

RAMIREZ WARNS POC: RESOLVE LEADERSHIP ROW

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Shape up or get no funding.

Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) chair Butch Ramirez warned the Philippine Olympic Committee (POC) on Saturday to resolve its leadership row. Otherwise, he will be constrained to withhold financial support to the national sports associations (NSA).

"They should resolve the crisis," Ramirez said in a statement. "If not, the government will stop funding if they continue to be divided."

"It will affect everybody,"

he added. "It will affect our training, it will affect our preparations for the Asian Games, the Southeast Asian Games and the Olympics."

The warning came two days before the NSAs gather in an extraordinary general assembly that POC called to tackle the leadership crisis between the camps of POC president Peping Cojuangco and challenger Ricky Vargas of boxing.

"Since July 1, 2016, I was already talking to the POC and the NSAs that we wanted unity and it's almost two years now and it's getting messy," said Ramirez.

Cojuangco ran unopposed and earned a fourth straight term as president in 2016 after the POC election committee disqualified Vargas.

But Vargas earned reprieve when the Pasig Regional Trial Court voided Cojuangco's victory and instructed the POC to hold an election on Feb. 23.

"[The] government has the right to protect itself from unacceptable behavior and acts such as, say, committed by the [POC] and the sports associations," said Ramirez. "It has no place in a democratic society and should not be tolerated."
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