

Aspiring engineers demonstrate inventive skills

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By Sandra Sokial

KOTA KINABALU: They may not have won the special award, but the four aspiring engineers from Universiti Science Malaysia (USM) can take pride in the performance of their creations in the 7th Malaysian Chemical Engineering Car (Chem-E-Car) 2012 Competition.

Wong Kuan Hwa, Toe Cui Ying, Leong Ann Tsun and Eng Yi Wen took the top spot in the poster category and second in the car performance category.

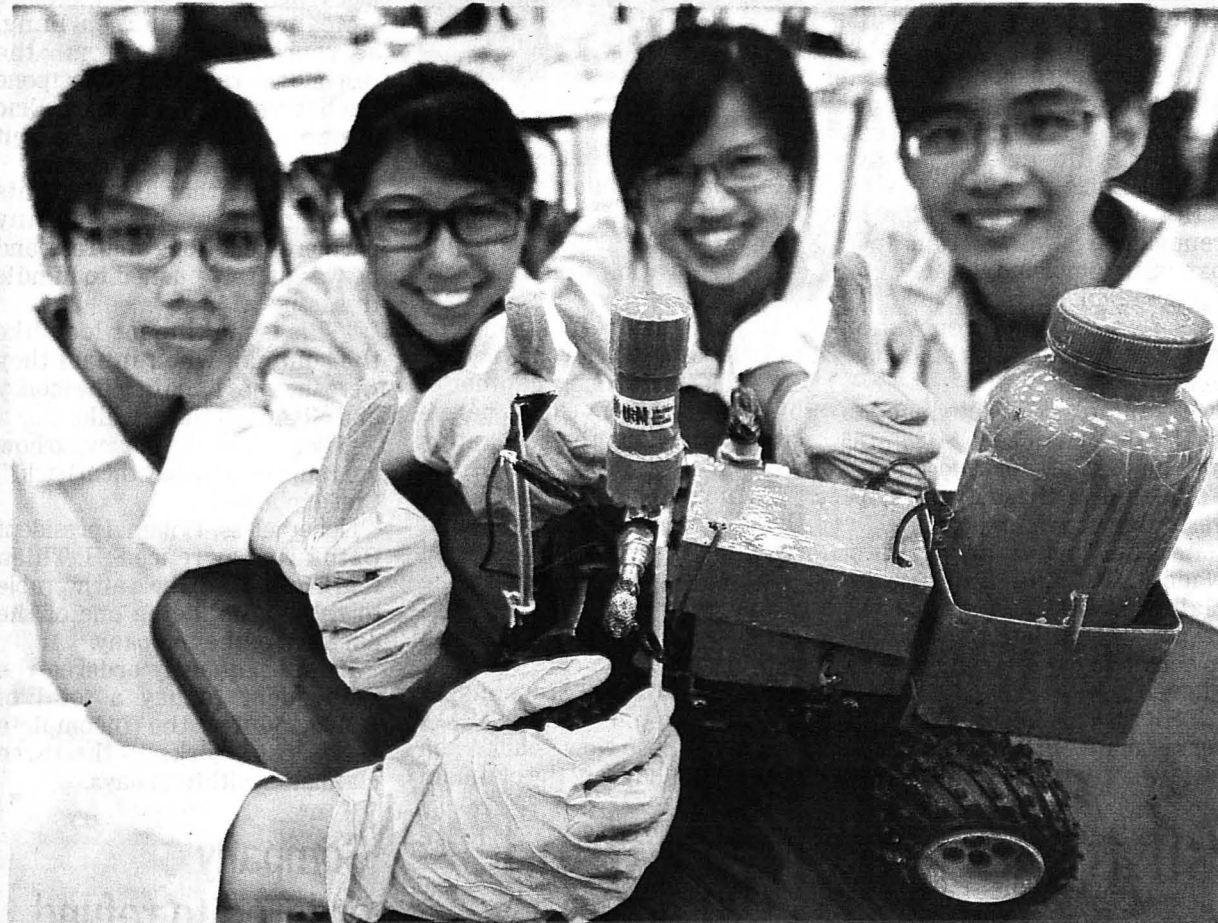
The second-year undergraduates who are pursuing a degree in chemical engineering are inseparable buddies, so it was no surprise the rest gave their support when Wong mooted the idea to join in the competition.

"My sister is also pursuing the same course as I am and she joined the same competition a couple of years ago. I thought it would be interesting, so I asked my friends if they were interested to take part, and I was glad they said yes," said Wong, when met at UMS main lecture hall where the event was held yesterday.

So for the past two months, the 21-year-olds had sleepless nights as their time after lectures and during weekends were dedicated to constructing a shoebox-sized car.

"We are lucky that our university was very supportive as they allowed the laboratory to be opened at night and during the weekends to enable us to carry on with our project. Apart from our team, two other groups also signed up for the competition.

The four aspiring inventors' main challenge at the event was to ensure their car, powered by chemical reaction, could move while laden with 450ml of water



(Left to right) Leong, Toe, Eng and Wong showing off their creation.

and could stop within two minutes at a distance of 16 metres.

Theirs stopped at 15.88 metres, just 0.12 metre short than the specified distance.

"We were thrilled with the performance ... as it was beyond our wildest imagination. We did not expect it to be that close," said Eng.

As for Universitas Gadjahmada undergraduates M Fajar Setiaji, 20, and 21-year-olds Hadi Hudhori, Fanny Gunawan and Jundan Raid F from Indonesia, the competition had been a memorable and incredible learning process.

"We learned about the competition from the Internet and got excited. So we formed a group and signed up. With the help from sponsors, we constructed Subali II," said Fajar, showing their creation.

It took the boys four months to complete the project, and when they arrived at the event hall, they were a bit worried with the size of their car as it was bigger compared to the rest.

"We raised the matter up with the organiser and felt relief when they told us it was okay," said Fajar.

Although they did not win anything, they described the whole experience as "priceless".

USM's Zeolite took the top spot in the car performance category and Army Academy Republic of China (AAROC) was third.

In the poster category, AAROC's Brave and USM's T-Moment were the first and second runners-up, while the special award went to AAROC.

A total of 33 teams from higher learning institutions in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Taiwan and Iran took part in the competition.