hot thesundaytimes November 19 2006

LION DANCE DISPLAY The Singapore National Wushu Federation set a new world record by organising a lion dance display comprising 328 lions. The performance took place at the Jurong East Sports Complex on L3

most participants
IN A RIBBON-CUTTING CEREMONY

There were 3,238 participants - including President S R Nathan – in the ribbon-cutting ceremony at the official launch of Swissotel The Stamford and Raffles The Plaza on Jan 6, 2002. The ribbon was 4,203m long.



It is the first record of its kind. SOURCES: GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS 2007 AND SINGAPORE BOOK OF RECORDS

## Guinness World Records held by Singaporeans largest display

most people

WEARING BALLOON HATS A record 1,491 people wore balloon hats at an event organised by Sentosa at its Siloso Beach on June 4 last year.

largest number of BLIND DATES

On July 20 last year, as part of Nanyang Technological University's 50th anniversary celebrations, organisers paired 536 first-year undergraduates into 268 couples and broke the world record for the largest number of blind dates. The students had to interact with each other for at least an hour within a 12-hour period.

world's first BABY MASSAGE-A-THON

Jurong West residents set a new world

record by making and displaying 14,038 dumplings on June 12 last year. They beat the previous record of 13,192 dumplings set in 2004 by Jurong Junior College students.

Johnson & Johnson and KK Women's and Children's Hospital organised the world's first baby massage a-thon on May 8 last year. Four hundred and nine babies participated in this

longest scuba dive

Adventurer Khoo Swee Chiow, 42, broke the world record for the longest scuba dive in a controlled environment on Dec 25 last year. He stayed submerged for 220 hours. The last record was held by a Briton who stayed underwater for 212 hours and 30 minutes in 1986.

longest marathon

Dr William Tan, 49, set a new world record as the first person to be in a marathon on wheels for 48 hours. He accomplished it from Oct 21 to 23 last year.

most number of golf ball strikes

1,453. They were struck at 13 different golf courses during events organised to celebrate the National University of igapore's 100th anniversary on



## Singapore's record book

IT IS not just the famed Guinness book where Singaporean record-breakers stake their place in the sun. The Republic has its own cataloguers of citi-

zens' remarkable deeds. The Singapore Book Of Records Club, a non-profit society run by about 20 local volunteers, promotes record-breaking events and offers advice to people attempting these records. It was previously

known as Record Breakers Singapore and was run by Australian couple John and Helen Taylor. Last December, the club took the step of publishing the 192-page Singapore Book Of Records, with a new and more comprehensive edition

planned for early next year. LifeStyle talked to club president Ong Eng Huat, 48, who runs a publishing company.

What are the trends in record-busting ef-

forts in Singapore? We don't have many individuals in Singapore who can devote much time and effort in perfecting their craft or in training for their pursuits. People like Dr William Tan, adventurer Khoo Swee Chiow and mountaineer David Lim are a rare

But Singapore excels in mass participation events. I guess, as a society, we are very coopera-tive and are good at following instructions. We are also strong in organisational and management skills. It is easier to get thousands of people to do a similar action in Singapore than in most other countries.

Who are most inclined to record-breaking activities?

Students from junior colleges, polytechnics and universities. That's when people want to be different and stand out from the crowd. They also have the energy and passion to go without sleep to work towards their goal.

Why is breaking records so important? Not everyone can be the best in academic studies

or sports, but by breaking a record in an unusual feat, one proves to the best in that area. Life is very transient. You want to do things that get "recorded". Even if your record dosen

ORGET about Olympic gold medals for sports prowess. But when it comes to breaking records for the oddest, wackiest or most obscure achievements of huest or most obscure achievements of hu-man endeavour, Singapore is on a roll.

From forming the world's longest inline skat-ing chain to popping the record for the biggest mass gathering of folks wearing hats made of bal-loons, Singaporeans are busy claiming their place with the ultimate compiler of fabulous feats, Guinness World Records.

The nation boasts an estimated 45 world

The nation boasts an estimated 45 world records noted by Guinness, with the latest com-ing from schoolboy Ang Chuang Yang, 16.

He text-typed his way to a new world record in writing the fastest SMS message in English (see other story) last Sunday, smashing the previ-

ous one set by an American in July.

Chuang Yang trained for his record-breaking success for all of two weeks, so it does not rank

up there with human achievement involving gru-elling physical and mental extremes. Still, the teenager's success is the latest in a string of world records produced by Singaporeans in recent years, from obscure stunts to fun mass events to the odd one that was literally

mass events to the odd one that was literally breathtaking.

Adventurer Khoo Swee Chiow, who broke the Guinness record for the longest scuba dive - 220 hours - done in a controlled environment last year, agrees that some records are "strange and funny".

funny".

"People have called me stupid, ridiculous, wasting time and other names. But I generally ignore people who talk a lot. I prefer to do rather than talk," says the 42-year-old.

According to Mr Ong Eng Huat, president of the Singapore Book Of Records Club, Singapore currently holds about 50 recognised world records, of which 45 are Guinness records.

The exact number is

anyone's guess as the Guirness World Records book carries just a selec-tion of the over 40,000

records in its archive. Called the Guinness

Book Of Records until its name was changed in 2000 to the Internet-en-

compassing Guinness World Records, the first

edition was published in 1955 and is now the

world's best-selling copy-

righted book. The latest 2007 edi-

tion lists just four records from Singa-pore, and all came from

mass participation events, such as the most number of people wearing balloon hats in Sentosa in June last

Forty-five among 40,000 records world-

wide hardly counts as an obsession, but on a

is up there with the

most prolific countries such as Britain, Germa-

ny and the United States.

reans making their mark in this fetish for

So why are Singapo-

ner canita

How to be a record breaker

ANYONE can set - or break - a Guinness world

There is a correct procedure to follow, though, before you dash off to eat 50 bowls of mee siam in one minute, or whatever feat it is that you

First, get in touch with Guinness. You need to get the green light from the august body that your record-breaking idea is

worthy of attempt. The easiest way to make contact is by an online application at worldrecords.com. Give as many details as possible about what

record you want to try to break or set. It takes six weeks or more for Guinness to reply with a If it likes your idea, it will send you its rules and

After the feat, you need to send all the required information to Guinness for verification. Once it accepts your world record, it sends you a certificate proof that you have earned a place in history.

firsts? Are they obsessed with making a name for themselves in the more odd-ball cate-Dr Chang Weining, head of the psychology division at Nanyang

poreans are very competitive and tend to "con-strue success as outdoing other people and But sociologist Tan Ern Ser from the National University of Singapore reckons: "They are just having fun, but with specific goals."

Technological University, says that many Singa-

One Singaporean who had fun creating a world record is safety supervisor Yap Yee Tharm, 57. Along with his IT engineer son Victor, 26, Mr Yap was part of the 280-strong team who formed the longest inline skating chain in the world during the Samsung Inline Skating Festival

"It is probably my one and only chance at setting a world record, and it's great I got to do it through my favourite activity," says Mr Yap, who

has been skating for 15 years.

Singaporeans are no more and no less obsessed with etching their names in the annals of fame than citizens of any other country, says law-yer Michael Loh, 42. He boasts a 2004 Guinness record himself; the most number of letters to editors published in one year.
"If you look at TV shows like Ripley's Believe

It Or Not, you have people doing the oddest things. So we're no different from everybody else," he says. Indeed, some of the most bizarre Guinness records include the fastest sandwich made by feet (the US), most number of rubber bands stretched over the face in one minute (Britain)

and the largest gathering of people dressed as mobile phones (the Netherlands). Mr Ang Mong Seng, president of the Singapore National Wushu Federation, says that such feats help to create milestones for organisations. His federation organised two record-setting events last year – the largest lion dance display and biggest gathering of dancing dragons - which went nto the Guinness World Records 2007.

## FOR THE RECORD

From ribbon cutting to rice dumplings, some 45 world records are currently being held by Singaporeans in the Guinness World Records. LifeStyle takes a look at the nation's many wacky record-setting feats



Michael Loh, 42, had 212 of his letters published in one year. between 2002 and 2003.

Lion and dragon dance instructor Peter Chai, 36, took part in both feats. "What I found most valuable was the team spirit we fostered. The records were a nice bonus."

But not all record-breakers are basking in the glory of their world-class stunts.

An undergraduate from the National Universi-

ty of Singapore requests anonymity despite creat-ing a new world record by folding six paper cranes within five minutes.

And not all record-holders are fixated on de-And not an record-notiers are instance of ne-fending their titles. Mr Loh, for one, adopts an al-most indifferent attitude towards his Guinness record. Although 212 of his letters were pub-lished in that record-breaking year between Au-gust 2002 and 2003, he says he wrote only a cou-

ple of letters this year.
"I couldn't possibly make myself write things just to break that record. I'll just end up looking

stupid, he says with a laugh.

Associate Professor Kirpal Singh, who teaches creative thinking at the Singapore Management University, says the tendency for Singaporeans to break records on a mass platform is something of a worry. "It does not truly reveal a sustainable senseity for sensing limits." tainable capacity for genuine firsts," he says.

It is easy enough to continue to think of newer

ways of breaking and creating new records, like getting half a million Singaporeans to tie a tur-ban, he quips. "But for the longer term, we must endeavour to break records which truly matter,"

But Mr Khoo feels it does not matter if world records come from individual or mass events.

"People should be encouraged to pursue their passion. Everyone should take the courage to do something they feel is beyond them," he says.





## SMS champ prefers to talk

HE MAY have the world's fastest fingers when it comes to sending an SMS message, but Raffles In-stitution student Ang Chuang Yang says he pre-

fers talking to texting.

I find SMS messaging to be very anti-social," says Chuang Yang, 16.
He used to send as many as 5,000 SMS messages a month to family members and friends, but has slashed this to about 1,000 by cutting down on lengthy SMS conversations.

The teenager set a new Guinness world record for writing a 160-character SMS message last Sunday at the SingTel SMS Shootout 2006. The competition, now into its third year, drew over 300 people, mainly between the ages of 15 and 19.

play golf and pool instead.

When LifeStyle asks him to demonstrate his feat, he happily obliges. He knows the message –

as set by Guinness - by heart: The razor-toothed piranhas of the genera Serrasalmus and Pygo-

centrus are the most ferocious freshwater fish in the world. In reality, they seldom attack a hu-

He makes small talk as his fingers dance effort-

lessly across the keypad of his Nokia 6030. But he manages only 46 seconds, distracted by pass-

'I find SMS messaging to be very Chuang Yang's winning time of 41.52 seconds beat the record of

anti-social 42.22 seconds set by American Ben Cook in July.

And, no, his dextrous digits are not a result of hours spent operating game con-soles. He hates computer games and prefers to

- Ang Chuang Yang

always clocking about 46 seconds, which frustrated me and I guess that pushed me to try even harder," he says with a grin. Amazingly, he started practising only two weeks before the event Even then, it was only during dinner and before he went to bed, as his O levels were just round the corner. He

ing journalists at News Centre in Toa Payoh.

not even make it to the semi-finals last year. The SMS world champion says he has his "very scheming" sister Yu Wen, 14, to thank for his success this time. Their parents run a corpo-

The Guinness win was third-time lucky for the bashful schoolboy - he came fifth in 2004 and did

rate finance company.
"Whenever she helped to time me, she would

start the stopwatch a few seconds earlier. I was

sat for his last paper two days ago. He won \$12,000 in cash and prizes worth \$13,000. But the ultimate reward has yet to come - he must wait to see if his feat is accepted by Guinness World

When LifeStyle tells him that all Guinness record holders will get a certificate, his eyes wid-en. "If I do get it, I'll definitely frame it up," he As to how long he will stay the fastest texter,

he says: "I'm sure Ben Cook and many others will want to challenge my record. I feel the pressure to defend my title already."

Which mobile phone is the most SMS-friendly? Find out on Page 4