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President Arroyo cited for success of Sinag solar-powered car

MANILA, Jan. 7 (PGON) - President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo's efforts of pushing for the development of solar power were cited today as behind the success of the Sinag solar-powered car, the Philippines' first entry to the World Solar Challenge held in October last year in Australia.

Former Energy Secretary Vince Perez and now the chairman of the Philippine Solar Car Challenge Society Inc., who accompanied the Sinag Team during a courtesy call on the President this afternoon at Malacanang's Music Room, cited the Chief Executive's support for efforts to wean away the country from imported oil through the development of indigenous and renewable sources of energy.

"This whole thing won't be possible without your full support," Perez told the President as he presented her a miniature replica of the winning solar car developed by the De La Salle University College of Engineering.

The President, who was overwhelmed by the success of the Sinag team, congratulated them and expressed hope the team would compete again in 2009 with another solar-powered car.

"Since this challenge happens every two years, we look forward to seeing you off again with a new car," the President said.

"We will go back again in 2009, for you and the country," Rene Fernandez, Sinag Team technical head, said.

The President also specifically cited the support extended by Sun Power, a US-based solar cell manufacturer which has invested a total of \$600 million at the Laguna Techno Park.

The solar panel used by the Sinag solar-powered car was manufactured by Sun Power. The body of the car was made of carbon fibers.

During the presentation of the real solar-powered car at the Malacanang grounds, the President presented

the team a miniature replica cake of the solar-powered car while the team handed the President the official jacket of the Sinag Team.

The design and construction of the car was undertaken by a group of faculty and students from the Mechanical Engineering Department and the Electronic and Communications Engineering Department of De La Salle University-Manila, with the help and partnership of Ford Group Philippines, San Miguel Corp., Motolite, Shell, Sunpower, Philippine Airlines, and Ventus.

On the other hand, Perez's group is one of the implementers of the government's program for sustainable utilization of renewable energy through vehicles.

The Philippine team finished 20th out of the total 38 participants in the WSC, an international competition for developers of solar-powered vehicles.

The team's solar car entry called "Sinag" (Filipino for "sunlight") was able to finish the 3,021-kilometer race from Darwin to Adelaide at 4 p.m. on Oct. 27 (Australian time).

It was the Nuon Solar Team from the Netherlands, with their car the Nuna4, that took the overall win in the competition, finishing the race on Oct. 25.

Like Team Sinag, the Nuon Solar Team is also in the same Challenge category, which is for first-time participants in the race.

Despite being its first time to join, the Philippine team's car did not stall throughout the journey across Australia. A few of the entries were put in trailers after experiencing technical difficulties.

In a statement, Fernandez described their performance as remarkable as this was their first time to join and they did not know what to expect.

"It's positive proof of not only the car's solid design and construction, but also of our own capability to successfully deploy solar power technology in the Philippines."#

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