

Tyres are the new playground

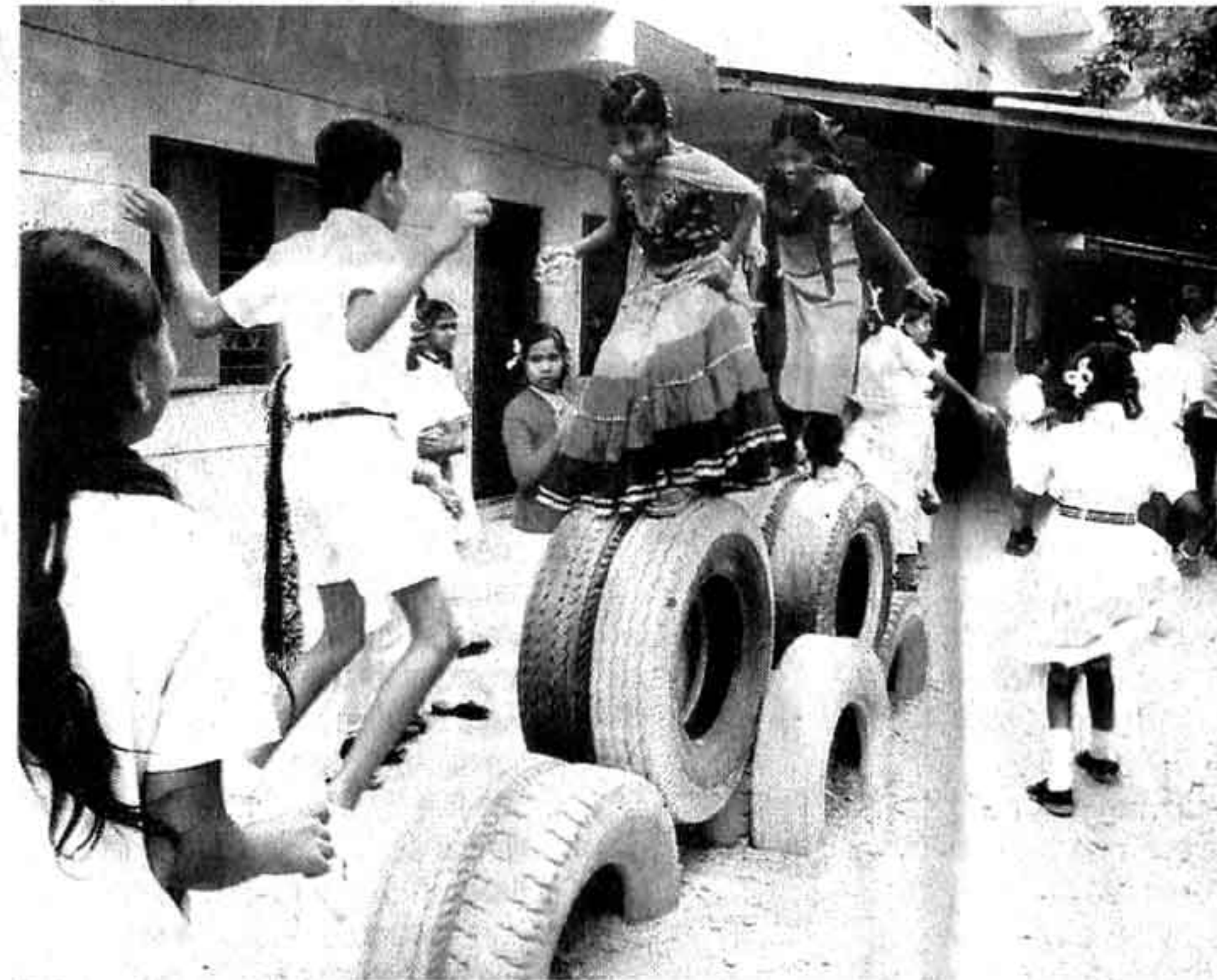
When one thinks of a playground, the first thing that pops up is rides, slides and swings made from iron and plastic. But what if someone were to tell you that one can use old tyres to create a playground where the kids can have all the fun with different kind of activities? The answer would be — is that even possible? But a young bunch of architects after passing out from IIT-Kharagpur have made this a reality.

Such is the popularity of these playgrounds, where the old truck tyres are used by not for profit Bengaluru-based organisation — Anthill Creations, it has made its presence felt in over 17 States today. The idea to create such an innovative playground began when the team was still studying.

“I was in my final year of college, in 2015, I went to this school where the children were playing with broken cement pipes. They were playing badminton with broken slippers. That is when we realised that these children didn't even have a park where they could play. We decided

to do something about it. A bunch of us built our first playground. Back then, we didn't realise how big the problem was. Over the next couple of years, we got many requests from across the country to build a playground using tyres,” Pooja Rai, co-founder of Anthill Creations recalls.

Rai and her friends quit their jobs and decided to take up building such playgrounds full-time. The idea to use tyres took shape because the team was young, they didn't have money to build the playground. With trial and error and over a period of time, they realised that tyres are very durable. “Children play aggressively. The reason why playgrounds don't last for long is because iron rusts and plastic breaks. But tyres are durable. We are trying to build them in a manner where they can last for years. We are using material that can be recycled — tyres and



Children playing with the tyres

drums,” Rai says.

However, the team doesn't use car tyres since they are not as strong. They turn to companies like Michelin Tyres and Apollo Tyres for truck tyres. “We work with these companies as part of their CSR initiative. We also turn to scrap dealers who deal in bulk,” Rai tells you and says that to build an average a playground, they need 80 tyres.

Since it is a playground, the rides need to be colourful. The tyres need to be treated — using primer — as well since they are out in the open and need to withstand the elements of weather. They also use non-toxic paint before the kids are allowed inside the playground.

“Rubber is durable. The playgrounds that we have set-up till now, we haven't seen any sign of wear or tear. While we have built playgrounds across the country, our

office is in Bengaluru. We are now concentrating our efforts in Odisha and Maharashtra,” Rai says.

She tells you that most of the projects that they work on are for Government schools. “In such cases the principal gives us the permission. When we work in public spaces, it is the BBMP which helps us identify dark spots and dead spaces where we can work and transform them. These playgrounds are also part of employee engagement for the companies that we work with. The funding comes from them. Since these projects are DIYs, the employees are welcome to come and build the playground,” Rai tells you and says that it takes five-six days to transform a space.

Initially, the kids were not too happy to see old tyres being unloaded. “Statements like: ‘Why are they dumping trash in our school?’

are common place. But within a couple of days, the children can't just wait to start playing. Such is their enthusiasm to play on what we have created, they don't even let the paint dry,” Rai says.

Then there is the matter of making rides using tyres. They can't be your usual merry-go-rounds. Rai and her architect friends designed many of the early rides they installed. Now, they have a team of designers who do the needful. The company has a small team here in the Capital as well. In fact, Rai has a project starting in the city soon.

“What we are doing, reusing the waste, is very small. The fact that children are involved, it means that we are trying to change the mindset and encouraging them to recycle and reuse waste in a productive way. We keep creating waste and you have another agency that is clearing it. This is not a sustainable solution. We hope that more people can come up with innovative ideas of using waste. Individuals too can do their bit, not using plastic, is one of them,” Rai says.