



UMS Team members (from left) Chua, Javier Isaac, Syamshul, Agnesius, Mohd Nasib Syamsudin and Hasnil Hussein with their creation, the 'Axolot'.

UMS to showcase 'Axolot' at Shell Eco-Marathon Asia competition

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KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah's Team 1UMS will be among the hundreds of Asian students' teams to converge on Kuala Lumpur this month for the Shell Eco-Marathon Asia.

The event is designed to address the global energy challenge and help the world meet its growing desire for mobility in a more sustainable way.

Led by team manager, Agnesius Muslin, they will be hoping for a better performance this year, having had a good run at last year's event.

"We are excited to be competing with the best from Asia again in the Prototype category for futuristic, streamlined vehicles which maximise fuel efficiency through innovative design elements. This year, we will showcase the "Axolot," a car inspired by the neotenic mole salamander, an endangered aquatic species," he said.

Team advisor, Associate Professor Dr Rosalam Sarbatly, who is also UMS' School of Engineering and Information Technology (SEIT) dean, said the university has always been supportive of such student activity that promotes innovation and teamwork among them in line with the vision of the School and UMS.

"Some of the design elements such as engine modification and chassis design were adopted as part of the students' Final Year Projects."

Some 23 mechanical engineering students are

involved in this project.

According to Syamshul Rashid, who heads the designing team, the UMS car is unique and different from that of the other teams in terms of design and performance.

He added that learning from past experiences, they added some modifications to the engine for better fuel efficiency and to the overall design and make of the body for better stability and safety while achieving better aerodynamics.

"With its distinct military camouflage patterns, it will stand out in the crowd," he remarked.

Meanwhile, the activity advisor, Engineer Chua Bih Lii said that the designing and team planning actually started since August last year while the prototyping started just two months ago.

"We hope our participation in the event will intensify interest in research and innovation particularly in automotive technology and energy efficiency among the younger generation as well as to encourage the involvement of industries in student and university activities," said Chua, who is also a lecturer at SEIT.

The team hopes to record a better performance this year with a petrol consumption of 300km/liter or better.

"Our long term objective is to build the most efficient petrol fuel prototype car in Asia and henceforth develop a sustainable prototype car using renewable energy.

"For the record, last year the team achieved the

second lightest car in the competition (47kg), modular concept (where the whole car can be dismantled to ease transportation through the flight cargo).

"The car recorded a maximum speed of 54km/hr on the Sepang International Circuit (SIC) track, passing all safety and maneuvering tests but unfortunately failed to record an official fuel usage due to the car having some technical problems while on the track," Chua said.

Some 100 teams from 13 countries and regions around Asia will gather for the Shell Eco-marathon Asia, from July 7 to 9 this year at the SIC.

In addition to prizes for vehicles which can go furthest using the least amount of energy, awards are also provided for off-track performance including innovation and design

Designed specifically to inspire the youthful participants to develop new approaches to sustainable mobility, this real-world engineering challenge encourages innovation and reinforces conservation amongst the teams as they strive to come up with the most energy efficient vehicle.

The event marks the second time that Shell Eco-marathon Asia will be held in Kuala Lumpur, host venue for 2010-2012.

It has been running in Europe since 1985 and the United States since 2007, and was held for the first time in Asia at the SIC last year.