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PARIS DAKAR-NO OIL



An odd three-wheeled vehicle turned many heads at Casemates Square yesterday afternoon with many passers-by puzzled at the strange sight. Picture Johnny Bugeja



Passers-by in Casemates were baffled yesterday afternoon at the sight of an aerodynamic, fast moving, bullet-shaped vehicle that was silently whizzing across the square at fast speed.

The scene became even more implausible as its driver, Belgian national Xavier van der Stappen, jumped out of the cockpit dressed in shorts and WWI aircraft pilot headgear, almost ready for an episode of the Wacky Races, and explained he was hoping to complete the distance of a Paris-Dakar race, that is, 6,000 kilometres, without using so much as a drop of conventional fuel. Speaking to the Chronicle, Xavier explained there was a

serious side to his trek across Europe promoting this unusual means of transport, a hybrid bicycle fitted with an electrical

engine, to advocate environmentally friendly attitudes, encourage the use of new technology and cleaner, renewable energies like solar and wind power to reduce the impact from more polluting forms of energy.

Xavier said he was bringing with him a message of optimism for a better future and was backed by an organisation called optimistswithoutborders.org

“I use this vehicle regularly in Brussels which is where I’m from, to make all these points in a country that is highly polluted. The target distance I set out to cover each day is 200 kilometres.”

Gibraltar is the half-way mark in the journey and he returns to Paris today.

