

VM2026 opens with strong show of unity: PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia rang in the New Year with celebrations that not only reflected national unity and cultural diversity, but also marked an early catalyst for the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign, as the country steps up efforts to position itself as a welcoming global tourist destination.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the harmonious and festive atmosphere during New Year eve celebrations showcased the beauty of Malaysia's multicultural fabric and the spirit of togetherness in welcoming visitors from around the world.

"The highlight of the celebration was enhanced by large-scale multimedia performances, including

fireworks displays that lit up key tourist hotspots in a peaceful and orderly atmosphere.

"May the organisation of such events continue to strengthen harmony and national unity, while opening a new chapter in positioning Malaysia as a friendly, inclusive and respected tourism destination on the global stage," he said in a Facebook post yesterday.

The celebrations culminated in the Visit Malaysia 2026 Countdown Festival, a large-scale New Year's eve event held at Pavilion Kuala Lumpur, which Anwar attended.

The countdown marked the official start of efforts to build early momentum in the national

tourism sector towards the target of attracting 43 million international visitor arrivals in 2026.

Echoing the call to action, Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing urged Malaysians to play their part in ensuring the success of VM2026 by demonstrating the nation's famed hospitality and prioritising cleanliness in public spaces.

"I have received complaints and sought explanations from the relevant agencies. They informed me that when tourists ask for help, some members of the public have been less than friendly and even appeared irritated.

"I urge everyone to work together to prove that our country is a very welcoming nation and our culture must reflect a warm attitude towards tourists from all over the world," he told reporters after welcoming foreign visitors at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport Terminal 1 (KLIA T1) yesterday.

Tiong said promotional efforts for VM2026 are progressing well and have received encouraging feedback from both locals and international tourists.

Earlier at KLIA T1, Tiong, together with officials from the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry and Tourism Malaysia chairman Datuk P. Manoharan, greeted arriving tourists with special gift bags. The welcoming ceremony featured cultural performances and appearances by the official VM2026 mascots, Wira and Manja.

KLIA was among the primary launch sites for the VM2026 campaign, with similar welcome events held simultaneously at 55 major entry points and selected venues nationwide.

In a separate statement, Tourism Malaysia said the VM2026 calendar will feature more than 300 programmes and events throughout the year, highlighting arts and culture, heritage and the country's multi-ethnic diversity through various celebrations and festive traditions.

Among the key events are the VM2026 Chinese New Year, Hari Raya, Deepavali and Christmas festivals as well as unique local celebrations such as the Kaamatan and Gawai festivals.

"Malaysia aims to attract 43 million visitors this year, as part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the tourism sector as a key driver of national economic growth," Tourism Malaysia said. - Bernama



Anwar ushers in the new year with thousands in Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur on Wednesday night, officially kicking off the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign. - PIC COURTESY OF PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE