

the
**SUNDAY
TIMES**

SUNDAY
FEBRUARY 1, 2026

FUN DAY TIMES



We love dogs

Pic. by M. A. Pushpa Kumara



COMPETITIONS

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**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 18, 2026**

Telephone: 2479337/2479333

Email: fundaytimes1@gmail.com



**In our online issue
this week:**

- **Page 5** – Independence
- **Page 6** – Animals
- **Page 7** – Kids News
- **Page 8** – News in Pictures

Please log on to the
Funday Times website on
www.fundaytimes.lk
or check out the
Sunday Times epaper on
www.sundaytimes.lk
for additional pages
of this week's Funday Times.



KIDS IN COLOUR

with

Richard

Funday Times together with Richard is happy
to launch a new Art Competition for our readers,
starting from January 2026.

A topic will be given each month.

The paintings should be on **A4 size paper** and you could use
any medium of your choice.

Three winners from two age groups will be selected each month.
Winners will receive an attractive gift pack from Richard.

**All paintings should be certified
by a teacher or parent as your own work.**

Age Groups: 4 – 6 and 7 – 10 years

Please write your Full Name,
Date of Birth, Home Address,
Telephone Number and School and
paste it on the back of your entry.

Topic for January: Back to School

Closing Date: February 5, 2026



Or



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Dog Festival

**Furry friends at the
Dog Festival
held on January 24 - 25
at the
Viharamahadevi Park
in Colombo.**

Pix. by M. A. Pushpa Kumara



Happy Birthday



**Aara Akram
8 years on February 4**

Photographs of members and non-members
between 4 – 15 years, for the birthday page,
should reach us at least ten days before the birthday,
along with a letter from a parent giving full details.



Blue Mosque



The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, also known as the Sultan Ahmed Mosque (Turkish: Sultan Ahmet Camii), is a famous historical mosque in Turkey. It was built during the time of the Ottoman Empire. It is still a working mosque today but it also welcomes many tourists.

The mosque was built between 1609 and 1616, when Ahmed I was the Sultan. It includes Sultan Ahmed's tomb, a religious school (*madrasah*) and a place for travellers. Inside, you'll see beautiful blue tiles painted by hand. At night, the mosque glows blue, as lights shine on its five main domes, six minarets and eight smaller domes. It stands next to the Hagia Sophia, which was the main mosque in Istanbul before the Blue Mosque was built.

The Blue Mosque is part of the "Historic Areas of Istanbul" and was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Site list in 1985.

History

After a difficult war, Sultan Ahmed I wanted to build a grand mosque in Istanbul. He hoped it would show the strength of the Ottoman Empire again.

Construction began in 1609 and finished in 1616. The mosque was built on the site of an old palace, right in front of the Hagia Sophia and the ancient Hippodrome. This spot was very important because it stood out on the city's skyline.

Architecture

The Blue Mosque has five main domes, six minarets and eight smaller domes. Its design shows the best of Ottoman mosque building over two centuries. It mixes ideas from the Hagia Sophia with traditional Islamic architecture. Many people consider it the last great mosque from the classical Ottoman period.

The architect, Sedefkâr Mehmed A a, learned from his teacher Mimar Sinan. The upper parts of the mosque are decorated with about 20,000 hand-painted blue tiles. These tiles have 60 different tulip designs. The lower parts are lit by 200 stained glass windows. In front of the mosque, there's a large courtyard with a fountain. There's also a special area for washing before prayer.

Interior

Inside, the lower walls and pillars are covered with over 20,000 handmade znik ceramic tiles. These tiles come from znik and feature more than



A view of the Blue Mosque from Sultanahmet Square.

fifty different tulip designs. The tiles on the lower levels have traditional patterns. Higher up, near the galleries, the designs become more colourful with pictures of flowers, fruit and cypress trees.

The upper parts of the mosque's interior are mostly painted blue. More than 200 stained glass windows with detailed patterns let in natural light. Chandeliers also help light up the space.

The most important part inside is the '*mihrab*'. This is a special niche in the wall that shows the direction of Mecca, which Muslims face during prayer. It's made of beautifully carved marble and

has many windows around it. To the right of the *mihrab* is the *minber*, or pulpit. This is where the imam (the prayer leader) stands to give sermons, especially on Fridays. The mosque was designed so that everyone inside can see and hear the imam, even when it's very crowded.

There's also a special royal area in the south-east corner. It has a platform and small rooms. This area leads to the royal box where the Sultan would pray.

Source: Kids Encyclopedia

Famous Landmarks Quiz 68

Q: Where is the Blue Mosque located and by what other name is it known?

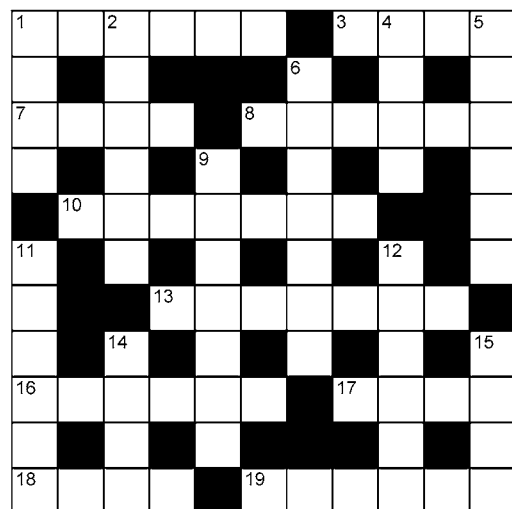


Famous Landmarks Quiz 67

Lisathma Munasinghe, WINNER
Telijawila



LUMALA Crossword – No. 18



Across

- 1 An eight-legged creature
- 3 Unlock
- 7 A throbbing pain
- 8 Less fast
- 10 Went red from embarrassment
- 13 Try
- 16 Do over again
- 17 Not in danger
- 18 Overdue
- 19 Day's end

Down

- 1 Exchange
- 2 Breathe in
- 4 A cat's feet
- 5 The opposite of wide
- 6 The part of clothes for your arms
- 9 A holder for cigarette ash
- 11 Fuel for a car
- 12 Says something
- 14 Pimple
- 15 A compass direction

Age Group: 8 – 15 years

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.

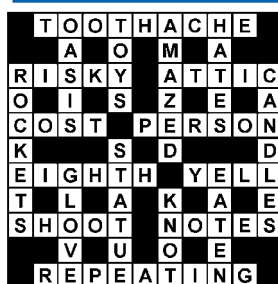
All you have to do is fill in the Lumala Crossword No. 18, according to the clues given. Write the answers neatly on a postcard or paper, and send it to **Funday Times**.

Cut the strip '**LUMALA Crossword No. 18**' seen at the top of the page and paste it on your entry.

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

Closing Date: February 25, 2026

Solution No. 17



Umair Azmy,
Colombo 9



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4 – 6 years



- ▶ Nehaan Cassim, Mt. Lavinia
- ▶ Ranaya Abeywickrama, Galle
- ▶ Luqmaan Abdul Qadir, Rajagiriya

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

4 – 6 AGE GROUP

Colour the National Flag of Sri Lanka.



Sri Lanka

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Sri Lanka's 78th Independence Day

Compiled by Cecilia Hewavitharana

After nearly 300 years of consecutively being under Portuguese and Dutch control, and then becoming a British colony for over 100 years, Sri Lanka became an independent nation on February 4, 1948. This year marks the 78th anniversary of Sri Lanka's independence.

Timeline

- 1505** – The Portuguese began taking over parts of the island.
- 1658** – The Dutch expelled the Portuguese and took over parts of the island.
- 1796** – The British began taking over the island from the Dutch.
- 1815** – The entire island came under British rule following the fall of the Kandyan Kingdom.
- 1833** – The first legislative bodies were set up by the Governor, Sir Robert Horton, uniting the island under British administration.
- 1947** – Following negotiations, parliamentary elections were held in Ceylon.
- 1948** – Ceylon gained Independence and became the Dominion of Ceylon.
- 1972** – Prime Minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike constitutionally declared the Dominion of Ceylon as the Republic of Sri Lanka.



For nearly 300 years, Sri Lanka was partly under the Portuguese and then the Dutch, but none of them were able to take over the Kandyan Kingdom.

This changed in 1815. The Kandyan chiefs, displeased with the cruelty of the Kandyan King, Sri Wickrama Rajasinghe, signed the Kandyan Convention which accepted the British as their sovereign.

It didn't take even two years for them to realise their mistake. From 1817 onwards, a number of rebellions emerged, but were successfully suppressed by the British.

However, a more organised and peaceful independence movement gained momentum, following the revival of Buddhism and Sinhala culture. This, coupled with the granting of independence to India in 1947, paved the way for Sri Lanka's independence movement to push for constitutional change and self-rule, which eventually led to the country gaining its independence in 1948.

Notable figures in the independence movement



D. S. Senanayake

Known as the Father of the Nation, Don Stephen Senanayake (1884 – 1952) was the first Prime Minister of Ceylon, after winning the majority at the parliamentary elections in 1947.

He was initially involved in the Temperance Movement along with his two brothers and subsequently emerged as

a key figure in the independence movement.

E. W. Perera

Edward Walter Perera (1875 – 1953) was a barrister and politician who played a prominent role in the independence movement.

He successfully carried a memorandum in the sole of his shoe, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies (in Britain), requesting martial law to be repealed, after the authorities responded violently to the 1915 riots. In response to the memorandum, the British government ordered the release of the leaders who were detained. E. W. Perera gained the name, 'Lion of Kotte', after his brave act.



Other notable figures in the independence movement include Anagarika Dharmapala (1864 – 1933), F. R. Senanayake (1882 – 1926), Sir James Peiris (1856 – 1930), Sir Ponnambalam Ramanathan (1851 – 1930), Sir D. B. Jayatilaka (1868 – 1944), D. R. Wijewardene (1886 – 1950), Capt. Henry Pedris (1888 – 1915), Dr. T. B. Jayah (1890 – 1960) & C. W. W. Kannangara (1884 – 1969).

Grizzled Giant Squirrel

Beyond elephants, leopards and whales, Sri Lanka also has a smaller icon hidden in the treetops: the Sri Lankan giant squirrel. Known as 'Dandu-Lena' in Sinhala, this species is unofficially celebrated as the national animal of Sri Lanka.

The grizzled giant squirrel is a large tree squirrel found in the highlands of the Central and Uva provinces of Sri Lanka. It is also found in patches of forest along the Kaveri River and in the hill forests of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala states of southern India.

IUCN – The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists the species as near threatened due to habitat loss and hunting.

Walk through a Sri Lankan forest at dawn and you may hear a sharp chatter



above your head, followed by a flash of fur and an impossibly long tail, gliding between branches. That is the Sri Lankan giant squirrel, *Ratufa macroura*.

The Sri Lankan giant squirrel belongs to the squirrel family Sciuridae, which also includes tree squirrels, ground squirrels and chipmunks.

Scientific Classification:

Kingdom: Animalia

Phylum: Chordata

Class: Mammalia

Order: Rodentia

Family: Sciuridae

Genus: *Ratufa*

Species: *Ratufa macroura*

The giant squirrel is highly territorial and very vocal upon encountering an intruder. It is usually found alone or occasionally in pairs. When frightened it will either flee, leaping up to six metres between trees, or will flatten itself against a branch, remaining motionless.

It spends the day eating fruit, nuts, insects, bird eggs and the bark of some trees. They are also fond of very young coconuts as soon as they are formed, and can be considered a pest to coconut plantations.



Why the Giant Squirrel is considered the National Animal of Sri Lanka

Countries choose national animals for more than just appearances. In Sri Lanka, the giant squirrel is a powerful symbol because it connects nature, culture and everyday life. As the national animal of Sri Lanka, it represents:

- ◆ **Forest heritage** – The squirrel lives almost entirely in trees, reminding people how crucial forests are for water, climate and rural livelihoods.
- ◆ **Biodiversity** – Sri Lanka is a global biodiversity hotspot, and the Sri Lankan giant squirrel showcases the uniqueness of island wildlife.
- ◆ **Cultural familiarity** – Unlike some elusive species, villagers and pilgrims often see the national animal of Sri Lanka near temples, reservoirs and spice gardens.

Quick Facts

- ◆ **Scientific name:** *Ratufa macroura*
- ◆ **Common names:** Sri Lankan giant squirrel, Grizzled giant squirrel
- ◆ **Status:** Regionally protected and closely associated with forest conservation
- ◆ **Size:** Body length around 35 – 45 cm; tail can be as long as or longer than the body
- ◆ **Weight:** Typically 1 – 1.5 kg
- ◆ **Habitat:** Forests, forest edges, home gardens and plantation-forest mosaics
- ◆ **Activity:** Mainly diurnal (active in daylight), especially mornings and late afternoons

These characteristics make the giant squirrel highly visible in the treetops, which is one reason it fits well as the national animal of Sri Lankan forests. It's large enough to notice, distinctive in shape and strongly linked to healthy tree cover.

Source: SRI LANKA TRAVEL GUIDE & INFORMATION

Alex Honnold free-solos Taipei 101 in record time

January 26, 2026

American rock climber Alex Honnold made history on January 25, 2026, by completing the first rope-free climb of Taipei 101 in Taiwan. The 1,667-foot (508 m) skyscraper is located in downtown Taipei. It was the world's tallest until it was surpassed by Dubai's Burj Khalifa in 2010.

The hair-raising stunt was streamed live on Netflix as part of Skyscraper Live. It was the highest free solo climb of an urban structure. Free solo means climbing without ropes, harnesses or any protective gear.

Honnold began his ascent at 9:17 a. m., local time on Sunday. Wearing a red short-sleeve shirt and yellow climbing shoes, the 40-year-old scaled the building's southeast corner. Throughout the climb, he frequently smiled and waved at fans watching from behind the glass. Speaking to viewers via a live microphone, Honnold described the incredible views and the excitement of the crowd gathered to witness the historic climb.

Though he appeared calm, the climb was far from easy. The most grueling portion involved the "bamboo boxes" — 64 floors in the middle section of the tower. The floors are divided into eight segments, each flaring outward to form overhanging ledges. These require intense upper-body strength and careful footwork to navigate.

Honnold also had to maneuver around large ornamental steel features that jut out from the tower. To make matters worse, some surfaces were coated with residue from New Year's Eve fireworks, making them especially slippery. As he reached the tower's needle-thin spire, he faced a different challenge — powerful winds! Honnold had to move very slowly to maintain his balance.

"It was very windy," he later said. "I was like, don't fall off the spire. But it was an incredible position. What a beautiful way to see Taipei."



Alex Honnold climbed the Taipei 101 skyscraper without a rope.



Honnold made it to the top in about an hour and a half.

Despite the obstacles, Honnold reached the top in just 1 hour and 31 minutes. That is about twice as fast as Alain Robert, the only other person to summit the skyscraper.

The French climber did it using ropes in 2004.

Honnold celebrated his feat by taking a selfie and simply saying, "Sick." He then put on a safety harness and descended several floors to a waiting platform to hug Sanni McCandless, his wife. She later admitted she had a "panic attack the entire time" while watching.

This is not Honnold's first headline-making climb. On June 3, 2017, he became first person to scale El Capitan — a nearly 3,000-foot (914 m) tall vertical rock face in California's Yosemite National Park — without ropes. The intense 3-hour and 56-minute ascent was featured in the 2019 Oscar-winning documentary 'Free Solo'.



The tower's middle sections were the most challenging.

January 27

News in Pictures

**Niscemi, Italy**

A drone picture shows houses perched along the edge of a cliff after a landslide in Niscemi, Sicily, Italy.

**Banda Aceh, Indonesia**

A visitor holds his baby as they look at a display at the Aceh Tsunami Museum, established in 2009 to commemorate the December 26, 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami that struck the region.

**Berlin, Germany**

Flowers laid on a snow-covered concrete stele of the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Pasir Langu, Indonesia

Ahmad Rohimat collects valuables from his destroyed house after a landslide caused by heavy rains in West Java province.

**Banissa, Kenya**

Donkeys drinking water from a small pail at a relief truck delivering water aid to villagers and their livestock in drought-hit north-eastern Kenya. Mandera county along Kenya's borders with Ethiopia and Somalia, has had no rain since May.

**Clohamon, Ireland**

A vehicle stuck on a flooded road near Bunclody, County Wexford. Hundreds of schools are closed and tens of thousands of people are without power as Storm Chandra batters the island of Ireland.

**Shetland Islands, UK**

Lynden Nicolson the *Guizer Jarl* (Chief Viking) blows candles on a cake in full regalia at Up Helly Aa, Europe's largest Fire Festival marking the end of the Yule season, in Lerwick, Shetland Islands.

**London, UK**

Historical re-enactors from the King's Army branch of the English Civil War Society march on horseback along The Mall to mark King Charles I's execution in 1649.

January 26

**Taipei, Taiwan**

US climber Alex Honnold takes a selfie atop Taipei 101 – one of Asia's tallest skyscrapers, after becoming the first person to climb the skyscraper 'free solo' (without ropes or a harness).

Sources: The Guardian & Reuters