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.

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

WATER WORKS: Adventurer Khoo Swee Chiew, 42, stayed underwater for 220 hours.

SHOOTOUT: Student Ang Chuang Yang, 16, sent a message in 41.52 seconds. His record is waiting confirmation.

Most number of letters to editors published
Longest scuba dive in controlled environment
Fastest SMS message in English

How to be a record breaker

ANYONE can set – or break – a Guinness world record.

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

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 www.guinnessworldrecords.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 decision.

If it likes your idea, it will send you its rules and guidelines.

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.

Dr Chang Weinig, head of the psychology division at Nanyang Technological University, says that many Singaporeans are very competitive and tend to "construe success as outdoing other people and groups".

But sociologist Tan En Ser from the National University of Singapore reckons: "They are just having fun, but with specific goals."

One Singaporean who had fun creating a world record is safety supervisor Yap Yee Thiam, 57. Along with his IT engineer son Victor, 26, Mr Yap was part of the 250-strong team who formed the longest inline skating chain in the world during the Samsung Inline Skating Festival in August this year.

"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 lawyer 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 Meng Seng, 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 Guinness World Records book carries just a selection 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-enhanced Guinness World Records, the first edition was published in 1955 and is now the world's best-selling copyrighted book.

The latest 2007 edition lists just four records from Singapore, and all came from mass participation events, such as the most number of people wearing balloon hats in Sentosa in June last year.

Forty-five among 40,000 records worldwide hardly counts as an obsession, but on a per capita basis, it would seem Singapore is up there with the most prolific countries such as Britain, Germany and the United States.

So why are Singaporeans making their mark in this fetish for firsts? Are they obsessed with making a name for themselves in the more odd-ball category?

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