

CA approves appointments of four cabinet secretaries

Four cabinet secretaries got their “blessings” yesterday when their *ad interim* appointments were confirmed by the Commission on Appointments (CA). In its plenary session, the Commission confirmed the *ad interim* appointments of **Hon. Alfonso G. Cusi** as secretary of the Department of Energy (DOE), **Hon. Carlos G. Dominguez III** as secretary of the Department of Finance (DOF), **Hon. Silvestre H. Bello III** as secretary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) and **Hon. Jose Ruperto Martin M. Andanar** as secretary of the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO).

Cusi, a Filipino businessman and politician from Oriental Mindoro, started his career in shipping when he joined the Aboitiz Shipping Company in 1973 as assistant comptroller. After his resignation in 1990, Cusi then ventured into his own shipping, logistics and distribution businesses and founded the Starlite Ferries which offers roll-on/roll-off ferry service between his home province Mindoro, Batangas and Aklan. With his broad experience and knowledge in the shipping and transportation industry, he was invited to join government service in 2001 as general manager of the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) during the first term of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. He was also the main project head of the Strong Republic Nautical Highway System of the Arroyo administration and was assigned to lead the Manila International Airport Authority where he became responsible for the opening of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3 in 2008. Cusi assumed leadership of the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) in March 2010. Among his accomplishments is the regaining of the Category 1 status of the Philippine aviation industry from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) which finally allowed Philippine carriers to fly to the United States and Europe. In December 2010, he returned to his private businesses and served in the Board of Intex Resources Philippines which has a nickel and cobalt mining project in his home province of Oriental Mindoro. He was also involved in Double Concept Investments, Ltd. prior to his return to government service under President Rodrigo Duterte on June 30, 2016. He hurdled deliberations on his *ad interim* appointment from the members of the energy committee, headed by Sen. Franklin M. Drilon, in two committee hearings, to effect the recommendation of his confirmation to the plenary.

Dominguez, on the other hand, is also a Filipino businessman, a former chief executive of the Philippine Airlines (PAL). He previously held the position of Secretary of Agriculture and Minister of Natural Resources under then President Corazon C. Aquino's administration. Prior to his assumption in President Duterte's Cabinet, he had served in various companies such as the PTFC Redevelopment Corp. as executive director, Alsons Consolidated Resources as independent director, and as director of United Paragon Mining Corp. His family owns one of the top hotels in southern Mindanao, the Marco Polo Hotel in Davao City.

Earlier in his career, Dominguez joined the Bank of the Philippine Islands after receiving his Ph.D. from Stanford University. He was president of the BPI Agricultural

Development Bank for two years before joining President Cory Aquino's government. He assumed the leadership of the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1986 and the Department of Agriculture in 1987 while also serving as director of the government-owned Land Bank of the Philippines. Sen. Francis “Kiko” N. Pangilinan, chairman of the finance committee, recommended the confirmation of Dominguez’s *ad interim* appointment to the plenary after intense scrutiny of the committee members on his fitness and qualifications to the finance portfolio. In his sponsorship speech at the plenary session, Pangilinan regarded Dominguez as an honest and overachieving person truly fit and competent to lead the finance department. He also repeated what the Ateneo de Davao University said in 1997, when it conferred Dominguez the degree of Ph.D. in Humanities Honoris Causa, that “Secretary Dominguez has put his managerial talents toward the development of the country, particularly of Mindanao, through the professional management of its resources.”

Meanwhile, the Commission also confirmed the appointments of both Bello and Andanar in just one sitting.

Bello, or more popularly known as Bebot, is a lawyer, human rights advocate, a peace worker and a public servant from Gattaran, Cagayan. Appointed by President Rodrigo Duterte for the labor and employment portfolio, Bello was a former justice secretary under President Corazon C. Aquino and President Fidel V. Ramos. He also served as a solicitor-general, chairman of GRP Negotiating Panel for Talks with the CPP/NPA/NDF, president and chief executive officer of PNOC Development and Management Corporation, general manager and chief executive officer of Philippine Reclamation Authority and representative of 1-BAP Party-list during the 16th Congress.

A former seminarian who once thought of pursuing his priestly vocation when he entered the Immaculate Conception Minor Seminary in Vigan, Ilocos Sur, Bello obtained his Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Manuel L. Quezon University in Quiapo, Manila, in 1966 and earned his Bachelor of Laws from Ateneo de Manila University Law School in 1970.

The Commission’s labor, employment and social welfare committee, headed by Rep. Joel Mayo Z. Almario, deliberated on Bello’s appointment and recommended for its approval to the plenary with no objections raised. Almario, at the plenary, expressed that the committee did not have to delve hard in scrutinizing Bello’s appointment on the criteria of fitness, competence and integrity, as they were “all convinced immediately and unanimously that Bello possesses the qualifications to the post he is appointed to.”

The confirmation of Andanar’s appointment also came on the same day of deliberating his appointment in the government corporations and other offices committee. Committee chairperson Rep. Rosenda Ann Ocampo recommended Andanar’s appointment for confirmation to the plenary.

Andanar was a former television news anchor, radio commentator, podcaster, audio blogger, voice-over artist and comedian who last worked for TV5 prior his appointment in President Rodrigo Duterte’s Cabinet. He was the head of News5 Everywhere, the online news video and audio portal and formerly anchored *Aksyon sa*

Umaga and *Punto Asintado* on Radyo5 92.3 News FM and *Aksyon TV*, sister stations of TV5. He was also a voice-over talent of News5, Aksyon TV, and Radyo5 92.3 News FM. He studied at the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government, Georgetown University, Northern Illinois University, Asian Institute of Management, National University of Singapore and Federation University Australia.

In June 2016, Andanar joined President Rodrigo Duterte's administration as the secretary of the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO). He was tasked to supervise the operations of government's news and information agencies, television and radio stations including PIA, PNA, PTV-4 and PBS-Radyo ng Bayan, and act as a presidential spokesperson in press conferences by the Malacañang Press Corps.

Ocampo, in her sponsorship speech on Andanar's appointment, mentioned that Andanar was "both a broadcaster and a community worker before working on his journey of being a public servant." As a broadcaster, according to Ocampo, one of Andanar's advocacies was citizen empowerment through internet-citizen journalism. "He developed a 2010 Presidential website that aimed to listen to the voices and opinions of internet citizens and journalists. This augurs well for Secretary Martin where he is expected to develop, execute and utilize new media technologies for government programs and campaigns," she added. Ocampo also emphasized that all the members of the committee are convinced that Andanar possesses the qualifications of the job entrusted him by the President.