AMOSUP leads PH transport unions at 43rd ITF Congress
The President’s Message

We were privileged to attend the recent 43rd ITF Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria, where the AMOSUP delegation also participated in industrial and regional section, committee and group meetings and other activities. The week-long Congress, which is held every four years, also re-elected Mr. Paddy Crumlin as ITF president and installed Mr. Steve Cotton as the new general secretary.

As one of ITF’s long-time affiliates, AMOSUP has been a partner in achieving the global union’s aims and principles of free trade unionism, protection of the right to organise and to bargain collectively, which are universal norms that already form part of international labour law. Over the years, the federation has assisted workers in the transport sector and allied industries in the defence and promotion of their economic, social, occupational and cultural interests.

The union’s partnership began when AMOSUP affiliated with ITF in the 1970s right after it merged with another local union into one cohesive organisation. The affiliation, which also ushered in a new era of collective bargaining agreement in global maritime manpower and employment, provided the fundamentals for AMOSUP to institutionalize the negotiating process for its steadily growing membership.

The ITF FOC campaign, for instance, which implements a policy of consultation between unions with negotiating rights and unions from labour supplying countries like the Philippines, paved the way for an inclusive and practical approach to enforcing decent minimum wages and conditions on board thousands of ocean-going ships. To the same end, the national flag policy endeavours to bring about the possible bilateral relationships between national unions and labour supply unions. Such policies have made the ITF the standard bearer for exploited and mistreated crew.

Later on, ITF and its affiliates actively worked to establish the International Bargaining Forum, where most of the maritime stakeholders get involved in a widened negotiating system to deal with the Joint Negotiating Group of the employers.

As AMOSUP tried hard to maintain the continuous employment of Filipino seafarers, negotiating for its agreements has always worked on a framework of rules acceptable to the ITF including its affiliates and social partners. And the key results of such collective efforts of AMOSUP were better pay and enhanced social benefits for union members. That framework of welfare and benefits continues through the union’s collective agreements with various ship owners.

During the Sofia Congress, the ITF adopted a four-year work programme, focusing on organising key hubs and corridors, leveraging key industry players, activating mass union membership and responding to geographic shifts. This work programme merely reflects the Congress theme “from global crisis to global justice: transport workers fighting back!” Global solidarity remains a core mission which Paddy Crumlin summed up best: “Just how interconnected we all are and how powerful that can make us if we work hard together and build on the solidarity between working men and women across supply chains, across industries, and across borders.”

Indeed, it is but fitting to pay tribute to the men and women of the ITF for assisting not only maritime workers but all transport workers in the defence and promotion of their economic, social and economic rights.

Happy Sailing Forward!

Dr. Conrado F. Oca
SEPTMBER 2014

6 Slop Chest: Progression of union members’ shopping privilege

From a variety store-type of operation, availing of goods at AMOSUP’s mini mart transforms into convenient purchasing of commodities for members family’s basic needs.

8 Slop Chest infographics

10 Union carries out awareness campaign about Ebola virus

In its effort to provide guidance on the risks posed by Ebola virus disease (EVD), AMOSUP is doing its part by carrying out an awareness programme for union members and their families.

12 Seamen’s Hospital trains doctors in surgery from other med centres

With yearly increase in about 300 procedures in laparoscopy alone, 5,500 admissions of union members and their dependents, AMOSUP’s hospital such as Seamen’s Hospital is proved to be one of the world’s top surgical centres.

14 MISPTP website: Educating union members; attracting more surgeons in laparoscopy training

To propagate its information campaign in minimally invasive surgery (MIS) the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital has launched its own website that is intended for both practicing surgeons and patients of the modern field of medical treatment.

16 Seamen’s Hospital Cebu upgrades medical equipment

The hospital says its aim to advance the quality of its healthcare never stops, as it strives for excellence in serving the seafarers.

17 Maritime jobsite launched

A website devoting to job hunters and employers in the entire spectrum of the maritime industry has been launched in the job market.

18 DOLE gives updates on MLC 2006 enforcement

Labour secretary Rosalinda Dimapili-Baldow cites a number of issuances her administration fashioned out to implement the international convention in the world’s manning capital.

20 AMOSUP sends strong contingent to ITF Congress

AMOSUP provided strong support and active participation to the 43rd ITF Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria, with its nine-man delegation to the week-long event last August 10 to 16, 2014.

23 ITF 43rd congress hailed as best ever

The ITF International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) congress in Sofia, Bulgaria this year hailed as the best ever at its closing meeting last 10 August.

26 Women, youth empowerment at ITF Congress

Capt Jasmin Laberde shares her thoughts and experience as AMOSUP Young Workers representative and lately to the post as ITF Women’s Sector Young Workers rep.

CONTENTS

28 Crews recover wages in NZ ITF week of action

Tens of thousands of dollars of outstanding pay for seafarers is in the process of recovery after action in July initiated by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) in New Zealand ports.

29 Crew shield: Box protection

A British team have come up with what they believe is the ultimate piracy panic room, namely a converted twenty foot container. The secure box works both onshore and at sea.

30 JSU, AMOSUP erecting Mariner’s Home anew

All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and AMOSUP have launched another joint venture project in the provision of dwelling pads to seafarers in transit, with the construction of a new residential building in Malate, Manila.

32 Ship mates, music on board lead up to career of a lifetime

A former chief officer recalls how he honed his crewmen’s musical talents and incidentally broke into the business of managing female bands. Sailing Forward editor Andy Dalisay meets Chief Mate Solito Galinto who manages a Pinoy rock band.

34 Capt Greg Oca gets Polaris Star Maritime Award in posthumous

PMMA Alumni Association bestows the honour in recognition of the former AMOSUP chief’s legacies and accomplishments in marine trade unionism.

About the cover:

Union leaders at the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) 43rd Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria.

(72dpi)
From manual to Barcode

Prior to the mini mart’s current operation, a helper needs to pick items from the display gondolas after a member lists down the items he wants to purchase. Computation and preparation of necessary papers for billing were manually done.

Slop Chest then transferred in 1980 to a new location at Seamen’s Hospital Annex where facilities are wider and convenient for members to pick items of their choice. Billing, collection and purchasing changed from manual into dot matrix computer system and gradually increased its service personnel.

In 2005, the mini-mart improved its internal operation system into a more systematic one through the POS system. Not only operation improved, it also has begun servicing an increase number of members and a corresponding hike in the availability of goods in grocery and appliance lists.

Overall, Slop Chest has retained a yearly average of P22.5 million worth of groceries and appliances (including furniture, cell phones and computers) and served some 7,000 to 9,000 union members availing themselves of the buying privilege over the last five years.

Members who are actively employed on board ships covered by an AMOSUP collective agreement are qualified to avail themselves of the Slop Chest commodities. This privilege is also extended to members’ designated allottees or dependents that are duly named by the member-seafarer in his Allotment Slip.

Credit limits and accounts monitor

Members’ total amount of purchased goods, however, remained constant over the last five years, which is attributed to inflation rate amidst union’s adjustment in credit limits as buffer to general price hikes. At present members or allottees have been given credit limits for ship officers to purchase worth of PhP6,000 for groceries and P36,000 for appliances, PhP5,000 in groceries and PhP30,000 in appliances for petty officers, and PhP4,000 in groceries and PhP24,000 in appliances for ratings.

To ensure better monitoring of unpaid accounts and lessen collection risk, AMOSUP now sends accounts receivables to its members’ manning agents four times a year. This also makes shopping hassle-free for members and allottees once they need it.

The union shoulders the amount and credit risks arising from the deferred payment basis.

Some of the leading crewing agencies whose officers and ratings are union members availing themselves of the shopping privilege include Magaysay Maritime, United Philippine Lines, NYK-Phil Shipmanagement, Pacific Ocean Manning, Maersk Filipinas Crewing, and Stolt Nielsen Phils. Other agencies that are also in the top list are Magaysay-Mitsui OSK Marine, Splash Philippines, CF Sharp Crew Management, Philippine Transmarine Carriers and BSM Crew Service Centre. Apart from better monitoring of accounts and collection, AMOSUP is studying the best way of merging data for both purchases and availing purposes, which may eliminate year-end closing of store for a week due to physical inventory.

The services Stop Chest rendered has continuously evolved into offering competitively priced goods and quality basic shopping services to members.

Because of this, there has been a demand from members and allottees from the provinces to expand its branches in Iloilo and Davao where the union also operates its own hospitals.

From a variety store-type of operation, availing of goods at AMOSUP’s mini mart transforms into convenient purchasing of commodities for members family’s basic needs

Slop Chest, the AMOSUP’s mini-mart, has gradually evolved into one of the most significant privileges union members and dependents can avail themselves of in shopping for basic commodities and appliances.

Started just like a small grocery in 1932 at Seamen’s Centre Building, from which members or dependents have to list down items they wanted to buy,

Slop Chest now has improved its goods inventory system through the POS (Point of Sales) and continuously improving operations at its Annex Building in Intramuros, Manila.

The POS system, a technology in retail selling in which counting of goods is done via Barcode machine itemisation, gives less mistake and less manual work that assures rendition of better services.

Apart from improved operation, the shopping privilege has extended its facilities in Cebu, where a big number of union members reside.

Cebu offers the same competitive prices in basic commodities and appliances including the quality of service and benefits Manila provides to members and allottees. Credit transaction in Cebu is implemented through a centralised billing and collection procedures at Slop Chest Manila.
SLOPCHEST
Union Members Shopping Privilege

STARTED: 1983
22 MILLION PESOS
YEARLY AVERAGE WORTH OF
GROCERY & APPLIANCES
7000 - 9000 (LAST 5 YEARS)
YEARLY AVERAGE NUMBER
OF PATRONIZING MEMBERS

2010 TOTAL
GROCERY $17.39 MILLION
APPLIANCES $5.129 MILLION
2011 TOTAL
GROCERY $17.18 MILLION
APPLIANCES $7.071 MILLION
2012 TOTAL
GROCERY $17.86 MILLION
APPLIANCES $6.742 MILLION
2013 TOTAL
GROCERY $17.21 MILLION
APPLIANCES $5.785 MILLION

9 317 MEMBERS
8 416 MEMBERS
7 438 MEMBERS
6 925 MEMBERS

RECEIPTS
CASH
CHECK
2010 RECEIPTS
2011 RECEIPTS
2012 RECEIPTS
2013 RECEIPTS

2010
2011
2012
2013

JAN
$2.198 MILLION
$1.612 MILLION
$2.273 MILLION
$1.582 MILLION

FEB
$1.783 MILLION
$1.802 MILLION
$2.274 MILLION
$1.783 MILLION

MAR
$1.931 MILLION
$2.115 MILLION
$2.358 MILLION
$2.219 MILLION

APR
$1.893 MILLION
$1.716 MILLION
$2.033 MILLION
$2.428 MILLION

MAY
$1.769 MILLION
$2.029 MILLION
$1.888 MILLION
$1.913 MILLION

JUN
$1.652 MILLION
$1.978 MILLION
$1.774 MILLION
$1.563 MILLION

JUL
$2.154 MILLION
$2.077 MILLION
$1.643 MILLION
$1.920 MILLION

AUG
$1.866 MILLION
$1.612 MILLION
$1.923 MILLION
$1.862 MILLION

SEP
$1.700 MILLION
$2.113 MILLION
$1.692 MILLION
$1.596 MILLION

OCT
$1.568 MILLION
$2.383 MILLION
$2.221 MILLION
$1.958 MILLION

NOV
$1.647 MILLION
$2.224 MILLION
$1.948 MILLION
$1.888 MILLION

DEC
$2.198 MILLION
$2.597 MILLION
$2.503 MILLION
$2.320 MILLION
Union carries out awareness campaign about Ebola virus

"The disease is introduced into the human population through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals."

In its effort to provide guidance on the risks posed by Ebola virus disease (EVD), AMOSUP is doing its part by carrying out an awareness programme for union members and their families.

The recent activity saw seafarers, their wives, including doctors and medical staff from the union's hospital attending the information campaign conducted at the cultural centre of the AMOSUP Seamen's Village in Dasmarinas City last 23rd August.

It was the seamen's village in particular that organized the event.

Dr Fidelino Malbas, the head of Veterinary Research Department at the state-run Research Institute for Tropical Medicine, gave out a comprehensive background about the origins and types of Ebola virus that infect victims in the remote areas of three African countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Virus distinct species

EVD is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads through human population through human-to-human transmission with a case fatality rate of 90%. It comprises five distinct species, namely the Bundibugyo, Zaire, Sudan, Reston, and Tai Forest.

The disease is introduced into the human population through close contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected animals. In Africa, infection has been documented through the handling of infected chimpanzees, gorillas, fruit bats, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines found ill or dead in the rainforest.

Malbas explained that the first three Ebola strains of Bundibugyo, Zaire and Sudan have been associated with recent large outbreaks in remote parts of Africa. No specific treatment is available.

Outbreaks in remote parts of Africa. No specific treatment is available.

In the Philippines, the Reston type, which has low pathogenic strain, was detected during several outbreaks in pigs in Laguna in 2006. Since then, however, experimental inoculations found that the type of strain failed to cause disease to the suspect host or carrier.

Citing key facts about origin and transmission including precautionary measures for EVD, Malbas believes that promoting awareness among seafarers would be a big help to the sea-based workers since they are the ones in apparent contacts with the affected countries through ships and ports. The government through Department of Health, he added, is also doing its share by carrying out lectures in major manning companies about precautionary measures against the disease.

Part of the AMOSUP awareness programme included added information tools like video clips and flipcharts about the outbreak in African countries and info about prevention and control, respectively.

POEA guidelines

Likewise the POEA has issued its own guidelines for the seafarers' welfare and protection. Under the POEA guidelines, all shipping principals, or employers, with ships operating or calling on Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone ports, shall ensure that seafarers are properly provided with working gears, including personal protective equipment, such as masks, gloves, and goggles where necessary, to limit the possibility of exposure or contamination with the EVD.

"There will be no shore leave for seafarers and no crew change in the ports of these countries in the meantime," said POEA administrator Hans Cadac.

The guidelines provide that it shall be the responsibility of the ship master and/or the designated ship medical officer to report any case involving a crew who become symptomatic of EVD.

They shall report those who have fever, headache, intense weakness, joint and muscle pains, and sore throat to their principal/employer who, in turn, are required to coordinate with appropriate international marine medical providers to seek their guidance on ways to manage an EVD contamination on board.

Principals and manning agencies are requested to consider and disseminate as a matter of urgency the following information to their ships and hiring seafarers prior to deployment:

a) The master must ensure that the crew are aware of the risks, how the virus can be spread and how to mitigate the risk;

b) The ISPS Code, or ensuring that unauthorised personnel are not allowed to board the ship should be strictly enforced throughout the duration of the ship's stay in port;

c) After departure, the crew should be aware of the symptoms and report any occurring symptoms immediately to the person/authorities in charge on board.

IMO, ITF join Ebola task force

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has joined the international ad hoc Ebola Travel and Transport Task Force and is working with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations to monitor the situation and provide timely information in response to the outbreak of the disease.

IMO, ITF, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), and the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) have joined forces with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Airports Council International (ACI), International Air Transport Association (IATA) and the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) in the Travel and Transport Task Force.

IMO has issued a circular letter providing information and guidance, based on recommendations developed by WHO, on the precautions to be taken to minimize risks to seafarers, passengers and others on board ships, from the Ebola virus disease.

Seamen’s Hospital trains doctors in surgery from other med centres

“Laparoscopic or minimally invasive surgery is a modern technique in which operations are performed far from their locations through small incisions (usually 0.5-1.5cm) in the body.”

With yearly intake of about 700 procedures in laparoscopy or nearly 5,000 admissions of union members and their dependents, AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital succeeds to share its MIS programme among other surgeons.

A part from performing hundreds of laparoscopic operations on union members and their dependents, AMOSUP’s MIS programme has demonstrated success in training physicians of other hospitals.

Preceptorship is an individual educational programme in which the physician (who is beyond residency and fellowship training) acquires additional skills and judgement to improve his/her performance of specific medical or surgical techniques and procedures. It should define eligibility for participation and length of the training period.

The training programme, which is now on its 10th year, recognised its graduates during a dinner tendered for them at the Manila Diamond Hotel last 09 July.

Dr. Enrique Lim, who was a contemporary and long-time friend of AMOSUP founder and former president Capt Greg Oca, was inspired by the graduates now serving in various parts of the country, also acknowledged the contribution of the All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) in helping the hospital to serve AMOSUP members and their dependents for their health and medical care.

The dinner also highlighted the recognition of the Hospital’s Surgery Department founder, Dr. Enrique Lim, who was a contemporary and long-time friend of AMOSUP founder and former president Capt Greg Oca.

Under the directorship of Dr. Miguel C. Mendoza, the Hospital’s Preceptorship Training Programme continuously carries out the course to those physicians dedicated to gain further clinical knowledge and skills in the field of laparoscopic surgery.

Laparoscopic or minimally invasive surgery is a modern technique in which operations are performed far from their locations through small incisions (usually 0.5-1.5cm) in the body.

Dr. Mendoza said the union’s hospital yearly undertakes between 600 to 700 laparoscopic procedures or an admission of nearly 5,000 patients, with 14,760 out-patient visits for surgery alone. Most of these patients are AMOSUP members and their qualified dependents.

Mendoza said the training programme offers state-of-the-art techniques in laparoscopy with emphasis on safe minimally invasive procedures and to develop good diagnostic and evaluation skills. It also aims to give basic and advanced knowledge and skills, but not limited to set up and maintenance equipment, safe and correct positioning techniques, correct and safe use of trocars for periitoneal and pre-periitoneal access.

The training programme also geared for angled laparoscopes, training of the non-dominant hand and two handed operating techniques.

The recent 10th anniversary celebration also gave way to the launching of the Hospital’s MISPTP (Minimally Invasive Surgery Preceptorship Training Programme) website.
MISPTP website: Educating union members; attracting more surgeons in laparoscopy training

To propagate its information campaign in minimally invasive surgery (MIS) the AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital has launched its own website that is intended for both practicing surgeons and patients of the modern field of medical treatment.

Through the Hospital’s Center of Excellence for MIS Preceptorship Training Programme, it says the website aims to reach out to members and dependents by educating them of what Minimally Invasive Surgery is all about. It wants to make them aware of what the union’s Hospitals in Manila, Cebu, Davao and Iloilo can offer in terms of quality minimally invasive surgical care.

The website, which is at http://shmisamosup.org/, aims to educate the members and dependents of AMOSUP on advantages of modern-day minimally invasive surgery compared to the traditional open surgery. One instance is the patient’s earlier return to their usual activities and more importantly earlier return to actual work as many of them are bread-winners of their respective families.

The second objective of this website is to reach out to more surgeons in the country who were deprived of their training in Basic Laparoscopic Surgery since such surgery was not part of their training during their surgical residency training in the last 20 years.

The website aims to show those surgeons interested in learning Basic Laparoscopic Surgery that they can go to a place in the Philippines, and need not travel abroad to spend a significant amount for tuition fee to gain access to a structured training curriculum in MIS containing significant amount of clinical hands-on experience combined with lectures and skills training in the inanimate laboratory for three months.

Clinical experience will average 150-160 procedures in three months, a volume more than enough to surpass the learning curve in basic laparoscopic surgery. This website also aims to emphasise the fact that the Hospital can be proud of a genuine structured MIS Preceptorship Training Programme that is complete, based in the Philippines and run by Filipinos.

Through AMOSUP Seamen’s Hospital Center for Minimally Invasive Surgery Preceptorship Training Programme website the prospective surgeons in training may view the objectives, accomplishments, see the past graduates, number of procedures performed per training period, annual census of in-patient and out-patient consults, laparoscopic and endoscopic procedures, articles in the news, link to other websites and research activities of the AMOSUP-MIS Preceptorship Training Programme.

The website will provide the medium for the surgeons to see the requirements prior to applying for preceptorship training.
Seamen’s Hospital Cebu upgrades medical equipment

The hospital says its aim to advance the quality of its healthcare never stops, as it strives for excellence in serving the seafarers.

A MOSIP Seamen’s Hospital Cebu has upgraded its array of medical equipment in the Pathology Department, Surgery Department and Endoscopy Unit.

The improvement is part of the hospital’s drive to provide the best available healthcare to union members and their dependents.

The Pathology Department has acquired the SFR/ Ion Selective Electrode (ISE) 6000 Electrolyte machine. It is a wide range of fully automated electrolyte analyser that allows the laboratory to perform accurate and reliable measures of electrolyte levels in the blood and urine.

The machine can do the tasks of measuring up to seven different parameters: sodium, potassium, chloride, calcium, lithium and pH levels using Ion Selective Electrode technology and bicarbonates (TC/Cl) using the manometric method. It also automatically calculates Total Calcium and the Anion Gap, which are useful in emergency and intensive care medicine.

Not only that, just last May, Seamen’s Hospital Cebu also added the Esco Airstream Class II Biological Safety Cabinet. This now allows the laboratory to perform microscopic exams such as direct sputum microscopy (DSSM), gram staining and potassium hydroxide (KOH) tests.

The Surgery Department added another complete set of high definition laparoscopic equipment and instruments. Just last April 2, 2014, the Stryker Laparoscopic equipment arrived from Seamen’s Hospital Manila.

Laparoscopic surgery, also called minimally invasive surgery (MIS), band aid surgery, or keyhole surgery, is a modern surgical technique in which operations in the abdomen are performed through small incisions (usually 0.5–1.5 cm) as opposed to the larger incisions needed in laparotomy.

The laparoscopic set has an upgraded 26-inch medical grade LCD monitor, which provides clear, brilliant images on a spacious, widescreen display, designed to create the optimal operating environment for the surgeon. Currently, Seamen’s Hospital Cebu Surgery Department has three laparoscopic machines to cater to more patients for this type of surgery.

The Endoscopy Unit has not been left out in the upgrades as it recently added the Pentax Video Gastroscope EG-2900i. The EG-2900i is a standard-sized gastroscope with high definition image quality that is universally accepted by many physicians as their primary scope for diagnostic EGD.

Likewise, the union’s Seamen’s hospital in Manila also carried out its upgrading process, with further acquisition of more sets of medical equipment in 2013 and early this year.

With the new equipment upgrade, the union’s Cebu hospital extends its level of care to AMOSIP members to higher standard. The hospital says it “never ceases to advance the quality of healthcare for its seafarers as we strive for excellence to serve our members and their family better.” SF

Maritime jobsite launched

A website devoting to job hunters and employers in the entire spectrum of the maritime industry has been launched in the Philippines.

Unis Group, the company behind the project, said that its www.jobsatease.ph is envisioned to become the “most trusted, innovative and leading maritime career advertisement website in the Philippines.”

It aims to open a wide array of business and career opportunities in the maritime industry for Filipinos, the company stressed, saying that the jobsite through its business entity Jobsatease Enterprise is also helpful to marine students and training centres.

The jobsite offers unlimited job posting for employers seeking qualified applicants on a 24/7 exposure from one to six months, depending on employers preferences.

Unis Group chairman Capt. Jae J. Jang and Jobsatease managing director April Castillo-Canonigo saw the need for an innovative and effective channel where Filipinos in the shipping industry could directly connect to the maritime world, not only seafarers seeking employment on board ships but other executives and staff ashore.

It is known that more than 25% of seafarers serving the world fleet are Filipinos that makes the country the largest supplier of crews in the maritime job market.

In this remarkable dominance, Capt. Jang said, the development of “tapping greater opportunities for Filipinos in this industry should be given more attention.”

Thus, the jobsite project has taken a step forward in assisting Filipinos in the use of technology to connect to greater possibilities in maritime jobs, he added.

The company said it has divided the availability of posting for job requirements between the seafaring profession and those that of the shore-based side.

The www.jobsatease.ph website offers opportunities for recruitment priority ad, company and products adverts and adverts for trainings and seminars at competitive rates with promotional packages. SF
DOLE gives updates on MLC 2006 enforcement

Labour secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz cites a number of issuances her administration fashions out to implement the international convention in the world’s manning capital

A year since it entered into force on August 20, 2006, the International Labour Organisation’s Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006 has begun to provide comprehensive welfare and protection at work for Filipino seafarers.

And to realize the rights of seafarers under the Convention, the Department of Labour and Employment (DOLE), being the competent authority to implement its provisions, has issued appropriate policies that actualize the MLC, 2006.

Labour and Employment Secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz explained this as she greeted all Filipino overseas and domestic seafarers, partners, and other maritime stakeholders on the occasion of the first-year anniversary celebration of the MLC, 2006’s entry into force.

To date, 61 ILO member-states, including the Philippines, representing more than 60 percent of the world’s global shipping tonnage, have ratified the MLC, 2006.

“It took the global maritime community seven years to formulate the MLC, 2006. Now, we are beginning to enforce its provisions to provide our seafarers decent work,” she said.

Last April in Geneva, Switzerland, some 400 participants, at the first meeting of the Special Tripartite Committee established under MLC, 2006, adopted new amendments to the MLC, 2006.

In an update, Baldoz recalled the policy issuances that the DOLE under her leadership has fashioned out to carry out the Convention, such as:

1. Department Order Number 129, or the Rules and Regulations Governing the Employment and Working Conditions of Seafarers Onboard Ships Engaged in Domestic Shipping (Issued on 7 June 2013 and took effect on 3 July 2013). This order covers 8,981 Philippine registered ships engaged in domestic shipping, except warships, naval auxiliaries, government ships, and fishing vessels.

2. D.O. 130, or the Rules and Regulations on the Employment of Filipino Seafarers Onboard Philippine Registered Ships Engaged in International Voyage, (Issued on 7 June 2013 and took effect on 3 July 2013). This order covers 125 Philippines-registered ships with 500 gross tonnage and above engaged in international voyage, but excluded warships, naval auxiliaries, government ships not engaged in commercial operation, and ships of traditional build, such as pure boats and fishing vessels.

3. D.O. No. 129-A, or the Guidelines on the Authorisation of Recognised Organisations to Conduct Inspection and Certification of Philippine-Registered Ships Engaged in International Voyages, which was issued on 5 July 2013 and took effect on 19 July 2013. In accordance with D.O. No. 130-A, the DOLE has accredited eight recognised organisations/classification societies that performs inspection and certification functions of Philippine-registered ships engaged in international voyages, and issue the Maritime Labour Certificate on behalf of the Secretary of Labour and Employment.

“As of date, the 138 Philippine-registered ships which have been issued the DMLC Part I, 96 PRS has been issued the Maritime Labour Certificate,” said Baldoz.

“We have issued the necessary compliance forms pursuant to the three orders,” she stated.

According to Baldoz, the DOLE has also issued Labour Advisory No. 02-2013 on 5 June 2013 detailing the Requirements for Compliance with MLC, 2006, and Labour Advisory No. 04-2013 outlining the Requirements on Medical Certificates, Certificates on Catering Services, and Certificate of Inspection of Crew Accommodation on 13 August 2013.

Last February, the DOLE signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Department of Transportation and Communications to harmonize all government interventions at operational, programme, and policy levels at the Maritime Industry Authority, Philippine Coast Guard, and other government agencies having jurisdiction and supervision with respect to compliance with the MLC, 2006 provisions.

“We have done this given the unique characteristic of the Philippines as a flag State, a port State, and a labour-supplying State under the Convention. This agreement details the responsibilities of each agency in the implementation, and provides for the establishment of a DOLE-DOTC Coordinating Mechanism at the national and regional levels to effectively implement the MLC, 2006,” Baldoz explained.

The labour and employment chief also said the DOLE has conducted several training to strengthen the capacity of implementers. For 2013, she said the DOLE has targeted 128.

Philippine-registered ships with gross tonnage of 500 GRT and above and engaged in domestic shipping.

“With these developments, we are on track in the implementation of the MLC, 2006, the vital instrument which affords protection to approximately 368,158 overseas Filipino seafarers and the estimated 60,000 seafarers plying domestic waters,” Baldoz said.

The Philippines is the largest source—comprising 30 percent—of the world’s more than 1.2 million seafarers. Therefore, our compliance with the MLC, 2006 will demonstrate to the world community our resolve to promote and enhance the welfare and to protect our seafarers,” Baldoz noted.

S

seafronts other Overseas Filipino Workers
including immigrants who are about to leave for abroad and who are not yet registered as overseas voter may now register at a newly launched facility in the Department of Foreign Affairs - Office of Consular Affairs (OCA).

The DFA’s Overseas Voting Secretariat (DFA-OVS) announced that the first Overseas Voter Registration Center (OVRC) in the Philippines, in preparation for the 2016 Presidentsial Elections, has been opened at the OCA, Macapagal Avenue, ASEANA Business Park.

In addition, if said registrants need to renew their passports, they no longer have to set an appointment to apply for renewal. Their Overseas Registration stub will allow them access to the Passport Division Courtesy Lane, the DFA said.

Office of Civil Security and Consular Concerns undersecretary Rafael S. Seguis, who is concurrently chairman of DFA-OVS, and COMELEC commissioner Lucenito Tadle, chairman of the Office for Overseas Voting, together with OCA assistant secretary Wilfredo C. Santos, and OCA executive director Sulipicio M. Conrado led the 27th June opening ceremony.

Overseas voter registration, for this election cycle, started late May 2014 and will end on 31 October 2015. For the first month (May) of registration, Philippine Foreign Service Posts (FSPs) achieved record breaking figures: They processed a total of 18,631 higher than 8,819 the first month of overseas registration for the 2013 Senatorial Elections; 64% more than (11,397) for the 2010 Presidential Elections; and more than 600 over (2,543) the 2007 Senatorial Elections.

As in the previous election cycle, there is also plans to open OVRs in the Philippines Overseas Employment Agency, Ninoy Aquino International Airport, Commission on Filipinos Overseas, and Overseas Workers Welfare Administration. The DFA-OVS and Comelec-OFOV are also discussing the possible opening in passport satellite offices in the National Capital Region and at Regional Consular Offices in Cebu and Davao.
AMOSUP sends strong contingent to ITF Congress

Dr Oca is second vice chair of Seafarers Section Committee and re-elected to the Executive Board; Filipina captain Jas Labarda is Youth Committee representative and Jose Raul Lamug as Congress Resolutions Committee representative.

AMOSUP provided strong support and active participation to the 43rd ITF Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria, with its nine-man delegation to the week-long event last August 10 to 16, 2014.

Led by the Union president Dr Conrado F. Oca and EVP Eduardo Ma R. Santos, the AMOSUP contingent garnered and retained committee heads for a four-year term during the ITF “supreme decision making event” last August.

Dr Oca was elected as second vice chair of the ITF Seafarers’ Section Committee and re-elected to the Executive Board, whilst Capt Jasmin Labarda became the representative of the ITF women transport workers committee to the ITF youth committee. Jose Raul Lamug was elected to Congress Resolutions Committee representing the Asia Pacific.

The Seafarers’ Section is one of the industrial sections affiliated maritime unions have declared membership in the ITF. Apart from the Seafarers Section, ITF memberships also have the Railway Workers’ Section, Road Transport Workers, Inland Navigation, Dockers, Fisheries, Civil Aviation and Tourism Services Section.

EB member

The Executive Board (EB), which consists of 41 members elected by Congress and the General Secretary, is the governing body of the ITF between Congresses. It carries out the decision and instructions of Congress and enforces the provisions contained in its constitution.

In his report to the Congress, Dr Oca highlighted AMOSUP’s efforts with the support of the ITF and shipowners groups to bring aid and assistance to the survivors of typhoon Haiyan (Yolanda) that hit Eastern Visayas in November 2012.

ITF co-affiliate Philippine Seafarers Union (PSU), led by its president Michael Mendoza, also reported to the body. AMOSUP and PSU posted a gallery of pictures and factoids on a dozen tarpaulin roll-ups, showcasing the relief and medical missions the two unions carried out in the aftermath of the typhoon.

At the same time, AMOSUP co-hosted with the Norwegian Seafarers Union and Kesatuan Pelaut Indonesia a fringe event at the Rubayat restaurant just outside the Congress venue. This joint activity gave information on how the bilateral relationship existing among the 3 unions was being practised.
ITF 43rd congress hailed as best ever

Maintaining the right to strike remains one of the key issues of the conference as workers across the world continue to struggle for better rights and conditions.

The ITF (International Transport Workers' Federation) 43rd congress in Sofia, Bulgaria has been hailed as the best ever at its closing ceremony last 16 August.

ITF president Paddy Crumlin was re-elected unopposed, while Steve Cotton was installed as general secretary.

FNV Bondgenoten's Brigitta Pass will hand over the women's vice president position to the host nation's Ekaterina Yordanova from the FTU in two years' time.

Mr Crumlin paid tribute to Ms Yordanova, who hosted the event where speakers included the prime minister and deputy prime minister of Bulgaria.

"What a great congress it has been and we couldn't have done it without you, Ekaterina," he said. "We made a commitment to leave the Bulgarian trade union movement in a stronger position when we left and that has happened because people here now know the strength of this family."

The ITF congress adopted a four-year work programme, focussing on organising key hubs and corridors, leveraging key industry players, activating mass union membership and responding to geographic shifts.

One of the key focuses of the conference was maintaining the right to strike as workers across the world continue to struggle for better rights and conditions.

Mr Crumlin said when he was elected four years ago, he detected a groundswell of support for a reinvigoration of trade union activism - not just in the transport and logistics industries but across the globe.

"The ITF understands just how interconnected we all are and how powerful that can make us if we..."
“The ITF understands just how interconnected we all are and how powerful that can make us if we work hard together and build on the solidarity between working men and women across supply chains, across industries, and across borders,” he said.

“The ITF lets brave men and women of the union movement know that their fight is not in vain, that they are part of something much bigger.”

Mr Cotton said that over the past four years a new social consciousness had begun, with uprising all across the globe and that the trade union movement would continue to provide the answers.

“Globalisation affects us all and it affects no group more than those working in the transport industry, so to achieve its mission of improving the lives of millions of transport workers across the planet the ITF needs to truly think globally,” he said.

“World trade dominates our national and international economies. It is a mighty engine linking labour throughout the world.

“We are all connected and across the globe it is transport workers who do the connecting. The mighty engine of globalized world trade – the defining symbol of our times – is powered by us: transport workers the world over.

“The mighty global economic engine has for too long been funnelling the majority of its wealth into the hands of the few and not the many. It is an engine that should benefit all of us.”

FIGHTING BACK
Women, youth empowerment at ITF Congress

Capt Jasmin Labarda shares her thoughts and experience as AMOSUP Young Workers representative and lately to the post as ITF Women’s Sectors Young Workers’ rep.

SOFIA, Bulgaria – The ITF’s 53rd Congress was held here in what the Pope referred to as the Eden of Europe - the sunny Sofia in Bulgaria.

I still remember the feeling when I received a message back in February 2014 from the VP of AMOSUP and President of MAAP, Admiral Eduardo Ma R Santos, inviting me to be an AMOSUP youth representative in the Congress. I immediately checked online what the event was about and I felt privileged to be considered. Of course, I checked my on-board schedule too and all other considerations before accepting the invitation.

Point of view

There were two reasons I said yes to the invitation – a rather personal and a professional reason. Professionally, I believed it would increase my network and my understanding of the status of my co-workers in the different sectors of industry. On a more personal reason, I am obliged to MAAP and AMOSUP. I cannot remember the number of invitations the Admiral had given me and only to send regrets due to schedule constraint. Also, the age limit to be a youth representative is 35 years old and if I waited for the next congress, which is after four years it would be like hanging by the edge (sorry, I would not divulge my age here).

The days, weeks and months leading to the event and during the event itself would be honest to say it felt like a duck. I was calm and unruffled on the surface, but paddling quickly underneath! It turned out it was not easy after all to coordinate onboard and with the company an event such as this. Anyway, this is still an ongoing ruckus and the year is almost over, I could only hope things will still turn out right. However, during the event itself I was equally anxious as well to mingle with the executives and key personnel of AMOSUP.

On the contrary when I finally met them, they were all grounded, very simple and down-to-earth. What also amazes me was how prayerful and God-loving they are – for the two Sundays we were in Sofia we went to the Church to attend the Mass, when it could have been easy to just stay in bed or spend the day for sight-seeing. During our stay in Sofia it really felt like I was with a family – when in fact they are all top notch, big bosses in the Philippines and internationally.

Every woman’s greatness

On the opening day of the Congress, the event was honoured with the attendance of some great women. It was also an opportunity for the Seafarers, Women’s and Youth Congress. An election was also held for the Youth representative from each Sector. The first congress I attended was the Seafarers’ Sections. Prior to that, Dr Oca, President of AMOSUP and Admiral Santos were keen on nominating me. However, I did not give any feedback yet as I have to think it all again if it was really ready. When the election for the Youth representative for the Seafarers was being conducted there was a brief silence amidst the AMOSUP party but I was quiet. Henceforth, this chance was missed.

Before the Women’s and Youth Congress I have been contemplating for nights and days of this opportunity. There are a lot of factors to consider personally, i.e. my availability onshore and the impact on my career. But there is a whole new human aspect to think about – I am a young worker and a woman, how many of us have the chance to make a positive influence to all young women workers like me? I have seen and experienced first-hand the challenges in employment of men and women alike. Will I get the opportunity to be the voice and representative of women and the youth workers? The answer to that is seen in the list below.

Points to ponder

One of the beautiful things I carry with me in Sofia, Bulgaria was the lesson and encouraging wisdom I gathered from everyone in the Congress. Let me close the writing by imparting the same to all of the readers.

The Following Women are Elected by the Conference:

The Conference agreed the composition on the Women Transport Workers’ Committee, as above, together with the following positions for confirmation at regional electoral groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Executive Board Representatives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia/Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akihiko Sato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Law, SMOL, Singapore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America/Gulfistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette Gay, RGSA, Chile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tan Maai, MLWest, United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shige Hidaka, IMAF, the Japan, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalland Nasikh, FKCN, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Transport Workers Representative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yasuhiro Iguchi, AMOSUP, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Representatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriana Araneta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dora Zabor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sangil Oh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>私の個人視点</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>責任感</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>タスク</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>インターネット</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>国際通貨</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>国際</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正義</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>労働</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>自由</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>和平</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>幸福</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>愛</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Crews recover wages in NZ ITF week of action

Visits by delegation of dockworkers and seafarers representatives to five ships in ports recover $110,000 in back wages, including probe into issues of crew wellbeing

Tens of thousands of dollars of outstanding pay for seafarers is in the process of recovery after action in July initiated by the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) in New Zealand ports.

Delegations of dockworkers and seafarers representing the ITF visited five vessels in New Zealand ports as part of a week-long flag of convenience campaigns workshop. Approximately $110,000 has been recovered in back wages, and issues of crew wellbeing have been investigated.

The exercise was led by New Zealand ITF inspector Graham McLaren, and Australian Assistant ITF Coordinator, Matt Purcell, with maritime workers in the rank and file members of ITF affiliated unions, the Maritime Union of New Zealand and the Maritime Union of Australia joining the boarding team.

McLaren said the joint exercise was about getting results for seafarers and was aimed at strengthening the New Zealand network of ITF approved contacts, who are maritime workers accredited by the ITF to visit vessels on a voluntary basis to check on the wellbeing of crew.

“The exercise has built on the already strong relationship with their fellow Australian ITF representatives and respective affiliates throughout the two countries.”

An eight-strong ITF delegation visited the MV Lilly Oldendorff on 3 July 2014 in Bluff, said Mr McLaren.

The delegation delivered a message through the Ukrainian Master that the vessel owner’s refusal to cover his vessels with ITF approved employment agreements was no longer acceptable in the region, and their vessels will now become a target for affiliated unions.

In Lyttelton on 1 July 2014, several issues were investigated on board the Liberian-flagged bulk carrier Sea Successa.

Crew were owed pay of over $53,000, and several crew members had been on board for over 12 months, contravening the Maritime Labour Convention 2006, which New Zealand is currently considering ratifying.

The Panamanian-flagged vessel SW Spinnaker was detected as owing $55,000 of wages to crew. In the Port of Tauranga, ITF representatives visited the ship Cap Pasado on 4 July 2014 to talk to crew and investigate issues around the death of a Filipino seafarer aboard the vessel last month in the Port of Los Angeles.

Around 700 unions representing over 4.5 million transport workers from some 150 countries are members of the ITF.

It is one of several Global Union Federations allied with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).


Crew shield: Box protection

The secure box “must be considered that this can be used across numerous vessels and may also have an effect to suppress insurance premiums on high-risk transits,” explains Mike Samways

A British team have come up with what they believe is the ultimate piracy panic room, namely a converted twenty foot container. The secure box works both onshore and at sea.

Mike Samways, managing director of Crewshield and a former boarding officer with the UK’s Royal Navy, explains why he thinks the system he invented has such potential.

“By comparing case studies of hijackings,” he says, “it is clear that whilst no one approach to countering the problem is foolproof or indeed without risk, once pirates have successfully boarded the vessel the only technique that has proved routinely successful is for the crew to shut down the main engines and ride to a safe area or citadel where they can await the arrival of maritime security forces.”

In response to this problem Crewshield designed a portable and easily deployable citadel based within a standard shipping container.

With regard to this approach it should be noted that most western militaries will have strict rules of engagement and often will not attempt to board a pirated vessel without two way communications with the master or accurate plans of the vessel including the citadel location, nor a manifest of exactly who is onboard the vessel with their locations.

The Crewshield system being both armoured and deck mounted mitigates these criteria as it allows a far greater range of options to the relieving forces such as the use of sniper teams from helicopters to secure the crew’s location hours before the arrival of a naval vessel.

The use of citadels is fast becoming the preferred method for ships to evade capture and or hostage taking where pirates have already boarded,” maintains Samways.

However, getting an internal citadel fitted is both expensive and time consuming, requiring up to five days retrofitting.

Source: http://www.maritimenews.co.nz/News/Crewshield-Box-protection/3w3c388.html
JSU, AMOSUP build Mariner’s Home anew

The success of the Japanese and Filipino unions’ partnership in providing accommodation to their seafarers in transit puts them together again in another welfare project.

All Japan Seamen’s Union (JSU) and AMOSUP have launched another joint venture project in the provision of dwelling pads to seafarers in transit, with the construction of a new residential building in Malate, Manila.

The recent groundbreaking ceremony of the new Mariner’s Home Annex II in Malate on 10th July marks the start of construction begins of the third edifice the two maritime unions will be providing to their seafaring members following two similar projects over the last eight years.

The eight-storey Mariner’s Home Annex II, which will have 360-bed capacity, is projected to stand bigger in size and accommodation than the already existing Mariner’s Home and its Annex which were built in 2006 and 2011, respectively. When combined the first two Homes provide a total capacity of 480 beds.

Both joint welfare projects between AMOSUP and JSU have proven to be a “successful partnership in providing thousands of transient Filipino seafarers with clean, decent, secure and very affordable accommodations,” said AMOSUP president Dr Conrado Oca, in reference to the two mariner’s homes — also in the Malate area.

Dr. Oca said the seafarers of the two unions have enjoyed the amenities of Mariner’s Home and Mariner’s Home Annex as they prepare to board their vessels or to take their licensure examinations. Others are accommodated whilst they undergo training and upgrading courses, or after having disembarked on the way to their respective provinces.

Annex II will have a gym, study/computer room, clinic, cafeteria and assembly hall. Construction of the residential building is expected to finish in eight months.

The project marks another milestone in the strong relationship between JSU and AMOSUP that also highlights the cooperation among Philippine and Japanese social partners. From such cooperation, Dr Oca recalls how the JSU and AMOSUP undertook the mariner’s home project in 2005 in “our common desire to promote the welfare of our members.”

Considering the continuing need of the two unions’ members to avail themselves the benefit programme, AMOSUP and JSU have decided to expand the existing facilities, he stressed.

Department of Labour and Employment secretary Rosalinda Dimapilis-Baldoz graced the groundbreaking ceremony as its guest-of-honour. She said the JSU-AMOSUP project always reminded her that the interest of seafarers has always been in the two unions’ hearts.

“It also brings fulfillment of the vision of Capt Greg Oca, founder and former AMOSUP president, that welfare and benefits of seafarers come as a primordial concern by the union and the shipowners,” said Baldoz. She added that such a move was meant to put more than just the usual labour standard that the two unions have wanted to maintain.
Ship mates, music on board lead up to career of a lifetime

Former chief officer Solito Galindo recalls how he honed his crewmen’s musical talents and incidentally broke into the business of managing female bands. Sailing Forward editor Andy Dalisay writes

Music and mates on board a cargo ship really go together once the crew become idle on long voyages at sea. But to a former seafarer like Chief Mate Solito B Galindo, who now manages the Pinoy folk-rock band Aegis, his musical instruments and the ship mates he once worked onboard apparently offered a prelude to something he would do after his maritime career.

A band member prior to studying nautical science in college, Lito – to crewmembers and friends – pursued group gigs at night whilst attending classes by day. So when he boarded his first ship after graduating at the defunct Cebu Polytechnic School, he also took his music and instruments with him on board.

Lito recalls he was one of the 100 cadets sent to Germany by an agency to train on the cargo ship Britainborg of Schultz Pacific Shipping in 1989. He also sailed on various ships owned by different shipowners such as Seaspan, Genstar Marine and Gearbulk with their collective agreements with the union, PTGWO (Philippine Transport General Workers Organisation).

Over the years the cadet progressed into obtaining his first ticket to dock officer’s rank – from third mate to chief mate – working on various ships and manning agencies. Whilst at sea he also played all types of musical instruments to cope with loneliness, but at the same time turned it into an opportunity to further his talent and consequently impart them to his ship mates.

Band on board

So what Lito did was to scout for pieces of second hand instruments as soon as he started receiving his regular salary. He completed acquiring the instruments that were cheaply purchased from shops in Europe each time they would go down for a shore leave. Lead guitar from London, bass guitar and amplifier from Antwerp, keyboards from a German city and set of drums from a visit in another port to arm a group of band members on board.

As their ship docked at ports, in Antwerp for instance, Lito and his crew would visit Filipino-owned bars or clubs that usually staged live band performances, from which they would volunteer to perform one or two songs on intermissions. Such acts were repeated in other clubs in Europe they would normally visit each time their ship had to discharge or load cargo.

“That’s how I began my career teaching musical instruments and eventually tapping one’s potentials,” he says, stressing how the Filipino by nature has really been musically inclined. He notes that in some instances, he had crew members who ended up abandoning their seafaring profession after having honed their musical prowess through months of practice on board and engaging in a number of gigs abroad. Later on he would hear news of them performing in this or that club within a new group.

Signing a few more contracts and continuously working on ships to save for future, Lito also finally got married. He would grow his hair long, hippie style. One time he went home for a vacation, excited to see his first daughter was then a toddler. He recalls “the child went hysterical as I was about to embrace and kiss her. She did not recognise me because of my looks after long months of separation with the family.”

In 1984, the Chief Mate and father of three daughters decided to stop working on ships. By that time a group of female cultural dancers who he met in one of the clubs in Europe asked him if they could be accommodated to train in a band similar to his other crewmates. The ladies requested to teach them to sing and play some instruments as the group showed interest to form a “female band.” Lito says the group could have been inspired by his band mates from the ship. And he did accommodate their request.

The need for more recruits came in during the middle of 1980s to 1990s when Japanese club owners sought Filipino entertainers to work in Japan. Lito emphasised that training and management business of entertainers grew tremendously as various promoters approached him, looking for female singers for a roster of bookings not only in Japan but in other countries as well. They also sent many of his trained talents to Australia, Singapore and Malaysia through his company AG Talent Development Management Services.

The company’s entertainers have come and gone after years of overseas stint, especially in Japan. Some of them went with their foreign boyfriends and got married. But there were others who chose to return, still under Lito and his wife’s management team. Some of those who came back formed the six-member successful folk-rock band Aegis. Made up of siblings, Aegis shot to stardom in early 2000, with their debut album Halik, which features their popular songs Luha and Sinta.

Lito attributes the success of his chosen career to what he calls “the musician in his heart.” The former leader of the band learned his piano lessons early in grade school. Apart from keyboard, he also learned to play string instruments and drums early in life that landed him to forming his high school band in Cagayan de Oro City. Besides, he came from a family who really loved music, with parents who played classical pieces on the piano.

He even saw his great grandfather’s owned piano and guitar when he was young. His clan in Misamis Occidental, the Galindos origin, has once displayed notoriety in ownership of the keyboard instrument among common folks. And they always said something like: “For every 10 households in the family (uncles and aunts included), 11 pianos belong to members of the clan.”

Whilst Chief Mate Galindo may have reasons to abandon the seafaring profession early in his career, what he started on board ship paid off ashore. And it seems to have been a lifetime. Today, apart from managing a famous folk-rock band, he is also into full time management of eight other female musical groups through his AG Talent Development Management Services.
Capt Oca receives maritime award

PMMA Alumni Association bestows the honour in recognition of the former AMOSUP chief's legacies and accomplishments in marine trade unionism

Former AMOSUP founder and president, Capt Gregorio S Oca, was conferred the posthumous Recognition of a "Polaris Star Maritime Award" by the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy Alumni Association (PMMAAAI).

The PMMAAAI conferred the award, which was received by son, Dr Conrado F Oca, during the alumni association's 54th anniversary and fellowship night held at Palacio de Maynila last 22 August 2014.

The alumni group said the posthumous award was in recognition for Capt Oca's many legacies and accomplishments that contributed to the maritime trade unionism.

PMMAAAI president Capt Gaudencio "Jebs" Morales and PMMA president NAEdh Richard U Ritual led the awarding ceremony.

The Polaris Star Maritime Award is PMMAAAI's trademark in honouring individuals, companies and organisations who have contributed a lot to the development of the Philippine maritime industry.

A graduate of Philippine Nautical School (now the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy), Capt Oca started as a seafarer before he became a maritime trade union leader. As founding president of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-PTGWO), he initiated programmes to improve the plight of Filipino seafarers particularly in seafarer training, health, and welfare.

Under his stewardship and the support of its members, AMOSUP established hospitals, housing and billining facilities, and training centres and schools including the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific. Capt Oca also worked for the protection of Filipino seafarers against proliferation of piracy in international waters and the approval of the Standard Employment Contract for seafarers.

Two other awardees include Cmdr Romulo Guerrero and the Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA) Philippines Cadet Programme. Guerrero is known for the indispensable support he has given to all his students during his years teaching career at the PMMA and the NSA Philippines Cadet Programme is recognized for being the most outstanding and promising cadet programme established to develop young and competent seafarers through scholarships grants and best maritime education to Filipino qualified applicants.

Dr Conrado F Oca receives Capt Greg's "Polaris Star Maritime Award", posthumously from PMMAAAI president Capt Jose Morales and PMMA president Richard Ritual.