

LIFE&TIMES **GREEN**

# Green strategy

BMW's Speak Green programme inculcates in the younger generation of the importance going green, writes **Aneeta Sundararaj**

**I**N the fourth instalment of the *Mission Impossible* franchise, *Ghost Protocol*, there is a scene where the protagonist Ethan Hunt (Tom Cruise) arrives at a party in Mumbai driving a new futuristic-looking BMW i8 Concept sports car. "That car comes under the umbrella of our EfficientDynamics strategy," says Sashi Ambi, 35, head of Corporate Communications at BMW Malaysia.

Recently, students at Taylor's University Lakeside Campus in Subang Jaya got the chance to view some of the other cars under the BMW EfficientDynamics' strategy umbrella. BMW had partnered with the university's Communications School to introduce the BMW Speak Green programme to the students about the importance of going green.

Josephine Tan Lian Lei, 49, the dean of Taylor's School of Communication says: "We are very selective with the industries we choose to collaborate with. They must demonstrate their sincerity and commitment to sustainability issues."

She adds that she was pleased with how BMW continued to champion green projects. As Sashi explained BMW's rationale behind its green strategy, it became easier to understand why this collaboration will work.

Sashi says: "BMW embarked on a strategy more than 14 years ago to create cars that save fuel consump-

tion and reduce emissions."

At present, most cars have a combustion engine that relies on fossil fuels.

"As you know," he continues, "fossil fuels are depleting. And companies are looking for ways to solve this problem."

BMW did not see the solution in stark terms, —that cars of the future must stop using fossil fuels and focus only on alternative fuels. Instead, what they chose to do was something in the middle: Optimise combustion engines and explore other sources of energy. In order to optimise the use of combustion engines, the idea is to use less fuel to make the car go further.

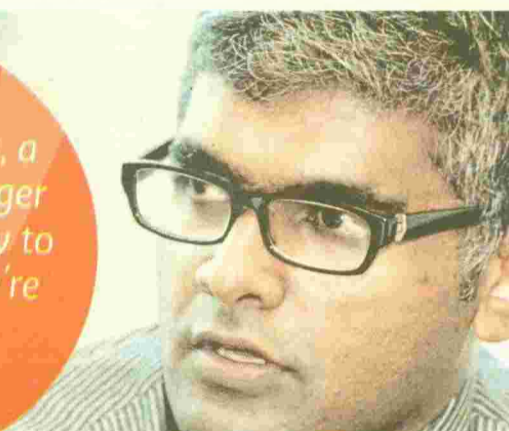
Sashi uses expressions such as "smaller engine displacement" and "re-routing the carbon emissions", which all have a basis in recycling what's used. As for exploring other sources of energy, the fuel of choice for BMW is diesel.

"Diesel," says Sashi, "has had a bad start. Because it was not refined and used only for commercial vehicles, people dismiss it for use in cars. Also, those who did use diesel in their vehicles didn't maintain them properly. Diesel is actually cleaner than petrol and has lower carbon emissions."

The reason BMW has not focused entirely on alternative fuels such as electricity, Sashi conjectures, may have something to do with

"In normal cases, a car that is no longer in use will go away to die. In BMW, they're reborn."

Sashi Ambi



geography. As BMW is based in Europe, they are closer to many oil-producing countries in the Middle East. Japan, on the other hand, being further away, has found alternatives to oil, which has resulted in it becoming a leading producer of hybrid cars.

That does not mean BMW has abandoned hybrid engines altogether. In fact, during the programme at Taylor's University, BMW showcased several of the cars in its collection, namely the BMW ActiveHybrid 3 Series, BMW ActiveHybrid 5 Series and BMW's Advanced Diesel.

Sashi points out that to change to producing hybrid cars alone will mean changing the entire infrastructure of how BMW works. This is neither cost effective nor feasible for now. Having thought everything through in such detail, it's no surprise to hear Sashi saying, full of pride, that "BMW has won the Dow Jones Sustainability Award eight times. Our products are clean and green. Throughout the supply chain."

He elaborates: "In normal cases, a car that is no longer in use will go

tanburg, USA, methane gas from a landfill nearby is used to power the plant."

Tan nods, attentive to Sashi's words. "This is what we look for. Cars are part and parcel of everyday life. Hopefully, by introducing our students to the technology and materials used, they'll be mindful of the things they use."

"The idea is to allow them to explore their skills in terms of how to communicate such technology. We start them young. While they're with us, we want to inculcate the right mindset. Give them a theme and allow them to explore their talent. It's total engagement."

Ultimately, both Sashi and Tan are of one mind: while BMW continues to ensure that all their cars fulfil their motto of being machines that give Sheer Driving Pleasure, the story behind how they are created, built and promoted must, as Tan says: "touch our hearts and minds."



A car featured in one of the *Mission Impossible* films.



PICTURE BY MOHAMMAD ERSYAD JAMALUDDIN