



Tirana is the Capital and largest city of the Republic of Albania. It was founded in 1614 by Sulejman Pasha and became Albania's capital city in 1920.

Albania, officially the Republic of Albania is a country in South Eastern Europe. It is bordered by Greece to the South-East, Montenegro to the North, Kosovo to the North-East and Macedonia to the East. It has a coast on the Adriatic Sea to the West and on the Ionian Sea to the South-West.

It is less than 72 km (45 miles) from Italy, across the Strait of Otranto which links the Adriatic Sea to the Ionian Sea. Albania is a member of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Council of Europe, NATO, World Trade Organisation and one of the founding members of the Union for the Mediterranean. It is also a potential candidate for membership in the European Union.

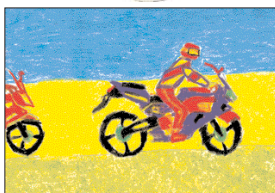
Albania



Capital City:	Tirana
Main Cities:	Durres, Elbasan, Shkoder, Vlore
Official languages:	Albanian
Ethnic groups:	Albanians 95 percent Greeks 3 percent Other (Aromanians (Vlachs), Roma (Gypsy), Serbs, Macedonians, Bulgarians) 2 percent
Demonym:	Albanian
Government:	Parliamentary republic
Independence:	from the Ottoman Empire 28 November 1912 from Italy de facto October 1944
Population:	2008 estimate 3,170,048
Currency:	Lek



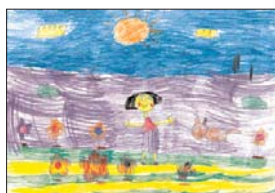
Paddy Field
Chamath Jayantha, Grade 7
St. John's College, Nugegoda



Bike Race
P. A. Tharaka Perera, 6B
Kingston College International
Mutwal Branch, Colombo 15



Skating together
Tharaka Perera, Grade 6
Kingston College International
Mutwal Branch, Colombo 15



Flower Garden
Shavinya Abeywickrema, 1D
Methodist College

Dawn of another Sinhala and Hindu New Year

Dear Children,

Are you all ready for the Sinhala and Hindu New Year celebrations? Be patient. There's only six more days left for this all important day.

The sound of the Koha, the sweet scent of the Erabada flowers and the smell of the traditional sweets brings the spirit of festivity.

Another Aluth avurudda or Chittirai varshapirappu will soon be ushered bringing happiness and prosperity specially with the dawn of peace ending three decades of war.

When the sun moves from the Meena Rasi (House of Pisces) to the Mesha Rashiya (House of Aries), it signals the dawn of the Sinhala and Hindu New Year.



Auspicious time. Pictures by Saman Sri Wedage

This season is not only significant to Buddhists and Hindus but also to Christians as Good Friday and Easter also fall in the month of April.

Every custom is observed according to an auspicious time.

The whole country transforms itself into a grand festival during the Sinhala and Hindu New Year period bringing joy for both young and old.

Children should be very careful when lighting fire crackers. Please let elders light them for you. Before you light crackers, make sure your pets are kept in a safe place as they may become excited and panic.

Dear Children, may you have a happy, prosperous and peaceful Sinhala and Hindu New Year.

Please don't forget to share your beautiful New Year experiences with Daily News Children.

Bye for now.

- Aunt Anji

Significance of Sinhala and Hindu New Year

The Sinhala Avurudda dawns when the Sun moves from Meena Rashiya to Mesha Rashiya completing a cycle of a twelve-month period. The transition time known as 'Sankranti' takes place on April 13 or 14. It is during this period that some of the rituals are performed to mark this important event of the year.

Parana Avurudda

Rituals connected with Aluth Avurudda commence with bathing on the last day of the old year (Parana Avurudda).

The custom of offering betel to parents and elders demonstrate the act of paying gratitude. The children in turn receive blessings from parents moulded according to Buddhist thought. The sense of goodwill and friendship among relations and friends is also seen during the festival time.

Village temple

Most of the rituals are linked with the village temple. People visit the temple during the time of 'Sankranti' the transitional period when they believe that there are no auspicious times (Neketh) to engage themselves in different tasks.

This time is called 'Nouagalle' during which people devote their time in performing religious practices. It is for this reason it is also called 'Pumiyala Kala' when people stop all their activities, and visit the temple to accrue merit.



Playing Rabban

and get their blessings from the monks.

Kiribath

Women folk facing the correct direction and light the hearth to prepare the traditional Kiribath. Prior to this, milk is boiled in a newly earthen pot symbolising prosperity when the will and friendship among relations and friends is also seen during the festival time.

Another meal is cooked along with a curry 'Hath Maluva' that has seven different flavours which is considered as a delicacy prepared during New Year time. Other sweets specially prepared for the festive season are made in advance to serve the visitors who drop in.

Bak Maha Uela

Among the national sports activities organised during the festive season are Onchili pedima, kalagodi sellama, olinda keliya, porapol gehima, mallawa pora, all pora, gon pora, lanpura addima, rilapeti pedima, dadu gasima and many other games of interest.



Children on the swing

est, to make the festival a fun-filled event.

Pancha is another popular indoor game played during the new year season. Pancha is played with five small sea shells, a coconut shell and a chart. Players are divided into two

groups. The New Year is a time for rejoicing and enjoyment. In villages a Bak Maha Uela or festival is organised where everyone gathers for sport and celebration.

Traditional games such as climbing the greased pole, pillow fights (kotta pora), raban (tambourine) contests, gadu and elle (similar to baseball) are played competitively.

Pora-pol gaeema is a contest between two teams, each taking it in turns to throw a coconut until all the nuts on one side are broken.

Ankefya is another common game preferred by teenagers. It is a more elaborate exercise than pora-pol gaeema and is essentially a community game where udupila and yatipala divisions are manifest. Each contestant has a forked sambar horn which are interlocked and attached to a strong tree called the angala (Horn tree).

A rope is attached to the interlocked horns and both teams tug vigorously at the rope. The tugging continues till one of the horns would get damaged.

Hindu celebrations

Just like the Sinhalese, the Hindus in Sri Lanka will also celebrate the New Year on a grand scale.

Hindu women folk too have a great time, designing Kolam in front of their front doors. It is said that by putting Kolam, they could get prosperity in the New Year.

Source: Internet

The teachers and students of the Pre-Primary Section of the Kingston College International (Mutwal branch) held the Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebrations at the College ground recently. Presided over by the Chairman of the College Lion Dr. T. Kumaravel.



Pictures shows two students chosen as Avuruddu Kumariya (Fathima Shamila) and Avuruddu Kumariya (V. Abilash) standing along with Vindya (Teacher-in-charge) and Miss Indumathy (Teacher).

The Chairman of the College Dr. T. Kumaravel is also seen in the picture.

A classic car



Monstrous sounding engine
Funny horn
Rancid exhaust
Bug like and small
A renovated classic car
With all the grand aura
Of a bygone era,
A blue Bug Fiat!

Nillasi Liyanage,
Grade 10 F,
Musaeus College, Colombo 7

Evil force close at hand



- Part 31

By Uncle Sachi and Aunt Ruwi

As they made their back to the footpath Ruwi began to develop a strange sense of discomfort. Suddenly an unclear vision flashed across her vision and before she could quite gather her wits, the image blurred out. Pramodaka shot a concerned look at his companion but was unable to detect the problem. He noted that the pixie blinked several times before darting a look his way. Ruwi avoided his eyes for she felt that there is no need to frighten the boy. She was just coming to terms with the fact that everything is fine when she had a clearer vision of the picture which had previously shown her senses.

The story so far...
Pramodaka, Nalaka, Champika and Chinthaka go on a trip to the woods with their parents for their school holidays. In the middle of the night the children are awakened by a strange noise. On following their dog, Scooby, Chinthaka is snared by the age old spell of the 'luring stones'. Pramodaka departs with Ruwi, a pixie, to recall a book of spell to cast off the spell while Nalaka, Champika and the dog remain behind with Sachi, a gnome who updates them on the life of mythical creatures. Shamika, a friend of the mythical creatures joins in and they begin hunting for Pramodaka and Ruwi as there is no sign of their return. Just as they were coming to terms with the fact that they were lost, six rabbits scamper along the way. The rabbits take pity upon the children and agree to guide them part of the way. Meanwhile Sulo, the goblin who is always trying to make trouble for the mythical creatures, grabs a basket of goodies from a gnome named Russell and makes off. Scooby sees the creature approaching and dives for her throat...

about to get himself into some kind of muddle... but why did I have this strange feeling as if there is some connection between him and their kid standing by my side?" she wondered as she shot another worried glance at Pramodaka. "That is only something only the elves can answer but we have to get to the others quickly, release Chinthaka and go in search of Russell. No doubt that

goblin had landed him in hot water yet again for he is easily sympathetic and had forgotten how it supported his worst enemy, Pradesh, during the duel between them at last year's Yakundra festival," she thought sadly. "Are you ok?" The sudden voice piping up from above her roused for thoughts. "I wouldn't lie to you and say that everything is fine. I feel an evil force close at hand. It is

trying to break my link with the divine agents but thankfully had not succeeded - yet." Ruwi replied casting a look around her.

Pramodaka's curiosity was aroused by her statement. He could see that she was genuinely shaken by her vision.

"Please tell me what had happened, aunt, Ruwi. Maybe I can help you in some way," he cried, fearing that some misfortune had befallen on the others during their absence.

"Oh, no. It's not what you have in mind, little one. It's one of our gnome friends, Russell. You will meet him shortly. I see that there will be a strange bondage between you two though I cannot quite explain it. We have to hurry to his side," Ruwi exclaimed.

(To be continued)

