



# HAPPY New Year!

By ANNA VIVIENNE



With these expectations,  
we usher in the New Year  
with pomp and pageantry.  
This is a tradition  
all over the world.

**I**n a couple of day's time, the year 2007 will be gone for good. On Dec 31, at midnight, we will officially bid goodbye to the old year. I believe most of us will remember the year with nostalgic warmth. So much had happened, so many experiences and so many memories to keep.

The rose-tinted memory of yesteryear however will surely be overlaid by expectations of the coming year.

Most of us hope for prosperity and good health, while others hope for love and romance. With those expectations, we usher in the New Year with pomp and pageantry. This is a tradition all over the world.

In Sabah, the celebration is not unique. But it is a sight worth seeing, especially if you are playing tour guide for the day. (or if you are one)

In all townships and human settlements in Sabah, especially those at the seaside, dusk will see people crowding to the beach. Men, women and children will mill around, looking for the best spots to settle.

They vie for 'prime' spots and when they do find one, they will lay out their mats and towels. Food from picnic hampers and baskets will be

set out. Some more industrious individuals will light fires for barbecues, while others will light bonfires to keep away the mosquitoes as well as to warm themselves.

The wind from the sea can be chilly even for die-hard New Year revellers.

Eating drinking and making merry will be the order of the day. All sorts of food will be consumed...never mind the ants, as well as beverages.

As midnight nears, the anticipation of the crowds becomes so intense that you can almost touch it. Then as the midnight hour strikes its first chime, ring or clank, the crowds shout "Happy New Year" and then dash to the water to take the first soak for the New Year.

Some will submerge themselves while others will just splash each other. For most of us the gesture, which is, washing or submerging in water means the washing away of 'bad luck' from last year and cleansing our body and mind in anticipation of new experiences for the coming year.

This is a tradition that has been practised by the people of Sabah, notably the natives, for a long time.

Those living in the interior will go to the

rivers and streams to wash during the New Year. Some who cannot do this during midnight will usually go through the ritual the following day.

Their reason for bathing during the New Year is interesting. Some believe that a magical kingdom is loated high in the mountains and that the divine beings there only bath in the river once a year, which is the New Year. At that time the people will bath downstream hoping that the 'magic' and 'good fortune' sloughed off the magical folks will stick to them.

That day they will celebrate, eating, drinking and generally making merry. Livestock will become 'victims' of their revelry. Some more 'opulent' family will beat the gong, drink, dance and sing.

Nowadays, heralding in the New Year is carried in various ways, especially for city dwellers. They will usually go to entertainment outlets and eateries to celebrate the occasion.

They will treat their families and friends to dinner and a night out.

That I think is better than going all out on a party. But then again...it depends on the individuals.

Have a great time ushering in 2008.'

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