

## Nanosatellite with Singapore start-up's thruster deployed into space on SpaceX mission



Aliena chief technology officer George-Cristian Potrivitu (left) and chief executive Mark Lim Jian Wei are both co-founders of the company. PHOTO: ALIENA

He added that propulsion systems like the one Aliena develops are important to be able to actively manoeuvre satellites.

China had earlier submitted a note to the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs in December last year that claimed two SpaceX satellites flew too close to the country's space station.

Dr Lim said: "Propulsion systems allow for collision avoidance to be executed in space. Without a propulsion system, if you know that there's a satellite going to approach you, the only thing you can do is to pray right?"

Since forming Aliena in 2018 with co-founder and chief technology officer George-Cristian Potrivitu, 30, more than 20 people have worked on the thruster.



Mr Potrivitu, who is also an NTU PhD candidate, said the pair was inspired to start the company to solve real world problems such as sustainability in space.

He said: "We saw how satellites were becoming more prevalent - especially miniature satellites, and there was a demand for propulsion systems that could enable sustainability in space and on ground.

"We can enable sustainability in space through giving satellites the ability to decommission themselves after their end of life, leaving behind a clean space for the generations to follow. And to also empower sustainability on Earth through the high resolution images that can be acquired to monitor and mitigate the effects of climate change"

Aliena has since secured separate orders from an undisclosed customer and has received interest from other enterprises for the use of its engines in their satellites.

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