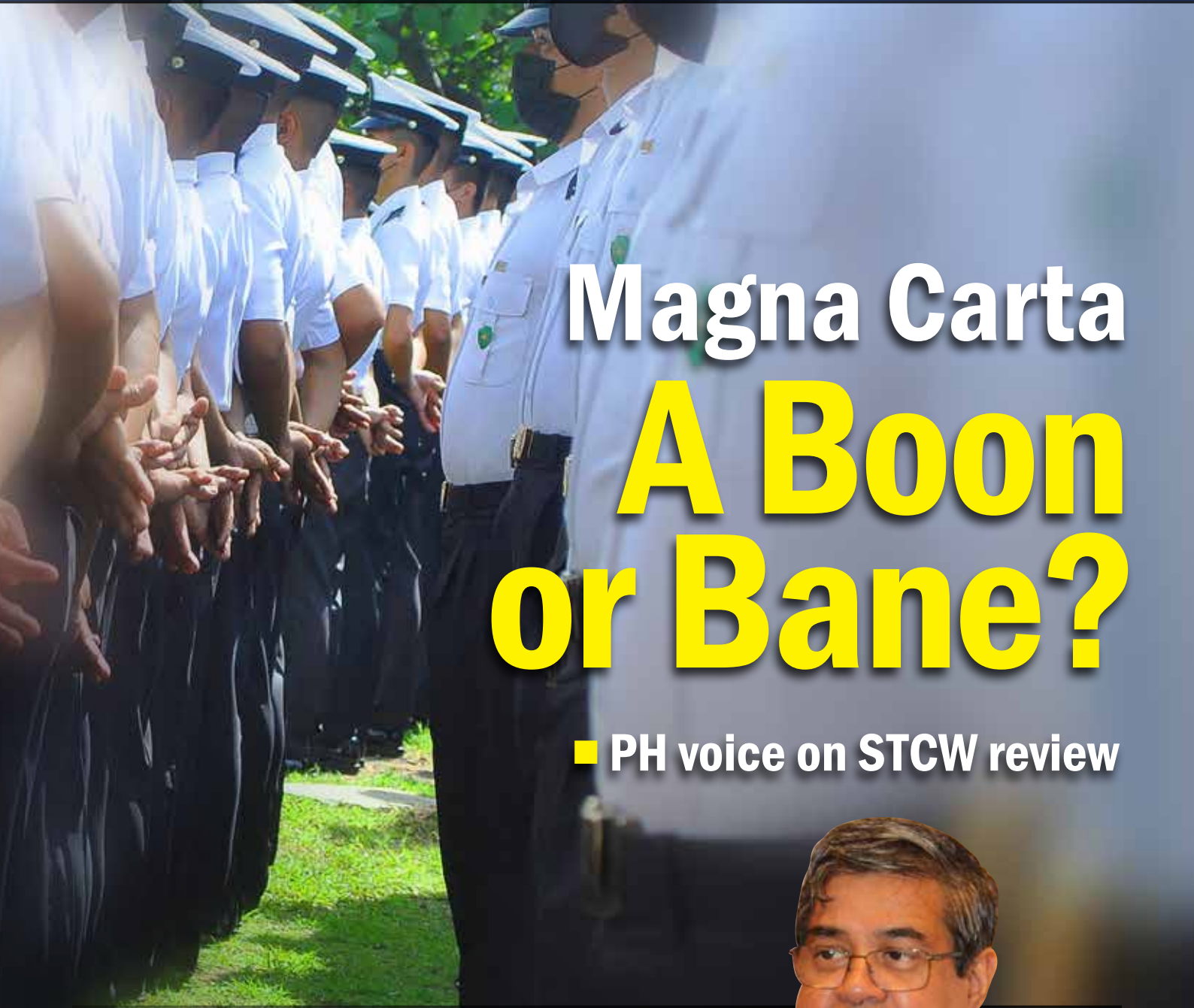


MARINO WORLD

FUSION OF MARITIME NEWS AND VIEWS



Magna Carta **A Boon or Bane?**

■ PH voice on STCW review

IMEC Chair Belal Ahmed

**GLOBAL TRAINING
FUND FOR FILIPINO
SEAFARERS**





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Layout by
Elmer Alitagtag

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While the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers is under review again, it is also imperative to reflect on how it will impact our future.

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QUALITY AND QUANTITY

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers' enactment into law may have been a rubicon milestone in the Philippine maritime industry if President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. had signed it on the originally scheduled date of February 26 at Malacanang Palace.

Understanding each of its provisions from beginning to end, The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers truly "codifies the protection of the rights and overall welfare of domestic and overseas Filipino seafarers, as well as the promotion of their full employment. It also ensures equal opportunities in the maritime industry, including access to education, training and development consistent with existing domestic and international laws, standards and conventions."

The measure safeguards the greater interests of the primary stakeholders: seafarers and shipowners, by addressing Ambulance Chasing, the cancer that gnaws the future for maritime Philippines as principals migrate to other countries to find fairness and protection. Moreover, it addresses the commoditization of the country's maritime education and training.

And the numbers speak for themselves: Of the 619,547 COCs issued in 2022, 451,665 are in ratings capacity. The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) reported 385,239 Filipino seafarers were deployed in 2022 and 578,626 in 2023. How many, however, are officers?

As a shipowner's representative warned "If we do not adjust, we could be a nation of the best educated ratings in the world."

Following the President's postponement, the Bicameral Conference Committee will again reevaluate the bill.

The upcoming weeks will be crucial in deciding which path the Philippines will take. Inaction and posturing will inevitably lead to damage to its leading position in the global crewing industry. Other countries will pick up the slack. In part, this is already happening.

The Baltic and International Maritime Council (BIMCO) reported in 2021 that "the global merchant fleet would require an additional 89,510 officers by 2026."

Geopolitical tensions, emerging technologies, digitalization, automation and decarbonization are all expected to worsen the shortage of marine officers.

Which should we choose: quality or quantity? We can indeed do both, but this requires chartering the future with sustained political will. **MW**

Understanding each of its provisions from beginning to end, The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers truly "codifies the protection of the rights and overall welfare of domestic and overseas Filipino seafarers, as well as the promotion of their full employment. It also ensures equal opportunities in the maritime industry, including access to education, training and development consistent with existing domestic and international laws, standards and conventions."



Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers

BOON OR BANE?

President Marcos Jr.
and Senate President Zubiri

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers is a priority legislative measure of the Executive and Legislative branches of the Philippine government. However, President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. did not sign into law Republic Act 11983. The measure was scheduled for enactment simultaneously with two other bills on February 26, 2024 in the Ceremonial Hall of Malacañang Palace.

The President only signed Republic Act No. 11981, the “Tatak Pinoy (Proudly Filipino) Act,” and RA No. 11982, the “Expanded Centenarians Act.”

Key government officials, legislators and maritime stakeholders were all surprised by the abrupt shift in the program, which was broadcast live on Radio Television Malacañang (RTVM).

Lawmakers in attendance were led by House Speaker Martin Romualdez and Senate President Miguel Zubiri, chairmen of the Migrant Workers Committees in both chambers, Senator Rafael “Raffy” Tulfo and Kabayan Party List Representative Ron Salo, as well as other sponsors of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers bill.

The government officials included Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista, Undersecretary for Maritime Elmer Sarmiento, Migrant Workers Acting

Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac and Overseas Workers Welfare Chief Arnell Ignacio.

Maritime stakeholders were present led by Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) President Dr. Conrado Oca and Executive Vice President VAdm. Eduardo Ma R Santos.

AMOSUP is the world’s largest seafarers affiliate of the influential International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), with over 130,000 members.

The Board of Directors of the Joint Manning Group (JMG) were

also in attendance. The JMG is an umbrella organization of five manning associations in the Philippines namely Filipino Association for Mariners’ Employment (FAME), Philippine Japan Manning Consultative Council (PJMCC), Philippine Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers (PAMAS), Filipino Shipowners Association (FSA), and International Maritime Association of the Philippines (INTERMAP).



Senator Tolentino

Constitutional process

Senator Francis Tolentino, who met the press shortly after attending the ceremonial signing in Malacañang, said that the enactment of the Magna Carta of Seafarers was

“derailed because of some provisions which probably might be objectionable on the part of some stakeholders.”

This, he said, “led to the decision of Malacañang, to instead of having it vetoed, to first see how it can be fixed



House Speaker Romualdez and Cong. Salo with the maritime stakeholders

or fine-tuned before it will be submitted again as an enrolled bill.”

Tolentino added that the Bicameral Conference Committee had already decided to re-review and discuss the law rather than having it vetoed by the President.

Both chambers approved and ratified the consolidated bill after discussing the disagreeing provisions of Senate Bill No. 2221 and House Bill No. 7325, in a bicameral conference committee meeting on December 13, 2023.

Senators Raffy Tulfo, Joel Villanueva, Francis Escudero, Imee Marcos, and Risa Hontiveros, along with Representatives Salo, Marissa Magsino, Sandro Gonzalez, Khymer Adan Olaso, and Marlyn Primicias-Agabas, comprised the Bicameral Conference Committee.

The bill was endorsed in its enrolled form by Senate President Miguel Zubiri and House Speaker Martin Romualdez and was subsequently transmitted to the Presidential Legislative Liaison Office (PLLO) and received on February 14, 2024.

The President has thirty days (30) from the date of receipt of the enrolled measure to either sign it into law, veto it, and return it to the Senate with a veto message, or allow it to lapse into law. Fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation, the Act will become effective.

Contentions

The Philippine Coastwise Shipping Association (PCSA) issued an Open Letter on Friday, February 23, two days prior to the bill’s scheduled enactment, urging the President to veto the measure and threatening that it would “destroy the domestic shipping industry and ultimately the seafaring industry.”

PCSA is the country’s largest shipping association of Filipino shipowners who operate short and medium-haul routes with 50 member-companies operating over 800 ships, approximately 60% of which are 500 GRT or larger.

In its letter, PCSA identified nine sections of the Magna Carta that they believe are “overboard and oppressive,

and unnecessarily burden the domestic maritime industry.”

Prior to PCSA’s opposition, the Philippine Association of Maritime Institutions (PAMI), which represents 73 of the country’s current 83 approved MHEIs, decried death sentence to the Maritime Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs), claiming that the bill will restrict the supply of cadets and future seafarers.

Cong. Ron Salo who spearheaded the bill’s passage, remained unruffled despite the oppositions. He emphasized that the legislation will improve exponentially the country’s maritime education and training, leading to a more robust Philippine maritime industry.

Both PCSA and PAMI filed an appeal to have all education and training provisions removed from the proposed law.

Cong. Salo noted that because it is not a budget bill, the President cannot veto specific sections of the bill. “So, it’s All or None.”

Cadets as seafarers

PAMI Vice Chairman and President Sabino Czar Manglicmot II explained, “Our concern lies on the constitutional aspect as we firmly believe that the bill goes against Article 6 section 26 of our constitution, which explicitly dictates that every bill passed by Congress shall embrace only one subject. He asserted, “Students are not yet seafarers.” They are onboard to accomplish their educational requirements.

In contrast, Cong. Salo stated, “I’m a lawyer myself. I used to teach law, and definitely when we speak about the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, it’s the entirety of the spectrum, from being a cadet to full time seafarer.”

He said, “As the name implies, at the core of it are the Filipino seafarers; how to make sure that their rights will be protected, promoted; and how to make sure that we create more competent Filipino seafarers. That’s the reason why it includes the education and training component.”

A training Director from one of

the country’s reputable maritime institutions shared his thoughts on whether cadets are seafarers or not.

“A maritime cadet onboard ship for shipboard training is a seafarer. As a seafarer, a maritime cadet is therefore covered by the provisions of the 1978 STCW Conventions, as amended with regards to the performance of duties in watchkeeping, training and certification.

The International Labor Organization (ILO) stressed in its 2019 document, that the concepts of cadet and trainees fall within the scope of MLC 2006, as amended and should be considered as seafarers in accordance with the definition in MLC 2006.

Nevertheless, the following elements must be present to be considered as a seafarer:

- a. The person is employed or engaged or working aboard ship
- b. There is a written agreement between the person (apprentice) and the employer (owner or manning agent)
- c. The person (apprentice) is utilized by the ship as part of the ship’s watch personnel (underway and in port)
- d. The person (apprentice) receives some form of compensation (salary/allowance/ other benefits).”

Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) Administrator Sonia Malaluan who takes side with PAMI, stated that a clearer delineation is that Magna Carta is primarily for the welfare of our seafarers, which is covered by ILO, and that there is already an existing law on education and training that addresses our seafarers’ competence.

Administrator Malaluan refers to Republic Act 10635, which establishes MARINA as the single maritime administration mandated to implement and enforce the 1978 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers.

Compliance

Critics say, RA 10635 has no teeth. It stipulates that the MARINA shall “recommend to the CHED en banc

the closure/phase-out of substandard maritime education institutions, in accordance with the rules and regulations, as well as recommend alternative schemes or options for the affected maritime educational institution.”

A former MARINA official claimed, “Schools have resorted to file court cases against these agencies to stop the enforcement of sanctions. Some agency personnel have even been threatened with physical harm.”

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers specifies that MHEIs must comply with the terms “within three years from the implementation of the Act.” Failure to comply shall result in “suspension or closure of the concerned MHEI.”

Furthermore, it states that “In no case shall MHEIs enter into an agreement with any other MHEIs” in order to fulfill the conditions and that “no MARINA, CHED or TESDA officials or employees or their spouses or any of their relatives up to the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity shall own or have substantial interest in an MHEI or training center.”

Shipboard training

Cong. Salo reiterated that the lawmakers are simply institutionalizing the policies and standards already established by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This is done to address the concerns raised by the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA), which emphasizes the need for comprehensive reforms in Philippine maritime education, and to ensure that all MHEIs adhere to the regulations.”

The letter titled “Extension of EU recognition of the Republic of Philippines in relation to its training and certification system for seafarers,” of the European Commission’s department for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) sent to MARINA on March 31, 2023, identified onboard training as one of the areas requiring improvement.”

The Philippines was invited to continue its efforts on the correct implementation of the requirements of onboard training, in particular information documented in the training record books, to ensure that in practice measures taken are effective; and to ensure the updating of the competencies of students who completed the on-board training six years or more after having completed



PCSA Lim



MARINA Malaluan



PAMI Manglicmot II

their theoretical studies, and that students completing their seagoing service on ships serving in domestic trade are given sufficient opportunity to complete their watchkeeping duties.

Salo provided further clarification: “contrary to the apprehensions raised by PAMI, the shipboard training provisions of the Magna Carta do not seek to undermine the interests of MHEIs. In fact, the provisions in the Magna Carta encourage collaboration by providing multiple compliance mechanisms such as having their own training ships, utilizing simulators or similar technologies, or entering into agreements with reputable shipping entities.”

SBT in the STCW convention pertains to what seafarers must complete in order to be certified as merchant marine officers and not for the completion of academic requirements.

The SBT, which was imposed as a graduation requirement, eventually became the primary reason why many maritime students were unable to receive their bachelor’s degree and impeded the continuous growth of merchant marine manpower.

“Only 36% of MHEI students complete or receive their degrees, according to CHED data,” Salo explained. “This is not because the students lack capability or competence; rather, it is because the schools are non-compliant and unable to provide the required shipboard training.”

Manglicmot refuted this, stating that, according to their consolidated data, 60% of the students were able to take their shipboard training; however, 30% were unable to complete it on time.

In order to reduce the number of undergraduates, Malaluan is contemplating on how to separate the STCW requirement from the baccalaureate requirement, given that “not all who will graduate the baccalaureate degree will pursue, be assessed and be issued a COC.”

Ladderized

In accordance with its authority under Republic Act No. 7796, Section 91 of the Magna Carta of Seafarers stipulates that TESDA, shall, in consultation with CHED, develop and establish non-degree courses on maritime education and training, subject to the approval of MARINA.

Non-degree-holding seafarers shall be

permitted to complete shipboard training in vessels with fewer than the minimum gross tonnage and required horsepower as provided under the guidelines of MARINA in compliance with international standards: Provided, That such non-degree programs may serve as preparatory course, or may be considered as an “associate degree,” leading to the full degree of BSMT, BSMarE, and other maritime degree programs. through a ladderized system of education and training consistent with Republic Act No. 10647, otherwise known as the “Ladderized Education Act of 2014” and Republic Act No. 10968, otherwise known as the “Philippine Qualifications Framework Act”.

On February 15, 2024, Salo met with Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) Director General Sec. Suharto Mangudadatu to discuss the TESDA’s Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP) and the creation of non-degree programs and other related courses for purposes of employment in the domestic seafaring industry.

Domestic shipping

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers mandates all Philippine-registered ships operating domestically to enter into agreement with any of the MHEIs for the shipboard training of the latter’s cadets. Passenger ships shall be required to accommodate cadets equivalent to not less than thirty percent (30%) of the total number of their crew-complement, while cargo ships shall be required to accommodate cadets equivalent to not less than twenty percent (20%) of the total number of their crew-complement.

In a phone interview, PCSA Chairman Lucio Lim Jr. claimed “currently most of their members are accepting cadets even more than what the law is asking.

Lim said, some of their ships cannot operate because of the crewing crisis they experience, because “majority of

seafarers want to work abroad.”

He emphasized, “Magna Carta provisions relating to international instruments such as MLC, 2006 should not be implemented in the domestic maritime sector.”

The MLC, 2006 applies to a wide range of ships operating on international and national or domestic voyages. Exceptions include those navigating exclusively in inland waters or waters within, closely adjacent to sheltered waters or areas where port regulations apply; those engaged in fishing or similar pursuits; and ships of traditional build such as dhows and junks and warships or naval auxiliaries.

Numbers speak for themselves

PAMI Chairman Felix Oca provided the latest figures on MHEI enrollment for the academic year 2022-2023: BSMT first year 26,279, second year 19,288, third year 19,205 and BSMarE first year 10,924, second year 8,968, third year 6,637.

“Only 11,643 cadets advance to the fourth year. The attrition for BSMT is 7,364, while that for BSMarE is 4,279.”

Records show, only 1,235 of the 2,870 Philippine registered domestic vessels (excluding motorbanca, fishing, and recreational vessels) have 500 gross register tonnage (GRT) or more as of December 31, 2023.

Based on MARINA ICTMD’s database on the headcount of valid highest licenses held as of June 2022, only 167,882 of the 619,547 Certificates of Competency (COCs) were issued to junior and senior officers, with the majority of these being officers in charge of a navigational watch (56,621) and officers in charge of an engineering watch (40,973), for a total of 97,594.

451,665 of the 619,547 COCs issued are in ratings capacity, which includes ratings forming part of navigational watch, able seafarer deck, ratings forming part of an engineering watch, able seafarer engine and electro-technical rating.



The officers under oath

The Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) recorded 385,239 in 2022 and 578,626 in 2023, surpassing the 507,730 Filipino seafarers’ deployment in 2019 prior to the pandemic.

It is more imperative and interesting if the agencies could share more precise statistics on seafarers’ deployment based on position and type of vessels.

According to the Baltic and International Maritime Council’s (BIMCO) Seafarer Workforce Report, the global merchant fleet would require an additional 89,510 officers by 2026. According to the research, 1.89 million seafarers currently serve the global merchant fleet, which operates more than 74,000 vessels worldwide.

Holistic

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers “codifies the protection of the rights and overall welfare of domestic and overseas Filipino seafarers, as well



The future

as the promotion of their full employment. This also ensures equal opportunities in the maritime industry, including access to education, training and development consistent with existing domestic and international laws, standards

and conventions.”

Shipowners consider it essential to address the elephant in the room in the employment of Filipino seafarers: ambulance chasing.

The bill highlights and reinforces certain elements of existing domestic laws and international conventions. The law clearly defines the terms “seafarer,” “domestic seafarer,” “ocean-going ship,” and “domestic ship” and only applies provisions within that framework.

As the bill declares “Towards these ends, shipowners, Maritime Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs), manning, and recruitment entities as vital partners in protecting and empowering Filipino seafarers.”

It further states that “The DMW shall, in coordination with the DOLE, DFA, DOH, Department of Finance (DOF), OWWA, CHED, MARINA, PCG, TESDA, PAO, Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), and other concerned agencies, and upon consultation with representatives from maritime industry stakeholders, recognized organizations, academe and training institutes, nongovernment organizations (NGOs), civil society groups, and all relevant sectors, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations to implement the provisions of this Act within ninety (90) days after its effectivity.

Will the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers be beneficial or detrimental?

Our future hangs on how we not only recognize the pressing challenges, but also seek and implement solutions as ONE Maritime Philippines! MW

IMEC Chair Belal Ahmed

Global Training Fund for Filipino Seafarers

Capt. Belal Ahmed, Chairman of the International Maritime Employers' Council (IMEC), with over 40 years of industry experience at sea and ashore, has initiated a call to establish a global training fund for seafarers in support of industry decarbonization goals and the challenges employers face in continuing to upgrade seafarers and stay relevant to modern technology.

The 2023 IMO Strategy to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions from Shipping was unanimously adopted by 175 countries in July 2023 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping. It includes an enhanced common ambition to achieve net-zero GHG emissions from international shipping by 2050, a commitment to ensure the uptake of alternative zero and near-zero GHG fuels by 2030, and indicative checkpoints for 2030 and 2040.

Achieving goals for GHG emissions requires introduction of new technologies in machinery and ship design. The need to train the seafarers to manage these changes on board is challenging and, in many respects, unprecedented due to the scope of the trainings needed and the cost that follows.

Ship owners and the managers are taking the burden at the moment, while the changes are taking place gradually and at a pace that is still sustainable. Seafarers who will not be employed on the new ships are exempt from the additional costly trainings. However, in order for the industry to be ready with a large number of pre-trained seafarers for new ships, huge investment will be required in this sector.

Countries such as the Philippines will need financial support from external sources to upgrade their training facilities. This is also applicable to many countries that provide large number of seafarers such as India, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Bangladesh.

"Tomorrow's shipping is not going to be what was yesterday or even today; it will be difficult. Please be ready for changes in the seafarer's life. And governments need to do a little more."

— CAPT. BELAL AHMED,
Chairman, International Maritime
Employers' Council (IMEC)

'Global North and South' also exists within the industry. Ship owners and engine manufacturers come from more developed economies while the seafarers come from less developed countries.

The creation of Global Training fund, regardless of how it can be achieved, will benefit nations whose training facilities cannot be improved for lack of funds.

According to Capt Belal, climate change is THE

issue of the day, but "while people talk about climate change, they tend to forget about seafarers and their needs to upgrade to do their job."

The President

The IMEC Chair underscores, "Tomorrow's shipping is not going to be what was yesterday or even today; it will be difficult." He continues, "Please be ready for changes in the seafarer's life. And governments need to do a little more."

Capt Belal describes Philippine President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr.'s remarks at last year's





President Marcos, Jr. at PMMA

File photo

meeting as “motivating and should always be remembered.”

At the Shaping the Future of Shipping: Seafarer 2050 summit in Manila in June 2023, the President highlighted the shipping’s huge transformation marked by the coming of new and sustainable fuels as well as the increasing deployment of digitalization and automation.

In order to facilitate this transition, Marcos Jr. remarked that “there is a need for the shipping industry to adapt and integrate new developments into their fleets, starting with the retooling of existing ships and the building of newer and more modern ships equipped with these new technologies.”

However, the President emphasized that “another central part of this change necessarily includes investing in a highly qualified and well-trained workforce that will build, maintain, and man these shipping vessels and sail towards other opportunities.”

Marcos Jr. reaffirmed his directive to the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) “to work closely with the shipping industry on the upskilling and reskilling of Filipino seafarers.”

Collaboration

Given the fragmented nature of the maritime industry, Capt Belal advocates for “collaboration among international



IMEC building will rise in MAAP

organizations, governments, and the industry.”

“Our industry is very fragmented.” Let’s try to get out of our space, come at the middle of the room and really talk about things that we are talking separately.

He says, “The government cannot get away with bureaucratic processes. The industry should do its part once the policies have been established and the government has made its commitment.” He repeats, “And that’s why one of the wishes that I have is if we can create a global fund.”

Asserting further, “This is a global issue, this is not just a Philippine issue so we need to start working on those labor supplying countries to create this global fund where countries like Philippines, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, Bangladesh can draw from for this particular type of training.”

Fund model

IMEC, the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), and the

International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) are working together to find a formula that will include the government. “While every government has a sizable training fund, the maritime sector receives a negligible amount,” Capt. Belal says.

The IMEC and ITF are parties to the International Maritime Training Fund (IMTF), which provides funds for the training, upgrading, and education of Filipino seafarers employed aboard IMEC member vessels.

“The idea is to have a fund coming from outside,” Capt. Belal states. “For example, here in the ITF IMEC IBF CBA for AMOSUP, the funds are coming from foreign shipowners to fund the training.” It is a similar concept but it must now be more global.”

He also cites the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) as an

example: “The Philippines can say, I need two million dollars to build a facility at PMMA since it is getting old. My government has so many other commitments with regards to uplifting property and other things. There is a maritime fund, and the Philippines contributes 30% of the world crew. Surely you can give us the money.”

“I need to hire 10 professors or lecturers from US or UK and I need a million dollar for a period of 3 years, please provide that funds because our government cannot afford,” Capt Belal continues.

Commitment

The Captain was heavily involved in establishing the 15-year-old IMEC Cadet Program in the Philippines, which has produced over 1,600 graduates thus far.

In June 2023, Capt Belal and MAAP President VAdm Eduardo Ma R Santos presided over the groundbreaking ceremony for the new IMEC Academic Building on the MAAP campus in Kamaya Pt., Brgy. Alas-asin, Mariveles, Bataan.

“IMEC and MAAP will share the cost,” he declares. It will be exclusively for IMEC,” and completion is anticipated within two to three years.

The classrooms will have a futuristic design, featuring live simulators, displays, computers, less paper usage, and more automated teaching methods.

Diversity

“Shipping is global and you just cannot be in global industry without

diversity in your core policy," Capt Belal underscores.

IMEC Cadet program in the Philippines and South Africa has considerable number of female cadets. They are the building blocks of the future of shipping.

IMEC has a dedicated team working on female participation in shipping, and the Philippines is central to some of the work being done.

Ambulance chasing

Regarding the IMEC's cadet intake, "the number of cadets is not steady, and there's a little bit demand slackness from overseas because a lot of foreign owners are still quite afraid of the ambulance chasing cases," Capt. Belal cautions. "They are afraid for long term commitment when this menace continues."

"A cadet program is a long-term investment, so I think we need to solve this problem without delay. We need to somehow come out of the shadow and have something more concrete for foreign shipowners. "When I invest in cadets, I'm investing in the future."

"IMEC members are practical, have their own ships to run and they know exactly what is needed," says the IMEC Chair.

Established nearly 30 years ago, IMEC represents more than 260 members located all over the world which operate almost 12,000 ships and employ over 300,000 seafarers of all nationalities.

While Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers remains pending in Congress, IMEC has improved its Contract Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) and the Philippine Seafarers Union (PSU) following a successful meeting in Cebu in November last year.

Capt Belal confirms, the adoption of a new clause in AMOSUP and PSU CBA seeks to address a fair arrangement to address genuine claims arising out of illness or accident. This process will be transparent with the involvement of seafarer, the unions and the employer. We hope this new clause will have positive effect on the issue of Ambulance Chasing."

EMSA

Capt. Belal emphasizes that Philippines still needs to resolve the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) concerns.

"EMSA it is there at the background.



The empowered MAAP female cadets

We did assist in clearing the last time. They have given five-year time and I think again it goes back we cannot sleep on this. A very important and urgent action is needed."

Last year the European Commission (EC) has decided to continue recognizing Philippine-issued certificates for seafarers. However, there are still issues that need to be addressed by the Philippines' Maritime Authorities in order to improve compliance with the STCW Convention.

In the document sent to MARINA by Director General of the European Commission's department for Mobility and Transport (DG MOVE) last March 31, 2023, a three-page annex specifies the areas that need to be improved, which are the same serious deficiencies identified by the EMSA during its inspection from February 24 to March 12, 2020.

"We all said, okay, we will do our best to clear it; but then you need to follow up afterwards. So that's the phase now," states Capt Belal.

Trainers

An additional significant concern identified by Capt Belal is the lack of competent educators and mentors within the maritime industry, which impedes the progress and advancement of the youth.

He underlines the importance of training a large number of individuals to global standards, thus, allowing international teachers/trainers to be allowed to come.

"It's a regulatory issue; it's not allowed. The government must take the initiative, he claims. "For over 15 years, Capt. Belal has been trying to convince the Philippine government to allow foreign trainers, lecturers, or professors to work in the academies,

training institutions "directly and not come as a company representative to do in-house training."

Capt Belal stresses, "We are not saying Filipinos are not up to the mark. Filipino seafarers are mostly at sea. Even those who are qualified lack the necessary teaching skill or proper instruction that is required to meet global standards.

Of course, you are capable, but I think you need support. We have good enough officers but they are not good enough in volume to teach all over the Philippines, given the number of institutions."

Tribute

Capt Belal pays tribute to the late Migrant Workers Secretary Susan 'Toots' Ople, highlighting her significant effort to bringing together international stakeholders as instructed by President Marcos Jr., through the creation of the International Advisory Committee on Global Maritime Affairs (IACGMA).

Global leaders from organizations representing seafarers, shipowners and other maritime employers signed a memorandum of understanding with DMW on January 11, 2023 to form the IACGMA composed of IMEC, the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA), the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

"She was responsible for many changes in a very short period of time. The IACGMA set up by Secretary Ople has provided much needed bridge between global bodies and the Philippine Government.

This is her legacy and we hope this allows us to succeed in resolving maritime issues in this country," states Capt Belal. **mw**

Kongsberg Digital strengthens partnership with MARINA for MIDP realization

Kongsberg Digital has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) in the implementation of the agency's 10-year Maritime Industry Development Plan 2028 (MIDP).

Another Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by both parties on November 22, 2023, at the MARINA Central Office in Manila, with the goal of collaborating on the competency development framework under the MIDP 2028 through the application of simulation technology.

Former MARINA Administrator Hernani Fabia signed the MoU with Kongsberg Digital Managing Director Are Follesdal Tjønn, which was witnessed by MARINA STCW Office Executive Director Samuel Batalla and Philippine-Norway Business Council President Carl Faannessen.

The first MoU was signed in 2022 by former MARINA Administrator VAdm Robert Empedrad and Andreas Jagtøyen, Executive Vice President of Digital Ocean of Kongsberg Digital.

Under MoU, the MARINA and Kongsberg Digital will co-engage in the development of Traffic Capacity Studies for coastal and inland waterways using simulation technology, with a focus on retooling and upskilling Filipino seafarers.

Furthermore, the collaboration includes assisting MARINA with certificate validation on KDI AS issued Simulator Certificates using

Renewing collaboration



Under MoU, the MARINA and Kongsberg Digital will co-engage in the development of Traffic Capacity Studies for coastal and inland waterways using simulation technology, with a focus on retooling and upskilling Filipino seafarers.

digital technologies such as Cloud to Cloud application programming interface (APIs) and Ecosystem Platform, conducting joint workshops on performance standards, and consulting on the development and standardization of simulation exercises, training, and assessment aligned with the STCW Convention.

The partnership also emphasized

actively engaging in open discussions to develop a training compendium for approved blended and distance learning, utilizing cloud-based technology and simulators suitable for Management Level Courses (MLC).

Tjønn emphasized the Philippines' vital role in shipping and maritime manpower. He also expressed satisfaction with the strong collaboration established over the years in the country's schools, universities, and training sectors.

"It's also, in my opinion, very clear that our simulation technologies can be valuable to you in your strategic initiatives, for safety, for the inland waterways, for all your different initiatives," Tjønn said.

On February 8, this year, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. issued Executive Order (EO) 55, which adopted the updated MIDP 2028 as the country's comprehensive roadmap for the integrated development and strategic direction of the maritime industry.

The EO mandates MARINA to establish a system for the effective implementation, monitoring and review of the MIDP and its component programs, which include promoting a highly skilled and competitive maritime workforce; implementing sustainable maritime innovation, transformation, digitalization and knowledge center; and implementing an effective and efficient maritime administration governance system. **MW**



The Kongsberg Digital Team and MARINA authorities

Kongsberg's Simulation Conference

TRENDS, INSIGHTS AND SUPPORT

"The MARINA is one with the industry in acknowledging that simulation plays a crucial role for enabling seafarers and levelling their competence to the emerging technologies in shipping," says Ms. Presca Lee Lugo, Maritime Education and Training Standards Supervisor (METSS) of the MARINA STCW Office.

Ms. Lugo was a guest speaker at the Kongsberg Digital Maritime Simulation Sim Connect 2023 conference, held November 25, 2023 at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, attended by educators and trainers to share knowledge and experience and collaborate.

She lauded Kongsberg as "a highly respected name in our industry, which has supported and has continuously supporting the training needs of the maritime higher education institutions and training centers here in the Philippines."

Lugo also announced that "the use of cloud-based simulator is allowed particularly for distance learning and e-learning," as stated by MARINA circular 2021-10.

While she firmly believes that "simulator-aided maritime education and training is a highly valued tool to ensure we have a ready maritime workforce by 2030 and beyond," Lugo pointed out that "we need the best instructors to maximize the potentials of the state-of-the-art simulators."

Transformations

"The Philippines has been and continues to be the most important country for supply of skilled seafarers. That alone is a good reason for holding this Sim Connect conference," says Are Føllesdal Tjønn, Kongsberg



Presca Lee Lugo,
MARINA



Are Føllesdal Tjønn,
Kongsberg Digital



Erle Kristin Wagle,
Kongsberg Digital

"The maritime industry is going through a rapid technical transformation, driven by the adoption of new fuel types. At Kongsberg we are committed to ensuring that our simulator training solutions meet the highest international standards."

— FØLLESDAL TJØNN,

Managing Director for Maritime Simulation, Kongsberg Digital



Martin Reiten,
Kongsberg Digital



George Neil Paraoan,
Integrated Maritime



Tormod Nordeng,
Kongsberg Digital

"It looks like it's gonna be a trend that the shipowners will put pressure on the training institutions to ensure we are not just fulfilling the foundation related to the STCW requirements, but we need to go beyond compliance to ensure that we are mitigating risk related to accidents onboard the ships."

— ERLE KRISTIN WAGLE

Vice President, Kongsberg Digital

Digital Managing Director for Maritime Simulation.

With extensive experience in

software and technology, Tjønn states that "the maritime industry is going through a rapid technical



The K-Sim maritime simulations



go beyond compliance to ensure that we are mitigating risk related to accidents onboard the ships,” shares Wagle.

Support

Kongsberg Digital’s Product Director Martin Reiten and Product Advisor Tormod Nordeng, as well as Capt. George Neil Paraoan, CEO of Integrated Maritime, presented updates on the use and impact of simulators in education, training and assessments.

Area Sales Manager Peterwilson Tamang provided information on Kongsberg’s latest product and service offerings.

He also reassured the customers of their continued assistance regarding previously owned, recently acquired, or upgraded

transformation, driven by the adoption of new fuel types.”

“At Kongsberg we are committed to ensuring that our simulator training solutions meet the highest international standards,” ensures Tjonn.

Accordingly, Kongsberg Digital’s Vice President Erle Kristin Wagle foresees that “there will be a higher degree of collaboration between ship and shore.”

“The shore base will have more

control about what’s going on onboard. And they will also communicate more with people onboard to ensure that they operate the vessel efficiently.”

“We have talked to quite a few shipowners, ship operators, ship managers and owners. It looks like it’s gonna be a trend that the shipowners will put pressure on the training institutions to ensure we are not just fulfilling the foundation related to the STCW requirements, but we need to

simulators.

Kongsberg Digital’s Regional Sales Director Asraf Ibrahim facilitated the conference program while Sales Manager Alvin Hurtada and the three competent staff Roberto, Eric and Sunshine assisted and discussed with the participants.

Ms. Lugo and the Kongsberg Digital team addressed the questions and concerns of the attendees during the Q&A session. **MW**



From left: Asraf Ibrahim and Joran Nostvik (KDI), Presca Lee Lugo (MARINA), Gerardo Galang and Felix Oca (MAAP), Alvin Hurtada and Are Føllesdal Tjønn (KDI).

SOLVANG Gears Up for Sustainable Future

“Welcome to our future!” Mr. Kjetil Meling, director of human resources for the Solvang ASA, exclaimed as he introduced the cadets.

The 2023 Solvang Crew Conference and Christmas Party brought 35 first and second year cadets from University of Cebu, DMMA College of Southern Philippines, and Lyceum International Maritime Academy (LIMA) of the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas.

It was a traditional Solvang Family reunion, but this time there were more cadets in attendance who interacted with the company’s 80 participating officers and crew.

The activities were suitably held along the 1.5-kilometer stretch of white sand, luring water, and breathtaking vistas of nature at the Pico Sands Hotel in Nasugbu, Batangas on November 10–12, 2023.

Mr. Meling urged the officers and crew to “treat the cadets the way you wanted to be treated when you were a cadet yourself.”

“They are young, they are hungry on knowledge, they are hungry on experience and in this room, we have

“They are young, they are hungry on knowledge, they are hungry on experience and in this room, we have a lot of experience so share it with them, so that they know what’s waiting for them when they join our vessels.”

— KJETIL MELING,
Director of Human Resources
Solvang ASA

a lot of experience so share it with them, so that they know what’s waiting for them when they join our vessels,” Mr. Meling continued.

“What we do during the few days is actually defining Solvang,” Meling declared.

We have fun together, we discuss together and we find solutions together.

Solid

Solvang ASA, one of the world’s leading LPG and petrochemicals transporters, currently owns and operates 23 ships: 8 semi-refrigerated/ethylene carriers, 9 LGCs and 6 VLGCs. This was after it recently sold 4 aging vessels.

Five newbuilds are scheduled for delivery between 2026 and 2027, following Solvang ASA and Gunvor Group Ltd joint venture to own and operate next generation eco-vessels for the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) market.

Mr. Meling explained, “It’s a financial decision to position ourselves to be a solid company for the future.”

He assured to their seafarers, “This is job security for all of you if you follow the rules, be transparent, be trustworthy.

We are solid company so we now look for opportunities, so we will grow even more.

Sustainability

Mr. Tor Øyvind Ask, Solvang ASA Fleet Director underscored that the organization works “in the safest, cleanest and most cost-efficient manner.”

“We have really focused on our

Team Solvang





The Solvang Family

future many years, so there is nothing new for us," he stated.

Mr. Ask provided updates on Solvang's sustainability goals, of which the carbon capture and storage (CCS) pilot project is a major undertaking of the company with Wärtsilä, a world leader in innovative technologies and lifecycle solutions catering to the marine and energy sectors.

Solvang's objective with the CCS pilot is to implement sustainable technologies across the fleet and help to reducing the environmental footprint of global shipping.

This is in accordance with the International Maritime Organization's GHG-reduction framework and other international initiatives.

The project complements a series of significant steps in the fields of machine operations optimization, transmission technology, propeller and rudder upgrades, hull optimization, and advanced open-loop scrubber technology.

Mr. Ask spoke on ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) reporting with reference to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

Transparency and adaptability

Mr. Knut Vespstad, Solvang ASA Senior Maritime Superintendent, and Mr. Stefanos Stylianos, Chairman of the International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (INTERTANKO) Vetting Committee,



HR Director Meling



Fleet Director Ask

Solvang's objective with the CCS pilot is to implement sustainable technologies across the fleet and help to reducing the environmental footprint of global shipping.

This is in accordance with the International Maritime Organization's GHG-reduction framework and other international initiatives.

discussed the latest developments and issues on vetting inspections.

The new Transparency Act, as elucidated by Ms. Tanja Hunshamar,

Solvang ASA Supply Chain Manager, serves to fortify Solvang's fundamental principles of teamwork and mutual respect as they pertain to its business operations.

Ms. Vanessa Alac, MarTrust's Customer Success Specialist introduced the benefits of MarTrust E-Wallet.

Solvang Philippines President Capt. Virgilio A. Lopez Jr. and Vice President Capt. Iriz Jimmy Lin Paiton, joined the speakers at the open forum session to clarify and respond to the seafarers' concerns.

Family-oriented

The occasion was even made more meaningful with the presence of the

Solvang's owner, the Steensland Family, who experienced the warmth of Filipino hospitality.

The Lahing Batangan Dance Troupe and the LPU Vocal Harmonics, the official dance company and the official choral group of the Lyceum of the Philippines University-Batangas City wowed the audience at the welcome dinner. LPU is Solvang's newest partner school under the Norwegian Shipowners Association (NSA) Cadetship Program.

Seafarers and their families had a great time at the company sponsored Kiddie Party after the conclusion of the conference.

In the evening, a white-themed celebration was organized at Pico Beach – a symbolic representation of Solvang Family's resiliency in enduring the epidemic and adapting to changes in pursuit of a sustainable future. **MW**



“You are the reason why we are here today. You are the reason why we have had overcome the challenges of the past and you are the reason why we continue to exist and develop good quality world-class seafarers,” declares UMTC Managing Director Engr. Donald Bautista.

More than 40 maritime companies were honored during the United Marine Training Center Silver Anniversary celebrations held on November 22, 2023 at the top deck of the UMTC building in Malate, Manila.

Shipmanagement companies, manning agencies, and training centers represented by their key executives, received plaques of appreciation for their contributions to UMTC’s mission of providing quality training to seafarers.

As Bautista thanked the stakeholders for the trust and partnership, he received a round of applause as he stated “Together we will continue to develop seafarers. Together we will propagate to the wave of the seas that seafarer is not just noble, it is not just important; it is rewarding and respected profession.”

Collaborations

UMTC President Capt. Antonio Galvez, Jr. claims, “For quarter of a century, UMTC has been at the forefront of maritime education playing a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing highly competent marine professionals.”

During a time when the Philippines’ maritime education was being questioned, he said, “It was in the last quarter 1998 when Marlow decided to address the quality of our seafarers

UMTC SILVER ANNIVERSARY

Partnership for Excellence



Galvez and Bautista receive the Seal of Integrity

being sent onboard to man vessels.”

In March 2001 Marlow Navigation Training Center was officially registered to the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). From a rented classroom of approximately 60 square meters, an 8,000-square-meter UMTC building was built in 2007.

“As the years go by, we have been approached by some manning companies if we can also provide them the training that we provide our principals.

In 2015 we therefore embrace our training center under the name United Marine Training Center (UMTC), symbolizing our commitment to collaboration and unity within the maritime community,” narrates Galvez.

This change underscores our dedication to foster the spirit of partnership, we share the commitment for the advancement of the industry,” he underscores.

Marlow Navigation’s Chairman



MARINA officials and stakeholders

Hermann Eden expressed appreciation and gratitude to the UMTC team for delivering “excellent services” to all Marlow Group clients, and “extending services to many other third-party entities to significantly enhance the quality of training for the benefit of the shipping industry in general.”

On the other hand, Bautista thanked the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), TESDA, the Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), and the International Maritime Employers’ Council (IMEC) for “helping the industry, making the Filipinos better seafarers by assisting organizations like us to offer courses.”

He asserts, “UMTC is a home of quality learning, builds management level officers, collaborates with our suppliers, clients, and regulatory bodies to further enhance our expertise in shaping the maritime Industry.”

Integrity

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) bestowed UMTC the prestigious Seal

of Integrity award, in recognition of its unwavering commitment in setting the bar high in adhering TESDA policies, guidelines and quality management principles.

The UMTC made history by being the first and only institution to be recognized as a beacon of excellence in the Philippine TVET competency evaluation and accreditation system.

“To all the partners and clients of the UMTC, present today, you are in good hands,” the TESDA official said, citing the UMTC’s remarkable accomplishments in competency assessment and education in the country.

Commitment

On behalf of the UMTC team, Bautista and Galvez reaffirmed their commitment “to continue to serve the industry for the next 25 years and beyond, capitalizing on innovation and digitalization.”

Bautista announced their new partnerships with the Mission to Seafarers, a charity that provides help and support to seafarers, and the Green

Marine, which is at the forefront of the methanol technology. He confirms “This methanol engine will soon find its way to the premises of UMTC in 2024.”

Galvez asserts, “Our concentrated efforts to quality have been reflected in our state-of-the-art facilities, dedicated instructors and staff who embody the spirit of excellence.

“Looking ahead, we are committed to excellence and innovation. We will remain steadfast in our mission to empower seafarers with skills and knowledge necessary to navigate the complexities of the maritime industry with confidence and competence.”

With great pride, the senior executives and managers of UMTC gathered on stage, lifted their glasses, and spearheaded the toast to celebrate.

Everyone enjoyed the dinner prepared by the UMTC Culinary Training Department, the loads of raffle prizes and giveaways, the fantastic performances, and, most importantly, the bonding and friendships. **MW**



UMTC senior execs: A toast to a renewed commitment!

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ANCHORED IN EXCELLENCE

The WSSAI
team and guests



The Western Shipping Southeast Asia Inc. (WSSAI) reaffirms its commitment to excellence as the company celebrates its 19th year in the industry.

Under the auspices of its principals Western Shipping Pte Ltd. and Byzantine Maritime Corporation, WSSAI held its 2023 Crew Safety Conference at the Marco Polo Hotel on November 19 and the Prestige Tower on November 20 in Ortigas, Pasig City, respectively. Thereafter, on November 22, there was a joyous anniversary celebration and Family Day at The Podium Hall in Ortigas Center.

Safety culture

"Be Safe, Be Sure, Be Secure," is the theme of the two-day seminar in which

"Be Safe, Be Sure, Be Secure," is the theme of the two-day seminar in which Filipino senior and junior officers working on tankers, LPG and bulk carriers actively participated.

Filipino senior and junior officers working on tankers, LPG and bulk carriers actively participated.

The officers were equipped with knowledge imparted by the presenters on the first day, and engaged in interactive exercises on the second day.

The subjects covered and exercises carried out were all aimed at assuring excellence in all aspects of vessel management and operation for the crew's safety and high-quality service to owners, charterers, and stakeholders.

WSSAI, Western Shipping and Byzantine were in full force, speaking at the conference.

From WSSAI and affiliate Western Shipping Philippines Maritime



Symbol of sharing and caring



Family-inspired celebration



Honors for the crew

Training Center (WSPMTC): RAdm. Bayani Gaerlan, President; Capt. Kharvic Sitchon, General Manager; Capt. Alban Castellino, consultant; and Capt. Rolando Olete, Head of Training Center.

From the Western Shipping: Capt. Belal Ahmed, General Manager; Capt. Hemant Arora, HSEQA Compliance Manager; Capt. Ketan Vaze, Fleet Personnel Manager; Capt. M. N. Unnikrishnan, Operations Manager; Mr. Shriyush Thakur, Technical Superintendent; and Mr. Narayanan Sundaram, IT Manager.

From Byzantine Maritime: Ms. Lara Stafilopatis, part-owner and Capt. Dimitris Davaris, Crewing Manager.

They were joined by other presenters such as Capt. Jeffrey Solon, a former Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) official, and representatives from Del Rosario & Del Rosario, UK P&I, Marine Benefits and STAG Marine.

There was an open discussion following each of the speakers' presentations.

Family-centered

Executives, employees, seafarers, and their families, along with industry partners, celebrated WSSAI's 19th anniversary and Family Day as one family.

The celebrations began with a mass, followed by a kid's party and The Great Gatsby-themed main event.

Officers and crew were honored with loyalty awards in recognition of their long and devoted service to the company.

Ms. Stafilopatis led the traditional cake-cutting ceremony, which was followed by the closing rites of singing together while holding hands.

Committed

Captain Belal emphasized Western Shipping's commitment to the Philippines.

He said, the company has a new LPG fleet and some new bulk carriers on order.

"When I opened this office about 10 years ago, we have really been steadfast focusing here, and that has not changed and our owners are very committed," he recalled.

About 90% of WSSAI crew are Filipinos, for a total of 600 crew for WSP and BMC vessels both onboard and on vacation.

WSSAI is an active member of the Filipino Association for Mariner's Employment (FAME) and the local International Maritime Employers' Committee (IMEC), as well as a consistent sponsor of IMEC cadets at the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). **mw**



Most elegantly dressed



Misuga Group executives and employees celebrate the milestone

Family and honors at the MMPI 25th Anniversary

The annual Crew Family Affair (CFA) celebrations of Maine Marine Philippines, Inc. (MMPI) and Manila Ocean Crew Management, Inc. (MOC) were made more meaningful by the commemoration of MMPI's 25th anniversary in the crewing business.

Sparkly Christmas parties for seafarers and their families were held at the Smallville 21 Hotel in Iloilo on November 25; the Cebu Parklane International Hotel on December 2; and the Casa Ibarra in Pasay City on December 8, 2023.

Outstanding employees were honored at the Manila Hotel on December 15. The entire management and staff looked stunning in their evening suites and gowns.

Maine Marine Philippines, Inc., Manila Ocean Crew Management, Inc., Misuga Management Services, Inc. (MMSI), and Misuga Kaiun Philippines, Inc. (MKPI), together

Ms. Coi expressed gratitude to the competent crew members, who demonstrated "bravery and dedication at sea, most especially during the pandemic."

She also praised the hardworking and dedicated employees and thanked the Misuga Kaiun's top management for entrusting MMPI to man their ships.



Honors for MMPI GM Coi Songcuya; Mr. Sone (right) presents the plaque

at the awarding ceremonies. She was honored with a bouquet of flowers and a special plaque of recognition, but more significantly, the directors and upper management of Misuga Kaiun, her colleagues, and the

seafarers and their families lauded her exemplary leadership.

Ms. Coi, to whom she is affectionately known, has been serving MMPI since its inception over 25 years ago.

An MOC executive underlined that the MMPI was pioneered by Ms. Coi, "a passionate and very visionary young lady tested by fire like gold."

Grateful

Ms. Coi recalled and highlighted how the organization began with only three office staff

with industry partners, and the former employees and retired marine officers of MMPI attended the event.

The Star

MMPI General Manager Ms. Ma. Corazon Songcuya was in spotlight

and has since grown to 54.

Ms. Coi expressed gratitude to the competent crew members, who demonstrated "bravery and dedication at sea, most especially during the pandemic."

She also praised the hardworking



(From left) MMPI Pres Okajima and his wife, MMSI manager Yamamoto, guests, and Misuga Kaiun's top executives Mr. Sone and Mr. Kitamura

and dedicated employees and thanked the Misuga Kaiun's top management for entrusting MMPI to man their ships.

MMSI Manager Mr. Kei Yamamoto extended gratitude to the seafarers and their families.

He said, "You are all part of our seafaring family. Seafarers work onboard, their families support them from their homes, and we work at the office. We are all located at different places, but today, we re-confirmed our unity as one family."

Misuga Kaiun executives were also given special mementos of appreciation for their outstanding contributions to MMPI over the years.

Family care

Under the theme "We value crew relatives as much as we value our seafarers," MMPI and MOC took advantage of the crew family affair event to raise mental health awareness among seafarers and their families.

Capt. Oliver Peras, a two-decade

"Our company's goal is for you to come home safely, with full of smile, no injuries, no sickness, no incidents onboard."

**— CAPT. OLIVER PERAS,
MOC Operations Manager**

seafarer and current MOC Operations Manager, discussed the importance of families in the mental health of seafarers onboard.

"Our company's goal is for you to come home safely, with full of smile, no injuries, no sickness, no incidents onboard," underscored Peras.

Everybody enjoyed the bonding,

sumptuous food, raffles, gifts, games and entertainment galore at the festive Christmas parties.

For the future

MMSI President Capt. Keita Okajima, in announcing Misuga Kaiun's 30th Anniversary in 2024, encouraged the seafarers to continue to undergo trainings "to protect the company and themselves."

He stated that seafarers must adapt to the new system due to changes in the industry such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) new regulations on shipping decarbonization.

"Let's make every effort together. Please continue to support us as we work together," Okajima said.

Well wishes

Mr. Yasuhiro Sone, the Director and Head of Misuga Group's Ship Management Division proposed the toast. He led the cheers for the next 25 years of continuous success.

Kampai! Mabuhay! **mw**



The proud seafarers of MMPI and MOC at the CFA event

“The discussion in IMO will be better if the views of the seafarers is presented.”

— **PRADEEP CHAWLA**
GlobalMET Chairman

On IMO STCW revision

PH voice must be heard – Chawla

“The views of the Philippines, being the biggest supplier of seafarers, must be heard in the corridors of IMO,” says GlobalMET Chairman Pradeep Chawla at the Workshop during the Comprehensive Review of STCW, held on January 25, at the Manila Yacht Club.

Chawla added that, “the discussion in IMO will be better if the views of the seafarers is presented,” because the significant revisions will address many topics such as “alternate fuels, digitalization, bullying,

harassment, sexual assault and harassment.”

GlobalMet, a non-governmental organization with consultative status at the International Maritime Organization (IMO), carrying activities and research in the field of maritime education and training, hosted the STCW workshop in collaboration with

the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), Philippine Transmarine Carriers, (PTC), Philippine Center for Advanced Maritime Simulation and Training (PHILCAMSAT), Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), Philippine Association of Maritime Institutions (PAMI), and the Philippine Association of Maritime Training Center, Inc. (PAMTCI).

MARINA STCW Office Executive Director Samuel Batalla and MAAP President Vadm Eduardo Ma R Santos respectively delivered the keynote address and concluding remarks.

Ms. Presca Lee Lugo, Maritime Education and Training Standards Supervisor (METSS) of the MARINA STCW Office, presented an overview of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW).

PTC Head of Education and Training, and the QA and Program



The workshop’s speakers and participants

GlobalMET
Chair Chawla

Director of PHILCAMSAT, C/E Alfredo G. Haboc presided over the workshop as its facilitator.

Participants, including seafarers, educators, trainers and maritime executives, actively engaged in group activities and discussions about what improvements should be made to the STCW Convention and Code to address any ambiguities.

This covers competencies that are already specified in the STCW but are now obsolete and should be removed, competencies currently required but have not been amended in the STCW code, and anticipated competence requirements for the next 15 years.

The IMO Maritime Safety Committee (MSC) will conduct a comprehensive STCW review and update of the Convention and Code, focusing on the following 22 key areas:

1. Emerging technologies on ships and ship operations
2. Digitalization in seafarers' certification, including e-certification
3. Emerging technologies in education and training
4. Facilitation, flexibility and quality of onboard, shore-based and workshop skills training, including use of simulators
5. Flexibility and efficiency in implementation of new training requirements and reduction of administrative burdens
6. Requirements for sea time or practical experience in relation to new and emerging technologies including the use of simulation
7. Bullying and harassment, including SASH, gender diversity and gender Sensitization
8. Mental health



9. Twenty-first century and interpersonal skills
10. Addressing inconsistencies
11. Addressing different interpretations
12. Addressing taxonomy and terminologies
13. Flexibility in revalidation and renewal of certificates and endorsements
14. Overview of the implementation of the Convention, in particular the need to update the STCW "White List"
15. Lessons learned
16. Flexibility
17. Alternative certification under chapter VII
18. Watchkeeping arrangements and principles to be observed (chapter VIII)
19. Alignment of STCW with requirements placed on ships, seafarers and shipowners by other IMO and relevant international instruments
20. Cybersecurity awareness
21. Implementation and transitional provisions
22. Addressing outdated training requirements **MW**

The Philippine delegation with IMO SecGen Arsenio Dominguez

MARINA leads PH delegation to IMO HTW 10

The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) led the Philippine delegation to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) 10th session of the Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training and Watchkeeping (HTW) held on February 5-9, 2024 at the IMO headquarters in London, UK.

The review covered topics such as cyber security and emerging technologies, bullying and harassment, sexual assault and harassment, the quality of onboard training and measures to facilitate mandatory seagoing service.

The Philippines participated in finalizing the draft list of areas under the STCW Convention and Code which will be subjected to review, the draft methodology which will be adopted to tackle the work, and the road map of activities which are aimed to culminate in 2027.

The Philippine Delegation at HTW 10 was composed of Mr. Samuel L. Batalla, Executive Director of the MARINA-STCW Office, Atty. Jean Ver P. Pia, Maritime Attaché, Atty. Cdr. Mary Leizl Barbero PCG, Technical Adviser to the Office of Maritime Attaché, Atty. Cinderella Filipina Benitez-Jaro, Executive Director of CHED, Engr. Annette B. Tan, RN, OIC Director of the DOH-HFSRB, Ms. Mayla N. Macadawan, Deputy Executive Director of the DMW-NMP, and select personnel of MARINA and representatives from concerned stakeholders who attended remotely or online. **MW**



Top Ever Marine Management 25 Years of Great Partnership!



Capt. Orbeta and son with their Japanese partners

THE Top Ever Marine Management Philippine Corporation 25th Anniversary is more than a mere commemoration of the company’s silver jubilee; it further demonstrates the Philippines and Japan’s enduring partnership, notably in the global maritime industry.

The auspicious celebration was held at the five-star Dusit Thani Manila in Ayala Makati City on November 4th, 2023.

The management, staff and long-serving officers and crew along with their families; shipowners and shipmanagers; industry associates and friends looked stunning with their barong tagalog and modern Filipiniana attires.



was commissioned by Funada Kaiun, its premier shipowner.

In 2003, the company became a bareboat owner for domestic tanker and high-speed craft operations. Subsequently, it established a sister company for domestic tanker management, which transformed into an international ship

management firm.

In 2018, Top Ever presidency was succeeded by Mr. Archimedes “Archie” Orbeta, son Capt. Orbeta in 2018; the Captain subsequently assumed the role of Chairman of the Board of Directors, with family-secured equity and policy.

Archie remarked with pride, “As it was then and as it is now Top Ever Marine was and is able to handle the manning solution requirements of our principals upholding the quality service started by its founders.”

Benefactors

Top Ever’s shipowners and

History

The company was founded in 1998 by the small triumvirate of Capt. Masato Suzuki and Capt. Motoya Hamaguchi from Japan and Capt. Oscar Orbeta from the Philippines.

“It was an attempt to build up a community of Filipino seafarers to take the challenge of operating merchant ships for the Asian economy, in particular the Japanese economy,” Capt. Orbeta recalled.

Top Ever Marine Management Philippines Corporation derived its name from its’ founding principal TEMM Maritime Co., Ltd. Its’ inaugural vessel, MV World Romance,



A token of friendship from Mr. Funada



Recognition for loyalty and dedication



The Topever foundation: Captain Orbeta and family

shipmanagers received plaques of appreciation for their unwavering trust and confidence to the Filipino seafarers, for the safe commercial operations of the fleet and for the sustained commitment to Top Ever Marine in providing crewing solutions for the past 25 years.

- Funada kaiun Co Ltd.
- Yoshiya kaiun Co Ltd.
- Hirai line Co. Ltd.
- S-S Line Ltd.
- TEMM Maritime Co. Ltd.
- Peninsula International Shipping
- Eneos Ocean Shipmanagement Pte. Ltd.

The Backbone

Honors were bestowed to the Filipino officers and crew who stayed and served the company for 25 years.

Capt. Orbeta recounted a statement made by his shipowner “the only reason why shipowners can sleep soundly at night despite of the trouble of the big loan from the bank and the liability is simply because we are aware that our ships are run by Filipinos who are competent and committed for safety.”

He explained, “In the dynamics of shipping, regardless how modern the vessel is, how rich is the shipowner, how fully maintained, how fully provided, at the end of the day, you can only judge how ship will perform on the basis of what the crew can

deliver.”

Capt. Orbeta addressed their shipowners and shipmanagers “We shall continue to dedicate the best crewing solution to keep our fleet and crew safe and commercially profitable.”

“We affirm that Filipino seafarer are still the best choice given the proper trainings and motivations, and for that we shall perform our role to manage them for your fleet.”

Dedicated staff

Loyal and efficient employees were also given due recognition for their outstanding contributions to the company’s advancement and sustainability.

Top Ever President Archie Orbeta is grateful that “his management team, and personnel were able to overcome the obstacles of COVID-19, allowing the fleet to continue operating with minimal disruptions to crew pooling and the tight process of crew embarkation.”

The Legacy

Highly esteemed Capt. Oscar Orbeta was honored with a Legacy Award for his remarkable vision, dedication and commitment that have greatly contributed to the advancement of the company and the shipping industry and the upliftment of the quality of life for the crew, staff and families.

Capt. Orbeta challenged the new management led by his son Archie to maintain the same standard of

“Our crew shall be motivated and trained further to meet the forthcoming challenges of new technology and work consciousness for a cleaner environment; focusing on this will always lead your voyage to have a fair wind a calm sea.”

professionalism, of service to their shipowners, ship managers, crew and their families. To uphold the company’s virtues of “sincerity, honesty and fairness.”

Furthermore, he underlined “Our crew shall be motivated and trained further to meet the forthcoming challenges of new technology and work consciousness for a cleaner environment; focusing on this will always lead your voyage to have a fair wind a calm sea.”

Sustainability

Jenson Orbeta, sent a video greeting from Kobe, Japan, introducing his father Archie for his opening remarks in the event. Jenson is being trained and has been immersed in Japanese culture.

The Japanese takes succession planning very seriously, with the goal of keeping the business in the family and preserving its traditions for future generations.

High spirits

Mr. Takatoshi Funada, the former President of Funada Kaiun gifted Capt Orbeta with a traditional Japanese pottery, while Eneos Ocean Shipmanagement’s representative presented him with a vintage ship’s wheel.

The second half of the show was lively, with several sing-along and dance performances by the management and personnel.

Cheers to 25 years of wonderful Filipino-Japanese cooperation and an even brighter future ahead! **MW**

Artificial Intelligence as Human Resource

Evidence that the maritime sector is proving less attractive than other industries to next generation talent is not only anecdotal, but data based.

Drewry's reported a nine percent supply shortfall of ships officers in its 'Manning Annual Review and Forecast 2023/24' - almost double the figure one year earlier, and the highest since the global consultancy started counting, in 2006.

Covid-19 and war in Ukraine added to the negatives that have led many to turn away from seafaring as a career, Drewry's reported.

At the same time, world events - including recent developments in the Middle East - show just how reliant the global economy is on its maritime professionals.

For Wallem Group, this means decent seafarer pay and working conditions are a prerequisite. It also means that other matters within its control - such as 'nurturing the talent pipeline', investing in seafarer wellbeing, competence and career development, and maintaining positive working experiences - become business imperatives rather than aspirations.

Converting these agreed aims into tangible actions demands an understanding that 'Generation Z' seeks meaningful, purpose-driven employment, and has different values than its predecessors on work-life balance, opportunities for growth and diversity.

Today's seafarer, for example, discriminates between employers based on connectivity, and will also prefer to work for organisations whose values it shares.

Over many years, Wallem has developed a mature approach to training, based on investing in local centres, collaborating with technology providers, crafting courses at the microlearning level, offering simulation-based and on-the-job support, mentorship and coaching. Over time, it has also become increasingly aware that recruiting and retaining the best available candidates in today's competitive global labour market demands more from the maritime employer.

In doing so, it has not only upheld



Rather than parroting pledges on ESG, maritime employers could key into advanced thinking on recruitment and training to overcome shipping's worsening seafarer shortage, says Yogesh Pasrija, Acting Global Head of Crewing, of leading ship manager Wallem Group

the highest ESG standards on occupational health and safety but gone on to develop flexible work hours and telecommuting, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies, proactive training to overcome unconscious bias, and enforced supplier diversity. It has also insisted on engagement between senior managers and front-line staff, to encourage the open and collaborative culture on which enhancing ship safety relies and cultivate employee participation in decision making.

What is more, against a backdrop of reporting which sometimes portrays AI and machine learning as short cuts to replacing seafarers, Wallem believes that - used responsibly

- these tools can enhance safety management, improve crew health and welfare, and identify, nurture and build maritime talent.

While shipping automation could reduce human error and increase safety, Wallem firmly believes that shipping's "Future is Human". AI and automation are likely to assist seafarers, but not replace them. Nevertheless, AI's ability to analyse large datasets of resumes, social media profiles, and other information - for example - may be invaluable for identifying and reaching out to individuals with the skills, experience, and potential to be successful in shipping careers.

Again, AI and ML can be used to personalize the onboarding process for new hires by providing them with personalized training, career development and mentorship programs that work at the pace of the individual, also continuously analysing their needs.

At the 'meta' level, meanwhile, AI and ML can interpret datasets on current and future work requirements to predict skill gaps in the maritime workforce, rather than simply identifying existing ones. Training and development programs can cover emerging maritime skills issues.

From the maritime employers' perspective, AI could also be used to analyse anonymised data on employee satisfaction, engagement and motivation, so that employers can respond with initiatives to encourage the more positive and supportive work environment. The HR professional could even benchmark the effectiveness of his or her own HR initiatives.

In a shipping industry often ready to tie itself up in knots on the advance of the autonomous ship, levels of automation and the pros and cons of computer-based training, there is irony in identifying the maritime HR professional as a possible key beneficiary of AI.

For Wallem, however, tools which deliver agility in responding to the changing profile of the seafaring workforce and promise to identify candidates best equipped to stay the course can only be beneficial for shipping as a whole. **MW**

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