

2020: Our  
dystopian year

The year 2020 has been defined by COVID-19 and all the horror stories that have followed. It's a year that has seen the world's largest cities and countries in lockdown, with a devastating global pandemic that has taken a toll on lives. We look back on the year that was 2020 with a mix of sadness and hope.

YEARENDER

**Look back at the year that was 2020 and see how our lives were impacted by a worldwide pandemic.**

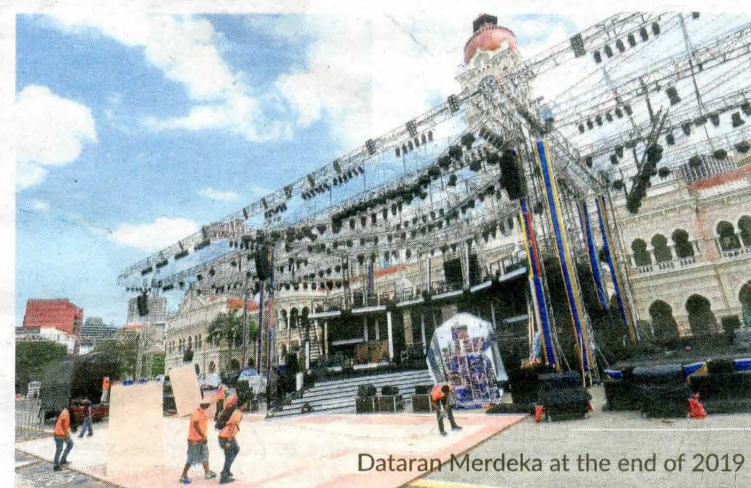
NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION IS TO BE A

# HOMELY AFFAIR

In a bid to crush a surge in coronavirus cases, the government has forbidden New Year countdown gatherings tonight. Malaysians have been urged to usher in 2021 with only family and friends. > See reports on page 5

Unlike the usual flurry of activity to prepare for the New Year countdown and musical performances at Dataran Merdeka, all is quiet at the popular venue in Kuala Lumpur although 2021 begins tomorrow.

— FAIHAN GHANI & AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star



Dataran Merdeka at the end of 2019



# A quiet New Year's Eve

## No annual countdown and fireworks this time around

**PETALING JAYA:** As much as Malaysians would like to bid farewell heartily to a year that has caused untold hardship to much of the world because of the Covid-19 pandemic, they have to restrain themselves by marking the milestone privately and with less fanfare.

In compliance with the Federal Government's rule to disallow large gatherings to usher in 2021, there will be no official celebrations for the countdown to the new year in any of the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.

Hotspots like Dataran Merdeka, KLCC and Putrajaya will, for once, be devoid of crowds and revellers.

According to organisers of previous new year celebrations, none of the applications to hold countdown parties were approved by the authorities under the National Security Council (NSC).

In Kuala Lumpur, the only official countdown will be by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall Orchestra (OKL).

On the Kuala Lumpur City Hall website, it announced that OKL would accompany city folk virtually via FB Live on its official FB page and on *Bapakku.FM* on Dec 31, beginning from 10pm until the new year countdown ends.

"We will play inspirational songs with our orchestra vocalists Teja, Abby, Oyent, Manje," said OKL in a statement.

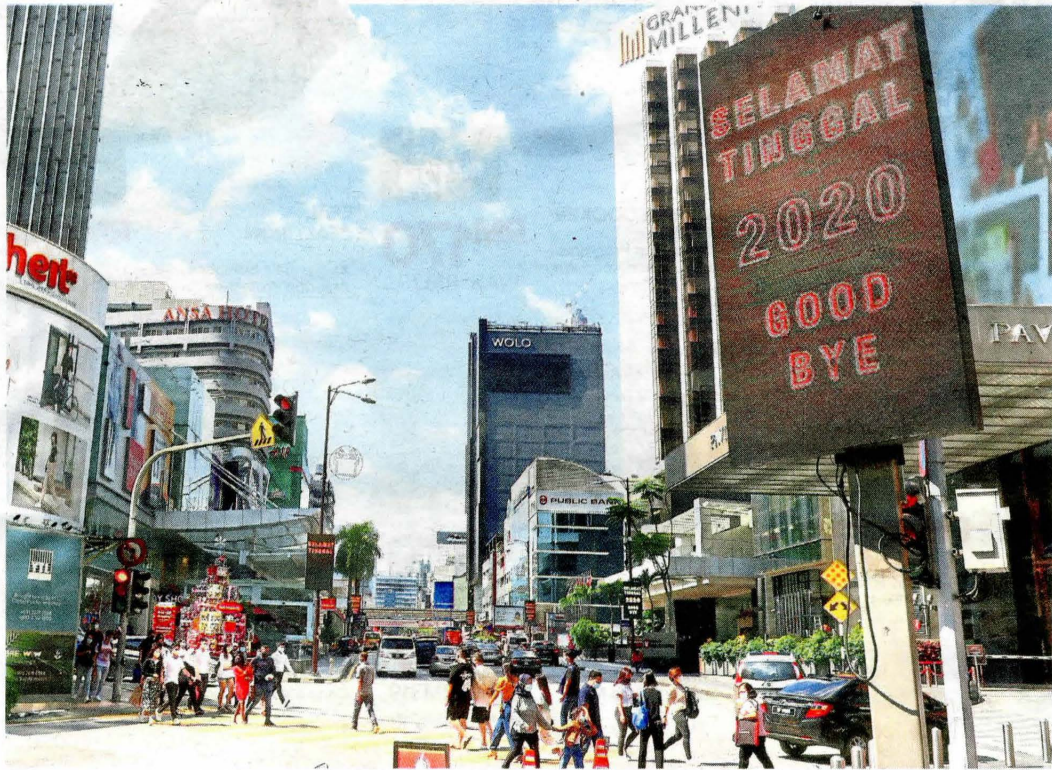
On Monday, Senior Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri said NSC would not permit any large gatherings to usher in the new year.

The Defence Minister said it was acceptable for those planning to celebrate the occasion to do so with family in the confines of their homes.

"Gatherings are still not allowed. If previously there were major celebrations at, for example, KLCC, this will not be allowed this year.

"Such events will see a lot of people gathering in one location, making it difficult to practise physical distancing. That is why it will not be allowed," he said in his Covid-19 update.

Kuala Lumpur police chief Comm Datuk Saiful Azly Kamaruddin has this to say to everyone:



**Welcoming the new year:** An electronic billboard wishing goodbye to 2020, in Bukit Bintang, Kuala Lumpur. — FAIHAN GHANI/The Star

"It's better to just stay at home for New Year's Eve. We all must remember that we are still in the conditional movement control order.

"Everything must still be according to the SOP, like wearing masks and practising social distancing.

"My advice is to just stay at home. Kita jaga kita (we protect ourselves)," the city's top cop said when contacted yesterday.

The police, he said, were ever ready to patrol and monitor hotspots during New Year's Eve for

Covid-19 compliance.

However, "private parties" are a main target, with the cops on high alert.

"We expect some of these wild parties so I have directed all my OCPDs to monitor this matter. This is a warning. Just because it's done privately, don't think we don't know.

"We have our eyes and we will go hard on them," he said, adding that police were also keeping a close eye on pubs and entertainment outlets that operate over the stipulated time.