



F1 heads to America
We have some interesting facts and figures for Sunday's US F1 Grand Prix at Indianapolis.



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SCOOP: SA Car runs on water

by John Oxley

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A South African inventor claims to have developed a device that allows an ordinary car or truck engine to run on water - with no air pollution. And it's relatively cheap!



BMW's expensive 7 Series hydrogen car carries hydrogen gas on board and requires special hydrogen filling stations

What's more it cuts servicing costs because the car's oil is not as easily contaminated as it is on a petrol-engined car.

Developed by Nelspruit research and development company Ku-Shan Technologies, the device uses electricity from the car's battery to turn water into a gas known as hydroxy, or Brown's Gas.

This gas is then re-aligned using Ku-Shan's process - patents have been applied for - to make it suitable for use in an ordinary petrol engine.

"It's not that the technology is new - it's how it's done," Ku-Shan CEO Danie de Beer told me.

Outside the box

"There are other people working on this at the moment. Sasol (the South African oil-from-coal giant) has been trying for four years to get it right. But it all

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depends on the way you are thinking.

"We think outside the box, and we have come up with the solution in 2 1/2 months."

De Beer said the main problems to date had been that it took more energy to produce the gas than could be got out of it.

"In the beginning we had the same problem," he said.

"Then we got to where we are now, where we get a lot more out than we put in.

"The amount of electricity consumed is no more than required to run one of the car's headlamps, but we can run a big Pontiac V8 fitted into a Volkswagen Kombi.

More power

"With this conversion the engine runs cooler and you have about a 5% performance increase.

"The oil stays cleaner for longer and there are no more harmful emissions, the only thing coming out of the exhaust is steam and oxygen."

He said he came up with the idea from a movie about a man who invented a hydrogen engine that could run on water.

"I did my homework on the unit used in the space shuttle - it's not high volume, but it's efficient", he said.

Apart from its low cost - De Beer expects his 22x12x12 cm device to cost between R5 000 and R7 000 - the device is much safer than current hydrogen-car technology, which requires large amounts of explosive hydrogen gas to be carried inside the vehicle, as well as a network of hydrogen filling stations.

No explosion risk

"We are generating the gas as we are using it, so there's only about a litre of gas in the system at any time, not enough to do any damage if it explodes," he said.

He said there was only one drawback at the moment, but this could be easily addressed.

When hydroxy is held under compression, without being ignited, it reverts back into water - and this small amount of water can cause rust inside the engine if it stands for a long period.

"The car needs to be in daily use because of the water aspect," he said.

However, special coatings, similar to those used on dragster cars adapted to run on nitrous oxide, could be applied to the engine to prevent rust build-up.

"It's not a serious problem," he said.

De Beer said he was currently looking for investors to take the device to market.

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