

Obama to test Archimedes solar ray legend (Update)

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US President Barack Obama said Monday he will star on reality show "Mythbusters" next month but lamented that he will not get to blow anything up on the explosives-prone program.

Obama will instead, in an appearance taped in July, charge the Discovery Channel show's team to test the legend of the fabled solar ray weapon invented by ancient Greek scientist Archimedes.

"I can announce today that I taped a special guest appearance for their show, although I didn't get to blow anything up. I was a little frustrated with that," Obama said, at a White House youth science fair.

The episode of "Mythbusters," a popular globally syndicated show, will examine whether it was possible for Archimedes to set fire to an invading Roman fleet using only mirrors and reflected rays of the sun.

The myth has been debunked before on the show, but the producers say fans are constantly asking hosts Adam Savage and Jamie Hyneman to test the legend again under different conditions.

"In the episode, we're brought to the White House and the president asks us to answer this question once and for all," said Savage, who was at the White House for Monday's science fair.

"We tackled it and when we come back we tell him how we did."

"It was the White House's idea, based on our popularity and the connections that we have with young people and the sciences," he said. The show will be broadcast in the United States on December 8.

The prospect of Obama on "Mythbusters" was too much for his Republican foes to resist, two weeks ahead of mid-term elections in which Democrats fear a beating at the polls.

In a research briefing, Republicans set up three "myths" to debunk, namely that Obama's stimulus plan worked, that his health care plan was beneficial and that the president's administration was the most transparent in history.

Obama on Monday spent more than half an hour touring science projects set up in the state dining room of the White House, featuring winners of a number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics competitions.

He appeared deeply interested in projects which included a steering wheel designed to monitor distracted drivers and a robotics project designed to kick soccer balls across a field, which he joked should be pointed at the press.

"We welcome championship sports teams to the White House to celebrate their victories ... I thought we ought to do the same thing for the winners of science fairs, robotic contests and math competitions," Obama said.

"Because, often, we don't give these victories the attention that they deserve," he said.

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