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ROW THE BOAT

"All of us are basically sailing. We are all rowing one boat."

At the gathering of maritime stakeholders in support of the implementation of the Republic Act 12021 or the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers (MCFS), maritime icon Ms. Doris Magsaysay-Ho delivered an insightful message: "That boat will only move if we are going towards the same direction and we need to be sure that we're going towards that direction."

Ho reflected on the Philippines' 50-year journey, which took a lot of political will from government and the determination of the private sector to develop the eco-system of the government agencies, schools, training centers, services, and the hard work of the Filipino seafarers to become IMO accredited and eventually fill over 25% of the world's fleet.

She continued, "And we fond all these to remind us that the Magna Carta is again our response to a global need. It is a response for the improvement of our governance, to ensure that we protect the rights of seafarers. It is our

response to ensure we still remain competitive and remain to be the Seafarer of Choice."

The Magna Carta's IRR, signed in January 28, 2025, contains 22 rules. Some of its key provisions still require guidelines to be developed by concerned agencies for implementation, in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

However, the current divisiveness on perspectives in certain Magna Carta provisions, as well as doubts on its real intentions and the challenge to its constitutionality, present obstacles to the full implementation of the landmark legislation.

Some critics are legitimate individual seafarers who may have valid concerns, but they are not part of the recognized social partners, which include the government, employers, and unions.

Empathy, active listening and humility -- acknowledging that both sides may have valid concerns -- are more likely to lead to productive discussions and bridge differences.

Rather than perpetuating a cycle of division, we should focus on how we can contribute to solving the issues in

a way that respects the perspectives of others.

The Supreme Court may issue status quo orders to prevent the implementation of MCFS until the legal issues are resolved, given the pending petitions that question its legality.

Nonetheless, many of the MCFS provisions can still be implemented because they existed prior to the law's passage.

But can the opposing parties negotiate to finally reach a compromise and begin working together?

We echo Ms. Doris Magsaysay-Ho's message to the manning agencies, unions, associations, government, seafarers, everybody rowing that boat towards one goal: Let us all row this with great fervor, with great determination.

Let us ensure the goal of maintaining our position as a Seafarer of Choice, providing really great jobs for the men and women of the essential professional workers or seafarers, is upheld.

If we can do that, if we all row in the same direction, we can achieve our dream to become a great maritime services nation. **MW**

OPPONENTS VS SUPPORTERS

The Magna Carta Challenge

The Republic Act 12021 or the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers (MCFS) was signed into law by President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. on September 23, 2024. It's Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) were signed on January 8, 2025. However, conflicting perspectives and legal challenges remain while the law is being deliberated and implemented.

A number of groups contested the legitimacy of the MCFS in petitions filed at the Supreme Court. These petitions were filed by the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) on March 20, the Philippine Association of Maritime Institutions (PAMI) on April 10, and the Concerned Seafarers of the Philippines (CSP) and International Seafarers Action Center (ISAC), with the support of Bayan Muna, on May 6.

Amid legal concerns and criticisms, government officials and leaders of major maritime organizations convened on April 10 at the AMOSUP Convention Hall in Intramuros, Manila, to sign the Pledge of Commitment for the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers.

The following officials expressed their support: Undersecretary Felicitas Bay of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW); Assistant Secretary Villamor Ventura Plan of the Department of Transportation (DOTr); Assistant Secretary Maylene Beltran of the Department of Health (DOH); Mr. Abdu Rahman Pacasum of the

Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA); Executive Director Samuel Batalla of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA); Assistant Solicitor General Thomas Laragan of the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG).

Private sector representatives include: Atty. Emmanuel Partido, Head of Legal Department of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP); VAdm Eduardo Santos, President of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP); Ms. Doris Magsaysay Ho, President and CEO of the Magsaysay Group of Companies; Capt. Ronald Enrile, SVP of the Philippine Transmarine Carriers (PTC); Atty. Iris Baguilat, Chairperson of the Association of Licensed Manning Agencies (ALMA) Maritime Group; Capt. Juanito Salvatierra, Director of the Joint Manning Group (JMG); Commo. Joel Abutal, Superintendent of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA); Dr. Edgardo Nicholas, Executive Director of the

Philippine Coastwise Association (PCSA); Ms. Judy Domingo, President of the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS); and Atty. Carmel Magpantay, Secretary of SeaFam International

Other government officials in attendance were: Commo. Joel Simo-ag of the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG); Undersecretary Melbourne Ziro Pana of the National Economic Development Authority (NEDA); Director Tito Marshall Fajardo of the Philippine Health Insurance Corporation (PHIC); Executive Vice President Elvira Alcantara Resore of the Social Security System (SSS); and Atty. Nazario Bancoro Jr. of the Public Attorney's Office (PAO).

Their collective commitments include "upholding transparency, accountability, and fairness in recruitment, employment, and deployment processes; promoting ethical business processes and supporting continuous training and skills enhancement to sustain global competitiveness of Filipino seafarers."

Bond posting

FFW, ISAC, CSP and Bayan Muna are challenging Section 59 of the Magna Carta, which requires seafarers to post a bond in order to obtain the full amount of compensation awarded to them by the NLRC arbiters or



AMOSUP EVP Santos received the signed Pledge of Commitment



Magsaysay CEO Ho

NCMB arbitrators.

The specific provision states that, "Pending an appeal or judicial review, a writ of execution on items any disputed amount determined to be legally due the seafarer, and the damages, including moral damages, exemplary damages, nominal damages, attorney's fees and other similar awards shall only be issued if the judgment obligee posts a sufficient bond to ensure the full restitution of those amounts and the bond shall be maintained by the obligee until final resolution of the appeal or judicial review: Provided, That in the event the seafarer ultimately prevails on appeal or judicial review, the losing party shall immediately reimburse the total amount paid by the seafarer for the cost of the bond. However, if the seafarer loses, no such reimbursement shall be made."

Sonny Matula, president of the FFW, said that "the provision violates the principles of equal protection and due process by imposing an unfair financial burden on seafarers seeking to collect awards from favorable rulings, conditions that are not required of other workers."

Counsel for the petitioners ISAC and CSP Atty. Neri Colmenares of Bayan Muna explained, "Under our current laws, compensation won by land-based workers in the Philippines are immediately accessible to the workers if they won their case in the DOLE and NLRC." He questioned why seafarers are treated differently than other workers.

Furthermore, their petition questioned the MCFS provision in Section 59 that uses the Aksyon Fund, which is allocated to the Department of Migrant Workers in the GAA for OFWs, to pay the seafarer's bond.

According to the MCFS "The DMW, through the Agarang Kalina at Saklolo Para sa mga OFW na Nangangailangan (AKSYON Fund), may provide financial assistance to the

seafarer depending on the final determination of maritime disability grading under Section 57 of this Act for the payment of premiums of the bond either in full or in part. Pertinent guidelines for assistance in the payment of premiums, including the availment process, amount, or length of validity shall be issued by DMW,

after consultation with stakeholders, including the DOLE, NLRC, seafarers' unions, manning agencies, shipowners, or their representatives."

Colmenares argued, "The use of DMW Aksyon Fund violates the constitutional provision that public fund should be used for public purposes as the bond will ultimately benefit foreign ship owners or employers and not the seafarers. Further, this will take away much needed funds from our OFWs."

MCFS principal author former Kabayan Partylist Cong. Ron Salo underscored that Section 59 is one of the law's most important provisions addressing ambulance chasing, which unscrupulous individuals have taken advantage of seafarers' vulnerabilities resulting on financial burdens and stress for their seafarers and their employers.

He highlighted that, "This measure does not seek to deprive seafarers of their right to claim compensation, rather it ensures that legitimate claims are processed immediately, fairly and justly, or preventing the misuse of legal avenues for personal gain.

Furthermore, Salo underlined the importance of establishing a separate law for overseas seafarers rather than depending solely on current labor regulations.

"The circumstances and challenges they faced are completely different from each other unlike domestic workers who operate purely under Philippine jurisdiction. Overseas workers work in multiple jurisdictions under the law of your flag state, your host country and your employment contracts among others," Salo stated.

ALMA chair Atty. Iris Baguilat remarked that the seafaring industry has long been reeling from the abuses inherent in the predatory claims environment and the practice of ambulance chasing. "Our Shipowner partners are clear if ambulance chasing

lawfare persist they will seize hiring Filipino seafarers," she disclosed.

Magsaysay CEO Ho encouraged manning agencies to do the same thing of what they are doing: speak to principals to make sure that claims are processed quickly and efficiently. "Because when they are not processed efficiently it's when the seafarers start becoming very impatient and frustrated. So we all need to play our part," she continued.

Education and training

PAMI filed a Petition for Certiorari and Prohibition, seeking to nullify Chapter XVIII of the law, arguing that its provisions unconstitutionally expand the law's scope from protecting seafarers to regulating maritime education, in violation of Articles VI, Section 26 (1) of the 1987 Constitution, which requires that every bill embrace only one subject.

The petition also contests Sections 75, 76 and 78 of the Magna Carta for infringing on the constitutional guarantee of academic freedom (Article XIV, Section 5 (2), and emphasizing that the transfer of regulatory authority from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) represents an overreach of state control that undermines the autonomy of maritime higher education institutions (MHEIs) in areas such as curriculum, admissions, and governance.

AMOSUP EVP and President of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) VAdm Eduardo Ma R Santos, indicated that the private sector supports all of the Magna Carta's educational and training objectives.

He talked on how "the seafaring world is going into a lot of changes like automation, digitalization and decarbonization, which we should start working on together, to be sure that our Filipino seafarers will remain to be the seafarers of choice and will always lead in the world manning industry."

PMMA Superintendent Joel Abutal sees the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers as a simplified proactive approach to ensure a higher standard of competence and safety within the maritime industry.

He said, "Early intervention for quality through section 75 and 78 (of the Magna Carta), ensures that our maritime learners as future seafarers are equipped with the necessary competence from the very beginning.

He thanked MCFS principal author Cong Ron Salo for including

the maritime education and training to ensure that early on, those who would like to be seafarers are already taken care of.

Allotment

Veteran seafarers with extensive experience in the manning industry, Capt. Edgardo Flores and C/E Art Serafico, as well as some active seafarers, continue to express, their opposition to the Magna Carta's provision mandating the seafarers to remit at least eighty percent (80%) of the seafarer's monthly salary, equivalent to basic wage plus fixed or guaranteed overtime, through social media.

The MCFS IRR Section 6 on Allotment and Remittances of Wages being questioned reads that "the allotment shall be at least eighty percent (80%) of the seafarer's monthly salary." For the purpose of this IRR, the monthly salary shall consist of basic wage plus fixed or guaranteed overtime.

The affected seafarers, who are mostly ratings and cruise ship personnel, are complaining that their remaining 20% monthly cash onboard is insufficient to cover personal expenses, internet cards, and for leisure expenditures during their shore leave, which may have an impact on their performance onboard and their mental health.

During the consultation meeting with the maritime stakeholders on April 23, presided over by MCFS primary author Senator Raffy Tulfo, Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac admitted that it was the Executive branch that defined the elimination of the word basic in the monthly salary as stated in the IRR – it's the monthly salary, the basic + fixed guaranteed overtime, which expands the coverage of the 80%.

AMOSUP legal counsel Atty. Henry Zamora noted that the provision remains fair because the IRR allows seafarers to be self-allottees, and the seafarer has the option of having both his family and himself as allottees.

According to ISP Executive Vice President Capt. Danny Ricohermoso, if the manning agencies explain it thoroughly and persistently to the



Senator Tulfo



Counsel Colmenares



DMW Sec Cacdac

seafarers, the provision has a positive side on the seafarer's financial literacy, something their organization has advocated for.

However, the other groups argued that seafarers should make their own decisions about how to manage their income. Seafarers, like land-based laborers, are free from paying income taxes under Section 23 of Republic Act 8424, or the National Internal Revenue Code. However, only seafarers are required to remit 80% of their salary to their designated allottee(s).

According to the MCFS iRR: "The allotments shall be paid to the designated allottee/s in Philippine currency at the rate of exchange at the time of remittance indicated in the credit advice of the local authorized Philippine bank, which information shall be provided to the designated allottee/s."

While some see this as a safeguard for seafarers because manning agencies are now obliged to follow the bank's rate at the exact time of remittance of the allotment, others suggested that it is better to "Let the seafarers open up their dollar accounts and let them decide when they will convert it to peso."

Secretary Cacdac warned that manning agencies involved in illicit deductions or exchange rate discrepancies may be suspended.

Going forward

During the senate consultation meeting on April 23, Senator Tulfo expressed confidence that the negative comments on the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, which he and Cong Salo considered "fake news," had already been disbanded. He maintained that the manning agencies should be accountable for the dissemination of proper information.

Nevertheless, their critics persisted, asserting that the seafarers were not properly consulted. Legal disputes are also arising as a result of pending cases before the Supreme Court.

A marine officer commented, "It is crucial that actual seafarers – rather than their spouses – attend the Magna Carta

hearing discussion to express their opinions and sentiments regarding the Magna Carta's usefulness to them."

"Bad policy cannot be rectified through enhanced marketing. It is evident that Senator Tulfo has not engaged in this process, as the most effective approach is to attend to those who are most impacted," he stated.

On the other hand, AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado Oca, reaffirmed AMOSUP's commitment to working in solidarity with all the stakeholders and allies, with Kabayan Partylist to ensure the effective implementation of the Magna Carta.

Joost Mes, Marlow Navigation's Owner's Representative who was also present at the Pledge of Commitment event, stated that "there's no perfect law, but the future will tell how effective it will be." He reflected on the long journey before MCFS became law, and stated that they would stay behind in order to have the opportunity to move forward.

OSG Assistant Solicitor General Thomas Laragan emphasized, as the principal law office of the Republic, they commit to ensuring the faithful defense and enforcement of the Magna Carta, and that they will uphold its constitutionality, promote its effective implementation and provide legal clarity when and where it is needed.

Newly-appointed DOTr Assistant Secretary Villamor Ventura Plan, assured that "as the DOTr pushes for efficient and safe maritime transportation, the rights and welfare of our seafarers shall be at the heart of its policies and programs. He looks forward to working with all the maritime stakeholders in the coming years for a stronger, more united maritime community." **MW**



(5th from left) DMW Secretary Cacdac shows his support to MWMEC and BEACON

Marino World Celebrates 20-Year Milestone, Launches Manning Expo and Conference at SMX

Marino World is celebrating its 20 years in the industry with a major project – the Marino World Manning Expo and Conference (MWMEC) 2025, which will be held at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City from September 29 to October 1, 2025.

Themed “Shaping the Future of Filipino Seafarers for Sustainable Shipping,” MWMEC will bring together seafarers and their families, cadets, shipowners and ship managers, maritime executives and staff, educators and trainers, government officials and employees, and service providers and suppliers to network, discuss and collaborate for the development and empowerment of our seafarers who are the heart and soul of the maritime industry.

MWMEC’s conference sessions aim to address not only the lingering

concerns but also the future challenges in the employment of our Filipino seafarers, anticipating the shipping’s huge transformation with the coming of new fuels, digitalization and automation.

The Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers will be revisited after one year of implementation, and stakeholders will discuss critical issues on criminalization of seafarers. The official event partners will also co-host industry dialogues and networking sessions.

At the exhibition hall, seafarers can explore job opportunities with the

recruitment activities, authorized and supported by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). Products and services for the seafarers and their families will also be displayed and presented at the event.

MWMEC promises to be a collaborative gathering between seafarers, employers, and the government to help the Philippines become more robust in the face of future global shipping issues.

MWMEC is happening simultaneously with The Maritime League’s Blue Economy Annual Trade and Conference (BEACON 2025).

For MWMEC sponsorships and exhibit space, call 0956-4892192 or email marinoworldpublication@gmail.com. **MW**



■ By DAVE
FLORIAN
BALANON

MARINA Leads Digital Transformation and Global Partnerships



(L-R) MARINA Admin Malaluan, ICS SecGen Guy Platten and LROO Co-CEO Nicholas Goubert

The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) continues to take significant strides in enhancing the welfare and global competitiveness of Filipino seafarers. During the 11th session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Sub-Committee on Human Element, Training, and Watchkeeping (HTW) held in London in February 2025, the Philippines showcased its ongoing initiatives to modernize seafarer certification processes, improve mental health awareness among maritime faculty, and solidify new international partnerships.

A step towards digital transformation in seafarer certification

A landmark moment for MARINA came with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) and Lloyd's Register OneOcean (LROO) to launch a pilot project that explores the integration of a global digital seafarer certification system. The MOU was formalized during the Philippine-hosted cocktail reception at the IMO HTW 11 session on February 12.

The collaboration seeks to modernize the seafarer certification process, ensuring that the Philippines remains in compliance with international maritime standards while improving efficiency and reducing administrative burdens for seafarers, shipping companies, and maritime administrations. MARINA Administrator Sonia Malaluan highlighted that this partnership would create a secure, digital system allowing real-time access to seafarer certificates, ensuring greater control and transparency for key stakeholders.

The pilot project will focus on

integrating the MARINA Integrated Seafarers Management Online (MISMO) System with the international platform, allowing a seamless interface between different maritime administrations, shipping companies, and Port State Control entities. The initiative aims to create a secure and accessible platform for all seafarer certificates, aligning the Philippines with international trends of digital transformation in maritime documentation.

Administrator Malaluan emphasized the significance of this collaboration: "This partnership marks a significant step toward a global platform for a streamlined and seamless certification process for Filipino seafarers, reinforcing our commitment to align with global maritime standards and embracing digital innovations in the maritime industry."

Seafarer Certification: Aligning with International Standards

The Philippines' ongoing efforts to strengthen the recognition and

credibility of its seafarer certifications were further showcased during the presentation of the MARINA Integrated Seafarers Management Online (MISMO) System at the IMO HTW 11 session. STCW Office – Maritime Education and Training Standards Supervisor (METSS) and Certification Division Chief Madiline Joanna Galve delivered a presentation outlining the MISMO system's role in streamlining the seafarer certification process.

The presentation underscored the system's alignment with the Philippines' commitment to combat fraudulent certificates, enhance efficiency, and provide transparency to stakeholders. MARINA's digital approach also aims to build trust and confidence in the competence

In addition to the digitalization efforts, the Philippines expanded its international maritime cooperation by signing an agreement with Georgia to enhance the mutual recognition of seafarer certification. The agreement, signed during the IMO HTW 11 session, aims to facilitate the recognition of seafarers' STCW certificates between the two countries, ensuring compliance with global training, certification, and watchkeeping standards.

MARINA and the LEPL Maritime Transport Agency (MTA) of Georgia agreed to recognize each other's STCW certificates, allowing seafarers from both countries to serve onboard vessels flying their respective flags. This partnership will strengthen maritime

maritime workforce.

Addressing Mental Health Challenges: A New Collaboration with ITF

Recognizing the growing mental health challenges faced by seafarers, MARINA has also taken steps to enhance mental health support for its maritime workforce. A significant milestone was achieved through the signing of an MOU with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) to implement mental health training for faculty members of maritime academies in the Philippines.

Signed by MARINA Administrator Sonia Malaluan and ITF Maritime Operations Coordinator John Canias, the agreement focuses on the development of a training program aimed at equipping maritime educators with the knowledge and tools to address mental health challenges among seafarers. The initiative will integrate the module "Mental Health and Stress: Understanding Early Management and Coping" into the curricula of maritime education programs in the Philippines.

MARINA's commitment to



MARINA Admin Malaluan and MTA Director of Georgia, Akhvlediani

of Filipino seafarers by ensuring the integrity of certificates and documents.

Additionally, the presentation highlighted MARINA's plans to integrate the MISMO system with the Norwegian Maritime Authority (NMA) and ICS, paving the way for increased interoperability among different maritime administrations. This integration will allow for the mutual recognition of seafarers' credentials, enhancing the global mobility of Filipino seafarers and supporting the ease of international seafarer certification.

"The Philippines continues to demonstrate leadership in enhancing seafarer certification through digital innovation. This project is a crucial step in our continuous efforts to modernize and secure seafarer documentation, ensuring Filipino seafarers remain globally competitive," said Administrator Malaluan.

Mutual Recognition of Seafarers' STCW Certificates: Strengthening Maritime Cooperation

cooperation and ensure that seafarers are better equipped to meet the demands of international maritime trade.

The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between MARINA and MTA was signed by MARINA Administrator Sonia Malaluan and MTA Director Aleksandr Akhvlediani. The agreement sets forth provisions for periodic inspections, cooperation in technical and administrative matters, and ongoing dialogue to ensure both countries' seafarers meet international standards.

This bilateral agreement reinforces the Philippines' reputation as a leading supplier of highly skilled and globally recognized seafarers, contributing to the growth of the international



MARINA Admin Malaluan and ITF Coordinator Canias

promoting seafarers' well-being was underscored by Administrator Malaluan: "Mental health is an essential component of a seafarer's overall well-being. By empowering our educators with the necessary knowledge and tools, we are taking a proactive step in safeguarding our maritime workforce."

The initiative aims to enhance faculty members' ability to identify mental health issues early and provide effective coping strategies for seafarers dealing with stress and anxiety. The training will also focus on building resilience among seafarers, helping them navigate the psychological challenges of life at sea. **MW**

■ By DAVE FLORIAN BALANON

The Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), in collaboration with Green Marine Group held a landmark two-day symposium aimed at preparing Filipino seafarers and the broader maritime industry for a decarbonized future.



MARINA decarbonization symposium spotlights seafarers and innovations

The event, titled “Charting Course: Empowering Seafarers for a Decarbonized Shipping Future,” gathered policymakers, shipowners, maritime educators, training providers and experts at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) to discuss regulatory, technological, safety, and human resource developments in the transition to greener shipping.

In her opening address, MARINA Administrator Sonia B. Malaluan emphasized the agency’s commitment to ensuring Filipino seafarers are not left behind in the global shift toward environmentally sustainable shipping practices.

“Our seafarers must be ready for the future of maritime operations. That future is green, and it is digital,” Malaluan said.

She announced the integration of MARINA’s Seafarers Identity Document (SID) and Seafarers Record Book (SRB) appointment systems into the Department of Information and Communications Technology’s (DICT) eGov PH Super App.

The integration promises a more seamless, paperless, and secure application process, with verified government documents made accessible in a single mobile

“Our seafarers must be ready for the future of maritime operations. That future is green, and it is digital.”

— SONIA B. MALALUAN
MARINA Administrator

platform. The transition, expected to be completed by year-end, is part of the national push for digital transformation and ease of access for citizens.

Director Joseph Victor Generato of MARINA’s Management Information Systems Service (MISS) detailed the technical integration of the SID and SRB into the eGov PH platform, aligning with Republic Act 11032 (Ease of Doing Business Act) and the broader vision of the 10-year Maritime Industry Development Plan (MIDP).

The new system will allow centralized and secured document verification from agencies like the PSA, DFA, and NBI, reducing manual uploads and enhancing data authenticity. The digitized platform, accessible via the eGov PH app, aims to streamline appointment bookings,

document processing, and eventually expand to include electronic SID issuance for seafarers abroad.

A demonstration of the app’s functionalities followed, showcasing simplified steps in booking appointments and uploading requirements. Officials urged shipping companies, manning agencies, and seafarers to adapt to the system and reduce reliance on paper-based processes.

Addressing training gaps

Key speakers throughout the symposium underscored the importance of evolving maritime training to match the skill demands of decarbonized shipping.

Competency-based training must extend beyond regulatory compliance to embed sustainability in daily ship operations. “Human behavior alone can influence up to 8.4% in fuel savings,” a panelist noted, emphasizing the power of decision-making and shipboard culture in enhancing energy efficiency.

Maritime institutions were urged to incorporate the International Code of Safety for Ships Using Gases or Other Low-flashpoint Fuels (IGF Code) in their curricula. Experts from Singapore’s Wavelink Maritime



Institute shared best practices in alternative fuel safety training, warning of the risks involved in handling LNG, methanol, and ammonia.

“Complacency kills,” warned Managing Director Mr. Keong Kok Teo, who shared alarming real-world incidents involving LNG bunkering. He stressed that while LNG carriers boast excellent safety records, improper handling in dual-fuel ships and lack of awareness can result in catastrophic consequences.

Technology and Dual-Fuel Engines

Industry leaders shared developments in next-generation ship engines capable of operating on both conventional and alternative fuels. Eric Carlson of MAN Energy Solutions provided a deep dive into their dual-fuel engine portfolio, including methane (LNG), methanol, propane, and ammonia engines.

These engines, powered by the diesel cycle with pilot fuel ignition, offer modular systems that can be retrofitted depending on fuel availability. Carlson highlighted innovations like electronic control systems, cloud-based simulators, and high-pressure vapor injection — developed to comply with emissions standards and reduce methane slip, a potent greenhouse gas.

The ammonia engine, currently in pilot projects across Asia, was noted for its potential to become the preferred alternative fuel due to cost-effective production and zero carbon output when paired with biofuels. However, the extreme toxicity and storage challenges of ammonia demand stringent safety measures.

Throughout the discussions, stakeholders raised logistical, financial, and safety concerns. While training institutions and regulators strengthen frameworks, shipowners face mounting pressure from charterers and global environmental mandates to decarbonize.

Real-world challenges

Throughout the discussions, stakeholders raised logistical, financial, and safety concerns. While training institutions and regulators strengthen frameworks, shipowners face mounting pressure from charterers and global environmental mandates to decarbonize.

Teo highlighted a bulk carrier case where cryogenic fuel leakage caused severe deck cracking and operational losses worth millions. Such incidents underscore the need for precision in bunkering and safety protocols.

“Shipowners don’t always want to decarbonize. They are forced into it by charterers and global economics,” Teo said, citing long-term charter contracts that now mandate emissions reductions.

Future demand

The panel echoed that LNG, methanol, and ammonia all come with varying degrees of risk — flammability, cryogenic damage, toxicity, and emissions management. Advanced safety features such as biometric verification, machine-readable documentation, and automated system alerts are increasingly standard.

Experts agreed that the future of shipping would demand multi-skilled seafarers — competent in fuel management, digital platforms, and emergency response involving hazardous fuels.

On the regulatory front, MARINA reaffirmed its commitment to harmonizing Philippine standards with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), particularly in implementing the IGF Code and supporting the global ambition of net-zero emissions by 2050.

Calls to action

The Singapore Maritime Officers’ Union (SMOU), Green Marine, and local stakeholders called for proactive training interventions. They proposed national awareness programs targeting cadets, licensed officers, and instructors.

“Don’t wait for the IMO to finalize everything. Educate now,” Teo urged, suggesting monthly sessions to improve awareness of fuel systems, safety, and decarbonization.

As the symposium closed, Marina reiterated its vision for a strong, sustainable Philippine maritime sector.

“Digitalization and decarbonization are not optional. They are imperative,” Malaluan concluded. “Together, we will ensure that our seafarers remain among the world’s best — competent, confident, and future-ready.” **MW**

PMC PRES MARK JOSEPH DAVID

JCI Leadership in Maritime



JCI





Promoting responsible leadership

“Technically, our crew is very good, but we need them to be better leaders, not just in the ships or onboard, but also in a way that allows them to contribute more to our community,” says Pal Maritime Corporation (PMC) and JCI Executive Vice President for Asia and the Pacific Mark Joseph David.

He noted that a significant number of their crew members are being promoted to officer positions and assuming leadership roles. Mark believes that when given the right tools, such as those provided by JCI, they will not only become successful seafarers, but also successful individuals in terms of contributing to a better community.

Mark, in collaboration with JCI trainers, has been facilitating conferences for PMC officers and crew, focusing on soft skills including effective communication, teamwork and adaptability.

“When each individual out there are trained the same manner as JCI where you share the same mission, same vision, if they are trained in the JCI way, then we believe that they are able to contribute positively to our future and sustainable growth for our next generations,” Mark stated.

JCI and PMC

JCI is a worldwide leadership non-governmental organization (NGO) committed to supporting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs), a global framework aimed at achieving prosperity, environmental protection, and peace by 2030.

PMC supplies officers and crew to their long-standing principal, Leonhardt & Blumberg Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG, which is modernizing and diversifying its fleet with innovative and efficient design, focusing on reducing emissions.

The company also collaborates

with GBS-Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG, Manx Ocean (member of the Naval Group of Companies), and Alunited Maritime & Trading Pte Ltd.

PMC promotes and trains their seafarers to be responsible leaders, highlighting the shipping industry’s decarbonization goals to address global climate change, such as making environmentally conscious decisions not only at work but also in every place they visit.

Stewardship

Mark assumed PMC’s presidency in 2018, during a business downturn that lasted until the pandemic. However, he noted that the previous two years had been, “incredible for the office in terms of targets and KPIs both financially and crew performance.”

PMC currently manages and man approximately 61 vessels, with a pool of

500-600 Filipino crew.

This increase in the number of vessels, he said, “is the main catalyst for the resurgence of recovery for the company, which provide opportunities mostly for their crew, and for cadets, creating a pool of the next generation of seafarers for Pal Maritime.”

No doubt the 45-year-old family-owned PMC will survive and thrive! Mark leads with excellence and resilience, having been a member of JCI since he was 20 years old and holding numerous leadership roles in the prestigious organization.

Mark was the Jaycee-Paranaque Pambato Chapter, he was Outstanding New Member (2006), Outstanding Director (2008) and Outstanding Regional VP-Metro South (2013). In 2020, Mark was recognized as the Most Outstanding National President at the 2020 JCI World Congress held in Yokohama, Japan, in recognition of his excellent and compassionate leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2003, Mark was elected to the Sangguniang Kabataan (Youth Council) of Barangay Manuyo Dos in Las Pinas City. He served as president of the Rotary Club of Makati-Buendia (2013) and was named Marino World “Most Promising Maritime Leader” (2010).

In 2018, Mark chaired the Ten Outstanding Young Men (TOYM), an annual, national search for youth “whose dedication has significantly contributed to the welfare of country and people, the advancement of their field.”

Mark is spearheading the JCI Asia Pacific Conference which will take place in Ulaanbaatar Mongolia from June 12 to 15, 2025.

His impactful leadership will undoubtedly resonate with his PMC officers, crew, and staff, as it is consistent with his initiatives centered on community development, youth empowerment, and sustainable practices. **MW**



The JCI APAC Board of Directors



Chairman Manny David and family

PAL MARITIME CORPORATION @45

IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY!

Mr. Manuel David and his wife Sonrisa, the Chairman of the Board and Managing Director of Pal Maritime Corporation, renewed their wedding vows after 40 years on November 23 at the Discovery Suites Manila as part of the company's Family Day and 45th anniversary celebrations.

The heartwarming ceremonies of the couple who founded Pal Maritime in 1979 were witnessed by approximately one hundred seafarers, their families, personnel, and industry partners. Mark and Matthew, their sons, and Mariel, their daughter, led the momentous event.

Pal Maritime's family bond, like their marriage, has kept the company survive and thriving for 45 years, and it will persist in the shipping industry for future generations.

"I'm very proud that my Pal Maritime Family is such one big family. Family is not just about blood relations. It encompasses the friendships that we have begun," Mr. David remarked.

"Like a family that mentors and guides us, and the loved ones that support us through thick and thin.



C/E Lorena and family with L & B's Schnitter (second from left) and Bischoff (far right)

Commendation for Garcia and family



Each of you plays a vital role in our corporation."

In his impassioned expression of gratitude to the attendees, Mr. David stated, "Today is a tribute to all of you." This is not for us. This is for you, our

crew members.

He urged the seafarers and their families to bring back the previous company Family Days, which featured performances of seafarers and their families from various regions.



Mrs. David and the staff



Gratitude to L & B's Zahorodniuk



A warm gesture from L & B's Wong (right)

The Pal Maritime's Family Day was revived after a four-year hiatus due to the pandemic and business slowdown.

Mr. David also acknowledged the deceased, stating "Let us remember our departed friends who all the years served us, once part of the family." They are still part of the family, but their friendship is missed today.

The event commenced with a Roman Catholic Mass and included a children's party, parlor games, raffles, live music, and a dance performance by Mrs. David, Matthew, and office staff.

Honors

Themed "Not All Heroes Wear Capes," the Family Day honored the seafarers who have been dedicatedly serving the company for 20 years and above. The families received Posthumous awards for their departed

loved ones.

A special commendation was bestowed to Capt. Nelson Osorio who started serving Pal Maritime as a seafarer and currently as Crewing Manager. An Active commendation was given to Arnulfo Garcia, who have served the company since he was still a bachelor in 1994, and now as the Head of Crewing, now with grandchildren.

Mrs. David remarked, "Our service awardees encompass the meaning of loyalty and we honor them today for all their contributions, service and sacrifices. Thank you for all the years of loyal service to PAL Maritime and to our principals."

Plaques of appreciation were also presented to Leonhardt & Blumberg Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG representatives Ronald Schnitter, Jörg Bischoff, Ionnes Wong, and Ivan

Zahorodniuk, for their presence at the event and "in recognition and sincere appreciation of their contributions to the continued success of Pal Maritime Corporation and our Filipino seafarers."

Pal Maritime also works with other principals GBS-Shipmanagement GmbH & Co. KG Manx Ocean (part of the Naval Group of Companies), and Alunited Maritime & Trading Pte Ltd.

Special message

Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go sent his video message to the Pal Maritime family.

Sa mga mahal nating seafarers, saludo po ako sa sakripisyo at dedikasyong ibinigay ninyo para sa inyong mga pamilya, at para sa ekonomiya ng ating bansa. Hindi biro ang buhay sa dagat pero dahil sa inyong pagsisikap at tiyaga na binigyan ng magandang kinabukasan ang inyong mga mahal sa buhay.

"To our beloved seafarers, I salute you for the sacrifice and dedication you have made for your families, and for the economy of our country. Life at sea is not easy, but because of your hard work and perseverance, you have given your loved ones a bright future."

Senator Go is the chairman of the Senate Committees on Health, Sports and Youth. He is a benefactor of Pal Maritime, providing scholarships to student-athletes through the National Academy of Sports (NAS) program, which he co-authored and co-sponsored.

Future proofing

Prior to the Family Day, Pal Maritime President Mark Joseph David presided over the company's Annual Crew Conference on November 22 at Discovery Suites Manila.

The conference rolled on the theme "Preparing for Success," which included topics on leadership and teamwork, effective communication, and safety and health. **MW**



The Happy Family conference

Maritime Leaders Discuss the Future of AI in Shipping

■ By DAVE FLORIAN BALANON

Maritime industry leaders gathered virtually on February 13, for the second installment of the “Tech Tides: AI in Shipping” webinar series, hosted by Mare Forum and Rotterdam Maritime Capital of Europe. The event brought together global experts to discuss the transformative potential of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the maritime sector.

Held from 11:00 to 12:00 Central European Time, the roundtable focused on the opportunities and challenges of implementing AI across various aspects of the shipping industry, including safety, efficiency, and regulatory compliance. As the maritime sector evolves, AI has emerged as a crucial tool for optimizing operations and driving innovation.

AI's Role in Maritime Operations

The webinar kicked off with a discussion on the challenges surrounding AI's adoption in the maritime industry. Moderator Mike Konstantinidis, Managing Director of Vessel Optimisation at ZeroNorth A/S, emphasized the importance of aligning stakeholder efforts to overcome barriers such as regulatory hurdles and integration issues.

“The challenge with AI in shipping isn't just about technology – it's about the industry's willingness to adopt it,” Konstantinidis said. “AI can improve efficiency and safety, but integrating it into existing systems remains a challenge.”

Erik van Gastel, Fleet Director at Stolt Tankers BV, highlighted AI's potential in predictive maintenance and route optimization. “AI can provide smarter solutions, but it's crucial that these technologies are scalable and can seamlessly integrate into current operations,” Gastel noted.

Key Themes in AI Implementation

The roundtable covered several key themes, including autonomous ships, predictive maintenance, cybersecurity, and AI's impact on chartering decisions.

Autonomous Ships and Safety

The discussion on autonomous vessels focused on the potential benefits and challenges of integrating AI for safety. Chris van Veelen, Head of Data & Analytics at Samskip, explained, “The future of autonomous ships is coming sooner than expected. However, AI must be capable of handling unpredictable factors like weather changes and mechanical failures to ensure safety.”

Predictive Maintenance

AI's ability to reduce operational downtime through predictive maintenance was also a key point of discussion. “AI can help minimize unscheduled maintenance,” said Ronald Root, Manager of Data and Analytics at VAN OORD. “However, shipowners must be prepared for the investment and training required to adopt these technologies.”

Cybersecurity Risks

As the maritime industry becomes increasingly digitized, the panelists addressed concerns over AI-driven cybersecurity risks. Dr. Karen Sumser-Lupson, Commissioner of the African Maritime Safety and Security Agency (AMSSA), warned, “The more dependent we become on AI and digital systems, the higher the risk of cyberattacks. Robust cybersecurity measures are essential to protect vessel control systems and sensitive data.”

Ethical and Workforce Impacts

A key topic of the webinar was the ethical use of AI in decision-making and its impact on the workforce.

Panelists agreed that AI must be implemented responsibly, especially when decisions affect cargo prioritization or labor assignments.

Dr. Sumser-Lupson stressed the need for ethical standards, saying, “AI can bring efficiencies, but it must not exacerbate inequalities, especially in regions where shipping jobs are critical to the economy.”

The discussion also touched on how automation and AI could reduce crew sizes. Panelists highlighted the importance of retraining and upskilling seafarers for more complex, supervisory roles as AI continues to advance.

Environmental and Regulatory Challenges

Panelists also examined how AI could help the maritime industry meet international decarbonization goals. “AI can optimize fuel consumption and improve vessel performance,” said Chris van Veelen. “However, it's important that smaller operators have access to these technologies as well.”

The roundtable also addressed the regulatory challenges posed by the rapid adoption of AI. “AI adoption is outpacing the development of international regulations,” said Oscar van Veen, Director of Innovations at Port of Rotterdam. “Regulators need to balance fostering innovation with maintaining safety standards.”

AI and the Future of Global Trade

In the final segment, the panel explored how AI might reshape global trade dynamics. Ronald Root, Head of Data and Analytics at Van Oord, warned, that AI could favor large shipping companies with more resources, potentially leaving smaller operators at a disadvantage.

“Smaller companies may struggle to compete unless they can access the same AI technologies,” Root said. **MW**



Crew Connectivity a “Powerful Tool” Requiring Strategic Deployment

SPECIAL FEATURE



Panelists at an Inmarsat Maritime ‘Thriving in the Digital Age’ seminar highlighted the power of connectivity to promote a happy and healthy environment for seafarers while advising a strategic approach to its deployment.

The evolution of maritime connectivity is a positive development for an industry striving to incentivise a new generation of cadets. While overuse can lead to stress and fatigue among crew members, onboard internet is a tool for good when deployed strategically.

This was the consensus among a panel of seafarers and other industry experts at a recent Inmarsat Maritime ‘Thriving in the Digital Age’ seminar. Held to coincide with Singapore Maritime Week 2025, the session explored the intersection of connectivity and crew welfare aboard the ‘floating home’.

Peter Schellenberger, Director and Founder of supply chain and maritime consulting network Novamaxis, described high-speed connectivity as a “given” that shipping companies today “have to learn how to deal with” if they hope to attract and retain the best seafaring talent.

Social media in particular is a “very powerful tool” that the industry should look to leverage to inspire and motivate young cadets, suggested Carl King, Communication Consultant at Seafarer Social.

“We always talk about these brand-new technologies introducing these fantastic new AI integrations, and I’m all for it,” he said. “But if you open a seafarer’s phone and look at the most-used applications, it’s the same five that everybody else is using: Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and so on. We as an industry should be capitalising on these platforms to communicate with our next generation of seafarers.”

Leading the way in the emerging field of maritime social media are chief engineer Mark Phillip Laurilla and electrotechnical officer (ETO) Mary Jane Siy Chuan.

Mark Phillip Laurilla – also known by his online alias ‘Chief MAKOI’ – hosts a YouTube

channel documenting life at sea. Launched in 2017, the channel now has over 400,000 subscribers, each video attracting around a million views. However, when it first began gaining traction, his company “panicked” and wanted him to shut it down. “Fast forward a few years – especially during the pandemic – they suddenly realised that they needed social media for visibility,” he said.

The advancement in vessel connectivity that has enabled seafarers to become social media stars is not lost on Chief Makoi, for whom “instant video calling” represents a significant upgrade on the “snail mail” and “monthly phone calls” he relied on early in his career.

Mary Jane Siy Chuan, who embarked on her first voyage in 2022, is a recent entrant into the world of shipboard vlogging but already has tens of thousands of followers on Facebook. It was her colleagues, pointing out that a female ETO was a rarity in the industry, who encouraged her to share videos of her work aboard ship – an idea she embraced “to inform and motivate other females, or even males, to become an ETO”.

Even in her relatively young career, Mary Jane has noticed significant progress in the availability of onboard Internet. However, she also acknowledges considerable room for improvement.

From conversations with fellow seafarers in the cargo sector, she reported that the majority still encounter issues with coverage – “specifically in the middle of the sea”. Most,

she added, receive limited data allowances – around 100–200 megabytes per day or even as low as one or two gigabytes per month – as employers seek to tackle “fatigue” and “mental health issues” attributed to the overuse of social media. “We need to improve the collaboration between crew members and shore office because a lot of us don’t feel like we’re being heard,” she said.

According to Carl King, the challenges faced by Mary Jane Siy Chuan and her colleagues demonstrate a need for shipping companies to place more faith in vessel captains. “Why don’t we put the trust back in the captains?” he asked. “Why is it, as a shore-based organisation, we should have the power to switch on connectivity like a tap? Isn’t it the captains’ job to make that judgement?”

With responsibility for providing – and restricting – Internet access, captains may be better placed to promote a happy and harmonious environment on board their ships.

Drawing on personal experience at sea, Chief Makoi reported: “If we have a long voyage, and we have a weekend, we try to organise an impromptu party or a special dinner, and we require the crew to attend and shut off the Wi-Fi.” By removing Internet access for “one or two hours”, captains encourage crew to interact rather than being “locked up in their own cabins”, he explained.

Limiting internet access is one way of fostering crew interaction; another is using that connectivity to bring seafarers together in the same space. Peter Schellenberger pointed to the provision of “live-streaming TV in the mess room” as a means of minimising onboard isolation.

In a further example of where connectivity is being used to promote crew welfare, Peter Schellenberger explained how the technology is enabling a “pre-emptive, holistic approach” to medical care in which “the vessel can call doctors as many times as they want”.

He added that Novamaxis is trialling an AI-based solution that presents seafarers with an anonymous questionnaire on their well-being when they connect to Wi-Fi through personal devices. This, he explained, allows companies to “build up a database of the physical and mental state of the vessel” and identify where any intervention is required.

Ultimately, the panelists agreed that while onboard connectivity is critical to inspiring, incentivising, and informing a new generation of seafarers, companies must carefully consider how they deploy and provide it to ensure the floating home is also a happy home for its residents.



Celebrating 75 Years of Greek-PH ties on Greek National Day

The 75-year history of Greek diplomatic relations with the Philippines was underscored during the commemoration of Greek Independence Day in Manila. Ambassador to the Philippines Ioannis Pediotis and his wife Mrs. Alikí Pappás hosted a grand reception on March 24th at the Fairmont Hotel in Makati City.

Greek shipowners employ more than 30,000 Filipino seafarers, recognizing their vital contribution to the success of Greek shipping industry. Diplomatic corps, government officials, businessmen and maritime executives attended the event.

The program commenced with the lively singing of the Greek and Filipino National Anthems by children who were carrying the flags of Greece and the Philippines. The Ballet Philippines' dancers performed an excerpt of Ang

Panaginip, choreographed by Russian artistic director Mikhail Martynyuk.

The festive event featured a duet of Sydney based leading violinist Melissa Voyias and internationally acclaimed bouzouki performer Tommy Tsonis. Plates were smashed on stage as Greeks and Filipinos danced. Greek plate smashing is one of the most exciting and popular traditions in Greece. Everyone enjoyed authentic Greek cuisine, with many of the ingredients shipped n in directly from Greece. **mw**



■ By DAVE FLORIAN BALANON

Höegh Autoliners held a naming ceremony for its third Aurora Class vessel, MV Höegh Australis, on January 31, 2025, at the Manila South Harbor. The event highlighted the company's ongoing fleet expansion and its long-term shift toward lower-emission shipping operations.

HÖEGH AUSTRALIS A Symbol of Sustainability and Partnership

The MV Höegh Australis is a Norwegian-flagged pure car and truck carrier (PCTC) with a carrying capacity of 9,100 car equivalent units (CEU). It is equipped with a liquefied natural gas (LNG) propulsion system and is part of the company's Aurora Class—a series of 12 multi-fuel and zero-carbon-ready vessels under construction by China Merchants Heavy Industry (Jiangsu) Co., Ltd.

The Aurora Class vessels are designed to reduce carbon emissions per transported vehicle by approximately 58% compared to conventional car carriers. The first eight ships in the series will operate using LNG, while the remaining four, scheduled for delivery in 2027, will be equipped to run on ammonia fuel. All vessels in the class are built to comply with future zero-emission standards as part of the company's goal to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

The MV Höegh Australis was already loaded with vehicles from East Asia and en route to Europe at the time of the event. The ship follows the launches of MV Höegh Aurora and MV Höegh Borealis in 2024, and precedes the fourth vessel, MV Höegh Sunlight, named earlier in January 2025.



Höegh Autoliners top executives, ship's officers and guests from the public and private sectors.



MARINA Administrator Sonia Malaluan receives a memento from Höegh Autoliners Chair, Leif Høegh

The decision to hold the naming ceremony in Manila reflects the company's long-term presence in the Philippines. Höegh Autoliners began employing Filipino seafarers in 1983 and established its dedicated manning agency, Höegh Fleet Services Phils. Inc., in 1997. The company currently operates three affiliated entities in the country—Höegh Autoliners Regional Operating Headquarters, Höegh Fleet Services Phils. Inc., and Höegh Technical Management Inc.—employing more than 220 Filipino personnel across sea-based and shore-based operations.

Company Chairperson Leif Høegh stated during the event that Manila was selected for the naming due to the company's longstanding ties with the Philippines. Chief Operating Officer Sebjørn Dahl also noted the contribution of Filipino crew members to the global operations of Höegh Autoliners.

The vessel is commanded by Captain Brian Capuyan Batiquin and Chief Engineer Lito Monguez, both Filipino nationals. According to both officers, the Aurora Class introduces operational updates in fuel systems, emissions compliance, and shipboard



(From left) Filipino pride Capt. Dennis Desabille, Head of Technical Management, C/E Monguez and, Capt. Batiquin

technology that align with international environmental standards.

The Manila ceremony was attended by company executives, maritime industry stakeholders, and government representatives. Attendees were given a technical tour of the vessel, focusing on its fuel efficiency features, onboard systems, and cargo handling capabilities.

Höegh Autoliners stated that the Aurora Class project forms part of its broader strategy to modernize its fleet, meet international decarbonization regulations, and improve transport efficiency. The vessels will be deployed along the company's global trade routes, with adjustments based on fuel infrastructure availability and port regulations. **MW**



MOL Magsaysay Holds Graduation for Second Batch

■ By DAVE FLORIAN BALANON

The MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy (MMMA) held its second commencement exercises on February 18, celebrating the graduation of 179 cadets who are now ready to take on careers in the global shipping industry. The event, held at the MMMA campus, carried the theme “Over the Horizon: Filipino Mariners Ready for the Brave New Maritime World,” emphasizing the academy’s commitment to producing highly skilled, disciplined, and globally competitive maritime professionals.

Distinguished guests, faculty, industry leaders, and families gathered to witness the milestone, highlighting MMMA’s reputation as one of the country’s premier maritime institutions. Senator Emmanuel “Manny” Pacquiao, served as the Guest of Honor, along with other esteemed speakers and guests, including Ms. Doris Magsaysay Ho, President and CEO of Magsaysay Group of Companies, Mr. Toshiaki Tanaka, Executive Vice President of

Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, and Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Endo Kazuya.

MMMA’s Continued Pursuit of Excellence

In his opening remarks, MMMA President Dr. Michael Morales acknowledged the resilience and dedication of the graduates, commending their perseverance despite the challenges faced throughout their

cadetship.

“You and your parents took a chance on a brand-new, untested maritime school,” Morales said. “Now, we stand proud knowing that MMMA is ranked second out of 45 participating maritime schools in the Maritime Schools Assessment Program and has passed the stringent Japanese government audit, allowing our graduates to work aboard Japanese-flagged vessels without further examinations.”

Morales assured the graduates that their years of rigorous training, both in the classroom and at sea, have prepared them for the realities of life in the maritime industry. “We have kept our promise to provide a world-class education. Now, it is your turn to uphold the values of discipline, excellence, and service in your professional careers,” he emphasized.

Magsaysay’s Commitment to Filipino Seafarers

Ms. Doris Magsaysay Ho, a key figure in the Philippine maritime industry, took the stage to express her confidence in the graduates and reaffirm Magsaysay’s dedication to supporting Filipino mariners.

“Our collaboration with Mitsui O.S.K. Lines (MOL) ensures that cadets receive top-tier training and career opportunities,” Magsaysay Ho said.



A MMMA officials and guests greet the graduates
B Cum Laude Moriones inspires
C Senator Manny Pacquiao receives a memento

"The maritime industry is a critical force in global trade, and I encourage you to embrace this journey with excellence and integrity. You are not just seafarers; you are key contributors to the global economy."

She also recognized the vital role of MMMA's faculty, mentors, and industry partners in shaping the graduates into competent professionals, adding that Magsaysay remains committed to advancing opportunities for Filipino seafarers worldwide.

Senator Manny Pacquiao Inspires Graduates

Guest of Honor Senator Emmanuel "Manny" Pacquiao delivered an impassioned speech, drawing parallels between his own struggles and the journey of the graduating cadets.

"Life at sea is unpredictable, just like life itself. You will face strong waves, long nights, and challenges that will test your strength," Pacquiao said. "But great mariners don't fear rough waters; they learn how to navigate through them."

Pacquiao, known for his humble beginnings and meteoric rise to international success, encouraged the graduates to remain steadfast in their pursuit of excellence. "I never imagined I would achieve what I have today, but through hard work, faith, and perseverance, I overcame obstacles. You must do the same as you embark on your maritime careers," he told them.

The senator's speech was met with

"You and your parents took a chance on a brand-new, untested maritime school.... Now, we stand proud knowing that MMMA is ranked second out of 45 participating maritime schools in the Maritime Schools Assessment Program and has passed the stringent Japanese government audit, allowing our graduates to work aboard Japanese-flagged vessels without further examinations."

— **Dr. MICHAEL MORALES**
MMMA President

resounding applause, as his words of motivation resonated with the cadets who are about to embark on the next phase of their professional journey.

Recognizing Excellence: The Graduates' Journey

The graduating class consisted of cadets from two disciplines: Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering (BSMarE) and Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation (BSMT). They received their degrees from MMMA President Dr. Michael Morales, Chief Engineer Michael G. Delos Reyes, and other key officials, marking the culmination of years of intense training and study.

One of the highlights of the ceremony

was the valedictory address by Cum Laude Cdt. Shaina Moriones, who represented the Class of 2025. She spoke about the challenges of cadet life, the sacrifices they made, and how their training at MMMA shaped them into resilient, skilled, and disciplined maritime professionals.

"This academy did not just train us; it transformed us," Moriones said. "We learned that success is not just about knowledge, but about discipline, resilience, and teamwork. Every challenge we faced was not a barrier, but a stepping stone towards becoming the professionals we aspire to be."

She also reminded her fellow graduates that their faith and determination would serve as their guiding light at sea. "Life at sea is unpredictable. Calm today, a storm tomorrow. But we must always trust in our training, our discipline, and in God, who will guide us through any challenge," she said.

A New Chapter: Pledge of Loyalty and Alumni Induction

Following the awarding of diplomas, the graduates took their Pledge of Loyalty to MMMA and were formally inducted into the MMMA Alumni Association.

As part of the symbolic transition from cadet life to professional maritime careers, the graduates removed an item of their uniform, signifying their readiness to move forward as full-fledged seafarers.

The event concluded with a surprise video presentation prepared by the academy, celebrating the journey of the graduates, their experiences at MMMA, and their aspirations for the future. Families and faculty members shared in the emotional moment, marking the end of one chapter and the beginning of another for the graduates.

A Bright Future for Filipino Mariners

As MMMA's newest graduates set sail into the maritime world, they carry with them the academy's values of discipline, excellence, and service. With the backing of industry leaders, world-class training, and a strong support system, these young Filipino mariners are now prepared to take on the challenges and opportunities of the global shipping industry.

The MOL Magsaysay Maritime Academy continues to solidify its position as a premier institution for maritime education, ensuring that Filipino seafarers remain at the forefront of the industry. **MW**



(From left): MARINA's Lugo, Magsaysay's Roño, Döhle Seafront's Baguilat, Green Jakobsen's Olano, and Arcadia's Chatzikampouris.

Photo courtesy of Safety4Sea

2025 SAFETY4SEA Manila Examines Seafarer Welfare, Training, and Regulatory Challenges

■ By DAVE FLORIAN BALANON

The 2025 SAFETY4SEA Manila Forum was held on April 3 at the Sheraton Manila Hotel. The forum focused on current challenges in maritime safety, crew welfare, regulatory developments, and the evolving demands of seafarer training. It gathered professionals from across the maritime sector including regulatory authorities, ship management firms, training institutions, and active seafarers.

Keynote Discussions: National Policy and Industry Direction

Presca Lee Lugo, Maritime Education and Training Standard Supervisor of the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), delivered a keynote address outlining current government initiatives. She discussed the implementation of Republic Act No. 12021, known as the Magna Carta for Filipino Seafarers, and emphasized the Philippines' role in the ongoing global review of the STCW Convention. Lugo also noted efforts to integrate digitalization and sustainability into the country's maritime education and training systems.

Marlon Roño, President of Magsaysay People Resources Corporation and Executive Chairman of Magsaysay Maritime Corporation, followed with a presentation on developments in crew management. He highlighted mental health awareness, diversity, and structured career development as key priorities for maintaining a competent and resilient workforce.

Panel Sessions: Seafarer Performance, Wellness, and Training Reform

The first panel session addressed seafarer performance and human factors. Atty. Iris Baguilat, President of Döhle Seafront, emphasized the importance of soft skills and leadership development in complementing technical training. Capt. Allan Raymund Olano, General Manager at Green Jakobsen, explained how organizational processes and clear

goal-setting influence performance onboard. Capt. Fanis Chatzikampouris of Arcadia Shipmanagement examined how international regulations such as MLC, STCW, and OCIMF SIRE 2.0 shape safety practices and compliance requirements.

The second panel focused on wellness and resilience. Capt. Sundeep Sequeira of OneCare Group discussed the importance of consistent mental health support and wellness strategies onboard vessels. Dr. Monique Mendoza of Nordic Medical Clinic highlighted the value of preventive care and organizational health frameworks. Marville Cullen Espago of ISWAN Philippines presented data showing increased psychological stress among seafarers due to real-time exposure to family issues through onboard connectivity.

The third panel featured seafarers who shared firsthand accounts of working at sea. Speakers included Third Mate Eleniña Paz Adriano, Second Engineer Denver Agsalda, Third Officer Jack Carandang, Third Officer Shaina Moriones, Chief Engineer Mark Joseph Paglinawan, and Chief Officer Ryan Reynes. They discussed limited shore leave, long working hours, and the difficulty of maintaining work-life balance. They also addressed how the maritime profession could better support early-career seafarers through clearer pathways, improved onboard conditions, and stronger mentorship.

The final panel examined training systems and future skill requirements. Capt. Nicolo Terrei, Director of I.M.A.

Assessment and Training Center, discussed the gap between existing training curricula and operational realities. Dr. Angelica Baylon of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) emphasized the importance of aligning education with industry demands. Leo Bolivar of International Registries highlighted the need for Crew Resource Management (CRM) in developing soft skills. Giovanni Tuapin of Intership Crew Philippines and Capt. Pol Winston Haboc of PHILCAMSAT both underscored the importance of updating training programs to include communication, adaptability, and decision-making as core competencies.

Human Capital and Long-Term Industry Stability

A focused presentation was delivered by Apo Belokas, Managing Editor of SAFETY4SEA, who discussed the long-term value of investing in human capital. He stated that seafarers should be treated as assets rather than cost centers. According to Belokas, structured investment in training, wellness programs, and leadership development leads to measurable improvements in retention, performance, and safety compliance.

Conclusion

The 2025 SAFETY4SEA Manila Forum presented key issues affecting the maritime workforce. Discussions highlighted that regulatory compliance alone does not address all operational challenges. Speakers identified the need for improved mental health support, training that matches current onboard practices, and the inclusion of soft skills in seafarer development. The forum underscored that the effectiveness of maritime operations depends on the health, skills, and preparedness of seafarers. **MW**



Cardiff's
SIRC alumni
in MAAP

Cardiff alumni visit MAAP

The alumni from Cardiff University's Seafarers International Research Centre (SIRC) Nippon Foundation, paid a visit to the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) campus in Mariveles Bataan on February 20.

They were warmly welcomed by MAAP President Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos and External Relations Director Dr. Angelica Baylon.

The 15 members of the SIRC-

Nippon Foundation Fellowship participants from different countries toured MAAP's world-class facilities and discussed with the school's officers, faculty, and students about the educational opportunities it

provides for aspiring Filipino marine officers.

SIRC Coordinator Dr. Nelson Tugo thanked VAdm Santos and described the visit as the highlight of their five-day alumni event in the country, which included in-house lectures, seminars and institutional visits.

Founded in 1883, Cardiff University is established as one of Britain's leading research universities. Its' SIRC conducts global research on occupational health and safety issues for seafarers, as part of the School of Social Sciences. **MW**



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