

RP robotics team readies for world finals

Team, DOST raising funds to support team

by ALEXANDER VILLAFANIA
Inquirer.net

MANILA—After a successful win at the regional FIRST Robotics Competition in Hawaii, a Filipino team is set to compete against 300 foreign teams in the world championships in the US.

Team Lagablab (Filipino term for "flame") is sending its entry, a robot named "Larry Labuyo," to Atlanta, Georgia in the US.

They expect to compete with teams from Brazil, Canada, Chile, Germany, Israel, the Netherlands and Mexico.

The FIRST Robotics Competition Championships will start on April 17 to 18.

Team Lagablab is composed of about 20 students from the Philippine Science High School (PSHS), one of the science high schools managed by the De-

partment of Science and Technology (DOST).

The team already won the Highest Rookie Seed Award and the Rookie All-Star Award at the regional finals in Hawaii, the latter award giving the Philippines the slot for the world championships.

DOST Secretary Estrella Alabastro said the Philippine team's achievements at the regional finals hope to spark public and private sector support for the country's science education programs.

She stressed the importance of building a culture of science among young Filipinos, as it is an integral part of nation-building.

"As of now, we're still far from what is recommended in building a culture of science. So far, we only have 106 scientists per million people. The

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recommends 360 scientists per million people," Alabastro said.

DOST Undersecretary Fortunato de la Peña said the agency is hoping to raise at least P3 million to send all of the team members to the US.

So far, the agency has raised about P1.5 million.

Meanwhile, DOST-Science Education Institute Director Ester Ogena said that as part of a program for continuous learning on robotics, the agency would conduct smaller robotics competitions among the 100 science high schools in the country.

Ogena said a standard robotics kit would be introduced during the National Science and Technology Week celebrations in July. (Inquirer.net)

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