

AUSTRALIA



Australian pop princess Kylie Minogue got the 2013 party rolling as she counted down the seconds to a spectacular fireworks display over Sydney Harbour. Minogue, who is celebrating 25 years in showbiz, was asked to choose the theme of this year's midnight show and plumped for the theme "embrace". The Harbour Bridge was duly emblazoned with a pair of Minogue-style lips, which counted down in unison with more than a million. Here, fireworks explode behind the Sydney Opera House. *Picture courtesy The Daily Mail*

HONG KONG



Fireworks explode over Victoria harbour to celebrate the new year, in Hong Kong on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

GREECE



Fireworks illuminate the ancient temple of Parthenon atop the Acropolis hill during the new years celebrations in Athens on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

WORLD welcomes 2013

in rolling New Year's PARTY

NORTH KOREA



North Koreans watching fireworks displayed in Pyongyang for New Years Day. *AFP*

ITALY



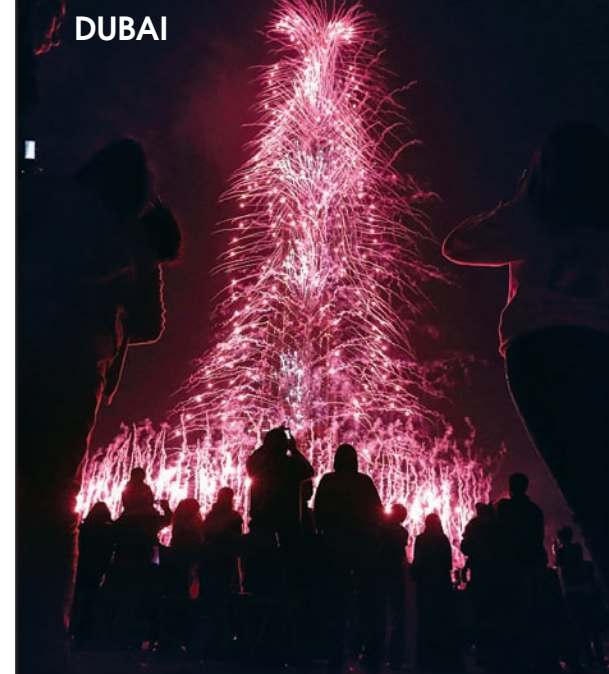
People gather to celebrate the New Year at the Piazza San Marco in Venice, early on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

JAPAN



People release balloons to celebrate the New Years during an annual countdown ceremony produced by the Prince Park Tower Tokyo, flagship of the Prince hotel chain on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

DUBAI



Revelers watch fireworks over Burj Khalifa in Dubai on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

FRANCE



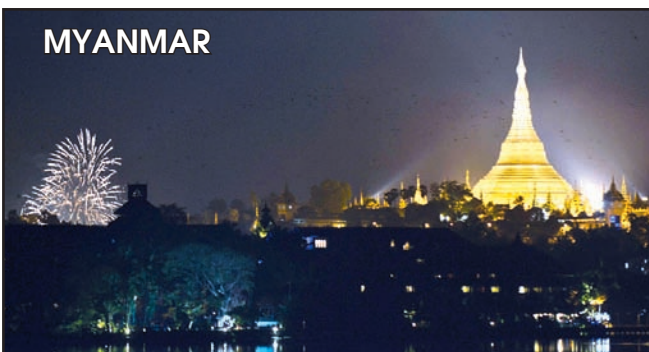
People gather on the Champs-Élysées avenue in Paris to celebrate the New Year, late on December 31, 2012. *AFP*

BRAZIL



Fireworks illuminate the night sky before Sugar Loaf Mountain in Rio de Janeiro to mark the start of New Years Day on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

MYANMAR



A view of New Year fireworks near the Shwe Da Gon pagoda at Kandawgyi Lake in Yangon on December 31, 2012. *AFP*

US: A million people cheered in New York's Times Square Tuesday, as the traditional crystal ball dropped to mark the start of 2013, bringing a rolling global New Year's party that kicked off in Australia to US shores.

An estimated one billion television viewers around the world also watched the Big Apple extravaganza, which climaxed when the mayor, aided by a bevy of Rockettes dancers, sent the huge, glittering ball down at one minute to midnight, sparking kissing and dancing.

"It's something you need to do in your life. It's New York and New Year's Eve," said an excited Juli, 18, visiting from Austria.

Worldwide celebrations got started on a balmy summer's night in Sydney with a \$6.9 million pyrotechnics display curated by pop star Kylie Minogue the highlight.

From there, the endless party shifted to a kaleidoscopic eight-minute jamboree in Hong Kong, with the city's famed Victoria Harbour lit up in spectacular fashion, and fireworks across other Asian cities, including for the first time Yangon, in long-isolated Myanmar. As the stroke of midnight moved westward through time zones, the world's tallest building, Dubai's Burj Khalifa, was the centerpiece of festivities in the huge expatriate and tourist hub. In Britain, tens of thousands braved rain on the banks of the Thames to see fireworks and the London Eye wheel lit up in changing colors.

"What an amazing end to an incredible year," said the British capital's own colorful Mayor Boris Johnson, alluding to the Olympic and royal spectacles of 2012.

Across the Atlantic, the mood was more somber in Washington, where the White House and lawmakers took their fiscal cliff wrangle over the

budget down to the midnight wire. New York made up for that, though, with South Korean pop sensation Psy and country star Taylor Swift in the line-up and the Empire State Building blazing in an unusual pulsating light display.

Frederick Martineau, a sales rep from Quebec, Canada, made the trip to Times Square as a Christmas present for his girlfriend, Sonia Lapointe.

Asked about his 2013 resolution, Martineau, 38, patted his substantial midriff and grinned: "Guess what?" Another Canadian couple, who were kitted out with tinsel and small gold-

tion New Year's address to call for unity following a year of protests against his return to the Kremlin for a third term. In Rome, Pope Benedict XVI celebrated New Year's Eve vespers in St Peter's Basilica, voicing solidarity with the poor and calling on believers to pause to reflect from time to time despite busy lives.

"We have to know how to stop and think. This way our soul can find healing for the inevitable wounds of everyday life," he said.

In Spain, revelers who gathered in Madrid's Puerta del Sol square ahead of midnight - cowed by cold, rain and recession - sought to numb the pain of economic crisis with a glass of wine and plenty of cheer.

Manuela Ibanez, 51, who came from Barcelona with her two daughters, said: "At times like this we forget the crisis." In Paris, however, there was less cheer as authorities issued a reminder that all fireworks are officially banned for the night.

Earlier in Asia, in regions devastated by Typhoon Bopha which hit the southern Philippines in early December killing more than 1,000 people, many survivors said food, work and permanent shelter topped their priorities. In the capital Manila, authorities had been bracing for the annual rush of injuries as families celebrated with do-it-yourself firework displays and shot celebratory bullets into the air.

Seoul ushered in 2013 with a ritual ringing of the city's 15th-century bronze bell 33 times, reflecting the ancient practice of marking a new year. Millions visited temples and shrines in Japan for "ninen-mairi" two-year prayers, gathering at family homes to feast on soba noodles and watch the New Year variety show "Kohaku Uta Gassen" or the Red and White Song Contest. *AFP*

UK



Fireworks light up Big Ben during the New Year celebrations in central London just after midnight on January 1, 2013. *AFP*

GERMANY



Fireworks light up the Dom church on the Rhine river in Cologne, Germany after midnight on January 1, 2013, as part of the New Year celebrations. *AFP*

CHINA



A lightshow illuminates the Summer Palace during a new year count-down event in Beijing on December 31, 2013. *AFP*