

S'pore Poly revs up solar car for race

SunSPEC5 will be only S'pore entrant in Australian event

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The latest incarnation of Singapore Polytechnic's solar-powered car SunSPEC5 will be competing once again in October at the World Solar Challenge race in Australia.

The car, which was unveiled yesterday and was 20 months in the making, has a carbon fibre-reinforced polymer body. It is a two-wheel drive with a 1.5-kilowatt high-efficiency direct-current motor, and has a top speed of 100kmh.

Mr Steven Chew, a senior lecturer at Singapore Polytechnic and a team manager who worked on the car, said: "It was tiring but also very fulfilling to see the students build these cars themselves, and work independently."

SunSPEC5 will be the only solar car from Singapore competing in the biennial Australian race. It will be one of the cars from 30 countries taking part in the 3,000km race, which starts in Darwin and ends in Adelaide.

This is the third time the polytechnic is entering the race. In 2015 – its second try – the race car, called SunSPEC4, was destroyed in a fire when the internal battery pack short-circuited. Luckily, the team managed to rebuild the car in less than four weeks, and finished in eighth place.

Hopes are high that this year's race in the advanced Cruiser Class category will go smoothly.

The polytechnic has tied up with Singapore grid operator SP Group – an electric utility firm – in a five-year contract worth \$1 million. Both aim to work together to help groom students into engineers.

Former Singapore Polytechnic student Leow Wei Lin, 27, who now works for SP Group, said he had no knowledge about renewable energy when he was a poly student. After working on SunSPEC4, he acquired the requisite skills, thanks to the training he received from his lecturers and poly staff. He is returning the favour by mentoring students at the poly.

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Singapore Polytechnic is entering the World Solar Challenge for the third time. Its SunSPEC5 solar-powered car was 20 months in the making and has a top speed of 100kmh. Hopes are high that this year's race in the advanced Cruiser Class category will go smoothly. PHOTO: SP GROUP