

Child Friendly News



THE TRUTH ABOUT TREES



PG 4-5

Volume 3, Issue 8 >> Thursday, 17 September 2015 >> [Subscribe www.childfriendlynews.com](http://www.childfriendlynews.com) >> [Email childfriendlynews@gmail.com](mailto:childfriendlynews@gmail.com)

SYRIANS FLEE COUNTRY FOR EUROPE

In a migration like never before, millions of people are fleeing war in Syria in search of safety in neighbouring countries and Europe. Over the past few weeks, thousands of Syrians have walked, boarded buses, trains and flimsy boats as they flee their country which has been torn apart by conflict (fights).

Why are they fleeing?

Over the past four years, life in Syria has been disturbed by war between various groups. Terrorist groups like ISIS have also established their domination over parts of Syria. As a result, ordinary Syrians want to get out of their country... and fast.

More than 4 million Syrians have moved out of their country in recent times. Around half are sheltering in neighbouring Turkey. Thousands have left Turkey, crossing the Mediterranean to enter Greece before beginning the long journey to countries in Western Europe like Austria and Germany. Although Syrians have been leaving their country for a few years, this summer the numbers have jumped. So much so that, there is a long line of migrants winding their way across Europe seeking shelter at countries that will take them.

Where are they going?

Germany has shown that it has the warmest heart in Europe by freely opening its doors to desperate migrants. German families have welcomed fleeing Syrians with food, clothes and even toys for young Syrian children. Almost 100,000 migrants have reached Germany while around 65,000 have reached Sweden. Countries like Serbia, Netherlands, Austria and Bulgaria are also hosting Syrians.

But it has not all been hugs and cheers. Countries like Bulgaria and Hungary, through which many migrants have been crossing, have been closing



Dangerous crossing - Migrants cross the Mediterranean in over-crowded boats like this one



their borders bit by bit. Even Germany has announced that it can no longer keep accepting people from Syria in large numbers. Instead, Germany has asked that countries in Europe equally share the number of migrants coming in.

Still a better life

The difficulties of crossing into another country are nothing compared to the danger of living in Syria. As a young mother who was trying to cross into Germany told a newspaper in Europe, "If they don't let us in, I'll use a smuggler (get in without permission). I'll do anything so my children can live and study in a free country."

THE MIRZA MAGIC

Days after receiving the Khel Ratna award for her Wimbledon victory, Sania Mirza did it again – along with partner Martina Hingis, she won the women's doubles at the US Open, the last major tennis tournament of 2015.

Mirza and Hingis are ranked as the No 1 doubles team in the world, and they showed their class by winning the tournament without losing a single set. In the final on Sunday, they easily beat the fourth ranked pair of Casey Dellacqua and Yaroslava Shvedova 6-3, 6-3.

It was an Indian summer for Hingis who won the mixed doubles title with Indian Leander Paes, again a repeat of their Wimbledon victory.



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SAY HELLO TO OUR LONG-LOST RELATIVE

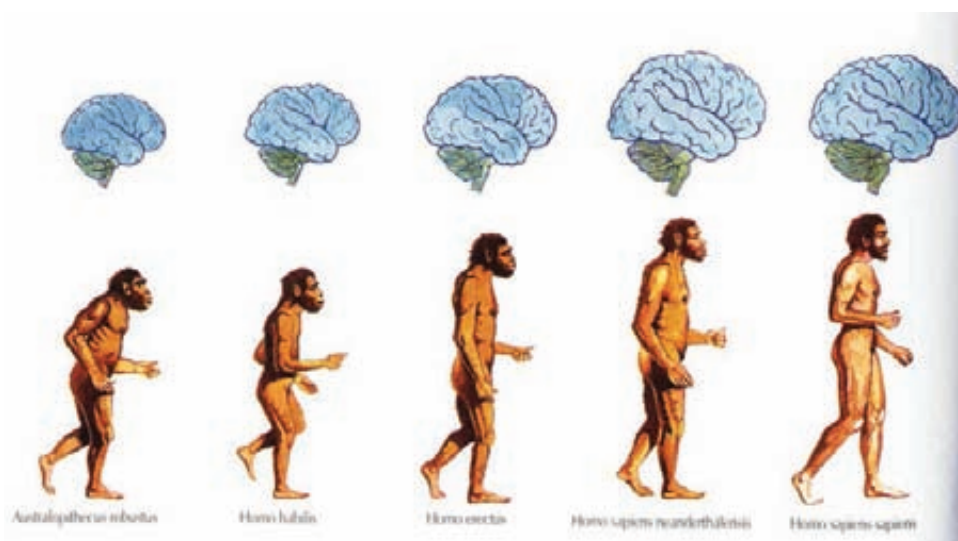
A team of researchers working in South Africa has made a truly marvelous discovery of an entirely new species of human ancestors who have been named *Homo naledi*. Ever more astonishing for a species that lived so long ago – the *Homo naledi* used to bury their dead, a practice seen only in our species, *Homo sapiens*. In fact the bones of the *Homo naledi* were found in a cave that was used as a burial site (where people were buried after their death) by these ancient humans. The bones remained undisturbed for thousands of years as the cave entrance was no more than seven inches wide. A team of small-built cave climbers and scientists was called in to bring out the remains.

A treasure trove

The cave was a treasure house - the bones found represent nearly every element of the *Homo naledi* skeleton, and all ages have been found: infants, children, adult men and women, the elderly. It is one of the largest human fossil finds of all time.

Who were the *Homo naledi*?

The skulls of the *Homo naledi* throw up a puzzle – they had tiny brains, the size of an orange, which would make them similar to the more ancient species – *Australopithecus*. But the skull, jaw and teeth are similar to those of ancestors in the species group *homo*, to which we modern humans also belong. But their practice of burying the dead is something that even *Neanderthals* who came



This chart shows the evolution of humans. Note how much more chimpanzee-like the *Australopithecus* ancestor was. The *Australopithecus* species links modern humans to our chimpanzee ancestors.



much later did not practice. In fact this habit of burial is found only among the *Homo sapiens*, the most modern species of humans. So, the exact position of the *Homo naledi* in the human evolution timeline is yet to be finalised. The skeleton of the *Homo naledi* indicates that their bodies may have been adapted for tree climbing, which links them back to the chimpanzees from which we have all evolved (developed).

<< *Homo naledi* remains discovered in South Africa

THE MAGIC OF TULSI

Have you been offered tulsi leaves as a cure for a cold or infection? Well, the old story about the curative (ability to cure) properties of the tulsi plant has just been proved right thanks to research done at Bangalore's National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) and Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms. Researchers from these institutes have uncovered the map of all the genes in the tulsi plant. Genes, as you know, contain all the information required for the growth of a living thing. Understanding the genetic map of an organism can help us understand what goes on inside the plant/animal and how or why it does what it does.

The genetic map of the tulsi plant has revealed the specific substances within the plant that fight diseases. In fact, the researchers have been able to map specific substances within the plant that fight specific diseases such as cancer. This knowledge can then be used to copy these substances in a lab and then use them to make medicines. Since the tulsi is known for its antibacterial, antifungal, antipyretic, antioxidant, antiseptic and anticancer properties, a wide variety of medicines could be developed.



THE MOST EXPENSIVE VOMIT EVER

A man walking his dog on a beach in the United Kingdom stumbled upon an odd object that had been washed ashore. His dog wouldn't let go of it, and when he studied it a bit more, the walker realized he had stumbled upon a piece of whale vomit! It was a lucky find for whale vomit, also called ambergris, is valuable. Sperm whales produce ambergris in their stomachs when they eat squid. The sharp beaks of the digested squid irritate the whale's stomach, leading to the production of ambergris which is then vomited out.

Ambergris finds can prove lucky as these are much in demand by companies that make perfumes and cosmetics. In fact this particular find could make the dog walker richer by 10 lakh rupees!





OWLIE TALKS TECHNOLOGY

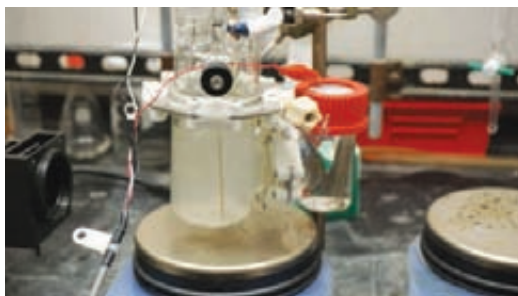
CAN THIS GREEN GAS SAVE THE PLANET?

Sometimes, the best magic is there, right in front of us, unnoticed but in plain sight. Look out of a window. Can you spot a tree, plant or even a blade of grass? If you have, then you are looking at magic right in front of you.

What's the magic?

Using just sunlight, carbon di-oxide (a gas in the air) and water, these plants are able to create energy that in turn helps the plant grows stems, leaves, flowers and fruits. As many of you already know, this is called photosynthesis. For a while now, scientists have been looking for ways to copy the photosynthesis magic and create a kind of energy that humans can use by combining light energy, carbon and water. One team at the University of California (UC), Berkeley in the United States (US) thinks it has found a way.

Led by Chris Chang at UC, Berkeley, this team has managed to create an artificial plant that generates (creates) the gas methane by combining these elements. Methane is the main ingredient in natural gas, an important source of



The cup with the bacteria used in Chang's experiment.

energy on Earth. Natural gas is used for heating, cooking, generating electricity and running vehicles.

How did they do this?

Chang's magic happened in a cup filled with bacteria swimming in liquid. These bacteria were specially designed to feed on carbon dioxide instead of their usual diet of sugars. Heat came from a tiny solar panel sticking out of the cup. The panel was connected to many tiny wires (many times thinner than a human hair), as small as the bacteria themselves and de-

signed just for them.

According to Chang, the wires stuck up like blades of grass among the egg-shaped bacteria in the liquid. The bacteria ate CO₂ from the air and grabbed electrons from the wires. Using the water around them, they combined all three elements to produce simple carbon-based substances like methane.

What is the big deal?

We humans have been pumping CO₂ into the air thanks to fossil fuels like petrol, diesel that we use daily. Excess carbon di-oxide in the air is making Earth hotter, leading to global warming. If we are able to take all the extra CO₂ in the air and use it to make a kind of fuel that we can use instead of fossil fuels, we would be solving a very big problem.

Chang and his team believe that the future lies in artificial photosynthesis to create these new kinds of fuels. Such fuels may be years away from being easily available but it may happen sooner than you think.

YOUNG CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

NO POTHOLE IS TOO SMALL...



CFN is carrying a series of articles on children who have brought about change in their school or home neighbourhoods through the action they took. Over the next few months we will be profiling 'Young Champions of Change' from Bala Janaagraha's nation-wide programme for eighth graders. Bala Janaagraha is the civic education programme run by a Bangalore-based organisation called Janaagraha that is aimed at children in 531 schools in 25 cities.

When teenagers Sumaiya and Sohra Banu read about a woman who was killed when a vehicle swerved to avoid a pothole on the road, they were shocked. The fact that a bad road could lead to someone's death set them thinking. That incident shocked me," says Sumaiya. "That was when I decided to do something."

Change agents

Both sisters, who were studying in Bangalore's Fathima High School, were part of the Bala Janaagraha programme in their school where they learnt that every citizen could act to make a difference. Their response to the pothole tragedy was to create a database of all potholes in the city of Bangalore. The sisters collected pictures from newspapers, wrote down quotes from stories, and collated every clipping related to potholes that appeared in newspapers. "We went through newspapers every day for three months to collect the information," says Sohra. "The daily reports of drainage problems, no streetlights, missing footpaths angered us and made us wonder why our city is in such a poor condition," she adds.

In addition to listing potholes, their project also mapped the potholes to wards (Bangalore is divided into a number of wards for easy management), ward numbers and the details of the corporator (government official) in charge of each ward.

The Impact

This database was an invaluable resource for Janaagraha which at that



time was setting out to make information on potholes and other road issues available on the internet so that people in those areas could complain to their corporators and get them repaired. Thanks to the hard work put in by Sumaiya and Sohra, the information was in place and went online in a short span of time. Soon, Bangalore's citizens began to use the information to get their roads fixed.

As you can see, making change happen begins with a series of small tasks, done well and on a regular basis. And here is a final thought from Sohra, "If we as young children are thinking so much about basic amenity like roads, then we hope the government feels ashamed and finally decides to do something about it."



Trees are the earth's endless effort to speak to the listening heaven.

—Rabindranath Tagore



3 trillion but not growing

There are three trillion trees on earth and this is seven times the number we thought grew on Earth. The new count was revealed at the end of a study carried out by Thomas Crowther, an ecologist (a person who studies the environment) at Yale University in the United States (US).

Have more trees grown on Earth?

Not really. The earlier estimate (number) of 400 million was based on pictures taken by satellites orbiting (going around) Earth in space. While that is a good method for counting the number of trees that form the canopy (the canopy is like the roof of a forest and is made of the tallest trees), it does not take count of the shorter trees that grow below the canopy.

In fact, the number of trees has actually diminished. 12,000 years ago, when humans



Each year, 15 billion trees are cut

were yet to discover agriculture, the number of trees was double what we have now. As forests were cut down for farmland, the number of trees has dropped.

And, it is still dropping. Each year, according to the study, humans cut down 15 billion trees. We only plant back 5 billion, so the overall number of trees will continue to diminish.



THE TRUTH A

So, how did they count the trees?



Trees are usually numbered during a count

Unlike earlier estimates, the 3 trillion number is based on actual counts of trees in forests. Of course, the research team didn't count and number each tree individually (that would have been impossible). Instead they counted sample patches of forest, and combined that with data from satellite images to get an idea about the number of trees that were there.

But there is still room for improving the accuracy of the study. No sample counts were done in major countries like China, India, Australia or in central Africa. When these are done, the count may go up.

Where are the trees?

- Almost half the world's trees (43%) are found in the tropical and sub-tropical regions – close to the equator
- The most dense forests are found in the 'boreal' forests that run through North America and Europe just below the Arctic circle.



The tropical forests of the Amazon basin

A new report says that there are more trees on Earth than ever before. That's a big number. But does it mean we have enough? Are they spread out evenly? S

Do we have enough trees?

Based on this count, there are 422 trees for each person in this world. But these are disappearing at the rate of 1.43 trees per person every single year. At this rate, in 150 years we will have only 214 trees for each person in the world.

Building with trees

Although we all use trees in several ways, there are some people who use trees in very special ways.

The Korowais, a tribe that lives in New Guinea (located north of Australia, in the Pacific Ocean), live in incredible tree houses built by hand from materials found in the forests.



Back home, the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya has perfected the art of building living tree bridges. Roots are patiently coaxed across streams and taken care of until they are strong enough to bear the weight of a human. Over time, these living bridges become stronger and stronger as the roots grow deeper into the ground on both sides of the stream.



ABOUT TREES

There are more than 3 trillion trees on this planet.

Does that mean we have enough trees?

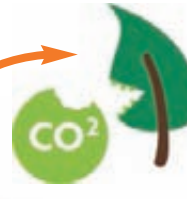
Our Special Report investigates.

Why we need trees

A fall in the number of trees is bad news for us humans, as they are important to us in a variety of ways.



They provide homes to many wild creatures.



Trees absorb the harmful carbon di-oxide that we humans give out



Trees prevent soil from eroding (wearing away)



Trees help us collect more water in the ground and help keep water in rivers and lakes clean

Super Trees

Here are some trees that have amazing features.

The Carbon Sink

The Iriartea palm is one of the most common trees of the Amazon rainforest. Scientists studying the tree have discovered that it absorbs more carbon than any other tree in the forest. Therefore, in our fight against global warming (the heating of the Earth caused by carbon di-oxide), this tree is an important soldier.



The old one

Methuselah is the name given to a kind of pine cone growing high in the mountains of California, US, that is estimated to be 4847 years old! That makes Methuselah (named after a character from the Bible who lived for a very long time) one of the oldest living things in the world.



The odd one

This is one tree that stands out – once you've seen it, you will never forget it. Many kinds of baobab trees are found in the island of Madagascar which is part of Africa. Some of these trees are more than 1000 years old and they can store over 100,000 litres of water – a useful feature to have when you grow in very dry lands.



TREE TRIVIA

- The tallest tree in the world is a Redwood growing in California, US, that has a height of around 380 feet
- A Wild Fig tree growing in South Africa has roots that go down to 400 feet – the deepest root ever discovered!
- The Manchineel Tree which is found in Florida, US and in the Caribbean coast secretes (gives out) an exceptionally poisonous and acid sap (a liquid produced by the tree). If the sap falls on human skin, it can cause blisters.



Californian Redwoods



INDIA



A man loves the meat in his youth that he cannot endure in his age.

—William Shakespeare



DENGUE OUTBREAK IN DELHI

Dengue fever has been fast spreading in Delhi over the past few weeks, and the fever has been detected in over 1800 people so far. One third of those patients caught the fever in the last one week. With hundreds of new patients crowding into hospitals each day, hospitals in the city have become over-crowded. The situation got so bad last week those hospitals began turning away patients. But this resulted in another tragedy. A seven year old boy who was turned away from several hospitals ultimately died of the disease even though he would have been cured had he been treated. The Delhi government has now ordered its hospitals not to turn away patients. It has also cancelled the leave of doctors and medical staff so that the huge number of patients coming in each day can be treated. Despite this, government hospitals continue to remain crowded with several patients occupying one bed. In some places, patients are spilling out of hospitals and even sleeping on the floor or out in the compound. This is the worst dengue outbreak the city has seen in the last five years. With the peak dengue season of October approaching, the problem may get worse before getting better.



Gurgaon to go car-free on Tuesdays

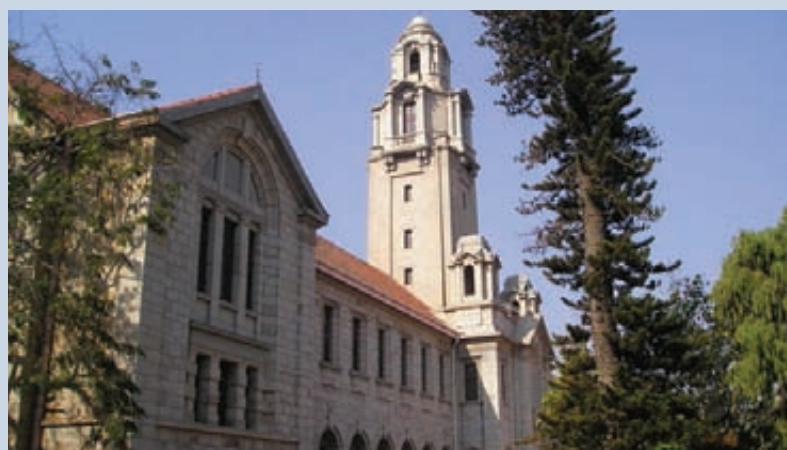
Starting from September 22, Gurgaon, Delhi's neighbouring city, will go car-free. The people of Gurgaon will be encouraged to not use their cars between 7 am and 7 pm, and instead use buses, the metro or even car pools to get to work or to reach markets for shopping. The move is being managed by the Gurgaon Traffic Police and the city's municipality. It is purely voluntary – this means you won't be arrested or asked to pay a fine if you use your car on Tuesdays. Instead the authorities hope that citizens will set an example for their neighbours and friends. However car parking will not be allowed on major streets on car-free days. Some companies also plan to offer bus services near metro stations and office buildings. Over 60,000 cars use Gurgaon's major roads each day and getting at least some of them off the road may just help reduce pollution in that crowded city. Let's hope this idea works and is adopted by more cities in India!



Traffic jams are common in Gurgaon

Two Indian institutes in top 200

Two Indian colleges – the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (IISC) and the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) have been included in the list of top 200 colleges in the world. This is the first time that Indian institutes have featured in the Quacquarelli Symonds' (QS) World University rankings. IISC has been ranked at No 147 while IIT-D is ranked 197. Other Indian institutes have made it to the top 400 – IIT Bombay (202), IIT Madras (254), IIT Kanpur (271), IIT Kharagpur (286), IIT Roorkee (391).



The Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

The fuss about meat



Last week, protestors in Mumbai threw eggs at a jewelry shop in Mumbai and went on to release four roosters inside. Wonder what they were protesting about? Well, since September 6, the city of Mumbai has been in a tizzy with the city's municipality announcing a ban on slaughter (killing of animals) and sale of meat on four days in September due to a Jain festival.

Meat-lovers in the city were very upset, and backed by the Shiv Sena political party, began protesting against the ban. In one locality, they even went around selling meat on one of the banned days. Luckily for the cause of peace, the Mumbai High Court ordered last Monday that the ban should be revoked (done away with). The Court pointed out that in a city like Mumbai, where people of so many religions and social habits live, such bans just didn't make any sense.



Owlie says

We agree with the Mumbai High Court completely. What to eat or not eat on certain days is a matter of personal choice. Doesn't the Mumbai municipality have anything more important to take care of?

I'm a happy man, because I am successful in what I do, of course; but what makes me most happy is I have people around me that I love and who love me back. This, for me, is the most important thing. Nobody likes to be alone.

—Novak Djokovic



News

CHILD FRIENDLY NEWS

17 September 2015

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Djokovic is the champ



Serbia's Novak Djokovic showed the world why he was the best tennis player in the world by beating favourite Roger Federer to win his second US Open title. The US Open is the last of the four Grand Slams (the name given to the four biggest tennis tourna-

ments) played each year.

Djokovic has dominated the Grand Slams in 2015 – he won three out of four (Australian Open, Wimbledon, US Open) and lost in the final of the French Open to Stan Wawrinka. Not surprisingly, he will end 2015 as the No 1

Djokovic is just the third man in the Open Era (when professionals who played for money were allowed to compete), which began in 1968, to reach all four Grand Slam finals in a calendar year, after Rod Laver in 1969 and Roger Federer in 2006, 2007 and 2009.



player in the world.

In New York City on Sunday night however, he wasn't the crowd's favourite. That title belonged to Federer, the great athlete who at the age of 34 (that's old for a professional tennis player) is still playing brilliant tennis. Federer has a record 17 Grand Slam wins and he would have been hoping to make that 18 by winning the US Open.

However it was Djokovic who added to his tally – he now has ten Grand Slam wins, making him only one of eight male tennis players in the world to have ever achieved this feat.

No Slam for Serena

Flavia Pennetta with the US Open trophy



The most watched player this US Open was Serena Williams. With 3/3 Grand Slam trophies in her cupboard before the US Open began, Williams needed just one more to make it a calendar year Grand Slam (all four Grand Slams in the same year), a feat that was last achieved by Steffi Graf in 1988. Williams however lost to Italian Roberta Vinci in the semi-final. Meanwhile another Italian Flavia Pennetta beat world no 2 Simona Halep in the other semi-final round to set up an all-Italian final, the first in the history of the US Open. In the end, it was Pennetta who lifted the trophy.

Lahiri lifts Indian golf



Golf is at best a niche game in India, played by a very small group of people who have access to golf courses. So, when an Indian reaches a big milestone in this popular international sport, it is time to sit up and take notice. Top Indian golfer Anirban Lahiri

has qualified for the President's Cup. This is an international tournament played every two years between the United States golf team and another team called the International Team that represents the rest of the world (other than Europe). Only the top international golfers make it to the International Team.

Lahiri finished seventh in the International Team rankings to qualify for the team. He is the first Indian to qualify for the International Team and the President's Cup which will be played in Korea between October 6 and 11.



Tree Talk

Can you identify the trees in the pictures below?
They are all found in India.



Answers:
1. Banyan
2. Peepal
3. Deodar
4. Chinara

UNSCRAMBLE THE WORDS

Re-arrange the
alphabets to
find the word

Hint: All clues are
linked to the theme
of trees

1. KTNUR

2. HBCARN

3. PAS

4. ERNEG

Answers:
1. Trunk
2. Branch
3. Sap
4. Green

SUDOKU TIME

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| 5 | | 3 | 2 | | 4 |
| | | | | | |
| 2 | | | 1 | | |
| | | 1 | | | 3 |
| | | | | | |
| 4 | | 5 | 3 | | 2 |

Try your hand at this
Sudoku. Remember that
numbers 1 to 6 can
appear only once in
each of the six rectan-
gles. They can also
appear only once in
each row and column of
the overall square.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 6 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| 6 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| 5 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 4 |

Answer

WORD SEARCH

Can you find the objects given at the bottom of the picture?



Top Reads for Kids and Young Adults

1. Percy Jackson and the Greek Heroes by Rick Riordan
2. Crystal Kingdom by Amanda Hocking
3. The Tiger who came to Tea by Judith Kerr
4. The Gita for Children by Roopa Pai
5. House of Robots by James Patterson
6. A Children's History of India by Subhadra Sen Gupta
7. National Geographic Kids Almanac 2016
8. Malgudi Schooldays by R K Narayan
9. Param Vir Chakra by Reena I Puri
10. The Parent Agency by David Baddiel



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while regular columns on everyday technology concepts keep children up-to-date with the world around them. A subscription costs Rs. 650 for the year.

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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 1, New Delhi 110020

RNI registration number: DELENG/2013/50870