

M E S S A G E

It is a pleasure to participate in this New Year edition of the sports magazine television program, hosted by Ms. Cristy Ramos-Jalasco, "Go, Sports."

As a sportsman myself, I believe that television can play a significant role in promoting Philippine sports, as well as in generating sports awareness among people, especially in the countryside.

As 1996 comes to a close and 1997 beckons, I wish to convey our vision of the New Year's sports program and goals.

We can proudly claim that the year 1996 was another bumper year for Philippine sports. For this, we have to thank the best, the brightest and bravest of our Filipino athletes: the World Boxing champion Luisito Espinosa, Atlanta Olympics silver medalist Mansueto Velasco, and four-time World Cup champion Rafael Nepomuceno.

But while Luisito, Onyok and Paeng may emerge as front-runners in Philippine sports for the year 1996, the country's sports heroes number a legion and they have excelled in their respective sports arena within the international sporting world. Most recently, Efren "Bata" Reyes achieved a classic win in a winner-take-all one-on-one professional billiard 9-ball marathon in Hongkong which could be regarded as a symbolical gold.

In addition, we have a tally of the Philippine medals we won in the Asian and Southeast Asian circuits. In the past six Asiads the Philippine anthem was played for gold performance four times. Our Asian record is even better than our achievements in the Southeast Asian Games. For five times, we have landed third overall in nine SEA Games.

But as Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the Modern Olympics, said, "the important thing is not winning, but taking part."

In this light, our country's strong Sports-for-All Program aims to enhance the quality of life of all Filipinos, instill national pride, and win for our countrymen and countrywomen international prestige in sports. The program supports the specially talented for high-level sports competitions. It also develops among our people down to the barangay level both physical qualities and moral values which are the basis of sports.

For the coming 1997, we look forward to having more mass sports and high level sports.

The selection and training of those who will constitute the National Sports Talent Reserve and subsequently the National Athletes Pool will include the best among our Filipino

athletes. We then hope to produce more Jaworskis, de Vegas, Nepomucenos, Elordes and Torreses who form the country's sports beacons.

But while we shall move on this year to develop more opportunities for sports participation and enjoyment, we find that information is a catalyst which can increase awareness of the benefits of sports, enhance equity and access in sports and speed up the delivery of support services and systems to our sports program.

For this reason, I wish to commend "Go, Sports" for its unique brand of sports programming. I wish it continued success for the coming years.

All in all, much has been accomplished in the name of Philippine sports. Yet, much remains to be done to make our people more aware of the value of sports for health as well as recreation. Sports mean a healthy and alert citizenry. Sports mean people empowerment and democracy-in-action that create a nation actively participating in our strides to become a new Asia-Pacific Tiger.

And so, as we prod the nation towards sports and nation-building, I say "Go, Go Sports!"

Hangad ko ang masagana at maunlad na Sports para sa lahat sa 1997!

M A N I L A
December 28, 1996