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SOME FOREIGN-BASED PRINCIPALS OF local manning agencies are starting to feel the pinch over the rising trend of bogus claims of Filipino seafarers, mostly raising the costs involved in claims and compensation. While the costs involved in processing these cases are not insignificant, the losses resulting from the phenomenon constitute a serious concern.

In his e-mail to CF Sharp, the fleet management official of the Arab shipowner openly expressed his company’s concern over the recent trend of Filipino crewmembers using every possible opportunity to convert injury or illness cases into permanent disability compensation cases running into tens of thousands of dollars.

“Our company has always been concerned about the welfare of our crew members and all sickness and injury cases are closely monitored through our local correspondents for treatment and recovery. We also go to great lengths to compensate and bear the cost of complete recovery of any crew member genuinely needing assistance. Unfortunately, we find that a large number of crew members seem to be abusing this facility granted to them under the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) terms and conditions,” he posed.

“We also know for a fact that majority of Filipino crew members who go in this direction are coerced by lawyers who will eventually collect a good part of the compensation amount from unsuspecting seafarers,” he continued.

“It is also our utmost concern that the recovery of any crew member genuinely entitled to it must be guaranteed without any risk of fraud or abuse,” the official added.

“We also note that they draw sick wages for months on the apparent pretext of no improvement in medical condition while claiming non-recovery,” the official added.

“Bogus seafarer claims are nothing but larceny. Practically every manning agency has had its fair share of the woes. The problem has become severe that when it reaches critical mass, we can expect shipowners to finally say: ‘Enough is enough! Goodbye Philippines,’” Mr. Rocha pointed out.

“What makes the problem worse is the fact that it contains the most dangerous element, which is corruption in the local seafaring industry’s legal system, with the NLRC at the center of it all. There is something really rotten in the system,” he stressed.

“Bogus claims running into tens of thousands of dollars. We also know for a fact that majority of Filipino crew members who go in this direction are coerced by lawyers who will eventually collect a good part of the compensation amount from unsuspecting seafarers,” he continued.

“This phenomenon is not uncommon among other companies employing Filipino seafarers. I also understand that some of them have already started investigating the possibility of recruiting non-Filipino crew,” he disclosed.

“We have invested heavily in the training of Filipino seafarers, both officers and ratings, and we would like to retain them in our pool. However, with the rapid increase in claims, we are now being forced to consider otherwise. Still, we would like to know, what steps are being taken by the local maritime industry to address this problem and if the stakeholders see any solution in sight,” the letter concluded.

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Fresh from venturing into the supply of quality seafarers for the offshore industry for a European-based principal, C.S.C. Manila, Inc. continued its expansion as it diversified again into the supply of Filipino officers and ratings for container vessels of a European-based shipowner and operator.

Currently manning handy-size bulk carriers and various offshore vessels, C.S.C. has laid down the groundwork for the commencement of its task of supplying various handy-size feeder container vessels registered under the Dutch registry with full Filipino crew complement onboard.

Tough as it is to be able to source qualified and competent officers and ratings for any type of vessel, C.S.C. is optimistic that its good name in the industry will entice experienced container vessel officers and ratings to join the fold of the company.

As previously done on its bulk carrier fleet, whose cadet program has now produced Chief Officers and 2nd Engineers for its own vessels, a Cadet program will similarly be institutionalized in the container fleet of its European principal to be able to train and produce its future officer pool.

C.S.C. therefore welcomes experienced container vessel officers and ratings to consider visiting their offices to explore career path opportunities, as well as those who have adequate experience and competence for bulk carriers and offshore vessels.

Local shipbuilding giant Tsuneishi Heavy Industries (Cebu) Inc. (THICI), which delivered its 113th newbuilding only last July 12, 2010 to its shipowner, is set to deliver again another 180,000-deadweight ton bulk carrier, the SC-185 on November 11, 2010.

By far, SC-185 is the biggest bulk carrier ever built in the Philippines. Established in 1994, the shipbuilding facility of THICI is located in Balamban, Cebu.

The company has built various merchant vessels of 100,000 deadweight tons and above and delivered them to different shipowning companies in different parts of the world.

THICI uses the same high quality shipbuilding technologies and standards as those being used by its parent company, Tsuneishi in Japan.

SC-185 is by far the biggest bulk carrier built by THICI. It has a length overall (LOA) of 291.90 meters, breadth of 45 meters, depth of 24 meters, and a draft of 18.04 meters.

The vessel has a gross tonnage of 92,900 tons. It has MAN-B&W 7S65ME-C MARK7 17,690kw engine with a service speed of 15.2 knots.

THICI is a joint venture between the Tsuneishi Group of Japan and the Aboitiz Group of the Philippines.

THICI’s main facilities are located in a 55-hectare land area in Balamban consisting of a Slipway No. 1, Slipway No. 2, Floating Docks for Ship Repair, a Warehouse, an Assembly Factory, a Hardcover Factory, a Pipe Factory, a Paint Shop, a Machine Shop, Floating Cranes, and an Office Building.

The international certifications of the company including ISO 9002 issued by Nippon Kaiji Kyokai in December 1998; ISO 9001:2000 issued again by Nippon Kaiji Kyokai on May 28, 2002; and ISO 14001 issued as well by Nippon Kaiji Kyokai in November 2003 are testaments to the deep commitment of THICI in upholding the highest quality standards demanded by its customers.

THICI is also a strong advocate of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and sees it as a pre-requisite for building a successful enterprise.

Apart from being the single largest employer in West Cebu, THICI is involved in many other CSR endeavors including education, health care, community development and enterprise development in the province.

C.S.C. Expansion Continues

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The Industry’s Silent Killer

The latest manpower deployment figure from the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) indicates that Filipino seafarers officially account for 32% of the global seaborne workforce. This means that for every three seafarers in any ocean-going vessel in the world, at least one is a Filipino.

Indeed, the Philippines is, by far, the undisputed world’s seafaring capital bar none.

There may have been several threats, whether real or imagined, posed by some seafarer-deploying countries in recent years but none of those mustered enough strength or deployment figures to even give stakeholders of the local maritime industry a couple of sleepless nights.

The Philippine seafaring industry enjoys a formidable and comfortable lead over other seafarer-supplying countries that many in the global maritime industry widely perceived that only its own (un)doing would dislodge it from its lofty status.

Many in the local maritime industry have in fact become too complacent of the Philippines’ reputation that they have already overlooked the fact that being No. 1 actually comes with it an even bigger challenge of maintaining the top spot not only in the eyes of other seafarer-supplying nations but more importantly in the consciousness of foreign shipowners the world over.

There is certainly more pressure on No. 1 to maintain the top spot compared to a determined No. 2 or a very patient No. 3 in shooting for the top. No. 1 obviously has more to lose whereas No. 2 and rest of the pack only have something to gain.

There have been cases of implosions in the local maritime industry in the past that have tarnished its reputation a bit as the world’s seafaring capital but those were merely dents or little chinks in an otherwise solid armor. Every stakeholder worth his or her salt is very much aware of the issues that have hounded the maritime industry like recurring illnesses especially those involving substandard maritime schools and training centers, fake training certificates, redundant training, excessive seafarer documentation and unnecessary fees, among others. Simply put, the industry has become too bankable that every enterprising folk known in the business or even outside of it has developed an acute sense of trying to milk the sector for whatever ounce he can get.

One perennial problem that the local maritime industry has had to deal with since practically time immemorial is bogus seafarer claims which has become a lucrative business within the flawed legal system of the sector, thanks in part to the very controversial decisions of labor arbiters and commissioners of the National Labor Relations Commission (NLRC). Controversial in the sense that seafarer claims cases these days are no longer decided upon or resolved based on the facts and merits of the case but merely on the earning potentials of those legally involved.

It would not even take a bar topnotcher to figure out that the NLRC has had a string of cases decided in favor of Filipino seafarers filing for claims, with eager and greedy ambulant chasers on the background pulling theTURN TO PAGE 49

Maritime Manpower to Maritime Power?

D. Jose Rizal predicted that in 100 years, the Philippines would become a maritime power. His prediction was partly correct but not quite accurate because the Philippines actually became a maritime manpower country.

The challenge to eventually become a maritime power is on and this column, from its soundings is proposing a five-point maritime agenda to begin with.

1. The creation of a Philippine Maritime Research Institute (PMRI)

The Philippines is, no doubt, a maritime country and an archipelago. What is doubtful is its ability to develop as a global maritime powerhouse. The Philippines is haunted by the world’s worst maritime disasters year in, year out, despite its ability to deploy qualified and competent seafarers to the world’s shipping. The creation of the PMRI through an Executive Order or Administrative Order or by an enabling law will spark a new beginning in the history of the Philippines as a maritime country.

2. The Philippines as a Maritime Training and Assessment Capital of the World

The Philippines is now enjoying its status as the Manning Capital of the World. The challenge of going beyond and becoming the Maritime Training and Assessment Capital of the World is an opportunity for the Philippines to respond to this challenge by making it official as part of the Mission and Vision of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

3. Manning Industry to Evolve into Full Ship Management

The manning or crewing industry is a lucrative business. It provides the avenue for increased remittances of US dollars for the country’s reserves thereby helping build the economy. It will be noted with interest that manning or crewing is one of the basic levels of operations in a shipping business. The Philippines now enjoys the wealth of experienced Filipino seafarers in management level positions onboard, executive positions in shipping offices, and Filipino marine superintendents deployed all over the world. It is high time that the Philippines take it to the next level – the ship management industry. All it will take is an MC from MARINA coupled with the political will strengthened by unconditional support from the leadership of the Philippines.

4. Philippine Registry as the Most Bankable

The Philippines is the biggest supply of seafarers in the world shipping fleet. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the seafaring force presently deployed at sea all over the world are Filipinos. The Philippines can unleash its strength using its maritime manpower to become a maritime power.

5. Maritime Safety in Philippine Domestic waters - From “Blame Culture to Safety Culture”

This is an advocacy that will pave the way for maritime development in Philippine waters. Improved maritime safety means improved port services, improved vessel safety, improved multimodal services, improved freight rates, more employment and more economic movement in our domestic waters. The Philippine maritime culture can evolve from blame culture to safety culture. This will mean that all concerned, particularly the authorities, will focus on solutions to prevent maritime incidents/accidents from happening via new policies, standards, and realistic rules and regulations. The creation of a new Philippine Admiralty Court will be a giant step toward that direction.
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After a couple of years of hiatus from the National Maritime Week celebration, the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) joined the 2010 edition of the week-long industry event by having its own booth and co-sponsoring several activities at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center, in cooperation with the Luneta Seafarers Welfare Foundation (LUSWELF) from September 21 to 25, 2010. Top photo shows UFS Director Rey Juego joining staff Maricar Songcayauon and Cherry Ann Oguez and UFS member C/E Allan Danghil, along with several of the union’s volunteer cadets in manning the union’s booth. C/E Danghil used to be a cadet volunteer of the UFS and is now the Crewing Manager of Foscon Shipmanagement, Inc. He also delivered a speech on behalf of Engr. Ramirez during the first day of the event. Lower photo shows the UFS president in his element while making a speech before the Filipino seafarer crowd at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center, fresh from the airport coming from an out-of-town trip. As usual, Ramirez elicited great interest among the Filipino seafarers in Luneta.

The UFS also actively took part in the meeting with the officers of International Coastal Clean Up that also saw the participation of other NGOs and other private entities. The participation of UFS in this year’s edition of the coastal cleanup was in support of the participation of INC Navigation Company Philippines, Inc.

The UFS President was also actively involved during the press conference hosted by the Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) headed by Atty. Persida V. Rueda-Acosta regarding the retrieved cadavers of victims of MV Princess of the Stars, detailing as well several cases of mistaken identities. Also with them was running priest Father Robert Reyes.

Several stakeholders of the local maritime industry were recently in an exploratory meeting with Capt. Dwain E. Hutchinson, Deputy Director of the Bahamas Maritime Authority, to discuss matters related to training and certification of seafarers onboard Bahamas-flagged vessels on October 29, 2010 at the Manila Yacht Club. Among those whom the Bahamas official had discussions with included Mr. Ericson Marquez, president of FAME, Capt. Hernando Eusebio of FAME, Ms. Merle Jimenez San Pedro and Celso De Guzman of PAMTCI, and Engr. Nelson Ramirez of the UFS.
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The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) awarded UFS President and indefatigable crusader, Engr. Nelson P. Ramirez another plaque of appreciation for his immeasurable assistance to the PCG in its numerous efforts to improve its service to the public.

Ramirez was cited by the PCG “for invaluable support to the PCG during the series of congressional public hearings which significantly helped pave the way for the passage of the Philippine Coast Guard Law of 2009.”

The award was given to Ramirez on October 21, 2010 on the occasion of PCG’s 109th anniversary. It was originally scheduled for October 19th but was moved due to supertyphoon “Juan” for which the PCG was placed on red alert, standing ready for search and rescue, and relief operations.

The PCG has been grateful all these years to the tireless UFS President for his uncompromising position in support of the PCG that resulted in the eventual passage of the Philippine Coast Guard Law of 2009 which gives the PCG more powers and latitude in serving the maritime industry.

A bit surprised, Ramirez remarked that he was thankful for the award, but emphasized that this was not the main objective for his efforts. Instead, he said that he was focused on the benefits that the stakeholders of the maritime industry can derive from the new law. Ramirez also added that with the enactment of the PCG law, the maritime industry’s sorry record of countless sea mishaps can now be minimized if not totally eliminated.

He points to the record of Sulpicio Lines which caused the deaths of more than 6,000 people and many more missing. He stressed that that was Sulpicio Lines alone and if one adds all the other culprits, one can see that the record is not something to be proud of.

Many industry stakeholders have noted Ramirez’s work when he led numerous rallies denouncing Sulpicio Lines and its remorseful attitude and lack of concern for the tragedies that it was involved in.

On the employment front, Engr. Ramirez was bestowed the Outstanding Achiever Award in the field of employment generation by the Provincial Government of Zamboanga del Norte in 2006, citing him for generating numerous employment opportunities for his provincemates and many others from various provinces.

In 1996, Engr. Ramirez was cited by the Professional Regulation Commission as Outstanding Marine Engineer, having served onboard various international ocean-going vessels for more than 20 years, with an enviable spotless record.

Among his many awards, Engr. Ramirez is particularly proud of the citation given to him by the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association for the “Visionary Achievement Award.” It was bestowed on Ramirez, one of only five awardees, for founding the United Filipino Seafarers Union or UFS. One of the PMMA’s criteria for giving the award was to recognize the founding of an organization that has lasted 10 years or more. The UFS is now on its 16th year.

The PMMA’s citation has left an indelible mark on Ramirez which said that “…these exemplary gestures are clear hallmarks of his leadership, competence and integrity in which the Board and the Academy are truly pleased and proud to be part of…”

Indeed, with this most recent citation by the Philippine Coast Guard, Ramirez does not intend to bask in the limelight or sit on his laurels. Instead, this will only encourage him to press on with his struggle to espouse worthy causes especially considering that he is constantly on the lookout for the millions of stakeholders of the maritime industry that he has grown to love and nurture over the years.
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 60% of the RP population may have been infected with the Hepatitis B virus. Hepa-B is a serious disease characterized by an inflammation of the liver caused by Type B hepatitis or serum virus and the fifth most common cause of deaths worldwide.

The virus of this type is usually transmitted by some contaminated instrument such as a hypodermic needle, tattooing, instrument for piercing earlobes, or by blood transfusion and sexual contact with persons infected with the virus.

According to a survey, 70 percent of the world’s estimated 350 million Hepa-B carriers are found in Southeast Asia, which includes the Philippines, and the Pacific region.

Statistics show that about eight million of the 85 million Filipinos are infected with the Hepa-B virus which, according to health authorities, may lead to cirrhosis of the liver and liver cancer.

A research by Dr. Masahiro Yamamoto of Nissay Hospital in Japan said certain herbs can promote the multiplication of liver cells, replacing cells destroyed by chronic hepatitis damage and immunity function.

A patient, George of Manila, was suffering from Hepa-B for almost two years and was unable to migrate to other countries. He was so depressed and learned about the oriental herb. After taking the bottle of herb extract for two months he showed remarkable improvement and was cleared of the Hepa-B ailment.

Free consultation and lectures on the management of Hepa-B virus will be conducted by Ms. Digna C. Lizada at Lizada Korean Red Ginseng Sales Center at Room 601 6th Floor MBI Bldg Plaza Sta. Cruz, Manila in front of Sta. Cruz church.

You may call 736-7732, 736-7691, 09285019519, or 09158524446. Please bring any identification card for building requirement purposes. You can also check out more details at its website www.lizadakrg.com.
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What’s more, you are rewarded with ample time to rejuvenate your spirits and enjoy a balanced lifestyle.

Bond with the kids at the children’s playground, beat the heat with friends at the 25-meter lap pool, or get an endorphin rush at the fully-equipped fitness center.

Other amenities such as a WiFi-enabled central park, multi-purpose covered court with indoor jogging trail, study hall with computer stations, and 200-meter jogging and walking trail await to be explored at The Linear.

But what makes The Linear truly unique from the rest is the premium it puts on environmental responsibility. Installed atop the multi-purpose covered court is an eco-roof system that minimizes UV and temperature impact, cuts energy consumption, and improves air quality by filtering pollutants.

Complementing this is a refreshing garden and viewing deck with areas for aerobics, yoga, meditation, and Tai-Chi exercises. A poet’s and painter’s nook, as well as chess tables and telescope platforms, are also situated at the rooftop to cater to the artistic lot.

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But more than anything, moving up to the good life at The Linear means living in a home that is not only well-designed but also competitively priced.

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You also get to unwind courtesy of the panoramic vistas of the Manila Bay, the Makati and Manila skylines, Laguna de Bay, or the central park.

Truly, The Linear has lined up a good life for parents who want only the best for their families. As you map out an entire future for your family, let The Linear be the enduring witness to all your milestones reached, promises fulfilled, and dreams achieved. Move up to The Linear and witness your family take off to a good start.

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The Road To Hell

As the saying goes, “the road to hell is paved with good intentions.” In 1998, we gathered at the DOTC office to draft the Philippine Merchant Marine Officers Act of 1998 to comply with the International Maritime Organization’s Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping 1995 Convention (STCW 95) to save the jobs of the almost 300,000 Filipino seafarers who were onboard ocean-going vessels at that time by having our country included in the IMO “white list.” We also included in that draft a provision that all various maritime organizations must be integrated before they could be accredited by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC).

Many years have gone by after that law was passed and millions of pesos have been collected from its members, the maritime profession’s Accredited Professional Organizations (APOs) of PRC have yet to be integrated. Article X Section 9 of RA 8544 is very specific. All Marine Engineer Officers shall be integrated into one national organization which shall be recognized by the Board and the Commission as the one and only integrated and accredited association of Marine Engineer Officers. The same applies to Marine Deck Officers. Sad to say, MEOAP and MMAP have not been integrated. None of its members has seen the financial statements. For the more than three decades since the inception of these two professional organizations, their members kept on asking as to what their respective organization has actually done for them. That is the very reason why a number of its members are quite reluctant to pay their dues. Even my good friend Capt. Edwin Iable, who is the consultant of the infamous Sulpicio Lines Inc. which is responsible for the deaths of thousands of innocent passengers in the country’s worst maritime disasters, had been advising his deck officer-friends and students not too long ago not to become members of MMAP because it has not done anything for the seafarers. Capt. Iable though, is singing a different tune these days and MMAP’s office is now located in the building of a training center where he is currently working. Capt. Iable is the type of person who has no permanent enemies or friends because he only has permanent interests.

Former MARINA Administrator Ma. Elena Bautista hurriedly lifted the suspension on three Sulpicio Lines passenger vessels before she left her post. I opposed the lifting of the suspension and even filed a case against Bautista because until now Sulpicio vessels are not covered with Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Insurance. During the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearing, Bautista insisted that Sulpicio vessels are covered with P&I Insurance. Anybody in the maritime industry in his right mind would then wonder why MV Princess of the Stars is not being removed and remains a navigational hazard to this day if indeed it was covered with P&I Insurance. We all know that under P&I, all vessels are covered up to US$500 million for wreck removal alone. We found out later during the Senate probe that Sulpicio’s vessels are under covered by a local insurer, Pioneer Insurance, and that MV Princess of the Stars wreck removal insurance is only good for US$1.5 million and also US$1.5 million for pollution. I just don’t know how some people have the guts to lie through their teeth under oath.

Mr. Isabelito Rayray, the MARINA naval architect and maritime expert who testified in the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee that the Batangas and Mindoro routes are inland waters and MV Baleno 9 is designed for the high seas is on the loose again. He is said to be responsible for the registration of two high-powered pleasure yachts which were confiscated by the Philippine Coast Guard personnel for failing to pay proper import taxes. When the PCG personnel saw these two vessels anchored at the back of the Mall of Asia, they immediately noticed that there is something fishy with the vessels. They are powered by three 250-horsepower engines and their craftsmanship is excellent. How Rayray allowed their registration as Navotas-made yachts although they have markings on the side indicating that these were made in Florida, remains a mystery. If MARINA will not give Rayray any form of legal or administrative sanction, I will personally file a case against him with the Office of the Ombudsman. Enough is enough. So many thousands of innocent lives have been lost and nobody is being punished.
Century Maritime Agencies, Inc. (CENMAR) has typified its confidence on the Filipino seafarers during its latest Officers Forum held on October 19-21, 2010 at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza hotel.

A total of 100 off-duty Filipino officers took part in the three-day forum that focused on various topics all meant to strengthen their skills and enhance their knowledge for their respective shipboard work to be able to effectively, safely and productively man the vessels of Centrofin, CENMAR’s sole principal based in Greece.

Of the attending Filipino officers, about 30 of them are already holding senior officer positions, while a few others are still holding ratings position but already have junior officer licenses. There were also a couple of Indian officers who took part in the conference, which were sent by CENMAR India.

CENMAR is currently providing the crewing requirements of some 20 vessels being managed by Centrofin, composed of tankers and bulk carriers, manning them mostly with Filipino crew. However, there are still some vessels in the fleet that have Indian and Ukrainian crew on them.

Capt. Manthos Rigas, Human Resources Officer of Centrofin, acted as chairman during the three-day forum. He disclosed that they expect the delivery of several tanker newbuildings by 2011 and they are looking at manning them mostly with full-Filipino crew, just like most of its vessels at the moment.

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Capt. Emeterio Andaya, who has been employed through CENMAR for 12 years and is in the three-day forum also believes that CENMAR is very accommodating to their seafarers with no interest. CENMAR also has an automatic deployment line-up so seafarers need not request for a line-up,” 2/M Olguera enumerated.

“A seafarer for 23 years. “The salary is very competitive. The company shoulders all our training expenses and they provide us transportation allowance. They also give cash advances to seafarers with no interest. CENMAR also has an automatic deployment line-up so seafarers need not request for a line-up,” 2/M Olguera enumerated.

Oiler and engineer trainee Rey Debil says that CENMAR is very accommodating to their crew. Although he has been with CENMAR for only one year, he hopes that it would also be his last company. He also lauded the conference because he has learned a lot of things on it. “It also strengthened the camaraderie of the Filipino officers within the CENMAR team. The speakers were also very excellent and we also have free hotel accommodation during the three-day duration of the forum,” he commended.

Capt. Emeterio Andaya, who has been employed through CENMAR for 12 years and is in fact the first Filipino captain ever to have served a Centrofin-managed vessel. He says that the company system is very good and its officials are very warm and accommodating. He is also looking to retire as skipper with CENMAR.

2/E Ericson Teruel, who has only joined CENMAR just recently says that the company may be small compared to others but they give good salary. They are also very honest to their people. 2/E Teruel, who now has C/E license, finds the knowledge he obtained from the forum very applicable to his job onboard. “I am very satisfied with the programs of CENMAR for its seafarers and I am also happy being part of the team.”

2/M Vicente Olguera, who has been with CENMAR for two years, says the benefits that the company provides are comparatively better than with his previous companies, having been a seafarer for 23 years. “The salary is very competitive. The company shoulders all our training expenses and they provide us transportation allowance. They also give cash advances to seafarers with no interest. CENMAR also has an automatic deployment line-up so seafarers need not request for a line-up,” 2/M Olguera enumerated.

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We were busy bunkering tons of high-sulfur fuel oil and low-sulfur fuel oil in Antwerp when I learned from my wife that our son, Mark, received a grade of 1 in Filipino as the first semester drew to a close.

According to her, she learned it first from Facebook very early in the morning. She just wanted to check if she had a fresh e-mail from me. Since there was none yet, she decided to comment on some friends’ Facebook messages which she got to read through her e-mails.

When she opened her Facebook account, lo and behold! There it was, Mark’s status regarding the good news (and the not-so-good news) and its strings of comments from friends (read: college and high school classmates here and abroad, new acquaintances, cousins, siblings, etc.).

Mhyre, the eldest sister, was the one who read it first and pressed “Like” right away. And so that morning, everyone at home was congratulating and cheering for him. His brothers and sisters were very excited and happy. Who wouldn’t be when “1” is the highest grade a student can get.

The Internet was again abuzz with the news flash when Mark’s siblings posted their comments on Facebook. Their mom also wrote on her wall: “Mark, my son, got uno in Filipino and it cost her Ate Mhyre and me two buckets of KFC chicken meals. Worth celebrating! Alleluia!”

Barely had she clicked the Share button when Facebook prompted “12 friends like your status.” It sent a plethora of comments from friends, kumares, relatives, former officemates, etc. “It’s not a bucket of tears anymore hahaha,” read one comment. Still another noted that Mark started to shine in college.

I was very happy. Such good news makes up for the loneliness that sneaks into me once in a while in my cabin onboard MV Asian Parade. I am amused because everyone at home learned it first from Facebook. These days, high technology makes transmission of information simply fast for us. In fact, Mark learned about his grades that morning from the Internet. But there is no doubt that Facebook is the most popular social networking site nowadays.

Facebook is truly a great tool for exchanging information. In fact, my children turn to Facebook to ask their classmates about the deadline of their projects, or if they have new lessons or assignments when they are absent. It is fun and free and is also a platform for expressing their feelings, opinions, frustrations and mode. My piece of advice to them when Facebooking: Be responsible, avoid foul language, manage your time and most of all, see to it that your priority is your studies.

Many of my colleagues and friends regard me as somewhat techie but when it comes to Facebook, I was the last one who joined the bandwagon at home. First of all, with a thousand and one things that I have to attend to in the office, I hardly find time to open my Facebook account.

When I am assigned as superintendent or as reliever of the vacationing chief engineer onboard overseas vessels, the less I am able to explore my Facebook account because there is no Internet connection onboard.

When I am at port, I open my Facebook account for a few minutes only. I get to catch a glimpse and see the status of my children and enjoy their messages and photos posted during our family date which they call “Family bonding and movie time.”

For me, the Photos application is one of the most appealing and popular applications on Facebook, where users can upload albums of photos, tag friends, and comment on photos. According to Facebook, there are about:

- 50+ billion user photos (since July 2010)
- More than 1.5 petabytes (1.5 million gigabytes) of photo storage used (since May 2009)
- 220 million photos added each week which take up 25 terabytes of disk space (since May 2009)

Facebook: A Cool Way to Keep in Touch
The importance of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in contemporary Philippine society has been highlighted once more with the enactment of Republic Act No. 10022 or the Act amending RA No. 8042 otherwise known as the Migrant Workers and Overseas Filipinos Act of 1995.

RA No. 10022 lapsed into law on March 8, 2010 and took effect on May 9, 2010. Its implementing rules were published on July 29, 2010. Touted to afford more protection and assistance to OFWs, RA No. 10022 highlights, among others, the following features:

1. Under Section 3, deployment of OFWs shall only be allowed in countries where their rights are protected. The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), through its foreign posts, is mandated to issue the certification to the POEA that a particular receiving country protects the rights of OFWs. Invoking police power of the state, absent the DFA certification therefore, no OFW can be deployed abroad;

2. In Section 5, the term “illegal recruitment” now covers the act by any person, whether a non-licensee, non-holder, licensee or holder of authority, of allowing a non-Filipino citizen to head or manage a licensed recruitment/manning agency. Also, penalties (both imprisonment and fine) under Section 6 for those who commit illegal recruitment, have been increased;

3. Aside from emphasizing the original and exclusive jurisdiction of the labor arbiters to hear and decide claims arising out of an employer-employee relationship or by virtue of any law or contract involving Filipino workers for overseas deployment, Section 7 makes it clear that in case of a final and executory judgment against a foreign employer/principal, the latter shall be automatically disqualified from participating in the Philippine overseas employment program and from recruiting and hiring Filipino workers until and unless it fully satisfies the judgment award;

4. Section 10 provides for the establishment of a National Reintegration Center for Overseas Filipino Workers (NRCO) in the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) for returning OFWs to extend a mechanism for their reintegration into the society and thereby tap their skills for national development;

5. Section 16 adds the Department of Health (DOH) as one of several government agencies directed to promote the welfare and protect the rights of OFWs. The DOH is tasked to regulate the activities and operations of all clinics which conduct health examinations on OFWs as requirement for their overseas deployment. It shall ensure that the OFWs shall only be required to undergo health examinations absolutely necessary for the types of job applied for or those specifically required by the foreign employers. No clinics shall have a monopoly of exclusively conducting health examinations on OFWs for certain receiving countries. In case an OFW is found not medically fit upon his immediate arrival in the country of destination, the medical clinic that conducted his health examination shall pay for his repatriation back to the Philippines and the cost of his deployment;

6. In Section 18, the Legal Assistance Fund established for OFWs in the amount of one hundred million pesos shall be used not only to pay the fees of foreign lawyers who represent the OFWs but also to file cases against erring or abusive employers abroad.

(To be continued next issue)
To all Global Filipinos —

Overseas workers and balikbayanos — who have come home to spend the holidays with family and friends, Vista Land would like to invite you to take a peek at our Home for the Holidays’ homecoming offer.

Inquire about our easy-to-own home financing packages and special promos and payment discounts that make owning a Vista Land home such a joy! So come visit any of our property sites or malls booths... gifts and give-aways await you.

We pay homage to each and every Filipino overseas worker as we look back to the very first home we built for an OFW 35 years ago. Now, it’s time we give back... to all of you who have made all this possible, salamat po!

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The possibility is mounting that the Philippines will overtake European countries and leap into becoming the world's fourth largest shipbuilding nation in 2010, following South Korea, China and Japan, in terms of newbuilding completion volume.

This is largely attributable to the expanded construction volume of the local Philippine shipyards of Japan's Tsuneishi Holdings and South Korea's Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction (HHIC).

Amid the slowdown in Europe and the emerging shipbuilding nations, the Philippines is manifesting a unique presence in the market as a production base of shipyards from developed countries.

According to IHS Fairplay statistics (formerly known as Lloyd's Register), 19 newbuildings of 710,000 gross registered tons (GRT) were completed in the Philippines from January to June 2010 alone.

As for the major shipbuilding countries in Europe, Germany completed 490,000 GRT, while Italy and Romania completed 470,000 GRT and 320,000 GRT respectively. Newbuilding completions in Taiwan, Vietnam and Turkey also shrunk, driving the Philippines to surpass these countries.

If the scheduled completions for the second half of 2010 are included in the count, it is expected that the annual volume of newbuildings completed in the Philippines will reach 46 units of 1.81 million GRT, catapulting the country into the Top 4 position worldwide for the first time in history.

The major shipyards in the Philippines are only Tsuneishi Heavy industries (Cebu) Inc. (THICI) in Balamban, Cebu operated by Tsuneishi Holding Corp. and the HHIC Philippines established by HHIC at the Subic Bay.

THICI kicked off full operation of its second yard in June 2009. With the drastic expansion of these two yards, volume of newbuildings completed in the country is ballooning.

While it may be true that the Philippines will likely secure the Top 4 position worldwide in terms of newbuilding completions, its total share in the global markets is still a mere 1.4%.

With this, South Korea, Japan and China will remain the three shipbuilding giants in the industry.

However, the ability of the Philippines, which specializes in production, to exceed the market shares of the traditional shipbuilding nations will likely become a major turning point in the shipbuilding industry that is now shifting to Asia.
Spend Wisely

Some people forget that economic crises occur in more ways than one in our lifetime. Those who have jobs — used to spending that they could not control themselves when they walk by a store on sale or which has promos with 0% interest on big purchases, allow their unnecessary cravings for food and go shopping in the hope of finding peace of mind. Still, most Filipinos are worried about what the future holds for them. We may never know if we can still keep our jobs or if we can keep up with the stress of piling workloads on our hands.

Sometimes, we ask ourselves, where did my money go? “I had five thousand pesos a week ago. Now, I only have three hundred pesos in my wallet.”

We know that money controls us in many ways. Having money need not affect us negatively. Instead, we can look at how we can use it to improve our lives.

How can we maximize the power of money in our lives? Let us count the ways.

1. Prioritize what to spend on.
   List down the things you need to spend for a month. Separate a MUST PAY list for things like bills for rent, utilities (electricity, water, and gas), food for the house (which can include provision for bringing bacon to work) and insurance expenses. Make another list for ADJUSTABLE bills like phone bills, transportation allowance to work, beauty and wellness needs, medicines (vitamins), clothing and footwear.

2. Be debt – free ASAP.
   Include paying your debt in the MUST PAY list. If you can pay your debt sooner, the better for your finances. Do your best not to use your credit card again if this will put you in more debt.

3. Make a budget.
   From your MUST PAY and ADJUSTABLE lists, make a budget on what you will spend every month (or every week whatever works for you). See if you spend more than what you earn. If you do, reduce the budget from the ADJUSTABLE list.

4. Stick to your budget and work on it.
   Be conscious in following your budget. Improve it by keeping the excess as part of your savings. It doesn’t hurt to learn a few tricks on lowering your expenses.

5. Make SAVING a habit.
   Now that you have learned how to manage your finances, you can now start the habit of saving. It will be an advantage to have your own savings (even if you have a joint account with your spouse). You can use it for future needs and wants (or a surprise plan or gift for your family). You can have a worry-free mindset when an emergency occurs. You can set bigger goals like traveling and celebrating important events in your life or starting a business venture.

6. Increase your insurability.
   Life insurance is very important in any person’s life. It should always be a part of the MUST PAY list. Most people forego paying life insurance premiums in times of economic crisis because they do not see the value of having life insurance.

   Life insurance protects you and your family from unexpected incidents that may happen to you, whether in the form of sickness or death. This is especially important if you are the sole breadwinner. It will assure you that your dreams for your child to get an education in a good school will be realized. It will also help pay for your medical expenses in case you become disabled or afflicted with a dreaded disease. It will cover your current amortization for a car or a house you purchased, or it can provide for inheritance for your children if you do not have enough assets to pass on to them.

   Money does not grow on trees. We work hard and sacrifice a lot for us to earn. You must find and learn ways to make your money work for you. So, start now because it is never too late for as long as you are alive and kicking.

   For more detailed financial advice, you may contact your licensed Pru Life UK insurance consultant, Ms. Aileen T. Ello, through her mobile number, +63920-951-0388, office number, +632-842-2007 or through her email address, aileen_ello@yahoo.com.

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• 3+ billion photo images served to users every day (since May 2007)
• 550,000+ images served per second during peak traffic windows (since May 2009)

Facebook also has an application for sharing videos. Like its sister Photos application, users can tag their friends in videos and can also have the option of video messaging.

But then again, when I’m out of the country, I would click away from Facebook and prefer to chat via Yahoo Messenger to keep in touch with family members and get immediate feedbacks without the world ogling at our conversations.

Facebook is time consuming. Aside from the exchange of comments from “hundreds” of friends, my children, I have observed, are hooked on an addicting game called FarmVille. They have even “pushed” me to join their FarmVille community.

Per Facebook’s official website, 83 million play FarmVille every month! This fun game is very appealing to all because it is a real-time farm simulation game. Many of my friends have “friend” me, and long lost relatives and colleagues are now my neighbors in FarmVille.

In real life, I am not interested in tilling soil and growing vegetables and fruits, but the game has allowed me to manage a virtual farm by “plowing land, planting, growing and harvesting virtual crops, harvesting trees and bushes, and raising livestock.”

However, because of my busy schedule and e-mails to reply, the crops that were due for harvesting have withered and died a natural death. But it is only the tip of the iceberg.

There is still a host of other Facebook games like FrontierVille, Pet Society, Sorority Life, and Baking Life among others. Restaurant City is the favorite game of my youngest daughter Ren-Ren.

Although I am not a huge fan, Facebook is really easy to use. Just point and click, and you have access to just about whatever you need.

Unless your son or daughter has blocked or “unfriend” you to prevent you from being privy to his or her affair, Facebook has become so ubiquitous that long-distance families do not have to wait for ages to keep in touch with loved ones. When used to full potential, it is a great site to ride the wave of excitement and have a place to express the joy, triumphs and milestones of your family and you.

Meanwhile, although there is no Internet connection onboard MV Asian Parade, I am happy with its communication system because the company sees to it that we keep in touch with families through e-mail for free.

Besides, when there is a good signal, I can always text or call home also. But there is nothing as cool as reading one’s message on Facebook for the young generation.

So perhaps, I will go to the nearest Seamen’s Center, open my Facebook account and write on Mark’s wall: “Congratulations, Mark! Keep up the good work and let’s see what I can do about the video camera you’re talking about.”
The website of the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) with URL at www.ufs.ph has become very popular within the local and global maritime industry and even outside of it and is now proving to be a monster hit.

Based on the monthly statistics of the website, www.ufs.ph posted 807,528 hits in September 2010 alone, practically making it the most browsed or surfed website in the entire maritime industry.

There were two days in September 2010 when www.ufs.ph posted record-breaking hits.

On September 16, the website garnered a total of 49,235 hits which were more than double its daily hits average of a little over 23,000.

Exactly one week later or on September 23, the website broke its daily hits record with an astounding 142,339 hits.

As of the end of October 2010, the UFS website has already recorded 7,027,507 hits from November 2009, which is the highest yearly figure that the website has recorded since it was officially re-launched in 2006.

The UFS website is arguably the most updated maritime industry website with news related to shipping and the maritime industry uploaded in minutes after breaking out, thus making it a very handy source of information and reference to seafarers and stakeholders of the maritime industry the world over.

Aside from timely news tidbits and useful information, the website also contains details on the accomplishments and activities of the United Filipino Seafarers in continuously championing the cause of Filipino seafarers under the able leadership of grizzled marine engineer Nelson P. Ramirez, who has been steering the helm of the union since its establishment in December 1994.

The website has likewise become a forum for the more than 300,000 Filipino seafarers to make known their concerns related to their work and profession to concerned stakeholders in the maritime industry, knowing only too well that the UFS simply does not take seafarer issues sitting down.

In addition, the website also contains the online edition of Tinig ng Marino, the only maritime newspaper in the Philippines with a global circulation.

Advertisers, both from the Philippines and abroad, have realized the importance of placing their ads on Tinig ng Marino given its incomparable reach and scope, not to mention its readership quality.

As a testament to the popularity of the UFS website, even the most respected internet search engines, Google and Yahoo! have the UFS website coming out as No. 1 when the phrase ‘Filipino seafarers’ is used in their respective search lines.
Dahil sa hirap ng ekonomiya ng buong mundo, malamang nabawasan na ang pagsa-shopping ng karamihan. Ngunit hindi pa rin lahatang maaalis ang kalagayan ng nakararami sa ating mga domestic helpers sa Hong Kong.

Bagaman sa Hong Kong ay napakalakas ng tukso sa tinatawag na “impulse buying” dahil sa nagkalat na “shopping malls” sa kapaligiran, sa aking palagay, ang kalagayan ng situasyon ay malamang umiiral din sa mga OFWs sa ibang mga bansa sa daigdig.

Marami sa ating mga OFWs ay nahihiyaplang mag-“for-good” dahil baon sila sa utang. Marami ang mga naglalakas-loob lang na “maka-overseas.” Malaking utang ang iniwan sa Pilipinas dahil kinailangan ang malaking halaga para may ipambayad sa agency.

Mayroon namang halimbawa sa Hong Kong na nagkakautang dahil sapilitan silang maging mga Overseas Workers (OFWs) sa maging OPW dahil “forced loan” sa financing company.

Bago ka mangutang, dapat mong tanunin ang sarili mo:
1. Saan mo ba ilalagay ang pera? Kung sa negosyo o investment mo ilalagay, isipin mong maigi, ano ba ang risko ng negosyo o investment na iyon? Kung hindi sapat ang sweldo na pambayad sa utang, bakit pa baka naaalis ang “forced loan”?
2. Kung mayroon ding nagasasabi (mas lalo na ang mga batang wala pang responsibilidad sa buhay) na kahit wala silang maimpok, gusto nilang maging mga Overseas Workers (OFWs) sa maging OPW dahil “forced loan” sa financing company.

FAQs hinggil sa pag-utang ng OFWs

Itong mga tanong:
1) Resonable bang mangutang kung gagamitin para mag-invest sa Pilipinas?
2) Ano ba ang mga dapat isaisip muna ng isang OFW sa nagbabalak mangutang?
3) Tama ba ang mangutang dahil may inaasahan namang dapat ho ng mga recruitment agencies?
4) Bago ka mangutang, dapat mong tanunin ang sarili mo:

a) Saan mo ba ilalagay ang perang inaasahang dapat ho ng mga recruitment agencies?

Nung hindi sapat ang sweldo na pambayad sa utang, bakit pa baka naaalis ang “forced loan”?

Ngunit mayroon ding nagasasabi (mas lalo na ang mga batang wala pang responsibilidad sa buhay) na kahit wala silang maimpok, gusto nilang maging mga Overseas Workers (OFWs) sa maging OPW dahil “forced loan” sa financing company.
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The 11th Asia Pacific Manning and Training Conference is fast turning out to be one of the largest international maritime events in the Philippines in recent years.

More than 250 international crew recruitment and training professionals from over 20 countries have signed up for the conference.

“The event will bring the major international maritime players to Manila, the manning capital of the world, to determine how the industry can come together to ensure a steady supply of seafarers to man the global fleet,” Kathryn Barnard Informa Manning & Training Conferences conference producer said.

Among the companies and organizations attending the conference are Asian Shipowners Forum, CMA CGM UK Ltd., OSM Maritime Services Inc., Stolt Tankers BV, Thome Ship Management Pte. Ltd., Antwerp Maritime Academy, Seagull Japan and Sinocrew Maritime Services, Ltd.

Even more delegates and companies are expected to register in the coming days as the conference, which will be held on November 17 and 18, 2010 at Hotel Sofitel Philippine Plaza, nears.

Highly acclaimed as the ‘definitive conference on maritime manpower,’ the event will have as its theme: ‘Year of the Seafarer 2010 & Beyond: What Next for Maritime Manpower.’

The conference is organized by the United Kingdom-based conference specialist, Informa Maritime Events and will be held at the Hotel Sofitel Philippine Plaza, Manila.

To secure a place at the industry’s most important event, visit http://www.manningandtraining.com/KT0142AA2 or call +44(0)20 7017 5511

The United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) is set to mark its 16th anniversary on December 10, 2010 at City Gardens Hotel to be highlighted by the 8th Tinig ng Marino Awards and the formal launching of the second edition of Gitik-Gitik Ginagmay, a collection of jokes derived from the pages of Tinig ng Marino, that Filipino seafarers and many in the maritime industry have come to love.

The Tinig ng Marino Awards is the UFS’ own way of recognizing the maritime industry’s best for the year 2010 and is in fact being regarded as a prestigious and respected award-giving initiative.

Being on its eighth edition this year also speaks of the successful run of the Tinig ng Marino Awards over a period of more than a decade.

The UFS will be handing out seven special awards during the 8th Tinig ng Marino Awards including Outstanding Master Mariner, Outstanding Marine Engineer, Outstanding Maritime Manning Agency, Outstanding Maritime Training Center, Outstanding Maritime Safety and Security Enforcer, Outstanding Marine Environment Protector, and Outstanding Public Servant.

Expected to receive the awards are this year’s best and brightest in the local maritime industry for their year-long outstanding performances in their respective endeavor or field of specialty.

The new batch of awardees are also set to join the increasing roster of Tinig ng Marino awardees most of whom, if not all, continue to live up to their lofty billing in the industry to this day.

The joke book Gitik-Gitik Ginagmay 2 has become imperative with the success of its predecessor launched late in 2008, during the 14th anniversary celebration of the UFS.

A number of Filipino seafarers have considered the joke book a collector’s item and some of them would not go onboard their next vessel assignment without it.

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- Exclusive Filipino crew update: regulators and manning executives from the Philippines discuss the new Manila government’s strategies for the manning sector
- Seafarer forum: unique platform for seafarers and senior managers to debate face-to-face how to enhance job satisfaction and career progression
- Targeted training techniques: leading training professionals from Asia - Europe - Middle East - Africa - the Americas look to the future of maritime education
- Safe manning solutions: key industry stakeholders examine collaborative solutions to tackle the industry’s inadequate manning skills
- Regulatory review: a definitive guide to the practical implementation of STCW Manila Amendments and impact of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 on shipowners and manning agents

Official publication: Lloyd’s List
While he did not discount the possibility of collusion between lawyers in milking foreign shipowners using the often unwitting Filipino seafarers as pawns to their schemes, Mr. Rocha insists that the corruption at NLRC is the root cause of the problem. “The collusion of lawyers is just a byproduct of the corruption in the system,” Mr. Rocha stated.

The CF Sharp Crew Management official also recalled that the industry brought the matter to the attention of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) five or six years ago but it seems that the department’s hands are tied and so is the POEA, which like NLRC, are attached agencies of DOLE.

“Along with the corruption in the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) for allowing the operations of substandard maritime schools in the country, the flawed legal system of the local seafaring industry makes up the major threats to our maritime industry, which if not abated soon enough, would eventually trigger its demise. We are simply giving other crew-supplying nations a chance to catch up or surpass us,” Mr. Rocha stressed.

“Shipowners may be here today but they may start considering going out tomorrow if we do not address this problem soon enough. The Philippines may be very confident now with its status as the world seafaring capital but this problem can eventually bring it down to its knees. Maybe not today or tomorrow; but in two or three years, who knows?” he quipped.

FAME and the JMO are now drafting strategies on how to address the industry’s nagging menace that seems to be giving it a slow but sure death like a malignant tumor.

The Likely Culprits
Capt. Reynaldo Casareo, President of Cargo Safeway, Inc. and a director of FAME, openly expressed that there is in fact an unholy alliance between the lawyers using the Filipino seafarers as a front or means to extract large amounts of cash from the insurance of foreign shipowners.

Cargo Safeway has had a string of ridiculous claims cases over the past couple of years including the publicized exploits of a Filipino chief cook who got a total of three “Total Permanent Disability” claims from different foreign shipowners because he apparently lost his sense of hearing in from different foreign shipowners because of a Filipino chief cook who got a total of instances that he lost in the process of filing his fourth claim for the insurance of foreign shipowners.

“Never mind if it takes years before they can collect eventually. There is a saying among lawyers that the longer the case goes on, the more benefits they can get. Sabi nga sa anak ng abogado na gustong magpasikat sa kanyang ama at tinapos kaagad yung napakatagal na kaso “Loko kang bata ka. Hindi mo ba alam na dahil sa kasong yan kaya ka nakapagtapos ng abogasya!” (One senior lawyer was quoted to have said to his son-lawyer when the latter showed off that he finished a procrastinated case swiftly. Why did you do that? Didn’t you know that it is because of that very same case that you were able to finish studying law?)” he explained.

In explaining the modus operandi of ambulant chasers, these lawyers have so-called para-legal staffs who serve as runners, often hanging around at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center or places where Filipino seafarers normally congregate.

When they see an opportunity to come in contact with a gullible Filipino seafarer, they bring the matter to the ambulant chaser and they can have the fictitious claims case up and running soon enough.

Often they also tell the seafarers that they need not worry about financially hurting the shipping company as they once worked for because it is the insurance which covers the cost of the claims.

Of course ambulant chasers cannot operate if they are not in cahoots with the labor arbitrators of NLRC, who have never ruled against Filipino seafarer claims no matter how fictitious or absurd the case may be from the outset.

There is even a strong possibility that lawyers representing local P&I correspondents are also into the scheme because they are normally the ones tapped by Owners to dispute or present their cases against the labor arbitrators and NLRC. Thus far, their records in winning a claims case at the labor arbiter level is nil, nada, zero, thus enforcing the notion that either they are mostly incompetent or simply just going through the motions.

Casareo even shared with Tinig ng Marino a correspondence from a Japan P&I Club addressed to a local correspondent on the issue of a recent bogus claim filed against a Japanese principal of Cargo Safeway, ironically by a chief cook again.

In that case, the chief cook filed for a permanent disability claim for arthritis even though he was diagnosed by the company-designated physician to be physically fit to work and that his disease was not work-related but as a result of one’s unhealthy lifestyle. The lawyers of the local correspondent lost the case at the labor arbiter level so Cargo Safeway decided to bring in a legal enforcement through its own lawyer.

In defending the bringing in of its own lawyer, Capt. Casareo, in his letter to the lawyers of the local correspondents mentioned: “It is sad to say, but I cannot remember any case handled by your correspondents for our company that won at the level of the labor arbiter. Not even the above case which we both believed as well as our Owners that the evidence is strong enough but lost anyway.”

“Most cases that lost at the labor arbiter’s level were either settled with Japan P&I approval after a substantial amount is reduced. Thanks to the effort of the lawyers in convincing the other lawyer and the seafarer to accept the greatly reduced amount. Most cases are appealed to the Commission,” Capt. Casareo lamented.

The Japan P&I Club backed Capt. Casareo’s notion when it said in its letter: “Although you have insisted that you have consistently and forcefully argued that the seafarer was declared fit to work and his illness is not a work-related one, it is the confessed fact that you lost this case at NLRC labor arbiter level.”

“We are embarrassed to hear Cargo Safeway’s complaints since it means that our correspondents are no longer considered reliable. The local manning agents appear to rely on their lawyer rather than our correspondents. You should be ashamed of yourselves. At any rate, we agree with the view of Cargo Safeway that this case must never be lost because the seafarer does not appear to have suffered any disability. So, we consider that you cannot be helped being blamed as to your performance,” the letter explained.

“In the above circumstances, as Cargo Safeway seems to have strong confidence in defending this matter, the Owners have decided to relieve you of this case and to have the lawyer appointed by Cargo Safeway take over the defense of this matter hereafter. So, you are requested to get out of and to give over this case to Cargo Safeway’s lawyer,” the Japan P&I Club instructed the lawyers of the local correspondents.

Eventually, the lawyer hired by Cargo Safeway to fight the case out got a favorable decision from the NLRC and the labor arbiter ruling was reversed.

Capt. Casareo is also wondering why
local correspondents do not want to furnish copies to FAME of all the Total Permanent Disability claims cases that have been awarded to Filipino seafarers in the past. FAME made the request from way back to ensure that none of its members would be duped into hiring Filipino seafarers who were able to get disability claims while under the employ of other manning agencies.

Uncharacteristically, the local correspondents refuse to give the manning agents a database which would help them in fishing out loose cannons and for them to identify and discern which are those who filed legal claims and those who have just made it a business endeavor. Members of FAME have since agreed to come up with their own claims database so that they all could refer to it whenever they would evaluate the application of Filipino seafarers coming in to their respective doorsteps.

Capt. Casareo also revealed that majority in the local maritime industry are pushing voluntary arbitration to settle claims cases and they are pushing that it should be transferred from the NLRC to the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB).

There is also that looming possibility that some elements of some maritime labor unions are into the scheme as the ambulant chasers appear to have dossiers of private information regarding Filipino seafarers before they ‘market’ their services to them.

**Hating with a Passion**

Chief Engr. Isagani Valmonte, President of Bridge Marine Corporation, also despises the handiwork of ambulant chasers and a number of lawyers in the local maritime industry.

“These people form the formidable group of termites that can bring the house or the local maritime industry down if not acted upon soon,” he said.

Bridge Marine has had a fair share of ridiculous and sometimes very fascinating claims cases from Filipino seafarer ratings that made a mockery of the legal system in the maritime industry.

“Even high school students would know who was telling the truth in those fictitious claims cases but the NLRC labor arbiters and the Commission saw otherwise. It is so frustrating,” says C/E Valmonte.

“It is time that the industry consider taking out the NLRC from the maritime industry’s legal system equation. We have to act now before it becomes too late,” says the Bridge Marine president who is also the External Vice President of the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS).
Pagtakhan Rules MGAP September Tourney

The Maritime Golf Association of the Philippines (MGAP) had its September monthly tournament at the Ayala Greenfields Golf and Leisure Club in Calamba, Laguna on September 28, 2010.

Nemy Pagtakhan bagged the Class A championship trophy by carding a superb net of 70. It was actually a down-the-wire finish at Class A as Willie Monillas also logged in a net of 70.

But by virtue of Nemy’s two-birdie and six-par performance as compared to Willie’s two-birdie and two-par game, the former was adjudged the victor. Willie settled for the runner-up honors.

Over at Class B, Abraham Tablizo handily bested second-running Rolly Abella to bag the championship honors.

Abraham turned in net of 71, three strokes better than Rolly’s 74 giving the former the plum.

Gil Angeles meanwhile emerged as champion in the Class C category with his net score of 75. Martin Lindawan came in at close second with his 77 strokes.

As usual, awarding at the Ayala Greenfields clubhouse ensued after the tournament that had Harbor Star Shipping Services, Inc., Multinational Maritime, Inc., MMS Phil Maritime Services, Inc., and Taiyo Enterprises as major sponsors.

The rites were also spiced by entertainment and raffling off of special door prizes.

PMMAI, Marin Sports in Joint Invitational Golf Tilt

The Philippine Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association Inc. (PMMAAAI) and Marin Sports Club, Inc. co-sponsored a joint invitational golf tournament for a cause at the Riviera Golf Course in Silang, Cavite on October 1, 2010.

Engr. Ramirez of the UFS was among the major maritime industry stakeholders that took part in the joint tournament sponsored by PMMAAAI and Marin Sports Club. He is shown with some of the other participants at right photo including Capt. Vic Del Prado and Capt. Hernando Eusebio.
POSEIDON creating opportunities

MARITIME ACADEMY OF THE ASIA AND THE PACIFIC UPGRADING THEIR 1510 POSEIDON PHAROS GMDSS SIMULATOR

Poseidon Asia is proud to deliver an upgrade of the latest GMDSS software to Maritime Academy of the Asia and the Pacific. The completion of delivery and installation started on November 7th to 10th 2010. In the same month, training was conducted from September 13 to 16, 2010.

Poseidon GMDSS Simulator is the latest version of the state-of-the-art radar equipment used by most ships. We have designed a tailor-made solution for GMDSS equipment which is efficient in giving students the required knowledge to achieve a high level of proficiency in using GMDSS equipment, and to learn the necessary skills to handle procedures in case of distress situations.

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Contact:
Maritime Academy of Asia & Pacific (MAAP)
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POSEIDON ASIA DELIVERED GMDSS SIMULATOR AND RADAR SIMULATOR WITH ECDIS AND 3 CHANNEL VISUALIZATION HAVING POSEIDON REAL HARDWARE FOR OUR LADY OF FATIMA UNIVERSITY

The Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Dan August D. Scott, has signed a contract with Poseidon Asia Inc., upgrading their simulator to the newest software development of Poseidon GMDSS Simulator and Navigation Simulator last June 2010. The installation of Bridge consoles commenced within 2 weeks and the completion of delivery and installation started from July 2010 - 2012. Final training for Navigation Simulator presented on Dec 19-20, 2010.

Poseidon GMDSS Simulator is a highly suitable tool for GMDSS training and examination for IMO Model courses 125 (GOC) and 126 (GOC). The simulator supports the following IMO Model courses:
- GMDSS Trainee course 127
- Operational use of Electronic Chart Display and Information System (ECDIS)
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DR. YANGCA COLLEGES SIGNS NEW CONTRACT WITH POSEIDON ASIA INC. UPGRADING ITS POSEIDON RADAR SIMULATOR WITH ECDIS HAVING 4 CHANNEL VISUALIZATION

As part of its efforts to continuously improve the maritime education and training of their future seafarers, Dr. Yangca College signed a new contract with Poseidon Asia Inc.

We have fully completed the delivery and installation on September 25-24, 2010 while the training was conducted on Oct 1-8, 2010.

Poseidon delivered Dr. Yangca College new radar in 2008. From then on we have established a year of pleasant business relationship with Dr. Yangca College.

For more information, visit our website at www.poseidon.no
Or visit
Dr. Yangca College Inc.
Viborg Highway, Westam Country, Bacolod

PAIMA UPGRADED POSEIDON RADAR SIMULATOR

One of the leading and known maritime institutions in the North, Pangasinan Merchant Marine Academy has upgraded its Poseidon Radar Simulator to the latest development of Poseidon Radar Simulator.

We are very pleased that since 1997 on the first piece of equipment made by PAIMA and up to the present, PAIMA has continued to produce number of quality graduates of Marine Transportation.

For this year, we have completed the delivery and installation of the latest Radar Simulator on July 25-26, 2010.

For more information, you can visit our website at www.poseidon.no
Or visit
Pangasinan Merchant Marine Academy
Philippines Beach, Subic City
Zamboanga
Empire Navigation Exemplifies High Regard for Filipino Seafarers

Empire Navigation, Inc. the young ship owning and management company based in Athens, Greece, further exemplified its trust and confidence on Filipino seafarers by setting in motion various initiatives in the local maritime industry meant primarily to put premium importance on its Filipino seafarers workforce.

In simple but otherwise meaningful cocktail rites at New World Hotel in Makati City held on October 20, 2010, Empire Navigation, through its local crewing agent Global Gateway Crewing Services, Inc. casually introduced to a handful of local maritime industry stakeholders its unique and excellent brand of shipping and crewing operations.

Mr. Harry Papadimitriou, Crew Manager of Empire Navigation, led the management officials of Global Gateway Crewing Services composed of CEO Engr. Ricardo N. Galvez Jr. and President Capt. Simeon Flores, in welcoming industry guests to the cocktails and making them feel at home.

Also joining them is Mr. Kostas N. Panagiotidis, Owner’s Representative of Michaelmar Shipping Services Greece, the parent company of Global Gateway Crewing Services, Inc.

Among the industry stakeholders that attended the cocktails were some members of the marine boards of the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC), the top official of the country’s premier maritime school, an official of a top-caliber and foreign-funded training center, the leader of one manning group, officials of other maritime companies, and government officials and staff from an attached agency of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The cocktail was meant to give the local maritime industry a sneak peak on Empire Navigation’s continuing growth especially with the expected delivery of two cape size bulk carriers by the end of January 2011 and four Suezmax tanker newbuildings beginning in March 2011.

In addition to its newbuilding orders, Empire Navigation is also looking to expand its fleet through acquisitions. “We’re also in the market for good deals,” says Mr. Papadimitriou.

Mr. Harry Papadimitriou, Crew Manager of Empire Navigation; Mr. Kostas Panagiotidis, Owners’ Representative of Michaelmar Shipping Services Greece, the parent company of Global Gateway; Engr. Ricardo Galvez Jr. and Capt. Simeon Flores, CEO and President respectively, of Global Gateway.

When the company first rolled out its four tankers last year at the start of its operation, Empire Navigation did not have any second thoughts in manning them with full Filipino crew. “Our company has a high regard on the skills, competencies, experience and proven track record of Filipino seafarers,” cites Mr. Papadimitriou.

“We intend to have our newbuildings each manned by full Filipino crew. There is no other second option for Empire Navigation in terms of crew nationality,” says Papadimitriou, who spent several weeks in the Philippines in October to review the applications of several Filipino seafarers for the top four senior officer positions for its upcoming newbuildings.

While many in the local maritime industry insist that there is still a shortage of ship officers, Empire Navigation, through Global Gateway Crewing Services, seems to be getting the attention and interests of many Filipino officers, who have sought to be employed with the company.

“I will select the most competent ones to man our new vessels,” says the Empire Navigation crew manager. “My goal is to be able to fill in first in the four top positions and take it from there. But definitely, each member of the 25-man crew compliment for each vessel from the captain down to the messman will be Filipino,” he added.

A number of Filipino seafarers have come to know and appreciate the importance that Empire Navigation is giving to the crew under its employ when word got around last year that the company went out of its way to extend financial assistance to seafarer-families who have been hit hard by Typhoon Ondoy.

No less than Global Gateway president Capt. Flores personally made an appeal of the reported devastation that the typhoon wrought on the homes of Metro Manila-based seafarer-families even during the height of the massive flooding. Subsequently, Empire Navigation through Global Gateway, handed out financial assistance to the affected seafarer-families which they used to rebuild their morale and homes.

Mr. Papadimitriou also said that they also make it a point to provide an all-expense paid to their crew whenever necessary. “We send our seafarers for a general training in Korea and we also send them to Greece at the Empire Navigation’s headquarters so that they would know the company better and realize that they are being treated as part of a family more than just a sea-based employee,” he explained.

The general training in Korea is necessary because all of Empire Navigation’s newbuildings are being built at Korean yards to be able to give the crew a good feel of the vessel even before it officially sets sail.

Most of the company’s vessels are timecharted, which somehow insulated it from feeling the ill effects of the global financial crisis that had international shipping reeling down beginning in late 2008 up to the first half of 2010.

“All our vessels were under long-term timecharters so we hardly felt the impact of the financial crisis,” reports Mr. Papadimitriou with a tinge of pride.

A recent onboard incident also showed how Empire Navigation cares for its crew. One of its vessels was on its way to a port in Rotterdam. Its electrician felt ill and was soon experiencing convulsion. When advised of the situation onboard, Mr. Papadimitriou advised the captain to veer momentarily off course and head back to France so medics can attend to him. The was eventually taken by medics off the ship by a helicopter.

While others would have advised to just wait it out until the ship reaches its destination port, Empire Navigation values the safety and life of its crew so much that it had to sacrifice time and resources just to ensure that proper medication is administered to the ailing crew. After undergoing treatment at the hospital, it was found out that the decision was quite timely because according to the doctor who treated the electrician for acute appendicitis, had the crew been taken to the hospital an hour more, his appendix would have already ruptured and he could have been dead soon after.

Engr. Galvez said that the crew was very happy with the life-saving decision made by Empire Navigation and has expressed his and his family’s profuse gratitude with the company. The same seafarer is now lined-up for another vessel of Empire Navigation.

Empire Navigation is also investing heavily in providing continuous training and education for its staff and crew because it strongly believes that experienced and well-trained personnel, both at sea and ashore, ensures high quality of service for its clients.

The Empire Navigation crew manager also revealed that other initiatives that they are seriously looking at pursuing in the Philippines is a 100%-sponsored deck cadetship program with the country’s premier maritime schools, health insurance coverage for its Filipino seafarers, seminar for seafarers’ wives, and scholarship grants to children of their Filipino crew.

With its uncompromising regard for its sea staff and its extraordinary concern for their safety and welfare, it is no secret why Empire Navigation is fast gaining the attention and recognition of more and more Filipino seafarers.
Global Gateway Crewing Services, Inc. has recently made the big move. From its small offices in a building in Makati City, the exclusive Philippine crewing agent of Michaelmar Shipping Services Greece has transferred to bigger offices at the 12th floor of the newly-constructed De Leon Center Building along M.H. Del Pilar Street in Malate, Manila.

On October 6, 2010, the fast-growing manning company had a simple blessing ceremony for its new offices in the presence of select guests from the local maritime industry.

Mr. George Patentas, Managing Director of Michaelmar Shipping Services Greece flew all the way from Athens, Greece to celebrate with its local crewing firm the transfer to a more spacious office in the heart of Manila. His representative, Mr. Kostas Panagiotidis, has been in the country since June this year, as he personally oversaw the establishment of the new office just as how Michaelmar Greece wanted this to be.

Apart from highlighting the constantly burgeoning crewing operation of Global Gateway, the move to its new and bigger offices is also very strategic in a way since the company took a major step closer to where most of the crewing action is happening – the Luneta Seafarer’s Center along T.M. Kalaw Street.

With the increasing number of vessels of most of its major foreign principals, it was imperative for Global Gateway to expand and strengthen its crew recruitment services.

The affair was highlighted by a blessing rites officiated by a Roman Catholic priest. Subsequently, the priest asked Mr. Patentas what his wish for Global Gateway is now that the company has transferred to bigger offices.

“This is a new beginning for Global Gateway Crewing Services and with its proven track record over the past couple of years, I am confident that the company would be able to live up to the crewing expectations of Michaelmar Shipping Greece and its foreign principals,” Mr. Patentas said.

The Michaelmar Shipping Greece owner also wished that the transfer and operational transition to the new office would also be smooth in the following days and months to come so that Global Gateway Crewing can focus on the more important task at hand – find competent Filipino seafarers to man the vessels of its principals.

Mr. Patentas also emphasized that although the blessing was just simple, the company expects to have a grand formal inauguration when its in-house training center is completed soon.

Global Gateway Crewing CEO Engr. Ricardo N. Galvez Jr. says that the company would be occupying the whole 12th floor of the building and shall have various departments to handle seafarer matters.

“While our company is already gainfully employing a substantial number of Filipino seafarers, both officers and ratings, we are continuously looking for competent sea staff as most, if not all, of our principals are on fleet expansion mode. That means additional business for Global Gateway Crewing in the Philippines.

“We sincerely express our gratitude to the officials of Michaelmar Shipping Greece for their unwavering support and commitment to Global Gateway Crewing amid the initial challenges that we had to go through,” he added.

For his part, Capt. Simeon Flores, President of Global Gateway Crewing, welcomed the move of the company to Manila.

“This is where much of the crewing action in the local maritime industry happens so we need to be here and stand toe-to-toe with the competition. We have very excellent foreign principals so it is quite easy for us to attract the interests of Filipino seafarers, both officers and ratings,” says Capt. Flores.

With its unabated expansion, Global Gateway Crewing has stepped up yet again to a new challenge by opening its doors and serving as a fitting gateway towards rewarding shipboard career opportunities for many Filipino seafarers.

The complete address and contact details of Global Gateway Crewing is at:

12th Floor, De Leon Center Building
1151 M.H. Del Pilar St. cor. Nuestra Señora De Guia Street
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Tel.: 632-3105680
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E-mail: crewing@globalcrewing.ph
Website: www.globalcrewing.ph
Filipino Seafarers are Still LUSWELF’s Main Anchors

The LUSWELF database is also one of the additional advantages of manning agencies maintaining booths at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center because they are provided copies of it as well as the periodic updates that the foundation is regularly doing on the database.

With the upcoming Holiday season, the Luneta Seafarer’s Center is expected to be abuzz with activities that draw many Filipino seafarers as well. This year, the LUSWELF Chairman and CEO also expressed his gratitude to the local maritime community for their continuous support to the foundation.

But as many in the local maritime industry have expected all along, the exodus was shortlived because pretty soon those manning agencies that once left their booths at Luneta are now in fact salivating to get their previous spaces back, now occupied by other manning agencies.

A number of manning agencies have remained in Luneta despite the POEA directive, although this time, they are no longer brandishing their respective company names or salary scales for various seafarer positions in their respective booths the way they used to. As such, the major drawback for manning agencies in Luneta is basically on the matter of promotion. The rest of the traditional going-ons still continue.

Obviously, manning agencies need Luneta and the throngs of Filipino seafarers that have practically made the area almost their second home more than the place need them.

“The foundation was created specifically for the purpose of serving the Filipino seafarers. For as long as there are Filipino seafarers at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center, LUSWELF will be around, continuously striving and looking for ways on how to serve them better,” says Don Bagatsing, Chairman and CEO of LUSWELF.

After taking in stride the brickbats that LUSWELF has been getting from some quarters in the local maritime industry over the past couple of months, Bagatsing decided to come out in the open to defend the good name of the foundation and the Luneta Seafarer’s Center.

“LUSWELF is here to stay to serve the Filipino seafarers at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center. The foundation was created specifically for the purpose of serving the Filipino seafarers. For as long as there are Filipino seafarers at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center, LUSWELF will be around, continuously striving and looking for ways on how to serve them better,” says Don Bagatsing, Chairman and CEO of LUSWELF.

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After taking in stride the brickbats that LUSWELF has been getting from some quarters in the local maritime industry over the past couple of months, Bagatsing decided to come out in the open to defend the good name of the foundation and the Luneta Seafarer’s Center.

“LUSWELF is here to stay to serve the Filipino seafarers at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center. The foundation was created specifically for the purpose of serving the Filipino seafarers. For as long as there are Filipino seafarers at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center, LUSWELF will be around, continuously striving and looking for ways on how to serve them better,” says Don Bagatsing, Chairman and CEO of LUSWELF.

The LUSWELF database is also one of the additional advantages of manning agencies maintaining booths at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center because they are provided copies of it as well as the periodic updates that the foundation is regularly doing on the database.

With the upcoming Holiday season, the Luneta Seafarer’s Center is expected to be abuzz with activities that draw many Filipino seafarers as well. This year, the LUSWELF Chairman and CEO also expressed his gratitude to the local maritime community for their continuous support to the foundation.

But as many in the local maritime industry have expected all along, the exodus was shortlived because pretty soon those manning agencies that once left their booths at Luneta are now in fact salivating to get their previous spaces back, now occupied by other manning agencies.

A number of manning agencies have remained in Luneta despite the POEA directive, although this time, they are no longer brandishing their respective company names or salary scales for various seafarer positions in their respective booths the way they used to. As such, the major drawback for manning agencies in Luneta is basically on the matter of promotion. The rest of the traditional going-ons still continue.

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There is a lot to feel proud and good for a company that has logged in 31 solid years in a dynamic and very competitive business. The officers, staff, and Filipino seafarers of INC Navigation Company Philippines, Inc. certainly have those key elements going for them when the manning company marked its 31st Anniversary in September 2010.

But instead of savouring the accomplishments and bask in the glory that it has meticulously worked hard for over the years perhaps through a lavish anniversary bash, INC opted instead to reach out to undernourished tots in Mandaluyong City as it backstopped the holistic impact project of Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong called ‘Feeding Children, Teaching Mothers.’

Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong is one of the local chapters of Soroptimist International of the Philippines Region (A Foundation), Inc., which is a social club of professional women in business seeking to contribute in building a better world through an organized manner.

While INC has been in the ship manning business for over three decades, its partner for its latest corporate social responsibility (CSR) endeavour has been in existence since 1994, logging in 16 years of joyful and meaningful service in improving the lives of women and girls in the local communities.

INC’s partnership with Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong also stems from the fact that Ms. Rose Mesina, the company’s Financial Director, is presently one of the 23 active members of the club, currently headed by Mrs. Virginia V. Peñalosa as president.

The holistic feeding and learning project of Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong has been a continuing program since its inception in 2002, conducting it once or twice a year on underprivileged kids living in the club’s adopted barangays within the city.

On September 29, 2010, the officers and staff of INC Navigation Company Philippines, Inc., along with several members of Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong, formally launched the latest edition of the Feeding and Learning Program at a Jollibee branch in Mandaluyong City. The event was also attended by the participating 30 five-year-old girls from Barangay Highway Hills, each accompanied by their mothers.

Officials of Barangay Highway Hills led by Captain Onay, a couple of lady councilors and barangay nutrition scholars also took part in the formal launching ceremony, which subsequently turned into a children’s party as the tots and their mothers feasted on food, entertainment, and fun that were provided in Jollibee compliments of INC.

Unlike the usual feeding program by most entities that usually lasts a day, or two at the most, the Feeding and Learning Program sponsored by INC through the Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong is actually a six-month undertaking wherein the health of the children involved will be monitored during the project’s entire duration.

The program also has the blessing and supervision of the Nutrition Council of the Philippines, thus the barangay nutrition scholars play crucial roles in ensuring its success. All of the feeding and learning programs initiated by Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong since 2002 have been very successful so much so that it has actually become the club’s flagship or impact project.

In addition, participating undernourished kids to the program will also be provided with supplemental deworming medicines and other vitamins.

The project also has a learning component as the mothers of each participating kid in the feeding program will likewise be taught by the nutrition scholars on how to come up with an everyday menu for their children without having to shell out a huge amount.

Participants are normally weighed in before the start of the project and then again after six months so that the proponents can see for themselves the impact of the project.

“This is INC’s way of sharing its blessings to the community, particularly for those who are most in need of assistance. The management of INC Manila has decided to do away with a lavish anniversary celebration and instead focus on a great social undertaking like this Feeding and Learning Program as espoused to us by the Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong,” remarked Mr. Reynaldo Ramirez, President of INC Manila, in a short speech read by Capt. Nesias Rondina Jr., Operations Manager, during the launching program at Jollibee.

Capt. Onay followed his gratitude to INC and the barangay officials for a company that has logged in 31 solid years in a dynamic and very competitive business.

“On behalf of the people of Barangay Highway Hills, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for the support that INC has provided in this Feeding and Learning Program of the Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong. The company really knows how to care for the community and we hope that other companies would follow the lead of INC in giving something back to the community,” Capt. Onay said.

The officers of INC led by Capt. Jerome Delos Angeles, CEO, Ms. Rose Mesina, and Capt. Rondina also led the full contingent of INC Manila staff during the launching program that saw them working with some of the members of Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong in happily serving the Jollibee treats to the kids and their mothers.

While the kids and their mothers had sumptuous meals at Jollibee during that midday launching event, it was not the official start of the program. The Feeding and Learning Program officially began in the morning of October 4th at the Barangay Hall of Barangay Highway Hills where the participating 30 children were given their first servings under the program.

In addition to Barangay officials, members of Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong and several staff of INC Manila led by Ms. Mesina, were also around to ensure that the program rolls off to a good start.

According to Ms. Mesina, INC Manila will be earmarking ₱9,000 per week for 20 weeks during the six-month feeding and learning program to be able to nourish the 30 participating kids, whose health are expected to improve at the close of the program on April 1, 2011.

More than the amount involved in the holistic feeding and learning program, Ms. Mesina and the entire INC family are very excited and feeling good about the impact of the project on the participating young children and their families.

“After the project, we anticipate that there will be more smiles and joy in the cute little faces of participating kids in the program. For a small project, the impact is really long-lasting and we at INC Manila only feel good about ourselves, knowing that we have made a difference in a number of lives,” points out Ms. Mesina.

Capt. Onay, who compared his role to a ship captain during his short speech at the official start of the Feeding and Learning Program, expressed his gratitude to INC and the Soroptimist International of Mandaluyong for adopting Barangay Highway Hills and involving some of their young constituents to their impact project.

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Coastal Cleanup Participation Epitomizes INC’s Concern for the Environment

Fresh from officially obtaining its ISO 14001:2004 environmental management certification, INC Navigation Company Philippines, Inc. exemplified that its concern for the environment goes beyond ‘paper compliance’ and is in fact almost an integral part of the subconscious of the company and its people.

This was very evident during the International Coastal Cleanup activity held on September 25, 2010 when INC Manila officers, staff, seafarers and cadets joined throngs of environmentally-conscious groups and individuals in ridding the shores of the famous Manila Bay along the stretch of Roxas Boulevard of tons of garbage.

The International Coastal Cleanup was actually the culmination of the week-long celebration of the National Maritime Week which had run from September 20 – 25, 2010. The activity drew thousands of participants from various private companies, cause-oriented groups, schools and student organizations, as well as local government employees.

Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim set the tone for the half-day-long cleanup drive as he delivered a short message prior to the official start of the cleanup.

Contingents from the Manila City waste management department were also around along with their dump and garbage trucks to ensure the proper disposal of all collected refuse from the shore of Manila Bay along Roxas Boulevard beginning from the US Embassy up to the Manila Yacht Club.

In addition to the shores of Manila Bay along Roxas Boulevard, there were a few other focal points of the International Coastal Cleanup including the seashore near the side of the Manila Hotel and the headquarters of the Philippine Coast Guard also in Manila, and the stretch of shoreline near Mall of Asia in Pasay City.

The INC Manila coastal cleanup contingent also drew solid support from the staff and cadets of the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS), who also share the same commitment toward the marine environment as INC as a global shipping organization.

The INC Manila officers composed of Capt. Jerome Delos Angeles, CEO; Mr. Reynaldo Ramirez, President; Ms. Rose Mesina, Financial Director; and Capt. Nesias Rondina Jr., Operations Manager; led the company staff, cadets and seafarers in the cleanup drive as they each buckled down to work and focused on cleaning up the portion of the shore of Manila Bay, right next to the compound of the US Embassy.

Armed with gloves, brooms, dustpans, sticks, and even fishnets on bamboo poles, the INC cleanup contingent methodically worked its way through piles of refuse that has turned the once pristine shores of Manila Bay into a watery garbage heap.

Capt. Samson ‘Sam’ Jimenez, INC’s Environmental Management Representative, coordinated the cleanup activity of the INC team and supervised the entire procedure, including proper waste segregation and the recording of items and total volume of garbage collected in that relatively small portion of the Manila Bay shoreline along Roxas Boulevard.

After close to three hours of literally getting their hands dirty, the INC coastal cleanup team was able to generate some 285 bags of refuse which included various plastic products, drift woods, worn out clothing, food leftovers, light metals, among many others.

The 285 bags of refuse normally held every September.

Environmental initiatives have become a strong component of INC’s corporate social responsibility programs. On June 26, 2010, the company conducted a tree-planting activity at the La Mesa watershed in Quezon City to mark the celebration of the Year of the Seafarer as declared by the International Maritime Organization.

There are obviously more things in store for the environment with INC but one thing is sure, the company and its people truly ‘actualize’ their concern for the environment.
The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) celebrated its 109th Founding Anniversary in October 2010 with week-long activities designed to make the public aware of the PCG’s new mandate. This comes on the heels of the enactment of Republic Act No. 9993, otherwise known as the Philippine Coast Guard Law of 2009.

The PCG is tasked with the promotion of safety of life and property; the protection of the marine environment; the enforcement of maritime laws; and, the conduct of maritime security operations, among others.

Among the various activities was a week-long charitable service to the community that included free medical and dental services as a way for PCG to express its gratitude, commitment and dedication to its mission and mandate. Beneficiaries of this project were the children of the “House of Refuge,” a nonprofit organization that helps a large number of street children in Metro Manila.

A bloodletting program participated in by PCG personnel, the United Filipino Seafarers volunteers, students from AIMS, and various donors was also held to benefit dengue victims.

PCG Commandant Admiral Wilfredo D. Tamayo led the week-long activities which also included a nationwide lifeguard and lifesaving training sessions conducted in the 10 districts all over the country. In addition, Admiral Tamayo spearheaded the convening of the rubber boat handling and maintenance course for government and various civic groups from Pasig, Marikina, and various donors was also held to benefit dengue victims.

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A particularly popular project, the scubasurero, was undertaken in 10 Coast Guard districts all over the country. The PCG’s many partners who are actively engaged in environmental protection enthusiastically participated in clearing the seabeds in these districts of garbage, using their scuba gear.

On October 22, 2010, Department of Transportation and Communications Secretary Jose P. de Jesus, graced the culmination of the week-long celebrations at the PCG Headquar ters as guest of honor and speaker. In his speech, De Jesus congratulated the PCG for its remarkable achievements despite its limited resources and lauded the thorough preparation and planning the PCG undertook to minimize loss of lives during super typhoon Juan.

De Jesus was widely applauded when in his speech, he extolled the achievements of the PCG by saying, “…the PCG may be outmatched and out-equipped, but it is never outperformed…With the PCG on the ground, the safety of the Filipino people is assured…”

At the same event, DOTC Secretary de Jesus and Undersecretary for Maritime Transport, Aristotle B. Batuhan, presented awards to PCG operating units and individuals who have excelled in their tasks, missions and functions. This year’s Best Coast Guard Stations, categorized according to traffic density of domestic and foreign vessels visiting their respective areas of responsibility are: Coast Guard Station Ilolo as “Station of the Year, Class ‘A’”; Coast Guard Station General Santos as “Station of the Year, Class ‘B’” and Coast Guard Station Sual as “Station of the Year, Class ‘C’”

Coast Guard Detachment Calatagan bagged the “Detachment of the Year” award while the 606th Philippine Coast Guard Auxiliary Squadron of Antique was named “PCGA Squadron of the Year.”

The PCG’s air and surface assets were also recognized for their exceptional performances. The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources’ Maritime Control and Surveillance Vessel 3002 was cited as “Ship of the Year, Category 1”; BRP Romblon (SARV 3503), as “Ship of the Year, Category 2”; BRP EDSa II (SARV 002) as “Ship of the Year, Category 3”; DF 310 as “Small Craft of the Year”; and, PCG Islander 664 as “Aircraft of the Year.”

Outstanding individual performances were likewise recognized. Awards were given to: PO1 Enrico P. Paralejas as "Enlisted Personnel of the Year"; Greta G. Pamonag as “Civilian Employee of the Year”; LK1 Francisco F. Cunia as “Lighthouse Keeper of the Year”; and K9 "Tholits" as “Coast Guard Canine of the Year.”

Other outstanding achievers included Commander Teotimo R. Baja, Jr. who was given the Coast Guard Bronze Medal; Commander Charlie Q. Rances, who received the Coast Guard Bronze Cross; Commander Allan Victor T. dela Vega who got the Coast Guard Superior Achievement Medal and Ribbon; and, Allen J. Dalangin who was conferred the Coast Guard Bronze Cross.

Part of the day’s activities was the presentation of the ISO 9001:2008 Certification to the Coast Guard Action Center by Captain Graham J. Boulder, IRCA Registered Lead Auditor for Quality ISM Code/OH and S and the Environment. The CGAC is the nerve center of the PCG’s 24/7 operations.

The PCG is the second and only Coast Guard in the world to have received such a recognition after Canada for guaranteeing quality management service to the public and to maritime stakeholders who use the country’s navigable waterways for transport, trade and commerce, recreation as well as a source of food, minerals and energy.

During the same event, the signing of a memorandum of agreement between the PCG and the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority was also held. Admiral Tamayo represented the PCG while the SBMA was represented by Commodore Feliciano G. Salonga as Chairman, and Armand C. Arreza, as Administrator and CEO.

The memorandum of agreement provides for the use of SBMA facilities by the PCG for the establishment of a base complex for search and rescue, marine environmental protection facilities, a Coast Guard Aviation Group Station, and a potential site for a planned academy of the future.

The anniversary celebrations provided the Coast Guard with a chance to pride itself in its 109 years of dedicated service and its transformation from its humble beginnings as a lighthouse and revenue cutter service into today’s multi-mission maritime institution.

As a fitting tribute, Admiral Tamayo proudly stated: “We, the officers, men and women of the PCG are very proud and honored to be entrusted with such great responsibility of ensuring our country’s safe, clean and secure maritime environment.”
PCG Commandant Admiral Wilfredo D. Tamayo congratulated the men and women of the maritime agency on its 109th anniversary. In a speech at the PCG Headquarters on October 22, 2010, Admiral Tamayo extolled the outstanding achievements of the PCG despite its limited resources.

"Looking back at our humble beginnings, we take pride that the PCG has eventually matured as an organization. From a lighthouse and revenue cutter service in 1901, the PCG has gradually transformed into a multi-mission maritime agency that ought to be always mission-ready to answer the call of duty," he said.

"With the enactment of Republic Act 9993 or the Coast Guard Law of 2009, the PCG’s rightful niche in the bureaucracy and its role in nation-building have been well defined. It also establishes the Coast Guard as a premier maritime agency vested with the necessary authority and responsibility to perform preventive measures in ensuring the safety of merchant vessels, contrary to the pre-RA 9993 era when we were just relegated to reactive measures. The law also strengthened the organization’s authority to address the emerging challenges in view of the ever-increasing demands for marine resources, technological advancement, as well as climate change," he explained.

The PCG Commandant proceeded to enumerate the maritime agency’s various achievements. "I am proud to report to the Honorable Secretary that in compliance with the President’s marching order, we have had virtually zero casualty of fishermen during Typhoon Juan."

"We have noted a significant decrease in the number of recorded casualties attributed to the prompt and sustained monitoring coordination and response to maritime incidents and greater safety awareness on the part of shipping and the general public," Admiral Tamayo added.

"The Coast Guard Action Center, which is manned round-the-clock by competent and highly-trained officers and personnel also houses the Maritime Rescue Coordinating Center. This type of command center is replicated in all the 10 coast guard districts and 55 stations around the country. The PCG performed 1,107 search and rescue missions which resulted in the successful rescue or assistance to 9,107 persons," he pointed out.

On the matter of the environment, Admiral Tamayo proudly stated: "The PCG relentlessly performed oil, chemical and coal spill response operations noteworthy of which is the successful conduct of oil spill response in Rosario, Cavite when a submarine pipeline was damaged by a ship’s anchor at the height of Typhoon Basyang."

"In addition to the existing Asean regional action oil spill response action plan (OSRAP), the PCG has concurred on the proposed memorandum of agreement with Vietnam on oil spill response and preparedness and is currently working with Japan for the formulation of the hazardous and noxious contingency plan that will cover response to marine pollutants other than oil spills."

The PCG Commandant was particularly proud when he said: "The PCG was recognized internationally following the apprehension of international pirates after two vessels, on separate occasions, were forcibly taken by pirates in international waters. The pirated vessels were recovered intact. For this, the regional cooperation agreement on combating piracy and armed
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AET's commitment to employ, train and retain only the best people came to the fore once again during the company’s two-day Junior Officers' Seminar held at the Heritage Hotel Manila on August 12-13, 2010.

Aply titled: “Engaging Future Leaders Towards Safety and Operational Excellence” and attended by over 50 off-duty Filipino junior officers, the seminar showcased the continuing efforts of AET to inculcate in its young officers the company’s core values of excellence, responsibility, innovation and partnership.

As a dynamic global company with a mission to become the world’s leading petroleum tanker operator, AET firmly believes that its present crop of junior officers will become the future leaders of its fleet.

The two-day seminar aimed to instill a culture of safety and operational excellence among AET’s young officers, highlighting these as the crucial springboards that would eventually equip them to take on leadership roles within the company.

AET is one of the world's leading petroleum tanker operators, employing more than 3,000 highly-skilled and dedicated people who work in a cross-cultural environment, operating a young and technically advanced fleet of 75 tankers that move crude oil and refined products for the world’s oil companies and trading houses.

Its headquarters are in Kuala Lumpur, with commercial centers in London, Singapore, Houston and Gurgaon (India), as well as a specialist lightening operation run out of Galveston in Texas. Shipmanagement centers are in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Gurgaon, and crewing and manning activities are in India and the Philippines, with representative manning offices in Bangladesh and the Ukraine.

In the Philippines, the bulk of AET’s crewing requirement is provided by Eagle Star Crew Management Corporation. A premier marine recruitment and crew management agency, Eagle Star was established with the joining of forces of three major players in the maritime industry: recruitment specialist Parola Maritime Agency Corp, global energy logistics provider MISC Berhad, and leading worldwide petroleum shipping company AET Shipmanagement.

With high expectations for operational excellence and dependability from its major stakeholders, Eagle Star is committed to sourcing the finest professionals to man the ships of MISC and AET. The company assures innovative solutions and a progressive work environment through a proactive approach to recruitment and management.

AET's two-day seminar in Manila was facilitated by AET's Group HR Sea training. Among the topics and issues tackled during the two-day conference were the company’s quality policy, high vetting standards, advanced engineering competencies, career management for officers, expectations of and challenges for quality seafarers, and driving performance the 'SMART' way – i.e., by identifying goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

A workshop on embracing change was also held during the second day of the event, focusing on ‘AET’s Future Leaders: Positive Mindset and Behaviour Change.’

Capping off the productive conference was a commitment session during which AET’s junior officers set realistic goals for improvement. These were matched by commitments and support from AET shore staff.

A Word from AET’s Future Leaders

“AET is a company that wants its seafarers to have that officers’ mindset all the time,” said 2/O Harold Capaducio, who has been with the company for seven years since he was taken in as a fully-sponsored cadet from the Iloilo State College of Fisheries.

Citing that the two-day seminar had been very enlightening and engaging for him, 2/O Capaducio was also pleased to learn about the clear vision that AET has for its junior officers. He has set his sights on becoming a master in the next couple of years and wants to remain with AET because the company has already charted a very good career path for him and other promising junior officers.

4/O Ray-Ann Perito, who was taken in by AET as a cadet in 2003, said that the conference made perfectly clear the importance that AET placed on operational excellence and safety management. Having passed the oral exam at ALAM (the Malaysia Maritime Academy) in April 2010, 4/O Perito expressed loyalty to AET, claiming he wanted to work for the company for the long-term.

“AET has already charted a good career path for us from being cadets all the way to becoming captains and chief engineers and they always make it a point to continuously develop our capabilities every step of the way,” 4/O Perito stated.

Third Engineer Henry S. Sadcopen Jr, who has been serving the company as an engineering officer for five years, said that the AET seminar gave him a sense of security knowing that he works for a very stable organization that has already mapped out a viable career development plan for him and his fellow junior officers.

Taken in by the company as a cadet from the Northern Philippines College for Maritime and Technological Studies, 3/E Sadcopen said that the seminar also further lifted their morale as they became aware of the confidence and trust that AET is giving them as the next breed of company leaders.

“The seminar encouraged and motivated us to excel in our work onboard,” said 25-year-old 2/O Christopher M Leonora. Having been with AET for five years, 2/O Leonora is proud to be part of the AET family. “They really know how to take good care of their people, not just in terms of a competitive compensation package but also by providing clear career development plans,” he stressed.

2/O Leonora is expecting to join his sixth vessel with AET soon, initially as 3rd Officer but eventually assuming the role of 2nd Officer after two to three months onboard. “AET always has our career paths in mind so it is really nice knowing that our company gives us premium importance,” he said.
Industry Shows All-Out Support for DOLE’s Platform Agenda

The major stakeholders of the local maritime industry have expressed in writing their full support to the 22-point Platform and Policy Pronouncement of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) under the helm of Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz.

Through an official ‘Manifesto of Support’ signed on September 14, 2010, the stakeholders likewise made several commitments to the programs and objectives of the Philippine manning and shipping industry in line with the goals of the DOLE, which is part of the overall platform of government of President Simeon Benigno C. Aquino III.

Primarily, the industry stakeholders have committed to strive and continue to maintain the Philippines’ status as ‘Seafaring Capital of the World,’ by providing competent seafarers to man the world’s fleet of ocean-going vessels.

“We shall always be mindful that our Filipino seafarers play a vital role not only in sustaining the Philippine economy but also ensuring that the fleets of merchant vessels across the globe are able to transport cargo needed for the world trade,” stated in the manifesto.

“In this regard, the maritime industry shall continue its program of attracting better students to enter the seafaring profession while working with maritime institutions to improve the quality of graduates in order to expand the number of our marine officers and engineers that will address the current global shortage of officers,” they assured.

The industry stakeholders likewise pushed to further strengthen the tripartite cooperation between the government, labor, and private sector in order to promote industrial peace and ensure that both the rights of workers and the employers are respected and protected.

“We support the ratification of the ILO and IMO Conventions that will benefit the Filipino seafarers as well as work for the alignment of our country’s laws taking into consideration the peculiar and the well-established nature, practices, and culture of the shipping industry especially as compared to the land-based OFWs,” the manifesto stated.

These two commitments headlined the total of nine commitments made by the industry stakeholders in the manifesto including support for mandatory labor arbitration prior to litigation of all seafarer claims; cooperation with government agencies to ensure that social protection programs are fully enforced or adopted; support in providing quality education, skills and upgrading training for Filipino seafarers; improvement of the ‘one-stop shop’ facilities to fast-track the documentation of Filipino seafarers and the general OFW populace; establishment of an accurate government database of information for Filipino seafarers; ensure that all agencies attached to the DOLE have clear and distinct mandates which are aligned toward a common direction and objective; and continue the private partnership with the Labor Department and its attached agencies for the greater benefit of the local maritime industry.

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Signatories to the manifesto from the private and employer sector included Eduardo Manese of the Joint Manning Group (JMG) and the Philippine Japan Manning Consultative Council, Ericson Marquez of the Filipino Association for Mariners’ Employment (FAME), Pedro Miguel Oca of the Philippine Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers, Dario Alampay of the Filipino Association of Manning Agencies and Ship Managers, Teodoro Quijano of PJMCC and FAME, Josephine Francisco of PJMCC and FAME, Rodolfo Estampador of the Conference of Maritime Manning Agencies (COMMA), Dante Jimenez of the Philippine Association of Maritime Institutions, and Merle J. San Pedro of the Philippine Association of Maritime Training Centers.

From the labor sector, the signatories included Gregorio S. Oca of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines, Democrito Mendoza of the Philippine Seafarers Union, Manuel Collado of the Mariners’ and Allied Transport Employees Union, Nelson Ramirez of the United Filipino Seafarers, Romeo S. Occena of the International Seamen’s Mutual Labor Association, Rodolfo Aspillaga of the Master and Mates Association of the Philippines, Gilberto Deligero of the Marine Engine Officers Association, Victor Del Prado of the Society of Filipino Ship Captains, and Sammuel Lim of the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers.
The Society of Filipino Ship Captains, Inc. (FILSCAPTS) and the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (SONAME) continued with their drives to increase their respective membership roster believing in the adage: “there is strength in numbers.”

The two professional organizations recently had their respective events to induct new members.

On October 15, 2010, FILSCAPTS held a Fellowship Night at the Manila Yacht Club with the Oathtaking of New Members as the highlight of the event.

Capt. Victor S. Del Prado, President of FILSCAPTS, led the officers and members of the association of Filipino skippers in welcoming new members to their constantly growing fold.

Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos AFP (Ret), President of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) and Vice President of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), was the guest of honor and speaker for the FILSCAPTS event.

VAdm. Santos lauded FILSCAPTS for its initiatives in the local maritime industry and wished the group continued success in their future projects. He likewise mentioned that the formation of FILSCAPTS was actually a dream come true for AMOSUP President and known industry figure Capt. Gregorio S. Oca.

SONAME, meanwhile, had its annual general membership meeting on October 29, 2010 at the Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila.

With the theme, “60 Years of Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering in the Philippines,” SONAME had Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) Administrator Emerson M. Lorenzo and Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) Commandant Wilfredo D. Tamayo as guests of honor and speakers.

Admiral Tamayo and Administrator Lorenzo each made their presentation on the current status of their respective agencies with the aim of opening up possible collaboration with SONAME on certain government regulatory functions, particularly with regard to vessel and maritime safety.

Subsequently, the two guests of honors were inducted by SONAME President Engr. Sammuel T. Lim as honorary members to the association.

Engr. Rosalio A. Quirante, Chairman of the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) Board of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (NAME), and Engr. Edward B. Cruz, Member of the PRC Board of NAME, were also on had during the event.

Engr. Cruz presented to SONAME the 2010 board passers of the NAME licensure examination and Engr. Quirante subsequently had them swear their professional oaths.

Prior to the annual general membership meeting, SONAME also released the results of its “Ships and Boat Design Contest 2010” which was started around the second half of the year.

Engr. Lim also made the President’s Annual Report to SONAME members during the meeting highlighting the growth that the organization accomplished in 2010, which is the third in his prolific three-year tenure.

He also led the induction to the association of new associate members.

SONAME likewise recognized Engr. Melchor Blaire M. Yap for being the 1st placer in the 2010 PRC licensure examination for naval architects and marine engineers.

As the event also marked the 60th year of SONAME as an association, revelry also took place after the program which they dubbed as “Party at 60!” highlighted by skits and entertainment numbers from a sexy stand-up comedienne.
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TINIG NG MARINONOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2010

The United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) is again coming out in the forefront of the domestic shipping industry by strongly pushing for yet another timely change in the way the concerned government agencies are handling the crucial issue of maritime safety.

In a letter sent to President Noynoy Aquino dated October 26, 2010 and copy furnished to all Senators and Congressmen of the country, Engr. Nelson Ramirez, president of the UFS, strongly lobbied for the joint inspection of all domestic vessels by the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) and the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

The UFS president has likewise furnished copies of the same letter to the Secretary of the Department of Transportation and Communications, the Administrator of the MARINA, the General Manager of the Philippine Ports Authority, the Commandant of the Philippine Coast Guard, and the Chairman of the Professional Regulation Commission.

"I would like to strongly recommend that all inspections of all types of seagoing vessels shall be undertaken jointly by the MARINA and PCG at the soonest possible time. This activity shall include registration, re-registration and re-certification of seaworthiness of all seagoing vessels and all matters pertaining to maritime safety rules and regulations," Ramirez cited in his letter.

"This joint inspection and certification should result in more transparency in the system and reduce finger-pointing after every maritime incident. Most of all, this move could identify culpability much easier, and make the imposition of sanctions, penalties and the filing of the appropriate cases speedier and more accurate. In all, it should minimize and reduce the number of accidents, if not totally eliminate them," he further explained.

The UFS has been constantly championing the cause of the industry’s greatest anchors – the seafarers themselves, their dependents and the various stakeholders.

This latest move of the UFS came on the heels of the apprehension by the PCG of two luxury boats under very suspicious circumstances. Many questions have remained unanswered, and once more, MARINA is under a heavy cloud of suspicion.

Ramirez is getting very sick and tired of the countless issues that MARINA or some of its personnel have been involved in over
PPA Responds to North Harbor Buoy Issue

Following the series of letters from the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) and the publication of the matter on the September – October 2010 issue of Tinig ng Marino about the missing buoys at the entrance channel of the Manila North Harbor which now have become safety hazards to vessels entering or leaving the country’s largest domestic port, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) has made a formal response.

In a letter dated September 17, 2010 addressed to Engr. Nelson P. Ramirez, President of the UFS, Raul T. Santos, Assistant General Manager for Operations of the PPA, explained that the port agency is already in the process of entering into a memorandum of agreement with the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and has in fact appropriated a budget for the NH buoy rehabilitation project.

But according to the PPA official, recent developments have become somewhat of a roadblock to the supposed joint undertaking with the PCG.

“We are constrained to re-study the matter with PCG in light of the new Coast Guard Law which was approved on February 12, 2010. Under Section 3(f) of Republic Act No. 9993, otherwise known as the Philippine Coast Guard Law of 2009, part of the powers and functions of the PCG is ‘to coordinate, develop, establish, maintain, and operate aids to navigation, vessel traffic system, maritime communications and search and rescue facilities within the maritime jurisdiction of the Philippines,’” Santos explained.

Santos concluded the official PPA correspondence to Ramirez by stating: “We hope for your understanding and appreciate your concern shared by many others on the safety of navigation in the North Harbor waterways and will advise you soonest of any developments.”

The letter is also copy furnished to PPA General Manager Juan Sta. Ana and several other PPA officials including the Port District Manager of Manila and the Port Manager of North Harbor.

For his part, Engr. Ramirez said: “What is important is that proper government agencies are now acting on the maritime safety matter that the UFS has brought up. For the meantime, the most appropriate thing to do is for the proper government agency to put up regular advice or radio bulletins to vessels entering or leaving the Manila North Harbor to veer away from the critical portions of the entrance channel to ensure that no untoward incident can happen anytime soon.”
Over the last couple of months, much has been said, through paid advertorials in major dailies, about the Smokey Mountain Development and Reclamation Project.

On one side are allegations that accomplished works of R-II Builders, the contractor tapped by the Philippine Government for the project, on the SMDRP from 1994 to 1999 is worth only PhP 211 Million yet in order to collect the obligations of the government, resorted to legal maneuverings against Home Guaranty Corporation (being the guarantor of the project), to gain major control of the Smokey Mountain Asset Pool (SMAP) including the 79-hectare Manila Harbour Centre port complex. Manila Harbour Centre is now operated by Harbour Centre Port Terminal, Inc. (HCPTI), the port operating company of R-II Builders, which was born from the SMDRP.

There are also allegations that R-II Builders is supposed to get a windfall of a bonanza to the tune of PhP 4.46 Billion in what was claimed as a ‘midnight deal’ involving former Vice President Noli De Castro, Home Guaranty Corporation and R-II Builders.

On the other side are rejoinders or R-II Builders quashing those allegations and branding them as distortions of truth. R-II Builders elaborately described the social and economic impact of the project. They claimed that the SMDRP has a contract price of PhP 6.6 Billion and that the PhP 4.46 Billion alleged claims actually represent the contractual obligations of the SMAP.

R-II Builders has likewise compared the appearance of the area before the SMDRP when the Smokey Mountain was then the symbol of national shame into what it now claims as a livable community that has benefited thousands of poor families.

That is the problem with a ‘paper fight.’ Everything has been said and thrown in about the issue yet the public has no way of knowing who’s telling the truth and who’s lying through their teeth. Enough said already. It is time to make a reality check on the issue and let the pictures do the talking; after all, pictures do say a thousand words.

FACTS VS. CLAIMS on the Smokey Mountain Development and Reclamation Project

The livable community claim

The World-Class Harbor Claim

Can you call this a world-class port comparable to Port Darling of Australia or Fisherman’s Wharf of San Francisco?

Dusty during dry season and muddy during rainy season, HCPT is a port that combines dry bulk cargos like coal, gypsum, clinker and silica with breakbulk shipments like steel coils, steel bars, steel plates, logs, vehicles, among others, in practically one area, some portions of which get submerged during downpours.

The Central Business District: A new hub for shopping and trade

Is this the thriving business in the area that can rival Makati or Greenhills?
robbery against ships in Asia, based in
Singapore, likewise commended the PCG.
Numerous poachers and armed smugglers
were also apprehended.

“Just recently, our K9s recovered some
74.5 kilos of high-grade cocaine from
coastal municipalities in Samar which are presumed to have been dumped
off the coast by the crew of a Chinese-
registered vessel, **FV King Yue**, the PCG
Commandant disclosed.

Admiral Tamayo likewise reported that
Coast Guard personnel have recently
apprehended two pleasure yachts worth at
least 20 million pesos believed to have been
smuggled from Florida, USA. The yachts
were found at the Manila Bay shoreline near
Mall of Asia.

“The seizure of a sizable amount of
fuel in Bataraza in Palawan is a validation
of the reported prevalence of smuggling
of oil products and other taxable items in
the island-province coming from Sabah,
Malaysia,” Admiral Tamayo elaborated.

The PCG Commandant also announced
that based on its improved budget for next
year, training and retraining of personnel
will be conducted. He also said that some
500 additional personnel will be hired next
year.

He said that compared to Vietnam
which has about 5,300 Coast Guard
personnel for its 7,000-kilometer coastline,
the Philippines, with its 36,000-kilometer
coastline and the fourth biggest in the world,
pales in comparison in terms of the number
of Coast Guard personnel.

“With the increase in budget, the PCG
bases in Romblon, Mactan, Laguindingan
and Taguig will continue to be
developed,” Admiral
disclosed.

He was also hopeful
that with an allocation of PHP 1.6 billion, the
planned acquisition of disaster response
helicopters will push through to enable
the Coast Guard to undertake extended
search and rescue missions.

Admiral Tamayo
concluded his speech
by saying: “We ensure our nation
and the public of the Coast Guard’s
continuing presence, preparedness,
professionalism and passion to serve.

Indeed, the officers,
men and women of the Philippine Coast
Guard are very proud
and honored to be entrusted with the great
responsibility of serving our nation by
ensuring a safe, clean and secure maritime
environment.

---

**Tamayo Extols Men and Women of PCG**

**FROM PAGE 35**

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**Contact:**

**Capt. Jesse B. Martinez, MM - President**
In today’s era of modern communications, it is quite easy to convey messages, including distress signals, to and from the ship thatdeck officers in charge of the vessel communications no longer have to deal with the meticulous and traditional systems of the past.

With the advent of the Global Maritime Distress Safety System (GMDSS), the traditional Morse Code communication medium in sending out SOS signals has become a thing of the past.

For an officer to be considered competent in his work, it is important to have a good understanding of the GMDSS to be able to qualify for the needed General Operator Certificate (GOC) from the National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) as part of his portfolio of competence needed in effectively performing his task onboard.

Typically, to ensure the competence of Filipino seafarers, they are subjected to practical or simulator assessment so that assessors would be able to determine whether they have assimilated the practical use for their acquired theoretical knowledge.

Up until the official entry of the Assessment and Research Center of the Philippines (ARC Phils) to the local maritime industry scene, there was no institution that offers simulator assessment involving GMDSS for deck officers.

Just like the ark of Noah that rose above flood waters and gave a new beginning to the world, ARC Phils is giving practical assessment for GOC of Filipino deck offers a modern touch with its state-of-the-art GMDSS simulator.

Practical or simulator assessment for GOC is based on Table A/IV-2 of the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) 95 Convention.

The establishment of ARC Phils is also governed no less by an NTC Memorandum Circular No. 029-04-2010 issued in April 2010 by Commissioner Gamaliel A. Cordoba.

The NTC circular specifically spells out the “Guidelines for Accreditation of Assessment Centers and Administration of General Operator Certificate (GOC) Practical/Simulator Assessment Table A/IV-2 of STCW.”

Capt. Constantino ‘Jun’ Arcellana, former chairman of the PRC Board of Marine Deck Officer and a known industry stickler and advocate for the provisions of the STCW 95 Convention, sits as President of ARC Phils.

TURN TO PAGE 48
Hounding an Elusive and Unlawful Greek Shipowner

Dear Nelson,

I am most grateful for your time and interest in helping me.

As indicated, I am a journalist with Dow Jones Newswires and currently writing a news article focusing on the alleged role of Panagis Zissimatos in oil theft in Nigeria and how Filipino seafarers were unwittingly caught in the net.

As far as I know, the UFS is the only organization worldwide to have collected credible information on his role as so many Filipino seafarers have been his victims and ended up in jail because of him.

So with your assistance, I hope to finally expose his role in this illegal trade. We will of course credit the UFS for revealing details of his actions in the first place.

As you know, Zissimatos has confirmed in a YouTube interview that he owns the MT Akuda and the MT Lucia - two ships seized on allegations of oil theft along with allegations of drug trafficking for MT Lucia.

But the Nigerian authorities have never acted against him and said they didn’t know about him when I inquired. Interestingly, they always jail the crew and not the charterers or owners.

So the only way to demonstrate convincingly his role and make sure he doesn’t strike again against Filipino seafarers would be to interview crews who could testify he was the owner of the ships involved.

Please note that I will respect the anonymity of the crews involved if they so wish.

Here are examples of the people it would be wonderful to speak to:

1. Members of the crew of the MT Glory, seized in July 2010 at the Bight of Benin in Bayelsa State. I am not sure whether you have been in touch with them.


3. Members of the crew of the MT Lucia including 2/E Sandro Regalado, Chief Engineer Udarico Serato, Chief Mate Jose Clapano, Second Mate Dioscoro Tagud, and AB Francisco Jamero. And maybe a contact with the Sierra Leone Sierra Leone Criminal Investigation Department or Navy who could explain why they arrested the ship.


5. The anonymous master who described how Zissimatos is systematically hiding ships in Benin when they are in trouble and changing their names (for instance, MT Black Pearl changed to MT Ruby, MT Hato, MT Keno, etc.)

In particular, it would be great to see a copy of a court order issued by the Federal High Court in Lagos listing 24 vessels owned by Zissimatos or any other document tying him to them or his companies such as Seagem, Corinthian, Azure, Golden Carriers etc.

I am most grateful in advance for your help and please be assured that your assistance will make a huge difference.

In advance, many thanks

Benoit Facon,
Journalist
Dow Jones Newswires
Dow Jones & Company, Inc.

I have read some reports that after he filed for bankruptcy, he went into hiding somewhere in Austria.

Later on, I heard a story that he was involved in a drug-related business. A few years later, when his name surfaced again, he was the owner of these vessels involved in smuggling oil in Nigeria.

The conditions of the crew onboard these vessels were really horrible as per account of the crew whom I have managed to talk to in person. The problem though, when the office of Seagem here in Manila was closed they did not pursue their cases anymore.

When Bosun Balore was still in jail in Nigeria together with his colleagues, all the relatives of the crew promised me that they will all visit my office when they will be back in the country. But when they were here in Manila they did not care to see me anymore.

Most likely, these people don’t want to pursue the case against the shipowner anymore. That is the most disappointing point of my job in helping seafarers who are victimized by unscrupulous shipowners.

I can provide you some of the details in the stories that we published in Tinig ng Marino but for the interview of the victims, it has become very hard to talk to them.

Nelson

Isang Paglilinaw
Ukol sa Status Maritime


Nabanggit ko po sa aking sulat na ako ay nadestino sa isang barko na dadaan sa karagatang malapit sa Somalia at ito ay talawin na aming napakasanduan ng crewing manager.

Dahil dito ako po ay nag-withdraw ng aking job application sa Status Maritime na naging dahanan upang ang nasabing kumpanya ay mag-sampa ng reklamo sa akin sa POEA.

Nais ko pong pinagawaan na ang nangyari sa akin ay “isolated incident” at bungsod ng hindi pagkakaunawaan sa pagitan ko at ng nasabing kumpanya.

Gusto ko pong pinagawaan na mag-alian ng mga kaso ng isa laban sa isa ang nangyari ng mga marinong Pilipino dahil dito kay “isolated incident” at bungsod ng hindi pagkakaunawaan sa pagitan ko at ng nasabing kumpanya.

Nais ko pong ipabatid na sa tulong ng Tinig ng Marino at UFS ako ay nakapagtanggali ng mga kaso na naging dahanan upang ang nasabing kumpanya ay mag-sampa ng reklamo sa akin sa POEA.

Nais ko rin pong pasalamatan ang nasabing kumpanya sa kanilang malalim na pag-unawa sa aking sitwasyon. — Name Withheld Upon Request

Welcome home!
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Apart from a sound mandate and a noble objective, ARC Phils’ establishment is based on what is provided for in the STCW 95 Convention and supported by NTC, thereby erasing any notion that we are just another layer on the documentation and certification process of Filipino seafarers, deck officers in particular,” states Capt. Arcellana.

Chief Mate Christopher T. Resco, ably backstops Capt. Arcellana in ARC Phils as General Manager. The young and active Chief Officer is also proud to report that ARC Phils is first private company to have been accredited by the NTC to provide simulator assessment for GOCs.

“Our GMDSS simulator assessment is also very authentic because it is the type where there is no human intervention at all, unlike in most practical assessments using simulators,” C/M Resco pointed out.

While the company has been busily setting up its modern facilities and equipment at its offices in Room 203-204 of LOCB Building located at No. 18 East Avenue corner V. Luna Street, Barangay Pinayahan, Diliman, Quezon City, it officially obtained its accreditation from NTC on October 22, 2010, giving it the formal go-signal to offer its first-of-its-kind simulator assessment service to Filipino deck officers.

Among the major features of ARC Phils’ GMDSS simulator is the Transas 4100 communication module comparable to what is found in most ocean-going vessels today and 10 PC stations each with LCD and touch-screen feature.

Elmer Jacob, Assessor Supervisor of ARC Phils, says that the GMDSS simulator assessment has four stages including documentation, briefing, actual assessment, and results and debriefing. The maximum process only takes a maximum of two hours, ensuring that it would not put a cramp on the otherwise busy schedule of vacationing Filipino deck officers.

A former radio officer himself, Elmer says that ARC Phils can accommodate 10 deck officers per two-hour session of assessment and in one day, they can actually accommodate as much as 80 deck officers daily.

At the moment, ARC has five staff including Capt. Arcellana, which is more than enough for its initial operation.

Capt. Arcellana also expects the influx of examinees at their facilities in the next couple of weeks following the licensure examination for deck officers.

“Your maritime solution provider,” the ARC Phils slogan says and beginning in November 2010, Filipino deck officers and eventually the local maritime industry would soon realize how the company has brought GMDSS simulator assessment to a new level.

Capt. Arcellana personally overseeing the process of practical assessment.
Pangutang Para sa mga OFWs

FROM PAGE 21


Kung walang katayikan ang iyong trabaho, hindi ka dapat umutang ng housing loan na ang “amortization” ay pantangatagal panahon. Ang tamang patakaran sa pag-utang ay umutang lang kung may katyayikan ang pagkikunan ng pambayad sa utang na sa haba ng panahon na ang utang ay kailangan baying.

Sa totoong hita, hindi ka dapat bumili ng bahay kung ang kaya mo lang ay ang daw ng interes at hindi ka sigurado na maipagpatuloy mo o ang monthly installments. Malaki ang risko na mareremata lahat ng iyong bahay kung ang kaya mo lang ay ang daw ng interes. Sayang naman ang kita sa negosyo na mawalay sa iyong pamilya nang kaya tagal.

Kung walang katayikan ang iyong trabaho, hindi ka dapat umutang ng housing loan na ang “amortization” ay pantangatagal panahon. Ang tamang patakaran sa pag-utang ay umutang lang kung may katyayikan ang pagkikunan ng pambayad sa utang na sa haba ng panahon na ang utang ay kailangan baying.

Tungkol naman sa ibang detalye, tumawag na ang bahagi na may kanya-kanyang estilo ng pag-compute ng kabuuan ng halaga ng utang mo. Magkakagawa na ang mga financier analyst dahil ay ito ay average lang na ang binibigyang-pansin ang tinatangaw na time value of money. Ito ay isang simpleng halimbawa ng utang at kung paano na-compone ang tunay na cost of borrowing. Ang mga numero sa Table 1 ay halimbawa lang.

Tungkol naman sa mga negakakautang sa Hong Kong dahil sa pelipin siya ng kanilang industry sa financing company para magutang ng hanggang Php50,000, bilang karagdagang na naibayad na nilang placement fee sa Maynila, ito ay nakababahala dahil sa hindi ka dapat magpagpadala sa ibang tao na umutang kung ang paglagay ng utang na ang utang mo ay walang seguridad o kaya maipagpatuloy pa nan.

Ito ay isang simpleng halimbawa ng utang at hindi ka dapat magpadala sa ibang tao na umutang kung ang paglagay ng utang na ang utang mo ay walang seguridad o kaya maipagpatuloy pa.

Ito ay isang simpleng halimbawa ng utang at hindi ka dapat magpadala sa ibang tao na umutang kung ang paglagay ng utang na ang utang mo ay walang seguridad o kaya maipagpatuloy pa.
UFS Pushes for Joint Inspection of All Domestic Vessels

FROM PAGE 41

the years, among which have resulted in countless fatalities in innumerable maritime disasters, all of which, the UFS president has been saying all along, could have been prevented.

“On behalf of the almost 40,000-strong Filipino seafarer-members of our labor union and the local maritime industry, I would like to bring to your attention the woeful state of our interisland shipping industry in light of recent developments and past incidents in the local maritime scene. ‘Disaster’ has practically been the middle name of our domestic shipping industry and the recently-concluded Senate Committee Report No. 848, submitted on June 4, 2010, during the Third Regular Session of the 14th Congress only affirmed that sorry state,” posed Ramirez in his official correspondent to the country’s Chief Executive.

“The Senate Report listed among other findings, that since 1985, there have been no less than 178 maritime accidents involving Philippine-registered vessels, 43 of which involved passenger ferries. More than 6,000 lives have been needlessly lost at sea, a horrifying number, courtesy of Sulpicio Lines alone, the most recent of course is the MV Princess of the Stars sinking tragedy on June 20, 2008, where more than 700 lives were lost. Sulpicio Lines has since changed its name to Philippine Span Asia Carriers, Inc. Note that the figure does not even include the number of missing as a result of the tragedies where its vessels figured in,” he elaborated.

Ramirez particularly cited several other high-profile maritime disaster cases where finger-pointing ensued after the release of the findings of the Board of Marine Inquiry, all boiling down to vessel alteration as the likely culprit or reason. He cited such disaster vessels as MV Princess of the Orient, also of Sulpicio Lines, MV Baleno 9, MV Blue Water Magic, and MV Kimelody Cristy, among others, whose trim and stability had somehow been affected because they were altered locally.

He also mentioned a couple of high-profile collision cases in his letter particularly that of MV Doña Paz (of Sulpicio Lines again) and MT Vector in December 1988, which is by far the world’s worst maritime disaster, and that of FB Anatalia and MB Catalyn B during the holiday season last year.

The UFS president likewise mentioned the recent apprehension by the PCG of two high-powered fiberglass boats whose owners tried to avoid paying proper import taxes by declaring the vessels as made in Navotas. Upon further investigation, the Navotas boatbuilder, whose name was indicated in the boats, denied they ever manufactured those vessels.

PCG personnel, on visual contact, firmly stated that the boats could not have been made locally and pointed out to the excessive power provisions for such small boats. Further inspection revealed that markings indicated that the vessels’ origin was Florida, USA.

“I’m mentioning this specific example to point out why, first of all, these boats, registered on May 20 and 21, 2010 were registered with the MARINA office in Batangas, if they were indeed manufactured in Navotas? It may have been possible that MARINA did not even bother to look at the vessels before registration. And if MARINA did, why couldn’t its inspectors have seen the glaring super characteristics of those boats? Is it therefore hard to think that something as fishy as two relatively small boats with so much power that more than suits their purpose could have escaped detection?,” queried Ramirez.

The UFS President is, in fact, already preparing charges against culpable MARINA officials with the Ombudsman particularly with regard to the apprehension of the two pleasure boats.

Just like in the past, the UFS expects to hear a positive response from the President, the Senators, Congressmen and the various government officials whom he has written in order that this latest issue will be given the attention and immediate action it needs.

Ramirez and the UFS are well known for the numerous battles they have waged on behalf of the maritime industry.

One of the two pleasure boats that were recently apprehended by the Philippine Coast Guard in the shores near Mall of Asia in Pasay City. The boat is powered by three 250-HP Yamaha engines.
Operational Use of Electronic Chart Display & Information System (OECDIS)

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UFS Supports Mega Balikbayan OFW Expo 2010

The United Filipino Seafarers (UFS) has formally tied up with event specialist Ex-Link Management and Marketing Services Corp. for the “Travel Philippines Expo at the 7th Megabalikbayan/OFW Expo 2010” slated on December 10-12, 2010 at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall. The event is duly endorsed by the Department of Tourism.

On October 19, 2010, the UFS and Ex-Link had an official signing of the memorandum of agreement at the UFS office for the partnership that basically focuses on the event’s marketing and promotion in the local maritime industry, particularly among Filipino seafarers and their families.

Engr. Nelson Ramirez, President of the UFS, and Agnes Lenon, Senior Event Sales Associate of Ex-Link signed the MOA with Rey Gambe, National Secretary of the UFS, and Evelyn G. Azuelo, Event Sales Associate of Ex-Link standing as principal witnesses.

The agreement formally enables the UFS as one of the support organizations to the Travel Philippines Expo. As part of its commitment to the agreement, the union shall put up an advertisement for Ex-Link’s event in this issue of *Tinig ng Marino* obviously for promotional purposes in the local maritime industry, particularly for Filipino seafarers and their families.

UFS shall likewise support in the initiatives of Ex-Link in the local maritime industry to draw attendance from Filipino seafarers and their families to the scheduled three-day seminars which are part of the activities of the three-day expo.

The seminars basically focus on financial and resource management for OFWs and how their families can channel their earnings to good use by engaging in enterprises and all the necessary steps needed to venture into such business undertakings.


All OFWs and their families, including Filipino seafarers, are welcome to the expo and the seminars as both are free of charge. Engr. Ramirez has given word to Ex-Link that he would ensure that all active UFS members who are not onboard at the time of the event would come in as participants to the informative seminars.

UFS has also committed to assist Ex-Link in the distribution of flyers for the event at the Luneta Seafarer’s Center.

In return, Ex-Link shall provide the UFS a full-page advertisement on the maiden issue of *Travel Philippines* magazine.

The UFS shall likewise be given three table spaces and other promotional opportunities during the three-day run of the event at the Megatrade Hall of SM Megamall where it can basically advocate its services and causes to the attending OFWs and their families.
Skeletons of Gyron, Lafeber Starting to Come Out of the Closets

Following the publication of the latest in Ronald Lafeber’s shenanigans in The Netherlands in the September – October 2010 issue of Tinig ng Marino, an able-bodied (AB) Filipino seafarer paid a visit to the office of the United Filipino Seafarers in late October to disclose the modus operandi of Gyron Crew, Inc., whose operation is intertwined with that of Lafeber in Holland.

The Filipino seafarer, who requested anonymity, revealed that when he signed the contract, he was not able to read it in full because it was said to be covered. He remembered signing the contract in front of the secretary of a certain Ms. Norma Andaya of Gyron Crew, Inc.

He recalled that there were a number of Filipino seafarers who signed their respective contracts with Gyron Crew that day and that they waited for about three months before they all joined the vessel.

Upon arriving in The Netherlands, they were given a blue book which was to serve as their record book. They eventually went to the Immigration Department to get their working permits. The Filipino AB was receiving 5 Euros per day for his food allowance.

After four months onboard his vessel, the Filipino seafarer eventually learned from the captain that the salary for an AB is 1,400 Euros which is far lower than the US$1,200 he was receiving monthly.

He is not sure whether his discovery of his actual salary had something to do with it, but he was eventually repatriated by Gyron Crew after four months when in fact the contract he signed for the manning company was for eight months. The reason given for his repatriation was because he ‘cannot speak in English.’ The Filipino seafarer denied this allegation because he was actually interviewed in the Philippines by the owner’s representative of the Dutch principal of Gyron Crew in English before he got hired.

When he reported to the Gyron office in Delf, Netherlands, the office personnel there confiscated his blue book and his working ID before he was subsequently sent home.

Upon reporting to the Gyron Crew office in Manila, the office staff asked for the original copy of his contract in return for his back pay or severance pay. The Filipino AB said that the Gyron Crew office gave him word that the company will not give him his leave pay or any other amount if he would not surrender his original contract to them.

That’s when he decided to bring the matter to the UFS and Engr. Nelson Ramirez, who advised him of a possible legal remedy to his problem.

Ramirez had been giving Lafeber nightmares from way back by publishing his dubious crewing exploits in the local maritime industry in Tinig ng Marino beginning with J-Zel, where he partnered with Capt. Rodolfo Estampador, to deploy seafarers to nonexistent vessels or ‘ghost ships.’ Their combined antics have legally backfired and Lafeber went on to find his next prey.

Lafeber even filed a libel case against Ramirez that dragged on for more than five years just to clear his name to no use because he eventually went back to his dirty old ways.

Before Tinig ng Marino printed the article on him in its September – October 2010 issue, the paper even solicited his side of the matter through e-mail. The e-mail was sent to him in early September but Lafeber responded only on October 27, 2010, when the paper already came out and was in circulation for almost two months already.

Sarcastic or otherwise, his message read as follows:

Dear Nelson. You are a good man. I will support you in your eternal struggle for justice. Ronald Lafeber

The UFS president is unperturbed still. “Unless the Dutch government gives him the clamps soon, I know we haven’t seen the last of Ronald Lafeber. But the UFS and I will surely be around to be on the lookout for him and his antics,” Ramirez emphatically stated.
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Amber Lily: The Next Big Star

She has the face of an angel, and she can sing like one too. Although she’s dubbed as the next Charice Pempengco or the next Miley Cyrus, she is a class of her own. A budding songwriter and singer, a new Filipina entertainer to watch out for, she is Amber Lily and she is really THE NEXT BIG THING!

TNM: How and when did your passion for music start?
Amber Lily: I first discovered my passion for music when I was five years old while performing at my school talent show. I really pushed myself to make what I did special. Afterwards I knew right away what I wanted to do.

TNM: Who’s your biggest musical influence?
Amber Lily: I’m definitely inspired by Beyonce. I love Beyonce because her music is so unique and she’s a great performer. She’s my idol.

TNM: What genre are you most comfortable with?
Amber Lily: I’m definitely a pop artist at heart.

TNM: Do you also write your songs? If so, where do you get your inspiration?
Amber Lily: I do write my songs. As a songwriter, I really look up to Taylor Swift. It’s amazing to me how simple and flowing her lyrics are, and how they can relate to so many people. That’s what I try to do when I write songs on my own.

TNM: Who’s your dream duet partner?
Amber Lily: It would be so cool to do a duet with Beyonce. She’s such a great singer! That would be a complete dream-come-true for me.

TNM: You are half-Filipina, are you in touch with your Filipina side?
Amber Lily: I am very close to my Filipino heritage! My Lolo helped to raise me, and he taught me a lot about my Filipino background. I’m definitely very proud to be a Filipina.

TNM: What is it that you love about being half-Filipina?
Amber Lily: I love how all of us Filipinos are very close to one another, even if you don’t know somebody very well, you still treat them like family. It brings us closer and it’s a unique thing about us that is really great. I think there’s also a lot of emphasis on the arts in Filipino culture, and I think I got some of that in me. It’s also nice to tan so easily! Hahaha!

TNM: People are starting to look at you as the next Charice, how do you feel about that?
Amber Lily: I feel like Charice paved the way for the new generation of Filipina pop/R&B artists. I love her music and she is definitely one of my inspirations as well. It’s an honor to be identified alongside her.

TNM: What made you join “The Next Big Thing?”
Amber Lily: I’ve been working really hard at my music, so being selected for The Next Big Thing is really a great recognition of my efforts and a validation that I’m headed in the right direction. The Next Big Thing is a great showcase for me. Win or lose, I’ll still come out a champion.

TNM: How has your life changed since joining this contest?
Amber Lily: People have started to take me seriously. Now I’m known as a legitimate artist/songwriter and doors are starting to open that were closed before. I know that a lot of opportunities will come with The Next Big Thing so I’m excited for these next few months.

TNM: What’s your message to all our Filipino readers?
Amber Lily: Please help me prove that a Filipina has what it takes to be Radio Disney’s Next Big Thing!

NOTE: Filipinos unite! Let’s all support Amber! There will be an open voting from November 24 thru November 30, 2010 for Radio Disney’s NBT. The rules have changed. Multiple voting is not allowed. ONLY ONE registered vote allowed everyday for online voting. You have to register on their site to cast your vote. Visit http://amberlily.com and see how you can make Amber the real next big thing.
A Scandal is Brewing

Threatens to Blow Out of Proportions

The Cost of Accountability

Accountability comes with a price, people say. Little did the new set of MMAP officers and directors know, or at least that’s how they projected it to Tinig ng Marino, that their quest for the organization’s proper accounting would somehow encounter rough sailing.

This is where the twists and turns at MMAP started cropping up especially with the colorful Capt. Edwin Itable taking the cue from the leadership, having been appointed as Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee.

Ramirez, the UFS president, has some brushes with Itable in the past particularly with regard to the controversial issue of the management level course, and then again with the investigation and subsequent hearings on the MV Princess of the Stars sinking case where they were on opposite sides of the issues.

Rivas, the new president, has likewise branded the election of Sempio illegal several years back and even filed a case with the courts but with Sempio having already stepped down from his once lofty post, the issue becomes moot and academic.

In the case of MMAP, everything seems to be roses and daisies over the past couple of years up until a thorn suddenly popped up from the organization’s stems no less.

That thorn was in the guise of the election of a new set of officers and Board of Directors of MMAP led by Rodolfo Aspillaga as president, and their subsequent assumption to office late in February this year.

The new set of MMAP directors and officers wanted to start on a clean slate so having to put the organization’s financial system became the first order of business. At the time of their assumption of office, MMAP had an existing fund of PhP1.9 million.

As the elected Business Manager of MMAP, Capt. Walinfo Rivas recommended that the financial records of the association be audited first so that the association could plan and move on from there. He even volunteered to MMAP to provide an external auditor, whom his company is using among other personal business undertakings.

Capt. Rivas is also the Internal Vice President and a member of the Board of Directors of the UFS and he in fact, proposed to have an audit of the labor union’s financial system upon assumption to office also in February 2010, volunteering again his external auditor at his own expense.

The new set of officers and directors of MMAP has committed to initiate reforms and go on first-time ventures for the benefit of its members. Rivas was even quoted to have said that if they cannot initiate reforms within the organization, he vowed to resign from his post even before their three-year term ends. Putting his proven business acumen on the line, Rivas even vowed that within their term of office, MMAP will have its own office or building.

Quite a tall order indeed for an organization which has a money-in-the-

Threatens to Blow Out of Proportions
to tell. She claimed that Capt. Itable has been constantly bullying her to produce documents needed by the external auditor that she said she has already provided. Sarino also disclosed that it was Itable who convinced the new set of MMAP officers and directors to transfer their offices to the building of the training center where Itable works. The enticement was free rent and utilities which the MMAP leadership immediately grabbed. Itable later on disclosed to Tinig ng Marino that MMAP is actually paying PhP 1 per month as rental to the currently being renovated building. As to why and how did the building owner allow MMAP to rent an office almost for free, Itable did not specify the details. Sarino also said that Itable proposed that the honorarium of PhP 500 given to board members for each meeting be raised to PhP 2,000 to which the MMAP directors posed no objections. It must be likewise noted that the previous PhP 500 allowance was acceptable to the MMAP members then because they were all gainfully employed. As to why the MMAP board decided to move from a building along Roxas Boulevard equipped with an elevator to a commercially-inferior building with no elevator, only heaven knows, according to Sarino. But one has to give credit to the salesmanship skills or convincing power of Itable. According to Sarino, Itable has been known to throw his weight around at MMAP, characterized by radical mood swings. She recalls that at times, Itable would subject her to insults, harangues and name-calling and at other times, he would be as gentle as a lamb, even calling her or the other MMAP staff as "anak" and various terms of endearment. In short, from red-faced, fire-breathing dragon to Mary’s meek and gentle, little lamb, in rapid, regular mood swings. Sarino described these episodes and many similar incidents tearfully to Ramirez while apparently on the verge of a nervous breakdown. She also claimed that Itable is known to silence even the MMAP board members whenever he bangs his fists on the table, leaving his audiences agape at his outbursts. But it seems that whenever he invokes thunder and lightning at these public displays of outrage, no one seems to be able to come up to him or to at least tell him to shove it. He must really be an interesting person, Sarino claims.

Capt. Aspillaga and Capt. Rivas personally denied to Tinig ng Marino Sarino’s allegations that Itable has the MMAP board members literally swooning at his feet. Sarino also says that Itable is also known to desire nothing but approval for all his actions. Even his choice of finance officer or treasurer is a unilateral decision which no one can oppose or question. He even has various auditors conduct spot audits no matter if the association already has an independent auditing firm introduced to it by the PRC some time back. Aspillaga defends that it was Rivas, not Itable, who brought in an external auditor and not various auditors as Sarino claims. Sarino hastens to add that Itable has started to believe that he has become all too powerful. She says further that Itable once resented the entry of two other members to the MMAP board while he almost didn’t make it, earning only the last slot. Many think that this has caused a massive blow to his ego, Sarino believes. Sarino also attributes the hefty increase to the MMAP funds because of the increased charges the new set of
A Scandal is Brewing

FROM PAGE 57

MMP board has levied and the growing number of officers who have sought membership. She said that during the past administrations, deck officers were not being obliged to be members of MMP if they chose not to. Even during oathtaking, she is not obligating deck officers to be members of MMP although she normally proposes to them to join the association.

The erstwhile MMP secretariat is now on leave, along with three other staff, from the association because of the growing tension in the association’s office which has now become Itable’s fiefdom, according to Sarino.

She reckons that Itable is now most likely holding sway over his dominations at the training center or at the MMP office where he is free to bang his fists on the table. It is also rumoured that he seems incapable of lifting his fists off the table. They are all afraid to be hit by Itable’s thunderbolts that he casually summons from the heavens, Sarino believes.

Charges and Counter-Charges

For his part, at a meeting with Tinig ng Marino at the MMP offices on November 4, 2010, Capt. Itable, in the presence of the external auditor Mr. Dodo Amar Capunpon, and the rest of the MMP office staff, along with his lawyer, and another maritime journalist, provided a dossier of evidence and supplementary information against Sarino.

Itable is insinuating that Sarino may have been liable for illegal acts during her 21-year tenure as MMP secretary including qualified theft, estafa, among other accusations of corruption that point to malversation of the association’s funds.

To some extent, Itable was justifying his outbursts at Sarino because of the anomalies and discrepancies that the external auditor has allegedly uncovered. It became clear during the second meeting with Tinig ng Marino that Itable wanted not only to clear his name, but also to present evidence of his and MMP’s allegations against Sarino.

There was even one captain-businessman who brought to the fore Sarino’s lifestyle to Capt. Rivas, with the instruction that her husband, who is a Second Mate, would surely be hard-pressed to support such a lifestyle allegedly including an SUV, a very well-appointed home and expensive, exclusive schools for their children, among others.

Sarino denied owning an SUV, adding that she’s only using a Mitsubishi hard-pressed to support such a lifestyle. She reckons that Itable is now most likely holding sway over his dominations at the training center or at the MMP office where he is free to bang his fists on the table.

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The country’s most sought-after maritime review center today, Argonaut Maritime Consultancy and Tutorial Services, has spread out its anchors of success in key parts of the country, with the aim of reaching out to more Filipino seafarers and help them become the best maritime professionals they can be.

The review center, which had an inauspicious start in the local maritime industry just a couple of years ago, recently inaugurated its very own office-building at Pasay City last September 2010, which marked the continuing growth of the company.

After opening branches in Cebu, Davao and Iloilo, Argonaut has added three more branches in the key cities of Cagayan de Oro, Ozamiz City, and Bicol this year. The review center will soon open a branch in Bohol, thus ensuring that all major areas of the country with abundance of Filipino seafarers can avail of the review services and hold on to the anchors of success that Argonaut has trailblazed in the local maritime industry.

Each branch of Argonaut, just like its main office in Pasay City, is situated in a peaceful location ensuring a very conducive venue for review.

In addition to consistently producing topnotchers and top ten Filipino deck officers practically in all ranks who have undergone review at the center, Argonaut has also maintained a high passing rate for all its deck reviewees.

Argonaut also makes available three sessions for seafarers to choose from so that reviewing would not get in the way of their busy schedule, especially those who are on vacation. Thus, it is almost impossible for any reviewee to miss any session because he is given the option of choosing his own schedule.

Review sessions are also fully computerized and the instructors are seasoned Master Mariners who are always available to explain in detail any question, clarification, or concern that any reviewee can raise.

Apart from offering quality review, Argonaut also has affordable review fees and even provides easy mode of payment for Filipino seafarers, even allowing installments on certain cases.

The review center has also put up its own seafarer dormitory in its main office to house reviewees who came from the provinces so that they need not worry of staying in costly hotels in the metropolis.

With its performance consistency in marine deck licensure examinations, both written and walk-in, as attested by its reviewees, Argonaut has stake its rightful claim to being a firm anchor of success for many Filipino deck officers.
UNAHAN NG KOTSE
Amo: Inday, alam kong matalino ka. Ano ang tawag sa unahan ng kotse.
Inday: Madali lang ‘yan Sir. Siyempre The BUMPER?
Amo: Mali. Ang tawag diyan ay karera.

GOOD NIGHT
A boss and a secretary attended an out-of-town business conference and stayed overnight in a hotel. When they went to bed, the boss asked. Do you want me to treat you as a wife or as a secretary? The secretary answered, as a wife. The boss said. Okay good night.

HINOG NAnga ANG BINIGAY
Nanay: Bakit ba umiyak yang kapatid mo?
Nene: Aywan ko sa kanya nay, hinog na nga ang binigay ko sa kanya.
Nanay: Ano ba ang kinakain ninyo?
Nene: Sili po.

POLITIKO TALAGA
San Pedro: God sent me to tell you these. Magdasal ka na. Hanggang bukas lang ang buhay mo.

THE CAUSE OF THE QUARREL
A social worker calls on a house and overhears a couple quarrelling. He knocks and a five-year-old boy opens the door.
Social worker: Are your parents quarrelling?
Boy: Yup
Social worker: Who is your father?
Boy: That’s what they are quarrelling about.

MALI ANG NASA ISIP MO
Paano mo ako matitikman kung hindi mo ako huhubaran?
-SAGING
Paano tayo makakabuo kung hindi ako papatong sa iyo?
-HOLLOW BLOCKS
Dilaan mo muna ako at lawayan para tumigas at mas madaling ipasok sa butas.
-SINULID

IBANG POSISYON NAMAN
Misis: Honey, subok naman tayo ng ibang posisyon.
Mister: Ha? Wow, ayos yan mahal, ano ang gusto mo?
Misis: Ikaw naman ang maglaba at mamalantsa at ako naman ang paupo-upo sa harap ng TV at painum-inom ng beer.

NAMATAY SA UBO
Sa isang burol.
Jaime: Anong inimatay ni pareng Boy?
Waldo: Ubo, pare.
Jaime: Bakit nagkasakit ba siya ng T.B.?

GIVING BACK
Police chases an overspeeding car
Police: Listen mister. I’ve had a real lousy day and I just wanna go home. Give me a good excuse and I will let you go.
Driver: Weeks ago, my wife ran away with a police officer. When I saw your car in my rear view mirror, I thought you were giving her back to me.
Ilagay ang Tapang sa Tamang Lugar

Bago po ang lahat, binabati po namin kayo ng magandang araw habang binabasa ninyong munti naming paalala lalo po ngayong panahon ng krisis sa sakayan sa barko gawa ng mga patapos pa lang na global financial crisis.

Problema pa rin ang lalo pong nadadagdag ng mga upgrading courses (o curses) na lalong magagapahairap ng buhay sa ating mga marinong Pilipino. Sa aming palagay, inisip na naman ng ilang mga magagaling sa ating industriya kung ano pa ang susunod na kurso na puwede nilang ipa-obliga sa ating mga mambabarko upang lalagay silang maging magaling sa marina gayong ang tunay na hangarin naman ay butasin ang kaniilang bulsa at sayangin ang kani-knilang oras sa bakasyon na dapat sana ay sulitin nila ito sa piling ng kani-knilang mga pamilya.

Nagtataka lang talaga kami kung bakit may mga ganitong tao sa ating industriya gayong naturingan na paman ang ilan sa bahagi ng mga namumuno sa ating industriya. Mahirap na muli ang sakayan sa barko, lalag-lalo na para sa mga ratings. Palagay naman narinamin nanga ng mga marining marino. Magbasa lang sila ng Tinig ng Marino, siguradong alam na ninya ang sitwasyon ng ating industriyang ginagalawalan.

Alam naman ng maraming mga marino na walang ibang laging lumalaban sa mga tiwalat at nagpapatunayan sa mga marining Pilipino maliban sa UFS at ang iba ang pinunong nito na si Engr. Nelson Ramirez. Mayroon pa po ba kayong alam na ibang taon o organisasyon sa ating industriya maritim na gawing sa gawain ng UFS?

Yung ibang mga tao diyan sa ating industriya, kung umasta akala mo kayo kung sinong marunong at magaling pang siraan ang UFS.

Kami mismo ay nagpapatunayan na napatarkam na pong nagawa ang UFS para sa hanay ng mga marinong Pilipino. Kung ilang beses na rin kaming nakasama sa mga pagkilos sa isinagawa ng UFS noon.

Hindi yan kagaya ng iba diyan na puro dada at pulos walang katuturan sa kawento lang ang ipinagkakalat.

Kung gusto po ninyong malaman ang tunay na balita sa ating industriya, magbasa lang sila ng Tinig ng Marino o kaya ay magsadya lang kayo sa UFS office anumang oras ninyo ng naisin.


For the Men of the Seas


SEAFARERS


For the Men of the Seas

Isang Pasasalamat sa Idol


Naging malaking tulong sa akin ang disiplina at mga aral na aking natutunan habang ako'y nanirahan pa noon sa UFS na talaga namang nakatulong nang malaki dito sa akin sa barko. Idol ko po kayo Sir dahil hindi kayo nagsasawang tumulong sa mga marinong naaapi at ipinaglalaban po ninyo ang karapatan ng bawat marino mula sa mga taong sumisira ng ating industriya.


Ang mga Latino ay taga Nicaragua, El Salvador at Panama. Mabait naman po ang mga Latino at ayos lang ang samahan namin dito kayang pilit kaming nag-aaral ng Espanyol na sa kita kay hindi sila marunong magsalita ng English.

Liner po ang barko namin. Sa New Orleans kami naglo-loading at sa Central America naman nga nakatulong namin ang diskarga dito.

Hanggang dito na lang po ang maikli kong liham sa inyo Sir Nelson at maraming salamat muli sa pagtulong ninyo po sa akin dahil mahal kita po ang aking mga kasama sahip at kaibang ay naisip sa nilang naisiliip ang magandang bukas.

Regards din po sa lahat ng staff ng UFS at sa mga UFS boys. Sipag, tiyaga at disiplina sa sarili ang inyong kailangan para makasampa rin kayo sa barko tulad ko.

Nagpasasalamat din po ako sa Seapower Shipping Enterprise, lalung-lalo na kay Capt. Polemis, Ma’am Vergie, at Ma’am Dendie dahil sa pagtitwala nina mga Pagbutihin mo ang iyong trabaho diyan sa barko at natitiyak naming malayo pa ang iyong mararating bilang isang marino. - Editor
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