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Indian breaks hot-air balloon record

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27 November, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Indian breaks hot-air balloon record

A daredevil Indian business tycoon has soared into the record books by almost touching the fringes of space. Vijaypat Singhania, 67, set the new altitude record in a hot-air balloon on Saturday by ascending to approximately 21,336 meters above sea level, breaking the previous 17-year-old mark of Swede Per Lindstrand. Mr. Singhania joked about his achievement, stating: "It was said that the existing record, which stood the test of time for 17 long years, would never be broken. I suppose it took an Indian". He exultantly dedicated his near encounter with the heavens to the Indian people and encouraged them to emulate him in striving for success. He said: "We are certainly among the best in the world. This is a proud moment for India. I am proud in achieving an almost impossible feat. So will every Indian."

Mr. Singhania also gave a message full of inspiration to India's senior citizens and youth, urging them to continue setting their sights high. He said: "If I can do such a thing at the age of 67, I am sure you can also attain such feats. I also hope that many young boys and girls would like to venture into sports and other activities which would bring them international fame." He said of his potentially perilous escapade: "It has been a very slow and arduous journey for me. I have been an aviator for 46 years and have achieved some international records. It is for the first time we decided to gamble on hot-air balloons, which have been flown by many prominent balloonists." An avid flyer, Mr. Singhania won the International Around the World Air Race in 1994. He said he has flying in his blood.

WARM-UPS

1. INDIAN PEOPLE: Walk around the class and talk to other students about Indian people. Talk about the stereotypes, the Indians you've met and famous Indians. Talk also about Indians of the past and Indians of the future. What role will they play on the world stage?

2. RECORDS: Which of these world records would you like to break and why? Talk about how people might feel after breaking them.

- Altitude in a hot-air balloon
- The 100-meter-sprint
- Length of time in space
- Long distance swimming
- The number of children in your family
- Eating hamburgers
- The number of English words known
- Sleeping

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Daredevils / India / business tycoons / world records / space / hot-air balloons / success / pride / inspiration / sights / international fame / journeys / flying / blood

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. BALLOON: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "balloon". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

5. PRIDE: Are you proud of your country? Why? Are there things about your country you aren't so proud of? Talk about this with your partner(s). Use the things below to help your conversations. Are you proud of your country's...?

- People
- History
- President / prime minister
- Social system
- Culture
- Standing in the world
- Food
- National sportsmen, women and teams
- Transport system
- Biggest companies

6. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: Have the following (for-fun) 2-minute debates. Students A take the first argument, students B the second. Change partners often.

- Breaking world records is great. vs. There are more important things in life.
- We must all be proud of our country. vs. There's often no reason to be proud.
- The 100-meters record is the greatest. vs. The record for the marathon is best.
- Hot-air balloons are more exciting than bungee jumping. Vs. Other way round.
- India will not become a superpower. vs. India will become a superpower.
- Old people should stay at home. vs. Old people should find big, new ambitions.
- Exploring the fringes of space is most exciting. vs. The ocean is more exciting.
- We need heroes for inspiration. vs. Inspiration comes from within.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. An Indian is the fastest to have flown across the Atlantic in a balloon. T / F
- b. An Indian hot-air balloonist broke a 17-year-old world record. T / F
- c. The balloonist, Mr. Singhanian, said he wanted to go to heaven. T / F
- d. The balloonist said a minority of Indians would be proud of his feat. T / F
- e. The balloonist urged old people to keep their sights set low. T / F
- f. Mr. Singhanian encouraged young Indians to seek international fame. T / F
- g. Mr. Singhanian took a big risk by deciding to fly hot-air balloons. T / F
- h. He said he has the spirit of the Atlantic Ocean in his blood. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| a. daredevil | celebrated |
| b. fringes | space |
| c. the heavens | hazardous |
| d. emulate | enthusiastic |
| e. feat | copy |
| f. attain | adventurer |
| g. perilous | achieve |
| h. arduous | accomplishment |
| i. prominent | edges |
| j. avid | hard |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. soared into | such feats |
| b. almost touching the | their sights high |
| c. stood | fringes of space |
| d. encouraged them to emulate him | and arduous journey |
| e. I am proud in achieving an | perilous escapade... |
| f. continue setting | in striving for success |
| g. I am sure you can also attain | almost impossible feat |
| h. He said of his potentially | in his blood |
| i. a very slow | the test of time |
| j. he has flying | the record books |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Indian breaks hot-air balloon record

A daredevil Indian business tycoon has _____ into the record books by almost touching the _____ of space. Vijaypat Singhania, 67, set the new altitude record in a hot-air balloon on Saturday by _____ to approximately 21,336 meters above sea _____, breaking the previous 17-year-old mark of Swede Per Lindstand. Mr. Singhania joked about his achievement, stating: "It was said that the existing record, which _____ the test of time for 17 long years, would never be broken. I suppose it took an Indian". He _____ dedicated his near encounter with the heavens to the Indian people and encouraged them to emulate him in _____ for success. He said: "We are certainly among the best in the world. This is a proud moment for India. I am proud in achieving an almost impossible _____. So will every Indian."

Mr. Singhania also gave a message _____ of inspiration to India's senior citizens and youth, urging them to continue setting their _____ high. He said: "If I can do such a thing at the age of 67, I am sure you can also attain such feats. I also hope that many young boys and girls would like to _____ into sports and other activities which would bring them international fame." He said of his potentially perilous _____: "It has been a very slow and _____ journey for me. I have been an _____ for 46 years and have achieved some international records. It is for the first time we decided to _____ on hot-air balloons, which have been flown by many prominent balloonists." An avid flyer, Mr. Singhania won the International Around the World Air Race in 1994. He said he has flying in his _____.

ascending
striving
soared
exultantly
level
feat
fringes
stood
gamble
aviator
sights
escapade
full
blood
arduous
venture

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Indian breaks hot-air balloon record

A _____ Indian business tycoon has soared into the record books by almost touching the fringes of space. Vijaypat Singhania, 67, set the new altitude record in a hot-air balloon on Saturday by _____ to approximately 21,336 meters above sea level, breaking the previous 17-year-old _____ of Swede Per Lindstrand. Mr. Singhania joked about his achievement, stating: "It was said that the existing record, which _____ of time for 17 long years, would never be broken. I suppose it took an Indian". He exultantly dedicated his near _____ with the heavens to the Indian people and encouraged them to _____ him in striving for success. He said: "We are certainly among the best in the world. This is a proud moment for India. I am proud in achieving an almost impossible _____. So will every Indian."

Mr. Singhania also gave a message full of inspiration to India's senior citizens and _____, urging them to continue setting their sights high. He said: "If I can do such a thing at the age of 67, I am sure you can also _____ such feats. I also hope that many young boys and girls would like to _____ into sports and other activities which would bring them international fame." He said of his potentially _____ escapade: "It has been a very slow and _____ journey for me. I have been an aviator for 46 years and have achieved some international records. It is for the first time we decided to gamble on hot-air balloons, which have been flown by many _____ balloonists." An _____ flyer, Mr. Singhania won the International Around the World Air Race in 1994. He said he has _____ his blood.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**dare**' and '**devil**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the gap fill. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "INSPIRATION" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about inspiration, aiming high, achievements and world records.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| • soared | • message |
| • set | • sights |
| • level | • venture |
| • test | • arduous |
| • heavens | • gamble |
| • moment | • blood |

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. Would you like to touch the fringes of space in a hot-air balloon?
- c. Is there a daredevil inside you?
- d. What world record would you like to break?
- e. Where would you like to fly in a hot-air balloon?
- f. What does "stood the test of time" mean?
- g. Do you think Mr. Singhania is an inspirational figure?
- h. Are there any people from your country who you would consider to be similar to Mr. Singhania?
- i. Should there be more people like Mr. Singhania in the world?
- j. In what ways or areas do you strive for success?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What message of inspiration would you give to the young people of your country?
- d. What is your proudest moment / achievement?
- e. Do you think the people from your country are among the best in the world?
- f. Do you think it's good to encourage youngsters to "venture into sports and other activities which would bring them international fame"?
- g. Have you experienced any slow and arduous journeys in life?
- h. What gambles have you taken in your life?
- i. What is in your blood?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

MR. SINGHANIA: You must prepare for and make a speech. The title is "Success in Life". Use Mr. Singhania as the inspiration for your speech. In pairs / groups, look at the snippets of information below about Mr. Singhania. Expand on these to create more ideas for your speech. Explain what is important about these snippets. What can we learn? Be inspirational!

| SNIPPETS OF INFORMATION | IMPORTANCE | WHAT WE CAN LEARN | ADDED INSPIRATION |
|--|------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Mr. Singhania is a daredevil. | | | |
| Mr. Singhania jokes about his achievements. | | | |
| He has pride in his country. | | | |
| He encourages young and old to aim high. | | | |
| He persists along slow and arduous journeys. | | | |
| He takes risks. | | | |
| He follows what's in his blood | | | |

- Change partners and compare and share your ideas and give each other feedback. How can you help make each other's ideas more inspirational?
- Give your speeches.
- In pairs / groups, discuss the content and quality of the speeches and vote on the one you thought was best.
- Talk about your successes. Have the speeches changed your aims in life?

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on Vijaypat Singhania and his new world record. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. LETTER: Write a letter to Vijaypat Singhania about his new world record. Ask him about his feelings on breaking the record. Tell him what you think of his words to the people of India. Read what you wrote to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas?

4. DAREDEVIL ME: You are a daredevil. Write a plan for your next adventure. Write also about what inspiration you think young and old people can take from your adventure. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. F e. F f. T g. T h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| a. daredevil | adventurer |
| b. fringes | edges |
| c. the heavens | space |
| d. emulate | copy |
| e. feat | accomplishment |
| f. attain | achieve |
| g. perilous | hazardous |
| h. arduous | hard |
| i. prominent | celebrated |
| j. avid | enthusiastic |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| a. soared into | the record books |
| b. almost touching the | fringes of space |
| c. stood | the test of time |
| d. encouraged them to emulate him | in striving for success |
| e. I am proud in achieving an | almost impossible feat |
| f. continue setting | their sights high |
| g. I am sure you can also attain | such feats |
| h. He said of his potentially | perilous escapade... |
| i. a very slow | and arduous journey |
| j. he has flying | in his blood |

GAP FILL:

Indian breaks hot-air balloon record

A daredevil Indian business tycoon has **soared** into the record books by almost touching the **fringes** of space. Vijaypat Singhania, 67, set the new altitude record in a hot-air balloon on Saturday by **ascending** to approximately 21,336 meters above sea **level**, breaking the previous 17-year-old mark of Swede Per Lindstand. Mr. Singhania joked about his achievement, stating: "It was said that the existing record, which **stood** the test of time for 17 long years, would never be broken. I suppose it took an Indian". He **exultantly** dedicated his near encounter with the heavens to the Indian people and encouraged them to emulate him in **striving** for success. He said: "We are certainly among the best in the world. This is a proud moment for India. I am proud in achieving an almost impossible **feat**. So will every Indian."

Mr. Singhania also gave a message **full** of inspiration to India's senior citizens and youth, urging them to continue setting their **sights** high. He said: "If I can do such a thing at the age of 67, I am sure you can also attain such feats. I also hope that many young boys and girls would like to **venture** into sports and other activities which would bring them international fame." He said of his potentially perilous **escapade**: "It has been a very slow and **arduous** journey for me. I have been an **aviator** for 46 years and have achieved some international records. It is for the first time we decided to **gamble** on hot-air balloons, which have been flown by many prominent balloonists." An avid flyer, Mr. Singhania won the International Around the World Air Race in 1994. He said he has flying in his **blood**.