplishments last weekend.

While displaying red ang pow packets at the store front may not be directly reflective of the most intricate of actions under the National Blue Ocean Strategy (NBOS) advocated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, this embodies what our public sector must do to deliver the best quality of services to the public.

Blue Ocean Strategy, developed by W. Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, challenges the conventional thinking about strategic success and provides a systematic approach to making the competition irrelevant by creating untapped new market spaces.

In supporting our quest to become a high-income developed nation by 2020, the government has, since 2009, adopted the NBOS in 80 ministries and government agencies that are geared towards transforming the growth of the country.

NBOS, which serves as the basis for the Malaysian National Development Strategy that guides the 11th Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), covers a wide spectrum of the country's administration and sectors, including public service, entrepreneurship, community transformation, security, youth and education.

Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa had earlier this year said governments must now listen to the people, humanise public services and intensify the use of innovative platforms to deliver public services. He is right. The people want to feel that they matter. It is that simple.

More than 90 NBOS initiatives have been implemented to address economic and social issues.

Among them is the soon-to-be opened Malaysia's first Blue Ocean Entrepreneurs Town (BOET) in Bintawa, Sarawak.

The RM20-million BOET is set to be a vibrant and collaborative hub for youth in creative and innovative industries, including advertising and marketing, architecture, crafts, design, film, television, video, photography, computer skills, publishing, museums, galleries, libraries, music and performing arts.

Perhaps some of us view the BOET as a waste of public funds, but if executed well, it can a gold mine of ideas churned out by

young Malaysians.

Based on this year's indicators, those in the administrative capital have been told by the prime minister that things would be more challenging. Najib has called on all in Putrajaya to use creativity and innovation to face the uncertain climate ahead. He urged them to find creative ways to do more things with limited funds.

A point that I will add in my to-do list next year because, like it or not, it is a sound advice that everyone can apply, instead of complaining about the high cost of living without taking upon myself to improve things at my end.

While walking across the length of Putrajaya to get your official documents sorted out would make impressive reading on your Fitbit watch, the notion of having to apply for your passport, renewing your driving licence and replacing your identification card all in one place, is simply mouth-watering.

Somewhat under the radar but nonetheless important, in my opinion, to the development of our future generations is the government's edutourism project.

Parked under the third initiative of the University Community Transformation Centre under NBOS, the programme facilitates access to university courses and facilities that are not always fully utilised.

As local universities own vast resources and facilities that can be shared with the public, edutourism packages, which are jointly tailored by the Higher Education Ministry, Tourism and Culture Ministry and Tourism Malaysia, combine leisure with guided experiential learning for the purpose of education in natural, historical and multicultural environments.

Besides providing an alternative source of income for universities involved, the programme is also a good training ground for university students, who can improve their knowledge about the subject matter and polish up on their communication skills while acting as tour guides.

On new beginnings, it is high time for the state authorities and Federal Government to stop the irksome water supply disruptions.

Unlike some, I do not have the physique or the attributes to don my sarong to stage a protest at the menteri besar's office each time my house's taps run dry. I can only rely — I'm sure this applies to all of us, too — on the entrusted service providers to keep to their promise of making sure that the people have sufficient water to meet their daily personal and business needs.

Happy New Year, everyone!

azuraa@nst.com.my



With more than 15 years in journalism and a masters in Counselling Psychology, the writer is always drawn to the mysteries of the human mind and behaviours