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# Racing with the sun

## CYPRUS FIRST SOLAR POWERED CAR CHALLENGE

By **Paul Malaos**

even teams will be racing their sun powered motors through the finishing line tomorrow in Cyprus' first ever international solar car race at the Daytona track in Tseri.

"The Cyprus Institute Solar Car Challenge 2010' aims to address the challenge of finding greener solutions to transport but also promises to be thrilling experience for the audience. After all, it's not every day you get to see a fleet of quirky vehicles resembling flying saucers on wheels and insects racing down a track at speeds of nearly 100 kilometres per hour.

It's going to be a history making event," says Cyprus Institute Public Relations Officer Maria Mitas.

"There will be local and international teams racing custom built solar vehicles in a first of its kind challenge in Cyprus."

The initiative for the race, which is being organised by the Cyprus Institute in collaboration with the Research Promotion Foundation, began in 2008 after the first solar vehicle workshop was held at the Cyprus Institute's Athalassa campus.

"It was a huge success and we had tremendous interest from the teachers and students who participated."

The event, which was organised in association with the Ministry of Education, was led by the Belgium Umicore solar team, the runners up of the 2007 World Solar Challenge (WSC) in Australia.

"The next logical step was for us to organise a local solar car race so that students could put to practice what they had previously only studied on paper.

We approached schools which were very enthusiastic over the prospect and in just a year and a half the competing teams

have managed to build custom-made solar vehicles for the challenge," said Mitas.

"It's been a big learning curve for all the participants. There were some hurdles to overcome but everyone has shown great passion and invested a tremendous amount of time in preparing the cars for the race."

The eight teams participating include five local public and private schools - Apostolon Petros and Pavlou Secondary School in Limassol, the Pascal English School in Larnaca (two vehicles), the Avgorou Technical School in Famagusta, the Ayiou Lazarou Technical School in Larnaca and the Makedonitissa Secondary School from Nicosia.

The international teams are the University of Science and Technology (JUST) from Jordan and CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) Solar Club.

Mitas explained that the race which is set to start at 9am has been divided into two categories.

Within the 'Challenge Category' all vehicles must comply with the Cyprus Institute's rules and regulations, therefore their construction must not have exceeded the cost of €20,000.

The 'Open Category' is an exhibition style race which allows the entry of less or more expensive vehicles which must still however adhere to all the necessary safety regulations.

"What we are doing is taking science out of the classroom and giving students a true hands on experience and this will not be a one off event. We intend to make it an annual occurrence and get even more students involved in the next one.

Cyprus boasts 300 days of sunshine a year and it would be a shame for us not to

exploit this ideal weather for some regular solar racing."

The cost of construction of the cars was partly sponsored by the Cyprus Institute and the rest was raised through various fundraising activities.

Alexis Antoniadis, teacher and supervisor of the Apostolon Petros and Pavlou Secondary School in Limassol wished to thank all the companies that donated cash for the construction of 'WASP', the team's futuristic looking solar vehicle that resembles an insect.

"It has been a very challenging project. Our team struggled to secure donations and overcome some of the design difficulties but at the end of the day the look on the students' faces has made it all worthwhile."

The team supervisor said students worked on different aspects of the project depending on where their strengths lay.

"They helped with little things such as coming up with a name for the vehicle to more complex and demanding tasks such as construction and design," said Antoniadis.

Not all teams, however, will be racing new solar cars.

Swiss contenders CERN will be taking on the challenge with a 20-year old vehicle, to illustrate how far technology has progressed, but they are still confident they have a shot at first place.

"We always hope to win. Our car is still powerful with a motor designed for reaching high cruising speeds of up to 90 kilometres per hour," says team leader Paul Gelissen.

"It does not accelerate quickly so our greatest challenge will be to reach high speeds on the windy track."

Gillesen said their vehicle was now a top of the line solar car after