



# FUNDA Y TIMES



***Celebrating Thai Pongal***

Pic. by M. A. Pushpa Kumara

## EVENTS

**PAGE 2**



**STORY  
PAGE 3**



**COMPETITIONS  
PAGES 4 & 5**

**(ONLINE)**



**REPORT  
PAGE 6**

## KIDS NEWS

**PAGES 7 - 8**



**Please send competition entries to:**



**Funday Times**  
C/O the Sunday Times  
P.O. Box 1136, Colombo.  
Or  
8, Hunupitiya Cross Road,  
Colombo 2.

**Please note that competition entries are accepted by email.**

**Write the name of the competition and the date clearly**

**at the top of your entry and include the following details:**

Full Name (including Surname).

Date of Birth, Address,

Telephone Number and School.

Please underline the name most commonly used.

**All competition entries should be certified by a parent or guardian as your own work.**

Competition entries without the full details requested above, will be disqualified.

**Closing date for this week's competitions:**

**February 5, 2025**

**Telephone: 2479337/2479333**

**Email: [fundaytimes1@gmail.com](mailto:fundaytimes1@gmail.com)**



**In our online issue this week:**

- **Page 5** – Competitions
- **Page 6** – Young Reporter
- **Page 7** – Kids News
- **Page 8** – News in Pictures

Please log on to the Funday Times website on [www.fundaytimes.lk](http://www.fundaytimes.lk) or check out the Sunday Times epaper on [www.sundaytimes.lk](http://www.sundaytimes.lk) for additional pages of this week's Funday Times.

### Thai Pongal Day



Pix by M. A. Pushpa Kumara



**Thai Pongal Day celebrations were held at Maple Kids International on January 10, 2025.**



**Denuwan Early Childhood Development Centre at Kiribathkumbura in Kandy held their annual handicrafts exhibition in the centre's main hall on October 30, 2024.**

**Rugrats**





# Believe in yourself!

By Manoshi De Silva

‘Chooty’ the duckling sat near the lake and stared at the clear blue water. He was not feeling happy at all. He couldn’t swim. He was scared of the water.

“I’ll never learn how to swim!” thought Chooty. “But, I really don’t understand why I get the feeling, that I should try and learn how to swim. Something tells me that I’ll be a good swimmer!”

A frog hopped on top of a rock near Chooty. “Why do you look so unhappy?” he asked Chooty.

“Because I can’t swim,” answered Chooty. “Oh, it’s such an easy thing to do. I love to swim!” said the frog. “You also live on the land like I do. How did you learn how to swim in the water?” asked Chooty.

“Although I live on land, I grew up in the water,” said the frog. “I was born from an egg and I grew up as a tadpole, living and swimming in the water.”

“I was also born from an egg,” said Chooty. “But you didn’t grow up in the water, so I don’t think you’ll be able to swim!” said the frog. He then jumped into the water and swam away smoothly.

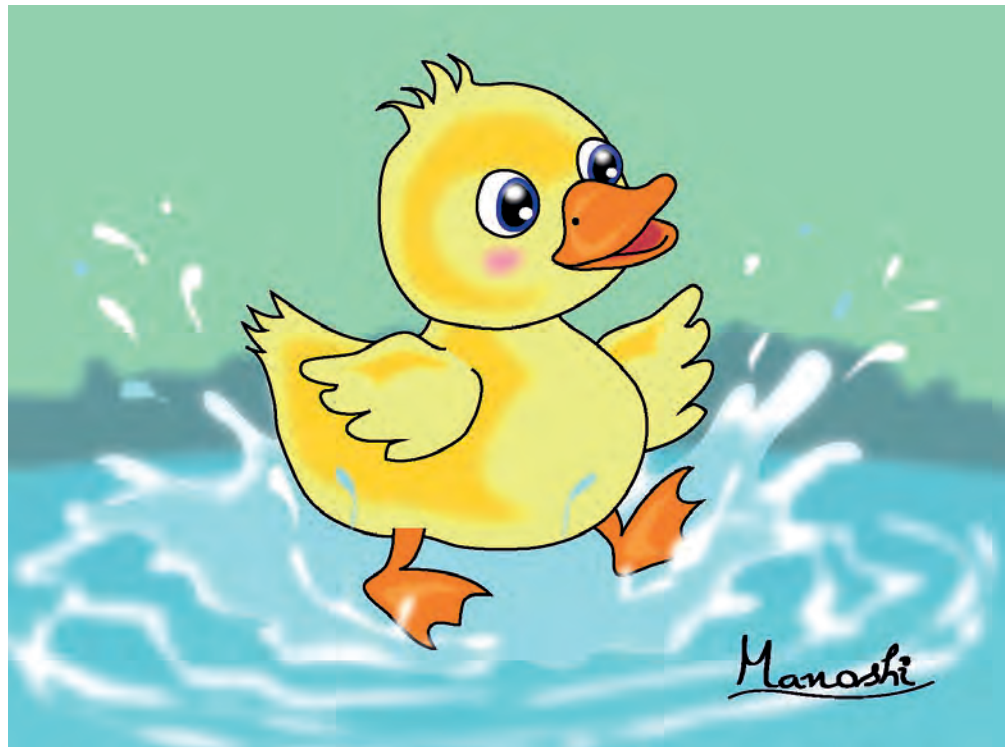
Chooty felt very sad. “The frog must be right,” he said to himself.

A fish splashed in the water and peeped out from the lake. “Why do you look so sad?” she asked Chooty. “I can’t swim,” said Chooty. “I was born from an egg, just like the frog, but I grew up on land. So the frog said that I won’t be able to swim!”

“I was also born from an egg and I also grew up in the water just like the frog!” said the fish. “Maybe the frog is right. You shouldn’t try to swim,” saying that the fish splashed in the water and dived deep into the lake.

“They were both born from eggs but they grew up in the water. I was also born from an egg but I grew up on land. I don’t think I have the ability that they have to swim,” Chooty sighed sadly.

By now Chooty was very sure that he shouldn’t even try to swim.



“I was also born from an egg and I grew up on land, but I am also a good swimmer!” said someone. Chooty looked around in surprise. “Who said that?” There was no one to be seen.

“I heard what the frog and the fish said. But you shouldn’t doubt yourself by comparing yourself with them!” said the voice again.

By now Chooty was very confused, “who said that?” he asked again, looking around.

“I did,” said the voice again. Among a pile of rocks was a tortoise. His shell looked like a rock. “You should get into the water and swim,” he told Chooty wisely. “But the frog and the fish both said that I shouldn’t try to swim because I grew up on land,” said Chooty.

The tortoise laughed. “If you listen to all the negative things said by others, you’ll never be able to do anything. They don’t know what your talents and abilities are. You are the one who knows all about it.”

The tortoise shook his head, “If I also listened to others and compared myself with them, I would have been just like you. But instead, I believed in myself and got into the water and tried. I didn’t let what others say stop me from doing what I believed I could!”

“So, can you swim now?” asked Chooty. “Of course I can,” said the tortoise getting into the water. He swam around the lake and came back near Chooty. “Always believe in yourself and don’t compare yourself with others!” he said and drifted away in the water.

Chooty decided to be brave. He looked at his little webbed feet and his water-resistant, fluffy little yellow feathers. “I have all that I need to become a good swimmer!” he said. “The only thing that I didn’t have was courage. I listened to the negative comments by others and compared myself with them. I shouldn’t do that. Instead I should believe in myself!”

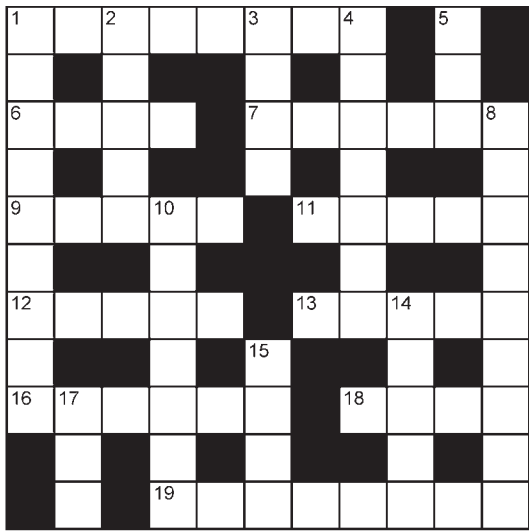
Chooty slowly got into the cold water. Before he knew it, he was paddling with his little feet and moving forward like a little boat.

“Well-done!” shouted the tortoise, while the frog and fish watched Chooty swim, in surprise.

“All I need to do is believe in myself and prevent others from stopping me, when I know I can do it, deep down in my heart!” Chooty quacked happily,

“I am so glad that I got into the water and tried to swim. I would have never known that I was this good at swimming, if I never tried. I must trust in my talents and abilities and never doubt myself!”

**LUMALA Crossword – No. 5**



- |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Across</b>             | <b>Down</b>                 |
| 1 A large, extinct animal | 1 Not the same              |
| 6 Lose colour             | 2 Big Ears' friend          |
| 7 A stinging plant        | 3 The sister of your father |
| 9 Where Egyptians live    | 4 Decaying                  |
| 11 A soldier's gun        | 5 Unwell                    |
| 12 More than is needed    | 8 All the people            |
| 13 Great pain             | 10 A whitish root vegetable |
| 16 An underground passage | 14 Happen                   |
| 18 A sound bouncing back  | 15 Too                      |
| 19 Correctly              | 17 ___ and downs            |

**LUMALA BICYCLE COMPETITION**

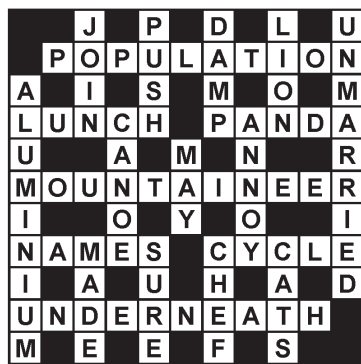
You now have a chance to win a brand new **LUMALA bicycle** for your own. One lucky winner will receive a brand new Lumala bicycle each month. All you have to do is fill in the Lumala Crossword No. 5, according to the clues given. Write the answers neatly on a postcard or paper, and send it to **Funday Times**. Cut the strip '**LUMALA Crossword No. 5**' seen at the top of the page and paste it on your entry.

**Age Group: 8 – 15 years**

*Closing Date: January 29, 2025*

Entries should be certified as your own work by a teacher or parent.

**Solution No. 4**



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**7 – 9 years**



- ▶ Randeer De Silva, Ratmalana
- ▶ Zaid Rizaam, Kandy
- ▶ Dinan Madagedara, Gampaha
- ▶ Adlan Ashiq, Negombo
- ▶ Ashfa Kamzan, Gampola

Winners please call Funday Times on 2479333/2479337 and arrange to collect your prizes.

**7 – 9 AGE GROUP**

Fill in the blanks and match the rhyming words.

S _ N •	•  C _ P
H _ T •	•  P _ N
J _ R •	•  ST _ R
P _ P •	•  C _ T
F _ N •	•  R _ N



**Win super books from**



**Age:** 9 years and below

**Word Count:** 150

**Topic:** How you saw the New Year in

**Win:** Three Cheers, Secret Seven by Enid Blyton

When Peter and Jack go looking for their lost model aeroplane in an old abandoned house, they find a surprise. Who is living there and why?

It's time for the Secret Seven to investigate!



**Write at the top of your Essay**

■ Book Competition ■ Essay Topic

**Age:** 10 – 12 years

**Word Count:** 150 – 200

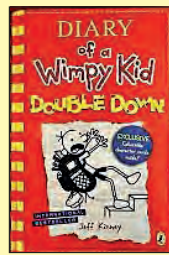
**Topic:** Resolutions you have made for 2025

**Win:** Diary of a Wimpy Kid – Double Down by Jeff Kinney

The pressure's piling up on Greg Heffley. His mom thinks video games are turning his brain to mush, so she wants him to put down his controller and explore his creative side.

As if that's not scary enough, Halloween is just round the corner and frights are coming at Greg at every angle. When he discovers a bag of gummy worms, it sparks an idea.

Can Greg get his mom off his back by making a move... Or will his plan just double Greg's troubles?



**Age:** 13 – 15 years

**Word Count:** 200 – 250

**Topic:** Spending New Year's Eve with friends and family

**Win:** After the Funeral by Agatha Christie

Though tragedy had touched the life of the wealthy Richard Abernethie, his sudden death seemed pretty unremarkable for a man of his age. So why would his sister wait until his funeral to say he had been murdered?

When she is savagely killed the next day, her extraordinary remark suddenly takes a chilling significance. The family solicitor turns to Hercule Poirot to unravel the mystery...



**Read-a-Book and win a voucher from Vijitha Yapa Bookshop**

Read any book of your choice and write briefly about it.

What we want is not just a summary of the story but your views on the book.

The best account in the three age groups will be awarded book vouchers of Rs. 500 each from Vijitha Yapa Bookshop.

Three winners will be selected each month.

**Your account should not exceed 200 words.**

**Please indicate word count, fill in the coupon and attach it to your entry.**



Or

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**Read-a-Book Competition**

**Name :** .....

**Date of birth :** .....

**Address :** .....

**School:** .....

**Tel:** .....

**Finished book on :** .....

Hi Kids,

Please send in your Articles and Art for Kids' World, to be published in the Funday Times online edition and website.

**FROM THE EDITOR**

As you can see, we have space only once a month for Kids' World articles and art in the print edition.

Therefore, we are planning to carry them every week in the Funday Times online pages as well as on the Funday Times website.

We also invite schools to send in their students' work for a school page in the online edition and website.

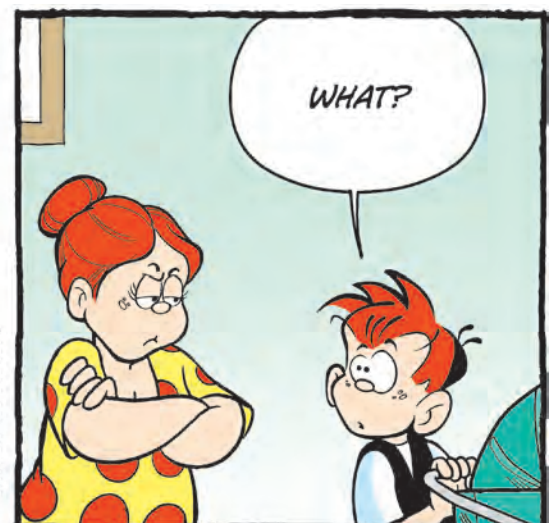
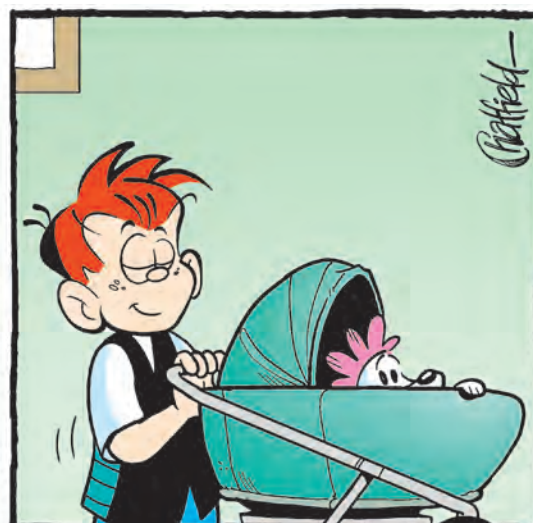
Thanking you in anticipation of your positive response.



Or

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Ginger Meggs





From a Funday Times Young Reporter

## NASA's preparation for human mission to Mars

**H**uman exploration of Mars has long been a dream of scientists and space enthusiasts.

As all of us know, NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Agency), is actively working to make this dream a reality. It has tried with ambitious plans that focus on technology, development, planning and international collaboration. It is a monumental undertaking that promises to unlock the secrets of the Red Planet, Mars, and expand our understanding of the universe.

Further, NASA's efforts are focused on overcoming the immense challenges of deep space travel, ensuring the safety and well being of astronauts and conducting ground breaking scientific research.

One of the key initiatives in NASA's Mars exploration strategy is the Artemis programme, which aims to establish sustainable human presence on the moon.

By gaining experience in Lunar exploration, through this NASA can develop technology, tests and procedures for a Mars mission.

Next, an important aspect in NASA's Mars preparation is the development of innovating propulsion systems. They explore things such as solar electric propulsion and nuclear thermal propulsion which could significantly reduce travel time to Mars. It will help to enhance the successful mission.

NASA's current timeline envisions sending humans to Mars by the late 2030s, but significant steps have been taken in 2024. They focused on developing advanced space craft designed to take astronauts safely beyond the Earth's orbit.

Further the Perseverance rover that landed on Mars in February 2021 is conducting experiments to collect samples that could be returned to Earth. This is essential for future human missions.

Another important aspect of NASA is the need for international collaboration. It means respectively engaging with international partners like ESA (European Space Agency), 'Roscosmos' (Russian Space Agency) and others, to share knowledge and resources.



**NASA is making significant strides in its preparation for a human mission to Mars but faces challenges in deep space travel and paving the way for humans to explore and settle on the Red Planet.**

This approach can help to combine expertise from various countries in space exploration. The parties will be essential for sharing knowledge, developing new technology and reducing cost. This can lead to progress and helps us achieve the ambitious goal of sending humans to Mars.

NASA is further conducting extensive research to address the challenges of long duration space flight and the effects of psychological and physiological effects on astronauts.

In conclusion public interest and support is also vital. Thus educational outreach programmes are being developed to inspire future generations.

**R.H. Yusuf-ul-Haq (13 years)  
Matale International School**



**Perseverance rover 'selfie' on Mars.**



### Young Reporters

If you are interested in joining as a Funday Times Young Reporter please fill in the coupon given and send it to us along with a recent report or interview not exceeding 300 words.

Photographs or illustrations would enhance the report.

**Young Reporters who have already enrolled with us, please send in new reports for publication.**



Or



[fundaytimes1@gmail.com](mailto:fundaytimes1@gmail.com)



### Young Reporters Coupon

Name: .....

Date of Birth: .....

Address: .....

.....

Telephone: .....

School: .....

Parent's approval:                      Date:

.....



# Deadly wildfires blaze in Los Angeles

January 14, 2025

**The Los Angeles area is battling major wildfires that have destroyed thousands of buildings, forced tens of thousands of people from their homes, and led to at least 24 deaths. The situation could get worse this week, as strong winds return to the area.**

The wildfires began last week. Since then, they have quickly spread, fueled by strong Santa Ana winds – dry winds that blow from the mountains toward the coast.

There are several major wildfires burning in the area, including the Palisades Fire and the Eaton Fire. Four fires around Los Angeles have already burned through roughly 62 square miles (160 square kilometres) of land. Firefighters have been able to control some fires, but the strong winds have made it difficult to contain others.

As of Monday evening, the Palisades Fire was 14% contained, while the Eaton Fire was 33% contained. Two others – the Kenneth and Hurst Fires – were largely under control.

Southern California hasn't had much rain over the last eight months, and the area is currently in a drought. The dry conditions make wildfires much more

likely, and the winds make the fires spread faster. Last week, the winds were especially strong, with gusts of over 80 mph (128 kph) in the mountains.

The effects of the fires have been awful. The fires have burned through entire neighbourhoods, including African-American communities and the houses of well-known movie stars.

So far, the fires have destroyed over 12,000 buildings, including homes, businesses and religious buildings like churches.

At least 24 people have died in the fires and over 20 people are missing.

Roughly 150,000 people have been forced to leave their homes because of the fires. Around 700 people are in emergency shelters. The smoke from the fires has created serious air pollution problems, and in some areas, people are also being warned not to drink the water.

The wildfires have also led to power outages. At one point, over 450,000 people were without electricity. Most of those people now have power again.

California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency.



The Palisades Fire seen from downtown Los Angeles.



Firefighters watch as a helicopter drops water on the Palisade Fire.



Above, firefighters walking through a destroyed neighbourhood.

Over 12,000 workers, including firefighters, police and members of the National Guard are helping in the battle against the wildfires.

Extra firefighting equipment has been brought in from nearby states. Mexico and Canada are sending firefighters and equipment to California to help fight the fires.

Experts are warning that things could get worse this week. The National Weather Service warned of a "particularly dangerous situation". The Santa Ana winds, which were calmer over the weekend, are expected to blow strongly again. Tuesday is expected to be the most dangerous day for wildfires.

California is used to wildfires, and has a strong firefighting force. But even so, the fires have been difficult to control.

January is not California's normal wildfire season. The number and size of the wildfires is far above average for this time of year.

Brice Bennett, who helps lead Cal Fire, told CNN, "We need Mother Nature to give us a break. We have the firefighters. We have the water. We need the time."

Source : NewsForKids



January 15

# News in Pictures



**Vatican City**  
Pope Francis gestures prior to posing for a photo with Roller Circus members at the end of the weekly general audience, in Paul VI hall at the Vatican.



**California, USA**  
A U.S. flag hangs from a damaged home, as the Eaton Wildfire continues, in Altadena, California.



**Oslo, Norway**  
Palestinian Prime Minister, Mohammad Mustafa and Norwegian Foreign Minister, Espen Barth Eide, were among those attending a global alliance meeting at Oslo City Hall, for the implementation of the two-state solution to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

**North Maluku, Indonesia**  
A woman and child look up at volcanic ash rising into the air during an eruption of Mount Ibu, as seen from Duono Village.



**Los Angeles, USA**  
A search and rescue team cleans off their dog, after searching the remains of a home burned by the Palisades Wildfire, in the Pacific Palisades neighbourhood in Los Angeles, California.

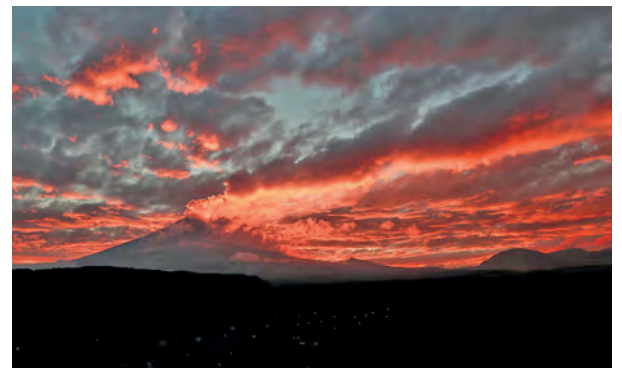


**Chemnitz, Germany**  
A worker walks in front of the Karl Marx monument, known as the 'Nischel', before the opening ceremony of Chemnitz as European Capital of Culture.

**Suffolk, UK**  
A 21 feet tall, fully working weather vane is unveiled by Kellogg's at Ness Point in Lowestoft, where the sun rises first in the UK. The weather vane depicts the brand's mascot, Cornelius.



**Prayagraj, India**  
Devotees gather at the river bank to take a holy dip at 'Sangam', the confluence of the Ganges and Yamuna rivers with the mythical, invisible Saraswati River, during the "Maha Kumbha Mela", or the Great Pitcher Festival, in Prayagraj, India.



**Puebla, Mexico**  
Popocatepetl Volcano spews a column of steam, as seen from Santiago Xalitzintla, in the state of Puebla, Mexico.

Sources : Reuters & The Guardian