# Child Strict Str

### **HOLIDAY ANNOUNCEMENT**

There will be no issue of Child Friendly News in the second half of March due to Spring Break. The next issue will be released on April 10, 2014.



Volume I, Issue 19 >> March 13, 2014 >> Subscribe www.childfriendlynews.com >> Email childfriendlynews@gmail.com

# INDIA HEADS FOR ELECTIONS IN APRIL-MAY

ome April and the start of the Indian summer, it will be time for India's General Elections.

That's when the entire country will vote to elect a new Central Government that will manage India from the nation's capital New Delhi.

# When will the elections be held?

The elections will be held in 9 phases (or stages) starting from April 7 until May 12. Why so long you may ask? India has a huge number of voters (more on that later) and an election this large cannot happen all at once. The counting of votes will happen on May 16 and by the end of that month, a new government will be in place in New Delhi.

### The Big One

India is the largest democracy in the world – which means we are the biggest nation in the world to elect its leaders by giving everyone over 18 years of age a change to vote for whomsoever they like. This year, 815 million voters will take part in the elections. Close to 100 million will be youth voters between the ages of 18 and 23 – so this time, young people will have a real say in selecting our leaders.

### Who are we electing?

India has been divided into 543 constituencies. In each, a number of people will contest the elections and the person with the most votes will be elected as the Member of Parliament (MP) from that constituency.

Once all votes are counted, the political party with the most number of MPs or the one with at least 272 MPs will get a chance to form the government.

### Is it all so simple?

Not really. No single political party has won more than around 200 seats in recent elections. So, most likely, political parties will need to form groups and jointly make an attempt to form the government.

### Its Modi vs Rahul

India has two national political parties — the BJP which is headed by Narendra Modi and the Congress headed by Rahul Gandhi. These two leaders are on a head-to-head clash this election. But the surprise star of the elections could be Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) which is promising a corruption-free government.



Narendra Modi



Rahul Gandhi

Arvind Kejriwal

### **New Kids on the Block**

The 2014 General Election will see some first-time candidates, who have never contested elections earlier.



Nandan Nilekani used to run Infosys, one of India's best technology companies. The Congress Party is fielding him from Bangalore.



Medha Patkar, an environment activist, has been nominated by the Aam Aadmi Party to contest from Mumbai

### 

### Can your children show the way too?

Last week, in the Special Report, you read about children in school across India who are helping make a real difference to the management of civic issues in their respective cities. These children and their schools were part of the Bala Janaagraha programme run by the Bangalore-based Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy (JCCD). Bala Janaagraha is a free program open to schools in cities across the country. This program is specifically delivered to students of grade VIII of government,

aided as well as private schools.

If you are interested in signing up your school for the program, or to know more about the program, kindly write to: Valli Narasimha at — balajana@janaagraha.org or at - Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship and Democracy, 4th Floor, UNI Building, Thimmaiah Road, Vasanthnagar, Bangalore - 560052
Tel: +91-80-4079-0400 Mobile number: 09844132697. Fax: +91-80-4127-7104.

BAHRISONS Kids



Bill Viola

# FISH OUT OF SIGHT

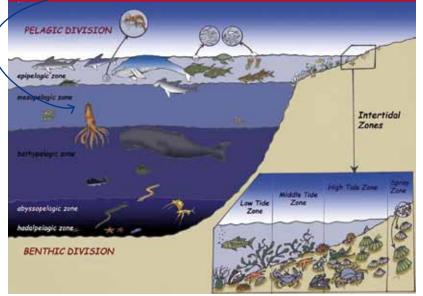
ost of the world's fish may actually be living deep down in the ocean, out of sight of fishing boats and predatory birds.

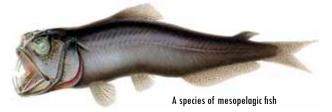
A new study by a group of scientists who spent the last seven months going around the world in a boat has revealed (shown) that 95% of the world's fish may actually be living 100 to 1000 metres (that's a kilometre) beneath the surface of the sea, far away from sunlight. Such species are called mesopelagic fish and the reason that there

are so many of them is the fact that many of these species have never been fished.

The marine biologists (scientists who study the habitat of the sea and coasts) who undertook the study observed that mesopelagic fish are clever when it comes to avoiding fishing nets. They come up to the surface of the sea only at night to feed – and thus manage to avoid predatory birds. This discovery could mean that the number of fish in the sea could actually be a lot more than we think.

Mesopelagic fish tend to have large eyes that help them see in their dim world. They are also sensitive to water pressure levels — this means that they can make out the depth they are swimming at (50 metres/100 metres/1000 metres) and plunge deeper to feel safer.





# A headband that can read the brain

scientist in the United States has developed a headband that can 'read' the brain and work out if it is functioning well. It sounds like something straight out of a science fiction novel but the headband is actually being tested in real life conditions.

The headband works by beaming infrared light (special kind of light waves) into the skull – without the need to



operate and insert any wires, thank goodness! The light waves are then studied to make out the level of blood flow in the brain. The band also calculates the level of light absorbed by the brain.

### Why are these measurements made?

A tired brain uses up more blood and absorbs more oxygen. So, with the information it has, the headband can tell if a person is over-tired or working comfortably.

### How is this useful?

The headband could be used by people who do jobs that require them to be alert at all times, such as flight controllers who manage the arrival and departure of flights at airports. A tired controller could make a mistake and cause serious accidents. If controllers wore these headbands, their boss could make out if someone was getting very tired and reduce that person's load or give her a break

# **Starling surprise**



If you live in Northern India, especially Delhi, an avian (bird related) treat is in store for you. At the end of March and beginning of April, starlings gather in huge flocks in parts of Northern India. These birds are preparing to leave India to return to Central Asia for the summer. Each evening, huge flocks take to the sky, with thousands of starlings flying together in a single group.

The unique thing about these gatherings, which are called 'Murmurations' (after the sound made by thousands of wings beating together) is that all the birds seem to be acting as one, without any single bird obviously leading the pack. It is almost as if each starling instinctively knows which way to move. Together the birds are a spectacular treat for the eyes as they move, swirl and create different shapes in the sky.

In Delhi, large starling flocks can be seen in the India Gate region in early April. The birds gathered here are Rosy Starlings which have a striking pink and black plumage (colouration). No one knows for sure how and why starlings create Murmurations – some scientists believe that they are used to frighten away predatory birds that prey on the starlings.

### THE CFN INTERVIEW

# **CREATOR OF A HAVEN FOR HERPES**

f you live in or have visited Chennai, you would have been to the Snake Park or the Madras Crocodile Bank. Both are among the few zoos for reptiles in India where you can view and even interact with snakes and crocodiles from around the world. The man behind them is Romulus (Rom) Whitaker, a naturalist who has been studying reptiles and amphibians for more than 30 years. (You can read more about Rom in the Special Report on pages 4 and 5).

In this interview, Rom Whitaker tells CFN what it is like to be a naturalist.

How old were you when you realized that you wanted to work with animals and become a naturalist? Is there any incident/event that prompted this decision?

Rom: I started collecting bugs, frogs, crabs, crayfish and fish when I was very young,

The Madras Crocodile Bank, which is a breeding centre for crocodiles, has one of

just 4 years old, in northern New York state (in the United States). There are no venomous snakes where we lived and when I found my first snake, a harmless garter snake, at age 4, I was lucky to have a very understanding mother who got me an old fish aquarium and we landscaped for the garter snake to live in for a few days. I'm pretty sure it was her encouragement that set me on the road to being a naturalist. That, plus my natural interest in everything wild.

Once you decided you wanted to work with animals, how did train yourself?

Rom: I was mostly self-taught. I started out with a very strong interest in hunting. I grew out of that but I learnt about wildlife and jungles during my hunting trips, with the help of local, often tribal people whom I always respected for their

intimate knowledge of wild things.

The best part about being a naturalist is....

Rom: Almost anywhere in the world I go there is something wild and interesting. Whether it's following the tracks of a bobcat in the Wyoming snows or following a king cobra through the



jungles of the Western Ghats there's always some excitement and new experience to be found being a naturalist.

The tough parts of the job are....

Rom: Seeing what is happening to our forests and our rivers, and to all the creatures and plants that live in them makes you pretty depressed sometimes. But it also gives you the angry energy to do something about it and get people on your side!

What's one thing you've learnt after working with animals?

Rom: I've learned many, many things working with animals, probably the most important being the obvious fact that I too am an animal, a greedy human animal who has to learn to respect and enjoy the peace and privacy of all the creatures in the wild.

The greatest challenge you've

overcome in your work is .....

Rom: Getting people to understand and appreciate even the dangerous denizens of our wonderful natural world, my favorite ones, the snakes and crocodiles.

# Do you have advice to a young person who wants to become a naturalist?

Rom: Nowadays there are numerous avenues someone to become more than just a part-time or 'armchair' naturalist. When I started out I had to create my own job (by starting a snake park in Madras!), but now there are a lot of opportunities to study and get jobs doing all sorts of wonderful things like exploring forests, climbing mountains and diving down to coral reefs. My advice to anyone who wants to become a naturalist is to stick with it!

### Website Wanderings

### AN 'ARKIVE' OF INFORMATION

If you enjoy looking up information on animals, <a href="www.ARKive.com">www.ARKive.com</a> would seem like an Aladdin's Cave — full of treasures. The website is indeed a treasure trove of information on the natural world, bringing together, in one place, news, photos and videos of the other animals we share our planet with.

Why is www.ARKive.com such a great website?

- You can hunt for animal by species and for each species, a detailed description, top facts, range (area where it is found), photos and videos are
- grouped together. Researching a species becomes a breeze
- If you are studying about a continent or country and want to find out about the animals that live there, you can look up species lists per country
- Games and puzzles all based on animals are there for the nature nerd
- Class room resources Arranged by age and topic, these resource packs include interesting presentations and classroom activity ideas





# **Special Report**

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### **Looking Back**

id you know that the Vedas, one of the oldest texts of the Hindu religion, mention the names of more than 250 kinds of birds? That the Mauryan kings actually used to guard forests to protect elephants that lived within them? (The Mauryans actually had a selfish motive – elephants were an important part of their army).

India has a long history of recorded natural history and naturalists but we have documents and paintings that only date back to the Mughals (who started ruling India around 500 years ago). Among the Mughal kings, Babur, the first Mughal emperor

and Jehangir, son of Akbar had a deep interest in the natural world. Jehangir especially commissioned many paintings of plants, flowers, birds and animals such as the one to the right.

Good to know: Such earlier records are important as they help us understand how long a species has been living in an area. They are also clues to how widespread some animals once were – rhinos for example were hunted by Emperor Jehangir in Aligarh, which is quite close to Delhi. As you know, rhinos are now mainly foundin Assam.



## The British Naturalists of India

uch of the early organized work in recording India's plants, birds and animals was done by British naturalists between 1800 and 1900. The science of observing and classifying wildlife was developing at the same time in Britain and this knowledge was also applied to India's natural world. Meet some of these pioneers below:

### A.O. Hume

Students of history would be interested to know that the same person who started the Indian National Congress was also one of our country's earliest ornithologists (bird scientist).



Prater was an Englishman who was born in India. He was an expert on mammals and his book, 'The Book of Indian Animals' is read even today.





# The Gall of the Wild

teve Erwin, Mad Mike and Mark, Bruce George - these names would be familiar to you, young watcher of Animal Planet and Discovery channels. Did you know that your own country has a rich tradition of naturalists too? Not camera totting adventure men (and women!) who want to show you amazing sights, but field naturalists who have worked and are still working to protect the wildlife and wild lands they love. In this edition you will meet with some of them. Read on....

### **Famous International Naturalists**

### George Schaller

One of the world's greatest biologists, American George Schaller is an expert on mammals like the Mountain Gorilla, African lion, Giant Panda and the Snow Leopard. Here's what he wrote during his study of the Mountain Gorilla in



Central Africa - "No one who looks into a gorilla's eyes – intelligent, gentle, vulnerable – can remain unchanged, for the gap between ape and human vanishes; we know that the gorilla still lives within us. Do gorillas also recognize this ancient connection?"

### **Jane Goodall**

Jane Goodall is one of the world's foremost experts on chimpanzees. She was one of the first people to recognize their intelligence and problem solving skills. She also discovered that, like humans, chimpanzees used tools



- this was a major discovery at that time. She is also the only human known to have been accepted into chimpanzee society and was the lowest ranking member of a troop (the name for a group of chimps) for a period of 22 months.

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change.

- Charles Darwin



# **Special Report**

CHILD FRIENDLY NEWS

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### Who is a naturalist?

A naturalist is a person who studies or is an expert in natural history and the natural world.



# Visit

Ith so many naturalists working in India in the 19th century, the Bombay Natural History Society was set up in 1883. Even today the BNHS works to conserve (protect) India's wildlife. It has the finest collection of bird and mammal specimens in India. Many rooms at Hornbill House (where the BNHS is located in Mumbai) have cupboards full of them. Persuade an official to open

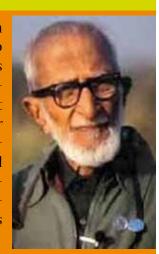


them, and out of the draws will tumble specimens of colourful birds and mammals such as porcupines, leopards and civets.

### **Important Indian Naturalists**

### **Salim Ali**

alled the Birdman of India Salim Ali was one of the first people to conduct detailed bird surveys in many parts of the Indian subcontinent. It was also thanks to him that the Bharatpur Bird Sanctuary (near Agra) was created and the Silent Valley National Park in Kerala was saved from destruction. Ali also wrote several important field guides used even today by birdwatchers to identify birds in the wild.



### **Romulus Whitaker**



ounder of the famous Madras Crocodile Bank, Romulus Whitaker is India's best known herpetologist (a scientist who studies reptiles).

He founded the Snake Park in Chennai and the Agumbe Rainforest Research Centre in Karnataka where studies on the King Cobras and their habitat are carried out. Whitaker is now working on protecting the Gharial, a unique long snouted crocodile that is on the brink of extinction in India.

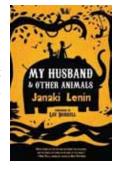
### **Fateh Singh Rathore**

ne of India's tiger men, Fateh Singh Rathore, was one of the earliest members of Project Tiger, a programme that was started by India's former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1973. A naturalist with a deep knowledge of the forest, Rathore was responsible for making Ranthambore one of India's best tiger habitats.



### Read

**My Husband and other Animals**' by Janaki Lenin is a collection of essays written by Janaki Lenin about life with her husband Romulus Whitaker (read his interview on page 3) – that involves encounters with turtles, snakes, crocodiles and many other creatures, big and small



**Birds from my Window** by Ranjit Lal is also a collection of short essays that introduce you to the ways of the birds that are our neighbours in the big, bad city. Reading the book will open your eyes to the amazing life of birds that has been playing out, unseen, under your very eyes all this time







# **GREEN REGIONS AROUND CAPITAL IN DANGER**

elhi is located on the Aravali mountains, one of the most ancient ranges in the world. The environment of these mountains has been eroded (destroyed) as the city of Delhi grew and now, the last few pockets of green around the capital are under threat, thanks to the greed of states like Haryana.

According to the law, wild areas in the National Capital Region (NCR) are protected from human habitation. Large buildings and structures cannot be built within them. Thanks to this, Delhi still has its famous 'Ridge', a wild belt that covers large parts of South Delhi and extends up to Rashtrapati Bhawan, the home of India's President. In fact, Raisina Hill, on which Rashtrapathi Bhawan is built, is at the very tip of the Aravali Range. In nearby Haryana, pristine forests such as Mangar that house many species of trees, birds and animals, do exist.

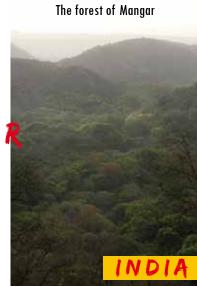
Real estate companies, that have built huge office complexes and homes in nearby Gurgaon, are hungry to get hold of this wild land. They want to build resorts and hotels in these areas. They are being supported by the Government of Haryana, which has been trying to persuade the central government in Delhi to change the law and allow buildings in these areas. The news has attracted angry protests from activists who want to protect the environment and the last few remaining green lungs of the polluted NCR region.

The state of Haryana was close to achieving its goal when elections

were announced last week. Now, as per the law, no new rules can be brought in until the election is over and a new government elected. The NCR's 'green lungs' can hopefully breathe easy awhile!

### What would you have?





# Ukraine almost at war

he east European country of Ukraine is almost at war with Russia leading to a dangerous turn of events in Europe. If you recall, a few weeks ago, the citizens of Ukraine succeeding in booting out (throwing out) their unpopular President Viktor Yanukovych. Yanukovych was backed by Russia and now the mighty Russians have taken control of the eastern part of Ukraine known as the Crimea.

Countries in Western Europe and the United States have opposed Russia's move. They are especially unhappy that the Russians are supporting a vote in the Crimea on Sunday which will decide if the people of eastern Ukraine should break away from Ukraine all together and join Russia. The rest of Europe and the US believe that the Russians are forcing the people of the Crimea to join hands with Russia. Russia has been moving soldiers into Ukrainian navy and air force bases in the Crimea. In response, Ukraine is seeking the help of powerful countries such as the United States. Although no fighting has yet broken out, Ukraine is in danger of going to war with Russia very



# A 'Holi' way to beat up men

In the crowded lanes of Barsana, a small town near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh, local women play 'Holi' with a difference – they drive away men with sticks or 'lathis', which gave rise to the name of the celebration - 'Lathmar Holi.

Lathmar Holi is celebrated days before the main festival of Holi (which falls this year on March



17). The celebration goes back to a story from myths connected to the Hindu god Krishna. According to the story, Krishna and his friends from Nandgaon (Krishna's birthplace) visited Barsana, which is the hometown of Krishna's companion Radha. They teased her, and reacting to this, the women of Barsana chased away Krishna and his friends. This scene is re-enacted each year, with the people of Nandgaon thronging Barsana on this day, and then being chased by the lathi-wielding ladies of Barsana.

### Ready to play Holi?

- Remember to use environment friendly colours that are made from natural things like fruits and flowers
- Don't force people to play Holi if they don't wish to
- Protect your eyes and hair from colours

# **TENNIS, IPL STYLE**

ahesh Bhupathi,one of India's most successful tennis players has launched the International Tennis Premier League, a tennis tournament similar to the highly successfully Indian Premier League (IPL) cricket series. He has managed to sign up some of the biggest names in the tennis world including Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams to play in the league.

The league will be played between teams of four Asian cities – Bangkok, Singapore, Mumbai and Dubai. They will play against each other in matches comprising five sets. Each match will include one set each of Men's Singles, Women's Singles, Men's Doubles, Mixed Doubles and Legend's Singles.

Details on the team names, logos and owners are expected to be announced soon. What is known is that the league will be played between November 27 and December 14. The team members have also been announced – so we have Nadal playing for Mumbai, Andy Murray for Bangkok and Djokovic for Dubai.

Since the format also includes a Legend's Singles, some of the older stars like Andre Agassi (Singapore) and Pete Sampras (Mumbai) will also be seen in action.



Rafa is playing for Mumbai!

# The missing plane

arly on Saturday morning, a Malaysian Airlines plane that was travelling from Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Malaysia to Beijing in China, suddenly disappeared. The plane went 'off radar', and stopped communicating with airports en route (along with way) as is common practice for all flights.

For 6 days now, aircrafts and ships from many countries in the region have searching for the missing aircraft but without success.

There is no information on what could have happened to the plane – whether it had an accident and crashed or if it simply changed course and landed elsewhere. There were 239 passengers on board the flight, including five Indians.

Ships from China, Malaysia, Vietnam and the United States have been combing sections of the ocean over which the plane was flying when it disappeared. Teams are also hunting for clues to the aircraft on land in Vietnam in case the plane managed to change direction.



# Sri Lanka wins Asia Cup



ri Lanka defeated Pakistan in the finals of the Asia Cup last weekend. A century by Lahiru Thirimanne de-throned the defending champions Pakistan. Thirimanne's success with the mat was matched by Lasith Malinga's success with the ball – the veteran (experienced) bowler took all 5 Pakistan wickets that fell in the match. The tournament went badly for India, which was defeated by both Sri Lanka and Pakistan and thus failed to make the final. Virat Kohli's first big tournament as captain ended with a disappointing early elimination.

### What to look forward to:

The World T20 — the world cup for the shortest form of cricket — will be played in Bangladesh between March 16 and April 4. In addition to the big names like India, Australia, England and Sri Lanka, the tournament also includes teams from Hong Kong, Nepal and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).





# CFN CHRISTMAS STORY CONTEST WINNER

# **RUDOLPH GOES** MISSING!!!

hen Santa walked through the door of his toy factory, he saw his elves busy making toys and Santa was so happy. After seeing this, Santa went to see his reindeer. It was winter and the children all over the world were expecting their Christmas presents and Santa went about checking if everything was going fine.

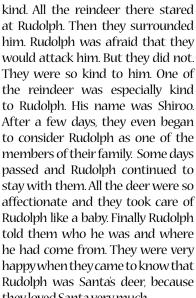
Rudolph the reindeer was his favorite of all the six. Rudolph had a red nose and so all the deer used to tease him. When Santa saw his deer, he was shocked! He couldn't identify Rudolph because all the deer's noses were red and then he came to know that all the deer had an attack of cold. He called out, "Who is Rudolph in this group?" After hearing this, Rudolph came forward and said, "Here I am, Santa." Santa said, "God be gracious! Take care, all of you. I'll ask my wife to give you hot porridge, which will make you all feel better." So he asked his wife to make some hot porridge. After sometime, the porridge was ready. All the deer drank it and felt better.

The next morning, Santa went to see his reindeer. He was very happy that all were fine. All the deer were sleeping peacefully. But it struck him that someone was missing. Only then he came to know that Rudolph was missing! Santa was so upset. He set out to search for Rudolph. First he searched his palace. His palace was so big so he thought that Rudolph would be roaming somewhere in there. Santa searched every nook and corner of the house. But Rudolph was nowhere to be found! Santa grew more and more upset. He enquired of everyone if they'd seen Rudolph. But none had seen him anywhere recently and they said that they were very tired and were sleeping soundly that they did not know where Rudolph went. Santa searched for Rudolph everywhere about his house. But Rudolph was not there. No one knew where Rudolph was. Santa prayed to God to keep Rudolph safe.

It was very cold that morning and Rudolph had gone wandering, lost in deep thought. He walked for hours together and finally he reached a place which had a little sunshine and to his surprise he found so many reindeer, therejust like him! He was surprised to see such a lot of his

Shweta Thiaguis the runner-up in the 10-14 years group. She is 11 years old and studies in Class VI D of the Bharathi Matriculation Higher Secondary School, Coimbatore.

Hope you enjoy reading her story!



It was Christmas in two days. Santa was worried about his dear missing Rudolph. At midnight on Christmas Eve. Santa went to all the houses and gave gifts to children. Children had left cookies and a glass of milk for Santa under the Christmas tree. They thought Santa would be tired going to all the houses and giving

gifts. Every year Santa used to eat them all. But this year, he did not eat any because he only thought of Rudolph.

Meanwhile, Rudolph and Shiroo had become best friends. One fine evening, all the deer took Rudolph to a beautiful place with many pastures and greenery. Rudolph asked, "What place is this? It is so beautiful!" A deer said, "This place belongs to us. We have a very big secret, which the world does not know." Rudolph asked, "What is the secret?" Suddenly the deer, which was talking to Rudolph, changed into a man!!! Rudolph was surprised! The deer said, "Not just me. Everyone in this herd can change into men. We all are actually reindeers. But we have the power to phase into men. We belong to the magic folk. You have made us happy all these days by your kindness and by staying with us. Now, I grant you a wish and we will try to fulfill it."

Vonder what's going to happend next? Read the oncluding part of Shweta's story in the next issue

### at Rudolph. Then they surrounded him. Rudolph was afraid that they would attack him. But they did not. They were so kind to him. One of the reindeer was especially kind to Rudolph. His name was Shiroo. After a few days, they even began to consider Rudolph as one of the members of their family. Some days passed and Rudolph continued to stay with them. All the deer were so affectionate and they took care of Rudolph like a baby. Finally Rudolph told them who he was and where he had come from. They were very happy when they came to know that Rudolph was Santa's deer, because they loved Santa very much.

## **FORM IV**

- 1. Place of publication: New Delhi
- Periodicity of its publication: Fortnightly
- Printer's Name: Anita Mani Nationality: Indian
  - Address: C5/7 FF VasantVihar New Delhi 110057
- Publisher's Name: Anita Mani Nationality: Indian Address: C5/7 FF VasantVihar New Delhi 110057
- Editor's Name: Anita Mani Nationality: Indian Address: C5/7 FF VasantVihar New Delhi 110057
- Names and addresses of individuals who own the newspaper and partners or shareholders holding More than one per cent of the total capital : Anita Mani,C5/7 FF VasantVihar New Delhi 110057

I. Anita Mani, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: March 12, 2014 Anita Mani (Publisher)

# Top Reads for Kids and Young Adults

- 1. Demon Dentist by David Walliams
- 2. Wonder by RJ Palacio
- 3. National Geographic Kids Almanac: 2014
- 4. The Secret of the Fairies: Thea Stilton by Geronimo Stilton
- Match of the Day: Annual 2014
- 6. The Mahabharata by Samhita Arni
- 7. Chained by Lynne Kelly
- 8. Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Hard Luck by Jeff Kinney
- BZRK Reloaded by Michael Grant
- 10. Requiem: Delirium Trilogy (Book 3) by Lauren Oliver

To know more about these books and to buy them, check out www.toptenbooksoftheweek.com

### **Subscribe to Child Friendly News**

Child Friendly News or CFN is an age appropriate newspaper for children in the age group 7-13. The newspaper comes out every fortnight. Every issue is written using language that young readers can understand on their own interspersed with pictures and imagery. Quick explanations of difficult words and terms and boxed elements that explain concepts accompany every article — this is to help build

vocabulary as well as context understanding. Special reports take up one topic in depth while regular columns on everyday technology concepts keep children up-to-date with the world around them.A subscription costs Rs.500 for the year.

Child Friendly News is published from C5/7 FF Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110057. Published, printed, edited and owned by Anita Mani. Printed by Printworks, F-25, Okhla Industrial Area, Ph I, New Delhi 110020 [RNI registration number: DELENG/2013/50870]