reading bank

The inventors' ball

- You are going to read about an international exhibition for inventors. Read the article and match the titles (1-6) with the paragraphs (a-f).
 - Not everyone is happy ... but they'll be back
 - 2 How successful is the exhibition?
 - 3 Who are the inventors?
 - 4 African inventor needs backing
 - 5 Boat cleaner wins award
 - 6 Unusual use of a fruit
- 2 Mark the sentences true (T) or false (F).
 - 1 The exhibition takes place every year.
 - 2 More than 25% of exhibitors are Malaysian.
 - 3 More than half of the exhibitors find backers.
 - 4 The prize at this year's exhibition is given to an invention that cleans boats.
 - 5 Corina's invention is in production.
 - 6 She says there's more to inventing than making money.
- 3 Answer the questions.
 - 1 Why do inventors attend the exhibition year after year?
 - 2 What two rules must participants follow?
 - 3 What are Ken's crash helmets made from?
 - 4 What advantage does the exhibition have over the Internet?
 - 5 What does Corina's experience show inventors?
- 4 Find words or phrases in the article that match the following definitions.
 - 1 to move towards a place from different directions and meet (paragraph 1)
 - 2 a person or company that gives support to sb / sth, especially financial support (paragraph 1)
 - 3 used to describe a situation in which sth serious, important, or of high quality is followed by sth silly, unimportant, or of poor quality (paragraph 1)

- 4 an official right to be the only person to make, use, or sell a product or an invention; a document that proves this (paragraph 2)
- 5 a person whose job is to find people who are good at singing, acting, sport, etc. in order to give them work (paragraph 3)
- 6 an opinion or a position that is strange or unusual and a long way from the normal position (paragraph 4)
- 7 introducing or using new ideas, ways of doing sth (paragraph 4)
- 8 the first design of sth from which other forms are copied or developed (paragraph 6)
- 9 a complaint about sth (paragraph 7)

Over to you

- 1 In your opinion, what has been the single most important invention in your lifetime?
- 2 How important are creativity and inventiveness in your job?



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SWEL KEY

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1 Ever had a bright idea for a new product? Every April, 75,000 people converge on the Swiss city of Geneva in the hope that just such an idea will make them mega-rich. The annual International Exhibition of Inventions has been showcasing new inventions for over thirty years. The inventions on display range from the sublime to the ridiculous but all the inventors are hoping for one thing - that they will find a backer to help them develop their ideas to become the next big thing. One such hopeful is Ken Tan, or 'Coconut' Ken, who has travelled all the way from Johor Baharu in Southern Malaysia "This is my year - I can feel it,' he says, before confessing that he's attended the nast five exhibitions without success.

2 According to organizers, the 700 exhibitors come from a range of different backgrounds and settings - a quarter of them are private inventors and researchers while the rest are companies, research institutes, and universities. They come from all over the world - Moldova, Spain, and Russia are just some of the forty-five countries represented. Despite visa problems, the Iranians are also in on the act, with over fifty exhibitors on display. But Malaysians like Ken Tan are the overwhelming majority, taking up over a quarter of the floor-space. In order to participate in the fair, the presenters have to adhere to strict

rules: the inventions must already have a patent, and the invention cannot have been on display in the exhibition previously.

The exhibition is believed to be the biggest of its kind and it's the chance of commercial success which is uppermost in the exhibitors' minds. They are hoping that the talent scouts who come to Geneva to find products to develop and commercialize will be wowed by their product. Organizers say that in 2006, 45% of the exhibitors found an investor. Which makes the serial attendance of Ken Tan all the more understandable.

Despite the incentives of fame and fortune, the inventors at the exhibition still manage to convey the image that their ideas come predominantly from left field Indeed, it's Ken Tan's coconut-husking machine which this year seems to have attracted some healthy attention, but more so for the innovative use of the leftovers. He tells reporters that the husks are ideal for making crash helmets which, he claims, adhere to government safety standards.

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5 Other inventions are more down-toearth and useful, such as the device for
collecting rainwater that can then be
used to water a garden or flush toilets,
or the tiny GPS mini-chip that could
help owners find lost pets. However,

the jury prize eventually goes to an invention from France: a new, non-polluting method of cleaning the hulls of boats, without taking them out of the water.

The five-day fair allows inventors to display their ideas to a wider audience, and producers like to actually see and try the ideas rather than just view pictures on the Internet. Olivier Bikinkita brought his car-driving simulator all the way from Brazzaville in Congo. This machine helps you train for steering a real car. At the moment, this is only a prototype but I hope to find a sponsor, 'explained the hopeful inventor.

7 Sometimes, of course, the dream never becomes reality. One inventor, Corina Grace, complained that her fuel-saving invention from the previous year had been bought by one multinational company purely to stop it from falling into the hands of a competitor. Despite the large fee she got for the licence, Corina was still not happy, saying. 'It's not about the money, it's about seeing other people using the thing that you've put years of hard work into developing.' Despite her gripe, no doubt Corina, 'Coconut' Ken, Olivier, and many others are certain to be back again next year - hoping that it's their idea that finally goes global!

Glossary

in on the act to get involved in an activity that she else has started adhere to sith behave according to a particular law, rule, or instructions uppermost more important than other things in a particular situation waved impressed very much, especially by a performance husk the dry outer covering of nats, fruits, and seeds hulf the main, bottom part of a ship that goes in the water