

the
**SUNDAY
TIMES**

SUNDAY
APRIL 12, 2026



FUNDA Y TIMES



Art by Minudi Minsadi Gamage (7 years)

*Happy
Sinhala & Tamil
New Year!*



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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:
April 29, 2026

Telephone: 2479337/2479333

Email: fundaytimes1@gmail.com



Win super books from



Age: 9 years and below

Word Count: 150

Topic: My favourite New Year sweetmeat

Win: Fun for the Secret Seven by Enid Blyton

The Seven are very fond of Mr. Tolly and his horse Brownie so they are determined to help when Brownie falls sick. Things get worse when the children hear that a gang of dangerous horse thieves is on the prowl.



Write at the top of your Essay

■ Book Competition ■ Essay Topic



Age groups:
6 – 10 years / 11 – 15 years
Word limit: 100 Words

Poetry Competition

This is your chance to get your poem published here. Entries should be in your handwriting and clearly certified by a teacher or parent as your own creation. Your poem should be posted to Funday Times with 'Poetry Competition' written at the top of the entry. The winner of each age category will be awarded a British Council Young Learner's Library membership.

11 – 15 years

A trip in a plane



Take-off was smooth,
In flight was not.
Turbulence, turbulence,
My head was aching,
Soon I'll need an ambulance.

Up, down, left, right,
Almost like my younger brother
Flying a kite.

The plane finally calmed down,
I was relieved.
I looked outside and felt
a great sense of pride.

The clouds looked softer
than cotton candy,
Almost like some of them could
come in handy.

I was hungry, very!
You know what I would really like
is some rice and curry.

Sleeping, fuselage – creaking,
A two-year-old weeping,
My mother eating.

Ascending, descending,
going up, going down,
Flight attendants still serving bottles of rum.

Landing, Touchdown was rather smooth,
Better not stand up,
My head may or may not explode.

We disembarked,
All I want to do is go to the park.

Neveen Rajapaksa (12 years)
Gateway College

Please write the date at the top of your entry.

Please note that copied poems will be disqualified.

fundaytimes1@gmail.com

Age: 10 – 12 years

Word Count: 150 – 200

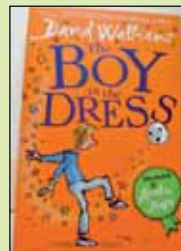
Topic: Celebrating the Sinhala and Tamil New Year

Win: The Boy in the Dress by David Walliams

Dennis lives in a boring house, in a boring street, in a boring town.

But he's about to find out that when you open your mind, life becomes anything but boring!

You'll laugh, you'll cry and once you meet Dennis, he'll live with you forever...



Age: 13 – 15 years

Word Count: 200 – 250

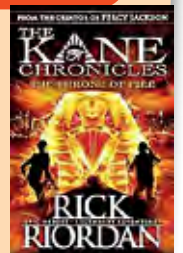
Topic: Sinhala and Tamil New Year Customs

Win: The Kane Chronicles – The Throne of Fire by Rick Riordan

The Egyptian gods have run loose in the modern world; and Apophis, the giant snake of Chaos is rising.

Carter and Sadie Kane have five days to revive the sun god Ra to battle the forces of Chaos – a feat no one has ever achieved.

If they fail, the world ends...



Book Competition



9 years and below

Uses of Water
Suganthan Labisashan
Harvard Int. School,
Matale

10 – 12 years

A visit to a Safari Park
Seja Abeywickrama
Southlands College,
Galle

13 – 15 years

A famous woman who impressed me
Vihanga Karunarathne
Lakdasa De Mel College,
Kurunegala



The Beauty of Avurudu Traditions

By Manoshi De Silva

Kavith was studying in his room when his little brother Chenuka barged in. Kavith looked annoyed, as Chenuka dropped some broken pieces of *kokis* on his table. “Achchi just fried these *kokis*!” he said in excitement, “she gave me the broken pieces.”

“Well, I don’t want any. Take them away before they ruin my books with oil stains,” shouted Kavith putting back the broken pieces of *kokis* in his little brother’s hands.

“Seeya is going to buy a new pot to boil the milk on Avurudu Day,” said Chenuka munching on the pieces of *kokis*. “Why waste money buying new pots when there are dozens of pots in the kitchen?” muttered Kavith. Chenuka shrugged his shoulders. “Ayya did you know that ‘Soorya’ the sun travels from the house of ‘Meena’ to the house of ‘Mesha’ on Avurudu Day?”

“What a bunch of nonsense!” sighed Kavith. “The sun does not travel anywhere. According to science it’s earth and the other planets that orbit around the sun. The Pisces and Aries constellations are just that; two groups of stars!” Chenuka stared at his big brother in surprise. “But what about Avurudu and all the traditions that we celebrate then?” he asked in confusion. “There’s no scientific meaning to any of that,” replied Kavith. “Now take your *kokis* pieces and go away!”

Chenuka sat on the door-step and stared at the broken pieces of *kokis* in his hand. “What’s wrong *putha*?” asked Chenuka’s grandfather who noticed the sad and confused look on his face. “Seeya, is there absolutely no meaning to Avurudu and all its traditions?” he asked from his grandfather who sat beside him. “Well now, why would you ask such an odd question? You looked so excited and happy about Avurudu all this while,” smiled Chenuka’s grandfather.

“I was happy until Ayya told me that there is no meaning to Avurudu and all its traditions!” sighed Chenuka. Just then Kavith also walked out of his room. “Yes, I did say so,” said Kavith, “it makes no sense spending all your time, effort and money for things like these with no scientific reasoning”.

“Kavith *putha*, come and sit here,” the children’s grandfather invited the older boy also to sit next to him. Kavith sat down wondering why he was asked to sit next to his grandfather and younger brother.

“Traditions are practices and customs, passed down through generations. Some traditions have a very big cultural importance too. You know every country, race and religion has certain customs. They are special because they provide us with an identity and create social connections,” smiled the children’s grandfather. “Chenuka *putha* tell me about some of the Avurudu traditions you know,” he said looking at the small boy. “Well, I worship all the elders on Avurudu Day,” he replied. “Yes, that shows respect which is a very good thing. What else?” asked the boys’ grandfather.



“Our whole family gets together and we eat all kinds of nice Avurudu food,” said Chenuka. “That strengthens the family bond. Anything else you remember?” asked their grandfather. “We share food with our neighbours,” said the small boy. “Yes, that’s also an important tradition where everyone forgives and forgets the anger or resentment, they had with one another and renews their

connections” explained the boys’ grandfather. “Positive traditions like these should be taken forward!”

“Food is all he remembers!” said Kavith looking at his little brother and rolling his eyes. The children’s grandfather laughed.

“But that’s true you know,” said the children’s grandfather, “think about an ordinary day where your parents bring you Avurudu sweetmeats like *kevum* or *kokis*, maybe to have as a snack. But does that give you the same feeling you get when you consume it with your family, on Avurudu Day?” Their grandfather looked at both boys. “Not really,” said Kavith. “It’s much more fun and exciting when you eat those on Avurudu Day with your family,” said Chenuka. “That is the beauty of traditions!” smiled the kids’ grandfather.

“Avurudu symbolizes unity and prosperity. Also, gratitude for the harvest. When our forefathers collected their harvest they gave thanks to the sun, because the sun is a primary source of life. That’s why the sun is considered so important in Avurudu festivities. Isn’t that a fair point and also a scientific reason?” smiled the children’s grandfather looking at his older grandson. Kavith smiled and nodded. “See what a beautiful thing it is to have gratitude towards nature, while celebrate the gathering of harvest,” smiled the children’s grandfather.

“I never thought of Avurudu traditions that way,” smiled Kavith. “Now that you explained it, it sure is nice to get together with our family and have a day to celebrate these traditions of our country!” “Well, every country has their own traditions and it’s nice to learn about those as well,” smiled the children’s grandfather. “Even the Tamil New Year has special traditions that they celebrate,” said Chenuka. “I know this because my best friend Ravi celebrates the Tamil New Year and he told me all about them!” “Of course,” smiled his grandfather, “there are so many different traditions from different ethnic groups in our country and that gives our country a rich heritage and a very colourful culture!”

So, on Avurudu Day Kavith dressed in traditional attire, joined his family and little brother in celebrating the Avurudu traditions, full of excitement and interest.

Because their grandfather explained the importance of traditions and culture, both boys took part in them in a meaningful manner, full of respect and gratitude. After they worshipped their grandfather by handing him betel leaves, they thanked him for sharing his wisdom and teaching them about the beauty of Avurudu traditions.



Avurudu Art



Seja Abeywickrama (11 years)
Southlands College, Galle



Manudi Ganewatte (5 years)
Christ Church Girls' College, Baddegama



Esandi Ranasinghe (12 years)
Musaeus College



Netana Krause (7 years)
Ladies' College, Colombo



Dinaya De Silva (7 years)
Sussex College, Malabe



Thihama Zacky (12 years)
Al-Azhar Central College, Thihariya



Githini Randini (10 years)
Polymath College,
Maharagama

Rasandi Ranasinghe (10 years)
Musaeus College



Happy Birthday



Shahzad Ghaneey
9 years on April 7



Umaima Hassan
8 years on April 12

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.

In our online issue this week:

- **Page 5** – Book Competition Winners' Essays
- **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 or check out the Sunday Times epaper on www.sundaytimes.lk for additional pages of this week's Funday Times.



From a Funday Times Young Reporter

Celebrating the Sinhala and Tamil New Year in Australia

Different cultures celebrate New Year in different ways around the world. The Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrated by Sri Lankans, usually falls on April 13th and 14th, each year. The New Year is celebrated according to the movement of the sun, marking the transition of the sun from Pisces to Aries and the start of a new solar year called “Aluth Avurudda” in Sinhalese.

This year, I celebrated the Sinhala and Tamil New Year Festival “Sunfest” or “Soorya Mangalaya” in advance, in March at our community language school in Sydney. It was a joyful event that brought families together and helped us share our culture, traditions and happiness.

That day, just before we went to the community language school, we wore our traditional clothing called ‘Sarong’ for pants and ‘Kamisaya’ for shirts. When we arrived, we had the cultural show in the morning conducted by our Sinhala School.

We did a group dance on stage with a song “Mey Avurudu Kale” created by Sahan Ranwala uncle, a famous Sri-Lankan artist in my mother country, Sri Lanka.

After the cultural show, there was an array of delectable sweets and cultural foods, such as Aasmi, Kevum, Kiribath with Lunu Miris, (a spicy spread), Kokis and more!



Some Avurudu sweetmeats.



Sinhala Avurudu table.

Next were traditional Avurudu Games. The game we first participated in was ‘donut eating’.

First, they tied our hands behind our backs at the starting line and then we ran to the plates on the chairs. We ate the cinnamon donuts with our hands behind our backs, because they couldn’t find the Sri Lankan traditional ‘Seeni Banis’ in Sydney, so instead they put the cinnamon donut as an alternative.

Sack Race

The sack race was a very fun and engaging activity where we jumped in sacks, waist deep and jumped across a field until we reached the end. It was a very competitive sport.



I am wearing a Sri Lankan traditional costume.



Usually, I am good at a few games, but I could tell it was very competitive as I couldn’t get into the top three, which was disappointing, but still very fun as I got to participate in the sport.

Balloon bursting

For me personally, the balloon bursting was a tricky activity, as blowing the balloon was not the fear, but the pain is what I fear. Imagine popping the balloon and feeling the searing pain spreading across your lips. Anyways, if you’d want to know the rules, the rules are simple like I said. Just breathe into and pop a balloon, then run to the finish line.

Lime and Spoon

The lime and spoon race is really fun. It is like the egg and spoon race, but instead you use a lime. We hold the spoon with one hand instead of two to make it more competitive and it’s a bit easier, as the lime is slightly smaller than an egg, which gives you a higher advantage of winning the game. If you fall down, you have to restart the game, or if you don’t want to play, you could just simply drop the lime and spoon and walk away.

Kana Mutti

Kana Mutti has got to be my most favourite game as it consists of candy in the game. You must get a stick or a bat and be blindfolded and stand still. They spin you around three times to confuse you, so they won’t make it easy. The spectators and judges are allowed to tell you where to move. Once the clay pot is broken, candy is dropped, and you can rush to get them. I usually end up with barely any candy, but I just shrug it off.

Aliyata Eha Thabeema

In this game, the judges draw an Elephant on a whiteboard or sometimes a blackboard. This game is recommended for kids for it has simple steps on how to play. Tie a headband on the eyes to make sure they don’t see and give them a marker. They then must use the marker and put a dot on the elephant’s eye.



Tug-of-War

I’m sure you guys know how to play Tug-of-War. But just in case you don’t, I got you covered. There are two teams and a coloured cloth is tied to the middle of a rope. The team who pulls the cloth the closest over the line or makes all the other team fall, wins.

At the end, even if you win in everything or lose in everything, everyone participating without a doubt gets a present. So don’t worry if you are bad at sports or activities, because you will always get a gift.



Donuts ready for the race.

Saviru Bandara (11 years)
Girraween Public School, Sydney Australia



First pictures by Artemis II crew of far side of Moon

April 7, 2026

The first pictures taken by the Artemis II astronauts of the far side of the Moon, during their six-hour historic fly-by, have been released.

As part of their 10-day mission the Artemis II astronauts are flying around the Moon and back. The four astronauts went out of contact with NASA's

team on Earth for forty minutes, as they flew around the part of the Moon not visible from our planet and never visited by humans before.

The Orion spacecraft has now travelled more than 250,000 miles from Earth – a new record for the furthest distance humans have ever travelled into space.

Here are the pictures the astronauts took on their journey behind the Moon.



You might have seen a sunset before, but how about an Earthset? This picture of Earth peeking out from behind the Moon was taken three minutes before the Orion spacecraft and its crew went behind the Moon and lost contact with Earth for 40 minutes before emerging on the other side.



The Artemis II crew wore special eclipse glasses to protect their eyes during the solar eclipse.



During the fly-by the astronauts saw an eclipse – where the Sun's light was blocked out behind the Moon, with only a tiny bit of light visible around the edges.



This picture shows the South Pole-Aitken basin – the largest and oldest basin on the Moon – believed to have formed billions of years ago. Roughly 2,500 km across it is one of the largest known impact craters in the Solar System.



This picture shows the Moon fully eclipsing the Sun. The Sun's outer atmosphere can be seen peeking out from behind the Moon. Stars that are usually too faint to be visible, because the reflected light from the Moon is so bright, are seen in the image – because the Moon is in shadow.



This picture shows astronaut Jeremy Hansen taking pictures during the fly-by using a special camera shroud – which is a special curtain with a hole for the camera lens to pass through – it is used to help prevent light from the cabin from reflecting on the windowpanes and spoiling the pictures.



April 7

News in Pictures



Space
A screengrab from a NASA livestream of Artemis II crew members Reid Wiseman, Christina Koch and Victor Glover giving a thumbs up onboard the Orion spacecraft.



Brasilia, Brazil
Indigenous people attending the *Acampamento Terra Livre* (Free Land) Camp, take part in a protest titled "Congress, enemy of the people: our future is not for sale" as they demand the demarcation of Indigenous lands and constitutional and cultural rights, in Brazil.

April 6

Vatican City, Vatican
Pope Leo XIV greets the faithful from the pope-mobile after delivering his *Urbi et Orbi* (to the city and the world) message, in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican.



Gouda, the Netherlands
Every Easter Monday the city of Gouda hosts a free breakfast in the historic city centre.



Outer Space
A view of the Moon taken by an Artemis II crew member through a window of the Orion spacecraft on day five of the mission.



Dhaka, Bangladesh
Vehicles wait in a long line to refuel at a gas station in Dhaka.

Tokyo, Japan
Tourists drive go-karts through the city.



Musselburgh, UK
Corgis race during the Corgi Derby at Musselburgh Racecourse in Musselburgh, Scotland.



Al-Luban e-Sharkiya, Palestinian Territories
Palestinian children inspect a destroyed car, which Palestinians say was burned by Israeli settlers, in Al-Luban e-Sharkiya, near Nablus, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Sources: The Guardian & Reuters