

GMA names Defensor PNR chief

President Arroyo has appointed former environment secretary and housing chief Michael Defensor as acting chairman of the Philippine National Railways (PNR).

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said President Arroyo also named Cotabato Archbishop Orlando Quevedo as chairman of the Presidential Task Force for the Mindanao River Basin Rehabilitation and Development.

The task force will supervise and coordinate rehabilitation activities in areas in North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Saranggani, Sultan Kudarat, Gen. Santos City, and Maguindanao that were damaged during recent typhoons. The areas are prone to flooding due to heavy siltation of the major rivers and the Liguasan Marsh.

Ermita said Mrs. Arroyo signed the appointment papers of Defensor and Quevedo and three others on different dates. Their appointments will take effect upon receipt of their respective appointments.

Defensor, prior to his new appointment, was

head of the Presidential Task Force on the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3.

The facility was opened a month after Defensor's June appointment. The task force has since been disbanded.

Defensor is the fifth losing administration senatorial candidate in the 2007 elections to be given a government post by the President.

The others are former senator Ralph Recto as head of the National Economic and Development Authority; Vicente Sotto III as chairman of the Dangerous Drugs Board; former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson as Deputy National Security Adviser; and former Surigao del Sur congressman Prospero Pichay as member of the board of the Local Water Utilities Administration.

The other new appointees were Jose Mamaril as chief superintendent of the Bureau of Fire Protection, and Sancho Buquing as the new regional director for the National Commission of Indigenous Peoples.

— Paolo Romero