VOLUME 14 | ISSUE 48 | FEBRUARY 2026

SAILING FORWARD

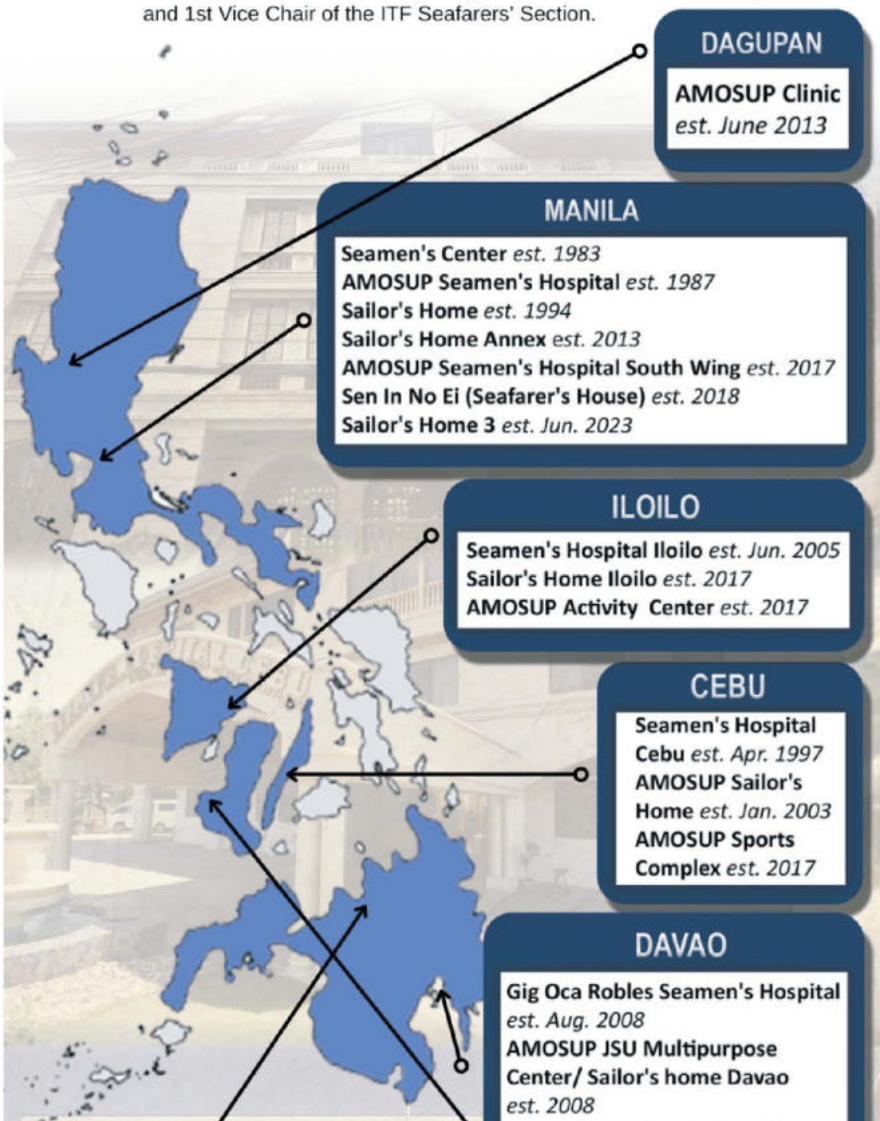
THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS' AND SEAMEN'S UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES

AMOSUP celebrates 65th Anniversary

ASSOCIATED MARINE OFFICERS' AND SEAMEN'S UNION OF THE PHILIPPINES AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF

The Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF) was established in 1960 by Master Mariner Captain Gregorio S. Oca. He saw a bright future for Filipino Seafarers and to make his vision a reality, he pioneered the negotiation for welfare benefits and advocated the upgrading of seafarer education and training in the country. Captain Oca dedicated his life to championing the rights and welfare of Filipino Seafarers.

AMOSUP's strong partnership and collaboration with industry stakeholders bound by Collective Bargaining Agreements is at the core of the Union's extensive and holistic welfare programs and services. For over 60 years, AMOSUP has cultivated a harmonious and constructive synergy with ITF-affiliated unions, companies/shipowners and international maritime employer groups in ensuring that members are accorded with the best benefits they deserve for their vital role and contribution to the industry. AMOSUP also actively engages in national, regional and global forums to champion the protection and advancement of Filipino seafarers' rights and welfare, having the Union's leadership designated as International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Executive Board Member for Asia Pacific and 1st Vice Chair of the ITF Seafarers' Section.



DAGUPAN

AMOSUP Clinic *est. June 2013*

MANILA

Seamen's Center *est. 1983*
AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital *est. 1987*
Sailor's Home *est. 1994*
Sailor's Home Annex *est. 2013*
AMOSUP Seamen's Hospital South Wing *est. 2017*
Sen In No Ei (Seafarer's House) *est. 2018*
Sailor's Home 3 *est. Jun. 2023*

ILOILO

Seamen's Hospital Iloilo *est. Jun. 2005*
Sailor's Home Iloilo *est. 2017*
AMOSUP Activity Center *est. 2017*

CEBU

Seamen's Hospital Cebu *est. Apr. 1997*
AMOSUP Sailor's Home *est. Jan. 2003*
AMOSUP Sports Complex *est. 2017*

DAVAO

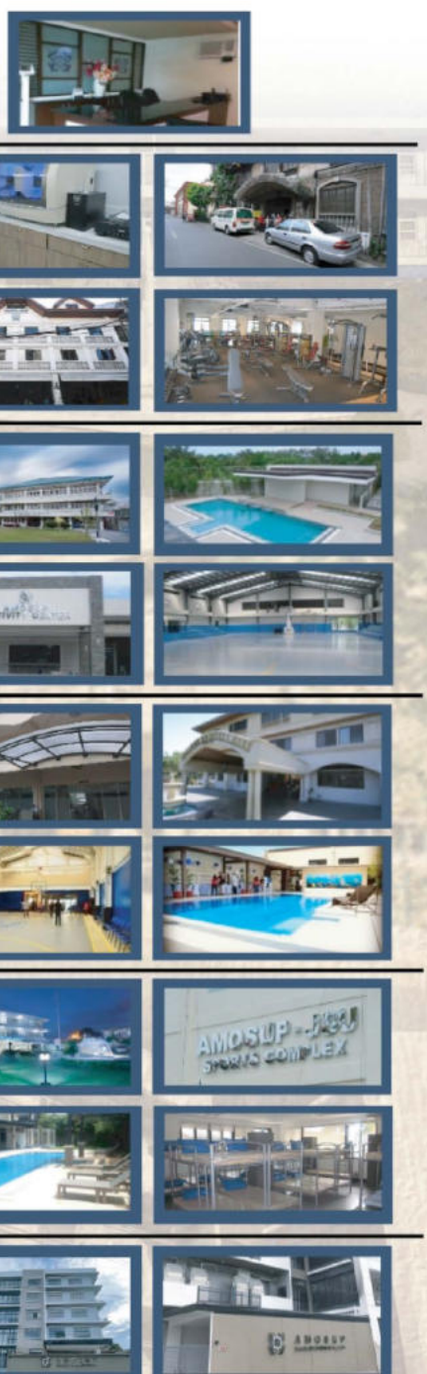
Gig Oca Robles Seamen's Hospital *est. Aug. 2008*
AMOSUP JSU Multipurpose Center/ Sailor's home Davao *est. 2008*
AMOSUP JSU Sports Complex *est. 2014*

BACOLOD

AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility *est. Oct. 2022*

CAGAYAN DE ORO

SOON TO RISE



LEGEND:
est. = established

From the President

HAPPY SEAXTY FIFTH ANNIVERSARY, AMOSUP!

On 11 November 2025, we marked the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF)'s 65th Founding Anniversary – Sixty five storied years of service to Filipino seafarers and their families, sixty five years of empowering maritime workers who move the world across the seas, and sixty five years of solidarity with the wider global maritime community and beyond.

With the theme, "AMOSUP SEAxty Five: Anchored in Strength, Sailing into the Future," we looked back and celebrated not just the milestones our Union has achieved, but above all, the people–our seafarers, union workers, employers, government partners, and other stakeholders–who made each feat possible.

As I said in my speech, AMOSUP's history started with one man with a dream, a heart full of hope, and a prayer to be God's instrument to champion Filipino seafarers and their families. I am truly humbled by and grateful for this great legacy entrusted to us by our beloved founder, Captain Gregorio S. Oca–a Master Mariner, a respected leader, a comrade, a brother, a husband and a devoted father.

Our monumental celebration was attended by distinguished guests from all over the world, and, most importantly, by our seafarers–the heart and soul of everything we do. Across the country, AMOSUP's provincial branches and facilities came together in a nationwide celebration anchored in strength and unity. The spirit of tripartism and solidarity were very much alive, and reminded us that while we may work in different places and roles, we sail forward with a shared purpose: to uphold the rights and to protect the dignity of our members, and to build a strong and sustainable future for all.

This issue of Sailing Forward also highlights lived experiences and inspiring stories that embody that purpose. We are reminded of the courage and determination of our people as we feature the journeys of exceptional seafarers from humble beginnings to leadership at sea, which proves that determination, discipline, and values can chart a course to success in the maritime industry.

We proudly celebrate the notable achievements of our modern-day heroes. We congratulate Capt. Gaudencio Morales, recipient of the Capt. Gregorio Oca Achievement Award at the 2025 Bagong Bayani Awards. Capt. Zulaika Florin being named Seafarer of the Year shows the vital role women play in shaping the shipping industry. The success story of a retired mariner reminds us that service does not end with employment but evolves into mentorship, community leadership, and continued purpose.

This issue also shows how the Philippine manning industry drives national development. Seafarers move the world. Our maritime labor sector powers the global trade, strengthens our economy and continues to position our nation as the top seafaring nation in the world.

Maritime education and training remain part of AMOSUP's key priorities, which we fully support through the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). We celebrate the graduation of our academy's successful cadets. Certainly they are the next generation of successful marine officers onboard the world's fleets. Likewise, we take pride in our cadet who was named The Most Outstanding Maritime Student in the Philippines. These achievements emphasizes our commitment to excellence in maritime education and training, and to the global competitiveness of Filipino marine officers.

Finally, our participation in the ITF Maritime Meetings reflects our dedication to global solidarity. As we reflect on these stories, one truth stands clear: our greatest strength has always been our people. From our seafarers to our union workers, from our government officials to maritime employers and other stakeholders, each story adds a chapter to AMOSUP's legacy. As we sail into the future, may we remain anchored in solidarity, driven by our shared purpose, and steadfast in our commitment to serve our seafarers and their families.

SAIL FORWARD FOREVER, AMOSUP! MABUHAY ANG PILIPINONG MANDARAGAT!

Dr. Conrado F. Oca
President,
AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF

Editorial Board and Staff

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AMOSUP Board Officers and Members

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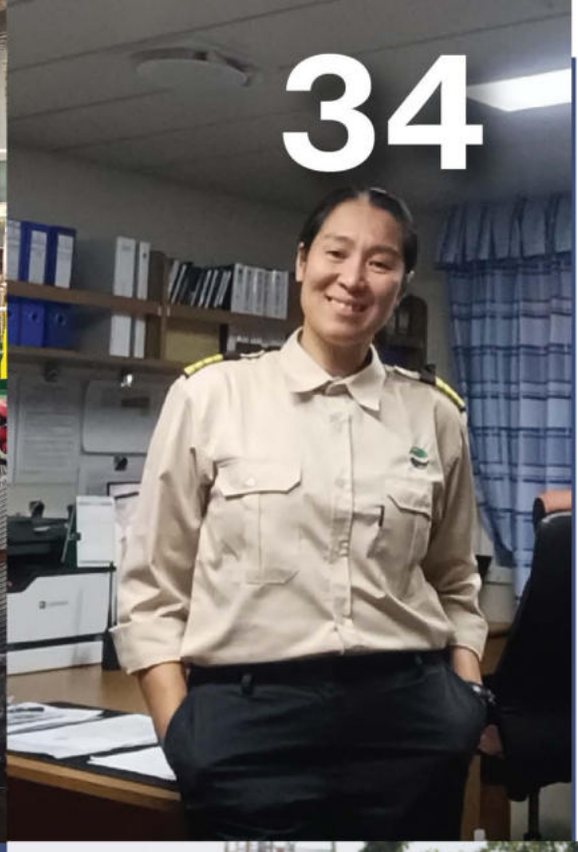


Cover: AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF's 65th Anniversary Celebration

Anchored in a dream, sailing with purpose: AMOSUP at 65

By: ***Andy Dalisay***

It began with a man, a dream and a prayer.

Captain Gregorio S. Oca, a shipmaster with a heart full of hope, once asked to be God's instrument in sharing love, mercy, care and compassion toward Filipino seafarers and their families. That prayer was answered in 1960, when he founded the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP). From that singular act of faith and vision grew a movement—one that would transform the lives of thousands of maritime workers and reshape the landscape of Filipino seafaring.

Sixty-five years later, AMOSUP stands as a towering testament to that dream. On 11th November 2025, the union celebrated its "Seaxty Fifth" anniversary at the World Trade Center in Manila, gathering shipmanagers, government officials, international partners, and—most importantly—Filipino seafarers from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, along with maritime union leaders across the globe. The evening was not just a commemoration of time passed, but a reaffirmation of purpose, solidarity and the enduring legacy of Captain Oca.

In his keynote address, AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado F. Oca paid heartfelt tribute to the union's founder, describing Captain Oca as a leader, comrade, brother, husband and father. "Lord, give me the strength to do ordinary things in extraordinary ways," was Captain Oca's favorite quote—and indeed, his life embodied that prayer. Through AMOSUP, he built not just an organization, but a sanctuary of dignity and empowerment for Filipino seafarers.

Dr. Oca traced the union's journey from its humble beginnings to its current stature as a pillar of maritime labor advocacy. He emphasized how AMOSUP has continually adapted to the evolving maritime industry while remaining anchored in its core mission: to protect, uplift and empower Filipino seafarers and their families.

The heart of the industry

> **"To our seafarers… you are the heart of the global maritime industry,"** Dr. Oca declared. Their courage, perseverance and excellence have not only raised the flag of Philippine seafaring heritage on ships around the world but have also inspired AMOSUP to fight harder for their rights and welfare. The union's commitment to its members is reflected in its wide array of services—from healthcare and lodgings to education and legal support.

AMOSUP's facilities span the archipelago, including Seamen's Hospitals, sailors' homes, the Seamen's Center, the Slop Chest and the Seamen's Village. Its flagship educational institution, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP), continues to produce world-class maritime professionals. These service units, staffed by dedicated healthcare professionals, instructors, administrators and union workers, embody the union's brand of "Alagang AMOSUP."

The celebration also honored AMOSUP's enduring partnerships with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), affiliate unions and global maritime organizations. Many of these partners braved a super typhoon to attend the event, underscoring the strength of international solidarity. **"Our close cooperation remains one of our key strengths,"** Dr. Oca noted, "as we forge through the seas of challenges and uncertainty in our industry and in this rapidly changing world."

Government support was also recognized as a vital force behind AMOSUP's success. Dr. Oca thanked public officials for their commitment to safeguarding the interests of seafarers, describing their

Dr. Conrado F. Oca
President
AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF

support as "the wind that keeps our sails strong." Employers and stakeholders in both public and private sectors were lauded for opening doors of opportunity, enabling Filipino seafarers to provide for their families and pursue their dreams.

Honoring the past, charting the future

As his storyline drew to a close, Dr. Oca turned once more to the past—to Captain Oca and the pioneers who laid the foundation for AMOSUP's mission. Some have passed on, but their legacy lives in every contract signed, every hospital bed filled, every diploma earned and every Filipino seafarer who steps and sails aboard a merchant ship with pride.

AMOSUP's journey is far from over.

> **"We continue to do our absolute best to build upon this important work bestowed upon us,"**

Dr. Oca affirmed. The union's future is charted with hope and determination: to achieve more gains, build more partnerships, ensure stronger protections and expand the horizon of opportunities for Filipino seafarers today and for generations to come.

In closing, Dr. Oca offered a message of unity and reassurance:

> **"Hangga't nandito po ang AMOSUP, hindi po kayo nag-iisa. Dahil ikaw, ako, tayo ay AMOSUP."**

The Seaxty Fifth anniversary was more than a celebration—it was a reaffirmation of a promise made in 1960 by a man with a dream and a prayer. That promise continues to guide AMOSUP's voyage: to serve with compassion, to lead with integrity and to sail forward with Filipino seafarers.

'Anchored in strength': Global union leader pays tribute to AMOSUP's 65 years of service and solidarity

By: **Andy Dalisay**

In a stirring address that blended personal reflection with global perspective, David Heindel—president of the Seafarers International Union (SIU) of North America and chair of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Section—paid tribute to AMOSUP's 65-year legacy during the union's milestone celebration in Manila.

Heindel's connection to AMOSUP spans four decades, and his admiration for the union's leadership runs deep. But it was his recollection of the Oca family's enduring commitment to Filipino seafarers that set the tone for his message.

"Over those years, we stood shoulder to shoulder. Conrad, with your father, of course. Now with you, for improving collective agreements and conditions to defending seafarers' rights. Always guided by a shared mission, making life better for seafarers, not just here in the Philippines, but around the world," Heindel said, drawing a direct line from the pioneering vision of Capt. Gregorio Oca to the dynamic stewardship of his son, Dr. Conrado Oca.

David Heindel
Seafarers International Union (SIU) of North America President
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Section Chair

A legacy forged in service

Founder and former president Capt. Oca, revered as a titan of maritime labor, laid the foundation for what would become one of the most respected and influential maritime unions in the world. Under his leadership, AMOSUP championed the rights of Filipino seafarers, built institutions of care and training, and elevated the Philippines as a global maritime force.

Dr. Oca has carried that legacy forward with vigor and vision. Heindel praised his initiatives—from expanding healthcare access through union-run hospitals to negotiating robust collective agreements and investing in world-class maritime training. These efforts, Heindel noted, have not only benefited AMOSUP members

but have also set a global benchmark for union excellence.

"That kind of success doesn't happen by chance," Heindel emphasized. **"It takes strong leadership, and you have had two of the best leaders in the world running AMOSUP."**

With over **120,000 members**, AMOSUP is the largest seafarers' union in the Philippines and one of the most formidable in the world. But for Heindel, its true strength lies in the unity between leadership and rank-and-file members.

"What Conrad and his team have done and achieved is a testament to what is possible when dedicated leaders are backed by committed youth and united members," he said. **"That partnership—leadership and rank and file working together—is a true source of AMOSUP's strength."**

Heindel's admiration was laced with humor and awe. "If I had 120,000 members, I would take over the world," he quipped, drawing laughter from the audience. "I'm surprised you haven't yet. Or maybe you have—I don't know."

The anniversary's theme, "Anchored in Strength, Sailing into the Future," struck a powerful chord with Heindel. He called it a perfect encapsulation of AMOSUP's proud history and forward-looking resolve.

"If there is one thing that has always carried this union forward—and indeed, all of us in the maritime labor movement—it is our solidarity," he said. "We're stronger together forward than apart, and there's never been a more urgent time to live up to that principle than today."

Navigating global challenges

While the evening was celebratory, Heindel reminded the audience that the maritime industry faces a sea of challenges: the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, the transition to alternative fuels, the persistent scourge of crew abandonment and the growing impacts of climate change. He also cited political pressures on workers' rights and the alarming rise in violent attacks on merchant ships.

> **"Seafarers are on the front lines of global change,"** he warned.

> **"But we are not powerless. We are prepared, we are organized, and most importantly, we are united."**

Heindel pointed to the ITF's critical role in defending seafarers' rights worldwide. During the COVID-19 pandemic, ITF affiliates—including AMOSUP—were instrumental in repatriating thousands of stranded seafarers. Today, the federation continues to recover unpaid wages, assist abandoned crews and uphold the dignity of over two million mariners across the globe.

> **"We do it through one powerful engine,"** Heindel said.

> **"And that's our solidarity."**

As he concluded his address, Heindel offered a message of gratitude and unwavering support.

"So tonight, as we celebrate 65 years of AMOSUP's service, leadership and vision, I want to thank you. Thank you for your example, thank you for your partnership and thank you for the steadfast commitment to the brother and sisterhood of the sea."

"You can always count on the ITF Seafarers' Section and the Seafarers International Union of North America. We are proud to call you brothers and sisters, grateful to call you friends, and committed, always, to standing beside you in solidarity."

With a final salute—"Mabuhay AMOSUP, and mabuhay Filipino seafarers worldwide"—Heindel reaffirmed a bond forged not just in contracts and campaigns, but in shared purpose, mutual respect and a deep belief in the dignity of maritime labor.

AMOSUP at 65:
A beacon of strength in a sea of global challenges

By: **Andy Dalisay**

In an era marked by rising seas, shrinking democracies and the relentless advance of automation, the maritime world finds itself at a crossroads. For seafarers—whose lives are shaped by tides both literal and political—the need for strong, visionary unions has never been greater. That urgency was the heartbeat of ITF President-elect Frank Moreels' speech at the 65th anniversary of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), delivered in Manila before a grand hall of international guests and proud Filipino seafarers.

Frank Moreels
President-elect
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

Moreels' message was clear: the challenges ahead are global, complex and deeply personal for transport workers. "Climate change provokes serious problems all over the world for the workers we represent," he said, citing floods, forest fires and rising sea levels. "Artificial intelligence, automation and digitalization [are] having serious consequences for transport workers with job loss and a big impact on the nature of our jobs."

These are not distant threats—they are already reshaping the maritime landscape. And in the face of such upheaval, Moreels urged unity: "None of these problems can be tackled on national level. We have to join hands and work together as unions on global level."

Pride in the present, strength from the past

Yet his message was not only a warning—it was a celebration. Moreels spoke with heartfelt admiration for AMOSUP's six-and-a-half decades of service to Filipino seafarers, describing the union as "strong, respected… offering real services: health care, training vessels, accommodation, wifi rooms to call home, and a commitment to women's inclusion in a male-dominated sector."

He recalled a personal visit to AMOSUP's headquarters in Intramuros, Manila, where he and a colleague were given an impromptu tour. What they saw left a lasting impression: a union that had built not just infrastructure, but community. "We were impressed," he said, listing amenities from groceries and hospitals to rest places, leisure rooms, and a vast training program—including two training vessels.

AMOSUP, he emphasized, is not just a national institution—it is an international reference point. "When I talk with the European seafarers' unions about seafarers' unions in South-East Asia, all of them will refer to AMOSUP as a strong and representative union."

Leadership anchored in vision

At the heart of this legacy is leadership. Moreels paid tribute to Dr. Conrad Oca, the AMOSUP president, whose steady hand and clear vision have guided the union through turbulent times. "We only can honor Dr. Oca for his leadership," Moreels said, "and the guidance he is giving to your mighty union."

AMOSUP's role within the International Transport Workers' Federation is not symbolic—it is strategic. As one of ITF's strongholds in Southeast Asia, AMOSUP is expected to help shape the federation's response to global threats. "Your leadership and contribution in ITF will be needed the coming months and years," Moreels affirmed.

The speech closed with a call to action rooted in optimism. Despite the scale of the challenges, Moreels expressed confidence in the power of collective action. "With unions like AMOSUP taking leadership roles in the organization… we are able to hold strong as international labour movement."

For maritime professionals and union members, the message is both sobering and galvanizing. The seas ahead may be rough, but with solidarity, vision, and institutions like AMOSUP at the helm, the global transport workforce is not adrift—it is mobilized.
"Viva ITF – Viva AMOSUP!"

*Image: **M/V Kapitan Felix Oca training vessel***
*Photo by: **Jhaytom Pineda***

AMOSUP at 65:
A legacy anchored in vision and service

By: **Andy Dalisay**

In a world where tides shift and industries flourish, the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) has remained a steady anchor for Filipino seafarers. As it celebrated its 65th founding anniversary, the union was hailed not just for its longevity, but for its transformative impact on maritime labor—locally and globally.

"Doesn't matter whether there are wars, economic crises, pandemics or challenges in our industry—AMOSUP stood tall for you," declared Stephen Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), in a rousing keynote address at the Hall B & C of the World Trade Center (Manila). **"You're a powerful force for change, not just here in the Philippines, but the whole world over."**

At the heart of AMOSUP's legacy is a story of vision turned into reality. Cotton paid tribute to the late Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, the union's founder, whose dream of building a world-class maritime academy began with a dilapidated hotel in Mariveles, Bataan.

"I have a lovely story," Cotton recalled. "He came to see me once and said, 'I want to buy a dilapidated hotel because I have a vision to build the best-maritime school—not just in the Philippines, but in the world.' And that's now MAAP."

Today, the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific stands as a premier institution, offering integrated training for deck, engine and leadership roles. It is a living testament to Captain Oca's belief in education as the bedrock of seafarer empowerment.

Stephen Cotton
General Secretary
International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

*Image: **Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific***

Expanding the circle of care

AMOSUP's commitment to its members extends far beyond training. Now under the leadership of Dr. Conrado F. Oca, the founder's son and current president, the union has expanded its network of hospitals and medical outreach centers across the country.

Photo courtesy of: **AMOSUP Bacolod**

Image: **AMOSUP Manila Slopchest**

"As we saw during the trip around the Philippines," Cotton noted, "there's more AMOSUP hospitals, more medical outreach centers, better union benefits. MAAP is even bigger than ever imagined."

These services are not mere amenities—they are lifelines for over 120,000 active Filipino seafarers and their families, ensuring health, dignity and continuity of care.

Filipino seafarers remain the backbone of the global shipping industry, and AMOSUP their most formidable advocate. "You are natural seafarers," Cotton said. "But you're also wonderful human beings—so warm, so welcoming. That's why you're the biggest labor supply country in the world."

AMOSUP's influence is felt in international negotiations, from the Maritime Labour Convention to the International Bargaining Forum. Cotton emphasized the importance of partnerships: "There's no dance without the employers. They're the ones that engage with us to build better futures for you."

Looking ahead: Training, technology and welfare

As the maritime sector faces new challenges—from alternative fuels to digitalization—AMOSUP is positioning its members for the future. "We have to make sure we train Filipinos to the highest possible standard," Cotton urged. **"We have to make sure the life you live on board is safe, has value and that we do more to protect your welfare."**

He also called for greater access to internet connectivity and the preservation of shore leave rights—essentials for mental health and family connection.

Cotton's message culminated in a heartfelt tribute to the people behind AMOSUP's success. "Whichever part of the AMOSUP machinery—whether you're the president, whether you work in the training center—all of you, please stand up," he said. "These are the people that work every day for the seafarers in this room."

He reserved special praise for Dr. Oca: "Conrad, your father would be immensely proud of you. You walked in his shadow and now you illuminate the whole world with what you've built."

But above all, Cotton reminded the audience that AMOSUP's true strength lies in its members.

> **"Without the seafarers, there's no AMOSUP,"**

he said. "This is what it's all about—your jobs, your conditions, your families."

As AMOSUP sails into its next chapter, its compass remains steady: a commitment to unity, dignity and the enduring welfare of the Filipino seafarer.

DMW chief hails AMOSUP's legacy of tripartism and seafarer advocacy

By: ***Andy Dalisay***

> "It's always all about tripartism, social dialogue, and stakeholder partnership."

Hans Leo Cacdac
Secretary
Department of Migrant Workers (DMW)

These words, once shared with former POEA Administrator Hans Cacdac by the late Capt. Gregorio Oca, continue to resonate deeply across the maritime sector. At the 65th anniversary celebration of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), Secretary Cacdac—now head of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW)—reaffirmed the enduring power and significance of this tripartite framework in shaping the lives of Filipino seafarers.

From its inception, AMOSUP has stood as a collective voice for maritime labor, championing fair wages, decent working conditions and the dignity of every mariner. "AMOSUP charted a course toward a more equitable, skilled, and resilient maritime sector," Cacdac noted, underscoring the union's foundational role in the Philippines' emergence as a global seafaring nation.

Over six and a half decades, AMOSUP has not only anchored the livelihoods of countless Filipino mariners but also helped steer national maritime policy. Cacdac credited the union's consistent engage-

ment in social dialogue and policy deliberation—from the crafting of POEA and DMW rules to the implementation of the Maritime Labor Convention and the Magna Carta for Seafarers.

> **"The story of AMOSUP is inseparable from the Philippines' maritime governance,"**

he emphasized.

A key highlight of his address was the DMW's ongoing collaboration with AMOSUP on the accreditation of third-party doctors for seafarer compensation claims. Cacdac revealed that 12 doctors have been vetted for inclusion in this pioneering pool, which will be endorsed to the Department of Health for formal recognition. This initiative, he said, aligns with the compensation provisions of the Magna Carta and reflects the government's commitment to practical, enforceable and internationally aligned regulations.

Training and skills development also featured prominently in Cacdac's piece. He praised AMOSUP's alignment with national goals to maintain a globally competitive maritime workforce, citing joint efforts with the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA) on advanced certification programs and training center accreditation.

In a heartfelt pledge, Cacdac assured seafarers that the DMW and AMOSUP would remain steadfast allies in times of need. **"We will never back down, dear seafarers... we promise AMOSUP, that we will be with you,"** he declared.

As a key member of the Maritime Industry Tripartite Council—one of Capt. Oca's enduring legacies—AMOSUP continues to shape the future of maritime labor. Under the stewardship of Dr. Conrado Oca, the union remains a vital force in discussions on crew qualifications, safety protocols, welfare guarantees and the modernization of maritime training.

Cacdac closed his tribute with a message of solidarity and resolve: "Your 65-year journey is a testament to resilience, solidarity and the unwavering belief in labor rights and professional excellence. With the enduring partnership between AMOSUP and the government, I am confident we will meet the challenges ahead with courage, innovation, and shared purpose."

AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF

IS CELEBRATING

YEARS OF SERVICE

IKAW, AKO, TAYO AY AMOSUP!

Photo courtesy of: ***Bagong Bayani Awards - BBFI FB Page***

Capt. Gaudencio Morales conferred Capt. Gregorio Oca Achievement Award at the 2025 Bagong Bayani Awards

Photos courtesy of: ***Atty. Mikhaela Escarilla***

The nation's most prestigious recognition for sea-based workers, the 2025 Capt. Gregorio Oca Achievement Award, was conferred upon former seafarer turned shipbuilder, Capt. GAUDENCIO MORALES.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. presented the award to Capt. Morales, a former ship captain who successfully transitioned into a dynamic shipowner and shipbuilder, during ceremonies at Malacañang.

The Bagong Bayani Award (BAA), given every two years by the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) and the Bagong Bayani Foundation, Inc. (BBFI), honors outstanding Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). This particular achievement award is named after the late Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, the visionary Founding President of the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) and former head of the BBFI, and an esteemed figure in the global maritime industry.

The bond between the award's namesake, Capt. Gregorio S. Oca, and the awardee, Capt. Morales, runs deep with both sharing educational roots and dedication to the Filipino seafarer.

Capt. Morales is a proud graduate of the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA), Class of 1970 while Capt. Oca was an alumnus of the Philippine Nautical School, which,

like PMMA, traces its heritage back to the historic Escuela Náutica de Manila, the first scientific educational institution established by the Spaniards in the 19th-century Philippines.

Capt. Oca, a lifelong champion of seafarers' welfare, continued this legacy by founding the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP). The PMMA itself dedicated its new Knowledge Center Building to Capt. Oca in his honor.

Capt. Morales' career is a testament to the Filipino seafarer's potential. He sailed for 20 years, eight of which were spent as a Master Mariner, before he transitioned to entrepreneurship, establishing a manning company and diversifying into other maritime ventures.

In 2018, he ventured into domestic shipping with the acquisition of Cebu Metro Ferry.

His most notable contribution, and the core reason for his recognition, is his dedication to former seafarers. Witnessing his colleagues struggle after retirement, Capt. Morales founded the Integrated Seafarers of the Philippines (ISP) in 2013 to champion comprehensive reintegration programs.

The recognition of Capt. Morales marks a first for the BBFI.

For the first time, the Capt. Gregorio Oca Achievement Award was given to a former seafarer and was simultaneously the first BAA conferred for Successful Reintegration.

This honor celebrates not just a successful career but a noble vision: "A maritime industry with ships built, owned, operated, and manned by Filipinos..." a vision Capt. Morales is realizing through the establishment of IMP Shipyard and Port Service Inc. in Albuera, Leyte, in 2024.

The President was joined in honoring Capt. Morales and the other awardees, including Capt. Rolly Tenorio Lapinig and the 18 crewmembers of MV MSC Aube F for the BAA for Heroic Act, by DMW Secretary Hans Leo Cacdac, OWWA Administrator PY Caunan, and BBFI Chairman VAdm Eduardo Ma R. Santos.

AMOSUP Joins ITF Maritime Meetings in Athens

By: ***Camille Simbulan***
Photos courtesy of: ***Camille Simbulan***

The Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP-PTGWO-ITF) led by its President, Dr. Conrado F. Oca, who concurrently serves as the 1st Vice Chair of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) Seafarers' Section, and the Chair of the ITF Philippines National Coordination Committee (NCC), attended the ITF Seafarers' Section and the Fair Practices Committee meetings last November.

During the meeting at the historic city of Athens in one of the world's major maritime nations, Greece, the Seafarers' Section assessed the work it has accomplished in respect of the resolutions passed in the Marrakech Congress in October 2024. The section also discussed the progress report on resolutions from the Seafarers Section Conference in Santiago, Chile in 2023 that form a core part of the Section work program for the congress cycle from 2024 to 2029.

There was an informative session from the International Group of P&I Clubs that represent over 90% of worldwide shipping tonnage. The IG committed to strengthening its efforts in upholding the Maritime Labor Convention, 2006, and in assisting in cases of abandonment where their Clubs are involved.

Moreover, the **Seafarers' Section Committee had a presentation and discussion on the latest developments in the Maritime Just Transition Task Force**, including the publication of the new baseline training frameworks, which provide guidance on competency standards required for the new training for handling alternative fuels.

It was highlighted that the next phase of work for the MJTTF will be on the recruitment and retention of seafarers, which will include the roll out of National Advisory Committees in key countries in which national governments and seafarers will be tasked with creating the necessary measures to promote the industry, and to structure projects to facilitate cadetships and apprenticeship programs for seafarers.

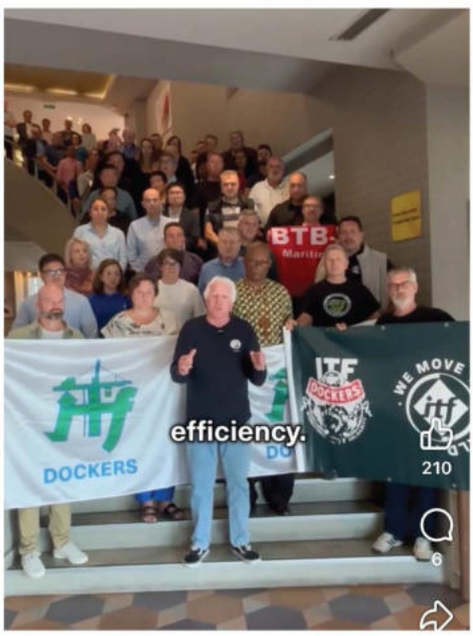
Other issues discussed were the alarming increase in cases of seafarer abandonment, as

well as the unfair treatment and criminalization of seafarers. The ITF Seafarers Trust also reported the results of a major survey on shore leave, which exposed the increasing difficulties of seafarers in spending time off ashore from their duties. The committee, however, noted the work that are being done to address these important issues through work with the wider industry, such as cooperation with the International Maritime Organization (IMO), and the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS), among others.

Furthermore, there was a discussion on the latest regulatory developments. First, for the ILO in respect of ILO 185 Seafarers Identity Documents, and the implementation of the minimum wage for the AB and other seafarers as discussed at the Joint Maritime Commission. With regard to the IMO, a more comprehensive briefing was reported on major developments.

There was also a brief report on developments in the United States relating to the actions of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) resulting in seafarers encountering problems when entering the U.S. AMOSUP shared with the committee an advisory it published for union members who might have been affected by the raids. At the meeting, it was noted that during the ITF Cruise Ship Task Force meeting, it was suggested to have informative campaigns for public awareness and stronger global solidarity in support of seafarers affected by the sweeping raids.

"On our part in AMOSUP, we released an advisory to our members onboard ships in the U.S. to remind them to exercise extreme caution when joining online group chats, forums or social media groups. Additionally, we gave some reminders on what to do if they were unknowingly added to a chat group sharing illegal content, or in the event that the U.S. CBP confronts them onboard," Dr. Oca said.



Manning industry:
A hidden powerhouse driving national growth

By: **Andy Dalisay**

In 2024 alone, the Philippine manning service industry generated a direct impact of ₱331.7 billion on the economy, and when multipliers were applied, the total impact soared to ₱1.06 trillion. According to a recent study, this remarkable contribution supported 398,839 jobs nationwide, added ₱150.1 billion in household income, and accounted for 4% of the country's GDP. Far from being a niche sector, manning has proven itself a hidden economic powerhouse—one that sustains families, strengthens communities and anchors the Philippines' global reputation as the world's leading supplier of maritime labor.

The study by ALMA Maritime Group, University of Asia and the Pacific (UA&P) and its partner think tank Center for Research and Communication (CRC) underscores that the manning industry is not just about remittances. It is about systemic economic activity. Filipino seafarers' salaries fuel household spending, which in turn drives local businesses, from sari-sari stores to transport services. Every peso remitted multiplies threefold in the economy, creating ripples across agriculture, retail, logistics and manufacturing.

Between 2021 and 2024, sea-based remittances averaged ₱366.8 billion annually, representing nearly 20% of all OFW remittances and contributing 1.6% of GDP. This steady inflow of foreign earnings has become a stabilizing force for the Philippine economy, cushioning households against inflation and global shocks.

Shipowners' Spending: The Unseen Investment

The study reveals a lesser-known fact: before a Filipino seafarer even boards a ship, foreign shipowners already inject billions into the local economy. In 2024, shipowners spent ₱54.3 billion in the Philippines on training, medical examinations, accommodation, clothing, food, government fees and professional services. These expenditures are not counted as remittances by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, but they represent direct foreign investment flowing into Philippine businesses.

When multipliers are applied, the research adds up, this pre-deployment spending expands to ₱174.9 billion in economic activity, generating ₱43.7 billion in household income and supporting over 116,000 jobs. This means the manning industry's impact begins long before seafarers set sail, the report recounts.

The ALMA-UA&P-CRC study illustrates the multiplier effect in human terms. A seafarer's remittance buys rice at a local store. The store restocks, the delivery rider earns a fare, the bakery buys flour, and farmers, truckers and mill workers all benefit. In this way, every peso sent home becomes three pesos in the economy. The industry's impact is not abstract—it is lived daily by millions of Filipino families.

Yet the study warns of vulnerabilities. Shipowners are highly sensitive to regulatory unpredictability. If policies become arbitrary, penalties blanket, or

reforms undermined, shipowners may quietly move contracts elsewhere. The potential losses are staggering: ₱1.06 trillion in economic activity, ₱150.1 billion in household income, 398,839 jobs, and 4% of GDP. In global shipping, it says, "when confidence breaks—ships leave."

Building Stability Through Policy

To safeguard this industry, the study recommends predictable, rules-based regulation. Among its proposals are:

- A tiered penalty and enforcement matrix that distinguishes between minor and severe violations.
- A voluntary "Blue Check" or verified badge certification for compliant manning agencies, replacing blanket suspensions with targeted accountability.
- Defense of key Magna Carta reforms, including anti-ambulance chasing provisions and EMSA compliance which protect credibility and jobs.
- Transparent digital tax administration to ensure fairness and investor confidence.
- A modernized arbitration system that delivers fast, fair and credible dispute resolution.

It says, these measures are not about protecting companies—they are about protecting Filipino jobs and families.

The study also envisions a reintegration plan that keeps high-income maritime careers within the Philippines. "Instead of retraining retired seafarers into unfamiliar industries," the research suggests, the country can build ship management, crew management, technical services, advanced training centers, maritime cybersecurity and environmental services domestically. With stability and trust, shipowners will invest, and Filipino seafarers can anchor a world-class maritime services industry on home soil.

Why Filipinos Remain the World's Choice

Shipowners continue to choose Filipinos for reasons beyond economics: maritime culture, strong English proficiency, discipline, loyalty and global trust built over decades. These qualities make Filipino crews indispensable to international shipping. As the study poignantly notes,

> **"Every Filipino at sea means a Filipino family on land has hope."**

The Philippine manning service industry is more than a labor export sector—it is a cornerstone of national development. It explains, its ₱1.06 trillion total impact demonstrates that protecting seafarers and ensuring regulatory stability "is not just about safeguarding contracts; it is about safeguarding families, communities and 4% of the entire economy."

As the study concludes, "the Filipino seafarer does not ask for subsidies—only that shipowners can keep choosing the Philippines." To honor that trust, government, industry, and unions must work together to preserve confidence, strengthen institutions and build the maritime services of the future. In doing so, we protect not just jobs at sea, but the very heartbeat of the nation.

Forged in fire

By: **Andy Dalisay**
Photos courtesy of: **Fidel Maniego**

When Fidel Maniego was roused from deep sleep by frantic engineers calling for help, he was still a trainee cadet onboard an LPG tanker. The crankcase of the main engine had failed—oil gushed out, and a spill ensued. That night left an impression far deeper than exhaustion or panic.

> **"I learned my lesson well,"**

Fidel reflects. "Since then, I used to make sure that I would report any abnormality… I learned my lesson well from that experience."

Today, as a seasoned Motorman aboard gas carriers, Fidel draws on that formative moment to remain vigilant, knowing how thin the line can be between normalcy and disaster.

Mechanical failures are part of maritime life, but for Fidel, they are not abstract technicalities—they're lived realities. He recounts a fire incident that broke out when a loose electrical connection in the incinerator motor led to an explosion. "Luckily, our Second Engineer fixed it quickly," he says, grateful for a narrow escape. These moments define his career not just by skill but by resilience and readiness.

Working in the engine room is not without its physical toll. "Compared to our counterparts in the deck department… our working space is too hot," Fidel shares. Temperatures sometimes reach 40 to 45 degrees Celsius, adding environmental hardship to the weight of duty. Each morning, he reports to the Second Engineer and checks engine parameters, motors, oil levels and the diesel tanks. The stakes are high; the space is unforgiving.

Image: **Fidel Maniego**

Fidel's journey is anchored in a quiet but steadfast devotion to family. With two children aged 19 and 15, his motivation to sail stems not just from financial necessity but from a deeper hope—to secure a future of dignity and comfort for those he loves most.

> **"I go to sea to support my family and to retire early when I save up enough,"** he shares.

Every decision—from enduring sweltering engine rooms to investing in his own training—reflects a father's calculated sacrifice. Even when ashore, his priorities remain firm: family time comes first, followed by training renewals when the opportunity arises. "If my company upgrades my trainings and they have a free offer, why not? I will do," he says with the quiet conviction of someone who views professional growth as a form of providing care. His dream isn't tied to rank but to creating a life where he can step away from the sea by age 45, ensuring his family has enough—and that he can finally rest.

Long voyages demand more than technical competence—they test emotional endurance. "We have stress bouts sometimes," Fidel admits, but he finds relief through gaming, physical exercise and camaraderie with colleagues. These simple routines keep him grounded in a world where unpredictability is the norm.

One innovation Fidel particularly appreciates is the engine simulator—an essential tool in today's digitalized maritime landscape. These virtual environments go far beyond convenience; they offer a crucial bridge between classroom theory and the often-intense manual realities onboard. A graduate of BS in Marine Engineering at the Philippine Maritime Institute, the motorman obtained his cadet/trainee experience in a sequence of two tankers: first onboard the 105,221 DWT Ashada followed by the 114,218 DWT Caspian Sea, in periods of nine and six months respectively.

Image: **Fidel Maniego**

He had apparently exceeded his apprenticeship on the two ships overseas for the required year-long stint. "Mabuti na din at hindi ako pinag-utility sa lupa or opisina tulad ng ibang kadete na umaabot ng dalawang taon bago nakasakay." (I think it's better that I didn't work as an office 'utility boy' like the other cadets who waited up to two years to get onboard.)

However, Fidel spent one of his hardest tests from his training stint. "Unang sabak ko nga agad—tangke ng sludge pinapala kasama ng mga estibidor ng puerto. One week akong mangiyak-ngiyak at gusto ng umuwi. Pero sabi ko sa sarili ko na matatapos din ito at kelangan matuto sa kurso ko," he narrated. (One of my first experiences was shoveling a sludge-laden tank being together with the port stevedores. I was teary-eyed for almost a week as if I wanted to go home. But I told myself that I could finish this and learn my course.)

He knew he learned a lot. "Before, everything was manual," Fidel continues, referring to training such as the simulator. "Now you can easily perform on land and apply it onboard." He values how simulators map out the machine's structure and flow, helping trainees mentally rehearse real-world procedures before entering high-stakes scenarios.

> **"Yes, you'll learn by simulator, but in reality, you'll have to perform it by hand. Still, it helps track and trigger the sequence of mechanisms—and that's very useful."**

Despite financial hurdles, Fidel is steadfast in his belief in lifelong learning. He sees training not as a requirement but as an investment.

> **"Ships differ in ages and operating systems… there is a need to adapt to new technology nowadays,"**

he says. Even while on vacation, he doesn't shy away from attending refreshers or upgrades—especially if offered free by the shipping company.

Fidel's motivation for going to sea was simple: to support his family, save for the future and retire early. "Even if I will not become an engine officer, as long as I've saved, I can be retired in comfort," he says. With training costs reaching $100 to $200 per certification, career advancement presents a daunting financial reality. Yet Fidel remains pragmatic. "If you have a family, it's very difficult to manage the career," he confides. Still, he continues to stay the course, prioritizing what matters most.

Off contract, Fidel spends time with his family, attends training renewals and enjoys basketball and jogging. He finds solace in these simple joys, knowing full well how fleeting peace can be in a seafaring profession. "Now I'm 40," he shares. "I plan to stop at 45… Work onboard ship is very hard. That is a reality."

Though encouraged to envision himself as a future First or Second Engineer, Fidel remains humble: "Nobody knows what will happen tomorrow… We need to spend time for whatever we want to achieve and be grateful to our Lord."

Though Fidel's experience isn't one of glamour or rank, he considers it a story of grit, growth and guarded optimism—etched by heat, pressure and the quiet hope of a well-earned retirement.

From deck to garden: The steady compass of a ship captain

By: **Andy Dalisay**.
Photos courtesy of: **Robinson Batan**

Image: **Robinson Batan**

Even in retirement, Captain Robinson Batan's days unfold with the precision of a ship's logbook. Where once he paced steel decks and issued job orders to his crew, he now tends to his ornamental and vegetable gardens, repairs household fixtures and manages his vacant lots with the same methodical resolve. "I see to it that every day, like onboard, I accomplish something," he says. The cadence of his life remains anchored in purpose—only now, the backdrop is a quiet home rather than the vast, unpredictable sea.

Captain Batan's transition from shipmaster to home steward is not a tale of slowing down, but of recalibration. Gone are the 24/7 duties and the pressure of command, replaced by a self-imposed discipline that mirrors his decades at sea. "There's no pressure, no time limit," he reflects. "Anytime you think you want to rest, you can rest." Yet rest is rarely his default. Rain may halt his gardening, but it simply redirects him indoors, where tasks await and idleness is never entertained. His ethos remains unchanged: adapt, act and stay engaged.

Though his days are now land-bound, Captain Batan's heart still sails. After 44 years at sea, the ocean is etched into his identity. He speaks of his career with reverence and warmth, recalling the thrill of visiting over 60 countries, the camaraderie of shipboard life and the pride of rising through the ranks from Ordinary Seaman to Master Mariner. "I terribly miss my job at sea," he admits. "Also, the fun, challenges and experiences in visiting different countries around the globe."

His journey was anything but linear. Not a sponsored cadet by any shipping company, Captain Batan began at the bottom, slowly climbing the ladder through grit and perseverance. He faced setbacks—being bypassed for promotion despite promises—but never let disappointment steer him off course. "Maybe my time has not yet arrived," he told himself. And eventually, it did. He spent just 14 months as Chief Officer before being promoted to Captain, a proof of his competence and the industry's urgent need for capable leaders.

Among his most memorable assignments was aboard the Stolt Sakura, where he became its first shipmaster. He fetched the 12,817 dwt chem/oil products tanker from Japan's Usuki Shipyard, where he remained for two months preparing for the newbuild's delivery. His Sakura's helm's takeover

takeover began an engagement that lasted to about four years as the ship's permanent Master. "Almost every month we had a great party," he recalls. "We even fabricated a portable swimming pool using scaffolding and canvas, filled with seawater." The ship frequently called at Manila, allowing crew families to visit onboard—a rare and cherished experience. "Imagine 24 crew members, each with his own wife aboard. The steward had to feed them every day!" he laughs. "It was more than like a whole ship."

Captain Batan's leadership extended beyond logistics and navigation. He fostered morale, built trust and created spaces where crew members felt valued. His anecdotes reveal a man who led with integrity, even when pressured to compromise. He recounts a moment early in his command when a superintendent suggested dumping sludge overboard—an illegal act. Captain Batan stood firm. "I told him to send me a black and white copy of his instructions. He didn't push me after that." His quiet defiance was not just about legality—it was about principle.

Throughout his career, Captain Batan balanced duty with dignity. He sent his children to reputable private schools, built a comfortable life for his family and maintained strong ties with colleagues. Even now, he regularly meets with a circle of five fellow captains along with some friends from the USA, all former STOLT crew, sharing stories and camaraderie. "We

maintain good communication," he says. "When they come home to the Philippines, we also meet."

His reflections are tinged with humility and wisdom. He once aspired to be an airline pilot, but financial constraints led him instead to Iloilo Maritime Academy (now JB Lacson Foundation Maritime University). "Schooling was short, job-offered a competitive salary and the chance to go to different places," he explains. That pragmatic choice blossomed into a lifelong vocation. He commanded 42 ships—all chemical tankers, served as OS to Chief Officer on 22 other vessels and weathered crises—from collisions in the English Channel to mechanical failures in the Atlantic Ocean. Each challenge became a lesson, each voyage a chapter in his evolving story.

Captain Batan also witnessed the shifting tides of maritime regulation. He recalls spending entire vacations on training and certification, a burden that shaped his off-duty life.

"No training, no certificate, no dispatch," he says of the past. Today's refresher courses are shorter, but the pressure remains. He completed the IMO 6.09 Instructor Training Course, hoping to teach post-retirement, but company policies delayed that goal. "They don't allow part-time jobs," he explains. "So I said, okay, I'll do that upon retirement."

Now officially retired as of July 2024, Captain Batan is contemplating his next chapter. Teaching remains on the horizon, though he's mindful of perceptions. "Sometimes I'm ashamed to train at my age," he confesses. "People might think I haven't saved enough." Yet his financial stability is clear, and his desire to share knowledge is rooted in generosity, not necessity.

> **"I'm happy that I shared both my theoretical and work-related experiences to the young generation."**

His legacy is not just in the ships he commanded or the ports and cities he visited—it's in the values he upheld.

> **"Never give up, always think positive and never waste an opportunity,"** he says.

These words guided him through setbacks, shaped his leadership and now inform his retirement. Whether tending to his garden or mentoring future mariners, Captain Batan remains a steady compass—grounded, purposeful and quietly inspiring.

As the maritime industry evolves with automation and modern technologies, Captain believes Filipino seafarers will continue to be prioritized by the shipowners. He sees improvements in working conditions and benefits, and hopes crewmen's rights such as the shore-leave—once restricted post-9/11 and during the pandemic—will be fully restored. "It's part of the IMO Convention that we should grant the crew their liberty," he reminds.

In the end, Captain Robin Batan's story is not just about a career—it's about character. It's about the quiet strength of a man who rose from humble beginnings, led with integrity and now cultivates his home with the same care he once gave to his ship. His days may no longer be logged in nautical miles, but they are still measured in purpose, resilience and heart.

Image: ***Robinson Batan***

Sailing safe to retirement

By: **Cynthia T. Cariaga**
Photo courtesy of: **Manolito Trani Gayrama**

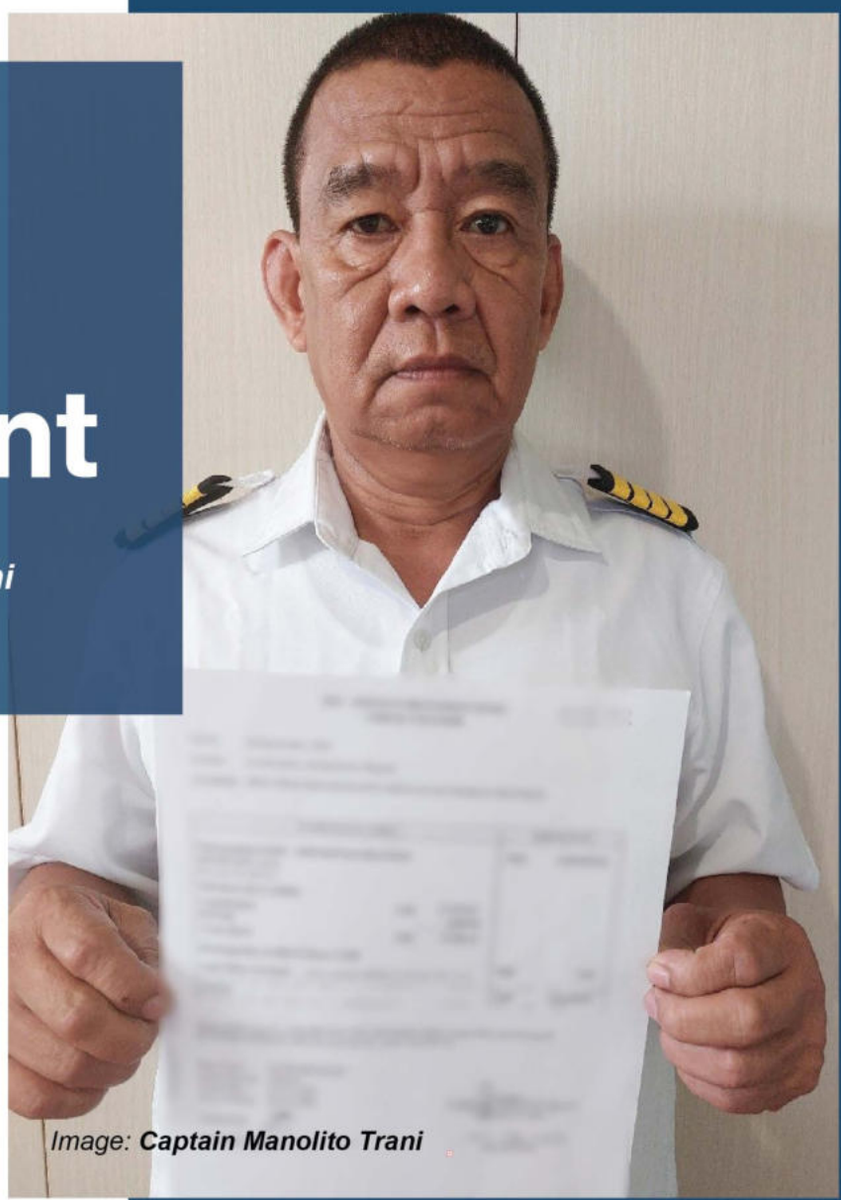


Image: **Captain Manolito Trani**

"Captain Gayrama's retirement life starts with a PhP1,200,000.00 claim from the AMOSUP All Japan Seamen's Union (AJSU) Provident Fund Office.

New Filipino Maritime Agencies Inc.'s Captain Manolito Trani Gayrama was pleasantly surprised to discover that his AJSU Provident Fund savings, which he had never touched, amounted to more than PhP1,200,000.00, including the approximately PhP300,000.00 interests/earnings.

Captain Gayrama began contributing to the Fund in 1996. Now 62 years old and ready for retirement, and with both children having completed their studies, he and his wife plan to enjoy their retirement together.

He also said that he plans to use this money for their daily expenses and help his youngest son start his career journey as an Aircraft Maintenance graduate.

Impressed by his savings, Captain Gayrama advises fellow seafarers to continue saving with the Provident Fund, emphasizing the exceptional potential of their earnings.

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CARRYING THE TORCH:
Estelle Ople-Osorio continues the legacy of service to Overseas Filipino Workers

By: **Camille Simbulan** Photos courtesy of: **Blas Ople Policy Center FB Page**

Carrying the name of the prominent Ople family, known for being staunch advocates of Filipino workers since the 1960s, means carrying the history and legacy that greatly shaped the Philippine labor landscape.

That legacy now rests upon the shoulders of Estelle Ople-Osorio— the only daughter of former Migrant Workers Secretary Susan *"Toots"* Ople, and grand daughter of the late Labor and Employment Secretary Blas *"Ka Blas"* Ople, who also served as a Philippine Senator and Secretary of Foreign Affairs during his time.

Estelle's grandfather was hailed as the "Father of the Philippine Labor Code," for crafting the Labor Code in 1974, while her mother was widely regarded as the "*Ilaw ng Tahanan ng Overseas Filipino Workers* (Light of the home of OFWs)," having been appointed as the first secretary of the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), and having served as a guiding light for thousands of OFWs, especially those facing extraordinary challenges abroad.

Image: **Estelle Ople-Osorio**

In 2004, Sec. Toots founded the Blas F. Ople Policy Center and Training Institute, a non-government organization that assists distressed OFWs.

"*Para kong kapatid ang Ople Center* (the center is like my sibling), growing up, it has always been my mom's passion. So it has always been me and Ople Center," Estelle fondly recalled.

Eventually, Estelle chose a different path and explored the corporate world after college. But while she was thriving in her corporate career as a business manager at a multinational company, Estelle quickly stepped up and took the reins of the Ople Center when her mother died in 2023. "It was not easy," she admitted, but she said she was determined to continue her mother's lifelong legacy, so she pressed on.

"The Ople Center was on the verge of closing last year. Because we are a non-profit organization and the grants had dried up, we ran out of money last February 2025. At that time, I was telling my mom

in heaven that I had to figure out how to make it work," she humbly shared.

"For about two months, I personally paid for the center's overhead expenses using my own savings. But I told my mom in heaven in a prayer, *sabi ko* (I said) I'm not sure how long I can continue doing this."

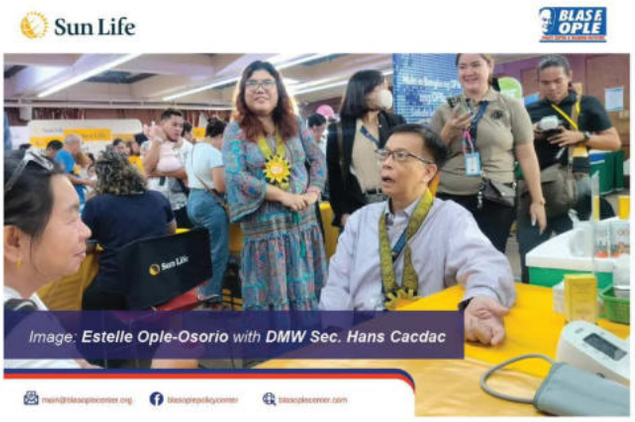
As fate would have it, the millennial Ople crossed paths with AMOSUP's President, Dr. Conrado Oca at an event, who offered the union's multi-purpose venues in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao for them to conduct their activities for OFWs. Several companies and agencies also came in and committed to support their organization financially. **"I told Doc Oca with gratitude and with humility, the Ople Center would not have survived 2025 without the help of AMOSUP.** I was ready to say that 'that was a good 20 years, unfortunately we will not be able to continue anymore,' but because of that… we were able to continue helping distressed OFWs, and then we were also able to bring government services to AMOSUP offices outside Metro Manila. (Through our caravan), the DMW was able to provide financial assistance and support checks to distressed workers as well. **All of these became possible because Doc Oca extended his help to us,"** she remarked.

Image: AMOSUP President **Dr. Conrado F. Oca** with **Estel Ople-Osorio**

Dr. Oca expressed his appreciation to the Ople Center for its contribution to uplifting the lives of OFWs. He said Estelle's story is heartwarming, and that **"AMOSUP supports their cause because migrant workers, including Filipino seafarers, are the heart of our society, and we should work together in safeguarding their rights and welfare,"** he said.

Estelle lauded AMOSUP and Dr. Oca for the union's services across the country. "In every place I have gone to, the level of service and care that you provide to seafarers, as I say publicly with or without Doc Oca there… I mention that **AMOSUP should be the gold standard by how we treat our migrant workers,** (it should be the) role model… How wonderful would it be if other stakeholders also follow," she said.

As the new president of the Ople Center, Estelle is committed to proactively continuing and further strengthening the initiatives established by her mother for OFWs. According to her, the network Sec. Toots has built through her decades-long public service, significantly help her to reach and help OFWs. **Estelle hopes to continue honoring her late mother through carrying onward the Ople brand of commitment and compassion for overseas Filipino workers.**



Filipina captain wins Seafarer of the Year Award 2025

Photos courtesy of: ***Zulaika Florin***

A Filipina ship captain bested four other seafarers around the world as Seatrade named her "Seafarer of the Year" in the recently concluded 2025 Crew Connect Global Awards.

Zulaika Florin is a master mariner who works at OSM Thome under Hafnia, the world's largest tanker company.

She was among the five seafarers from across the world who were shortlisted in the Seafarer of the Year Award, a category for the 2025 Crew Connect Global Awards that honors individual seafarers who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication, and contributions to the maritime community.

"Sailing on a tanker ship carrying chemicals is very rare and I want to excel on it. I did not expect that I would be a Captain — but I did!" Florin said on a separate interview.

> "It's not easy for a woman like me, I'm like an elephant passing in a needle's hole. I need to prove and show what I got and what I can bring to the table. Patience, faith, and my family's support keep me going,"

she added.

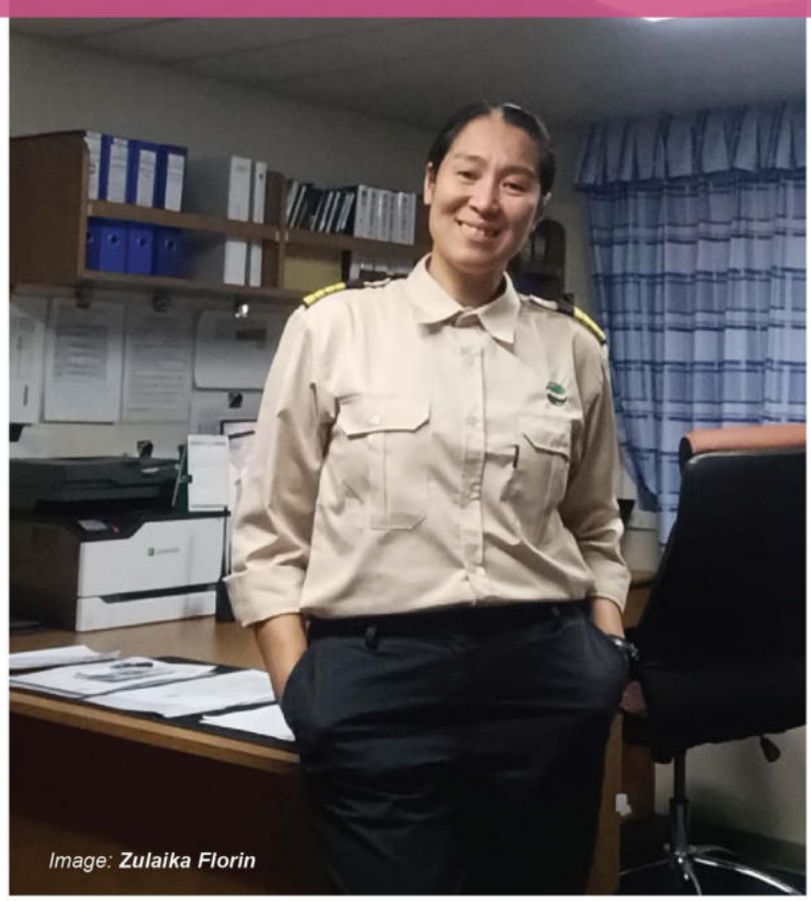


Image: ***Zulaika Florin***

OSM Thome stated on one of its social media posts that Florin "continues to break boundaries in the maritime world with her grit, grace, and unwavering leadership. From upholding respect and fairness onboard to making difficult calls in moments of crisis, she leads with conviction and compassion."

Supported by Hafnia and OSM Thome, Florin's rise reflects the value of disciplined training, strong mentorship, and consistent performance standards across the maritime industry.

Alongside Florin's recognition, seven other maritime professionals and organizations were honored at the Seatrade Maritime Crew Connect Global Awards held on 12 November.

These awards highlight innovation, leadership, and efforts to improve crew welfare, safety, and professional development across the industry.

Photo by: **3CL Silao, Israfil**

Marching Forward:
MAAP Holds Ceremonial Rites for VALHAREANS Class of 2025

By: **3CL Dalojo, Kurt Myko** Photos courtesy of: **Kamaya Point**

MARIVELES, BATAAN — The Class of 2025, named Valiant Altruists to Linger the Hushed and Restless Oceans (VALHAREANS), marked its final milestone as 177 graduates were formally commissioned as Naval Reservists with the rank of Ensign during a solemn and momentous ceremony held on December 5, 2025, at the New Parade Grounds of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP).

Photo by: **2CL Janeo, Aaron Jude**

Capt. Kiyotaka Aya
Chairman
International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ)

The event was graced by Capt. Kiyotaka Aya, Chairman of the International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ), who served as the Guest of Honor. In his address, Capt. Aya extended his heartfelt congratulations to the graduates, commending their perseverance, discipline, and unwavering commitment to both maritime service and national duty. He emphasized the vital role of future maritime leaders in shaping a safer and more progressive global maritime industry.

Among the graduates, Ens. Ian Caroc and Ens. Juralbie Aldwin Sediaco were recognized as Cum Laude for their exemplary academic performance and dedication. Ens. Lorenzo Raniel Concepcion was awarded the Leadership Saber for his outstanding role as the Fleet Commander.

The ceremony also highlighted the achievements of several distinguished awardees who excelled in their respective fields, including Ens. Kim Rasyl Cambiado for the Marine Engineering Award, Ens. John Carlo Abenojar for the Marine Transportation Award, Ens. Tristan Lei Calayo for the Math and Science Award, Ens. Romalee Canilang for the NROTC Award, and Ens. Maicy Ian Ebreo for the Conduct Award.

In addition to the major honors, Special Achievement Awards were also presented to the graduates who demonstrated exceptional performance in specialized fields, including Engine Watchkeeping 2 awardees— Ens. Venetia Beatrice Arellano, Ens. Ralph Jullian Besas, Ens. Kiara Mae Casaberde, Ens. Christian Paul Padua, and Ens. Joshua Kim Tambong.

Meanwhile, achievements in Robotics are awarded to Ens. Laurence Avila, Ens. Matthew Reme Castro, Ens. Chris Audi Cayaba, and Ens. Alvin Robin Dela Cruz for their outstanding performance for the course.

Capt. Aya praised the awardees and the entire graduating class for upholding the values of honor, discipline, competence, and service, expressing confidence that these new ensigns will carry as they step into their roles in the maritime profession and the Naval Reserve Force.

Furthermore, beyond academic excellence, the ceremony reflects the enduring spirit of service ingrained in every graduate as the celebration underscored their readiness to take on greater responsibilities in the global maritime sectors.

As the 177 new Ensigns embark on their new journey, the MAAP community proudly wishes them success on their future endeavors as professionals.


Photo by: **2CL Janeo, Aaron Jude**


Photo by: **4CL Hebrona, Sophia Beatrice**


Photo by: **4CL Hebrona, Sophia Beatrice**

Espiritu named as one of Ten Outstanding Maritime Students of the Philippines; three more hailed as Top 20 finalists

By: **4CL Endaya, Kimberly** Photos courtesy of: **2CL Janeo, Aaron Jude**

QUEZON CITY, Philippines — Midn 1CL John Emmanuel V. Espiritu of the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) - CGSO Campus earned a spot at the Ten Outstanding Maritime Students of the Philippines (TOMSP) marking excellence at the program's revival.

The TOMSP Luncheon and Awarding Ceremonies, held at the ALU-APSU-ITF Building in Quezon City on September 28, 2025, gathered maritime leaders, and government representatives, honoring maritime cadets selected from 55 national nominees for academic performance, leadership potential, and impact to society with only 20 finalists.

Other MAAP cadets who earned their place among the Top 20 finalists include 1CL Septian A. Gatto and 2CL Churchly Keith T. Balatian of the IMMAJ campus, as well as 2CL Michaela Grace T. Marimon of the CGSO campus who was recognized for Best Introductory Video, receiving ₱5,000 from the TOMSP Alumni Sponsors in recognition of her creativity and passion for the maritime field.

From the initial pool of 55 nominees nationwide, 20 finalists were rigorously selected, assessing their academic performance, leadership potential, and impact to society.

Midn 1CL John Emmanuel V. Espiritu

When asked what helped 1CL Espiritu stand out in the selection, he shared,

> **"Humility, determination, and faith.**
>
> **My father taught me to stay humble—achievements should inspire, not be bragged about. Determination reminded me of the sacrifices behind every milestone, and faith in God kept me grounded, knowing everything happens according to His plan."**

"It felt like more than a personal win—it was a collective one. The 20 finalists, my family, friends, and everyone who supported me are all part of this achievement. This recognition drives me to inspire and guide other cadets toward their own versions of success," 1CL Espiritu furthered, reflecting on his milestone.

1CL Espiritu also credited MAAP's formative training for shaping his character: "I internalized the Seven Points of a Midshipman—self-discipline, initiative, time management, stability under pressure, ability to react quickly with good judgment, exemplary appearance and good bearing, and leadership which were taught to us since we were Fourthclassmen. These values guide us not just as cadets, but in every aspect of life."

The finalists were conferred a Plaque of Recognition and ₱3,000 in courtesy of FastCat, alongside various awards and training opportunities such as review package from Cebu Gems, Third Officer Familiarization Course Package from STI Maritime Training Academy, two courses of their choice with complimentary use of dormitory facilities from the National Maritime Polytechnic (NMP), and merchandise from The Hood Platform which served as the event's Platinum Sponsor.

Moreover, MAAP is recognized as a legacy school which is among the institutions that have consistently produced five or more TOMSP awardees over the past decade, reflecting its fervent participation and determination of midshipmen and midshipwomen towards excellence.

The 2025 revival of the body was convened by the TOMSP Alumni Community and the Philippine Association of Maritime Institutions (PAMI), in partnership with the Associated Philippine Seafarers' Union (APSU) and Internship Navigation Training Center (ISNTC). It was further supported by key government and industry institutions, including the Department of Migrant Workers (DMW), the Maritime Industry Authority (MARINA), and the Filipino Association for Mariners' Employment, Inc. (FAME).

Distinguished maritime industry leaders, including Atty. Jerome Pampolina (DMW), Mr. Samuel Batalla (MARINA-STCW Office), Mr. Sabino Czar Cloma Manglicmot II (PAMI), and other esteemed guests delivered messages of inspiration and support for the shared commitment of government, academia, and industry into shaping the new generation of globally competitive maritime professionals.

The TOMSP is a prestigious national recognition program that honors exemplary maritime cadets since its inception in 2011. It has served as a platform for inspiring young mariners to pursue excellence both at sea and onshore.

AMOSUP at 65: A Nationwide Celebration Anchored in Strength and Unity

By: ***Lara San Juan***
Photos courtesy of: ***AMOSUP provincial branches***

United as one AMOSUP family, the Associated Marine Officer's and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) marked its 65th founding anniversary, honoring the Filipino seafarers whose dedication has strengthened the Union for more than six decades.

While the main program was held at the World Trade Center in Pasay City, the event was live streamed to AMOSUP provincial branches, allowing Seamen's Hospital Cebu, Gig Oca Robles Seamen's Hospital Davao, Seamen's Hospital Iloilo, and the AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility to take part in the milestone occasion.

Guided by the theme "Anchored in Strength, Sailing into the Future," each branch also hosted its own dinner and fellowship activities along with AMOSUP members, their dependents and AMOSUP staff, creating a festive and meaningful celebration.

As Mr. Vircelito Mendiola, Bosun and AMOSUP member, shared:

"Daghang salamat, AMOSUP, sa oportunidad nga inyong gihatag kanamong mga miyembro." ("Thank you very much, AMOSUP, for the opportunity you have given to us, as your members.")

Jenny Asis, AMOSUP Cebu staff, proudly shared her dedication to serving seafarers:

"Mapasigarbuhon kami isip mga empleyado sa AMOSUP nga makaserbisyo ug matinud-anon sa mga miyembro ug sa ilang mga pamilya, ilabi na dinhi sa Cebu ug sa mga dool nga lugar." ("As employees of AMOSUP, we take pride in serving our members and their families with integrity and dedication, particularly here in Cebu and the neighboring towns.")

Iloilo seafarers also shared their gratitude for AMOSUP's helpful and supportive services:

"Congratulations AMOSUP for 65 years for helping and caring for seafarers. I would like to mention also Sailor's Home Manila; it's a great help for us seafarers residing in the province. The staff are very approachable and friendly."

"AMOSUP is already a part of our lives. From the birth

of our eldest child up to the youngest."

"Congrats AMOSUP on your 65th year! Bilang miyembro po ng AMOSUP ng 16 yrs. Malaki po ang naitulong niyo sa akin at aking pamilya. Maraming Salamat. God bless us all." (Congratulations AMOSUP on your 65th year! As a member of AMOSUP for 16 years, you have helped me and my family greatly. Thank you very much. God bless us all.)

-Reece G. Jomillo, AMOSUP member

Celebratory messages also came from AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility (ABEF):

"Congratulations, AMOSUP! My family is blessed by your entire service. Always grateful for everything. God Bless. Love, Bacong Family"

"Happy 65th, AMOSUP!!! More power and blessings. Congratulations!"

-Dr. Shearwin Soyao, Visiting Consultant (ABEF Ophthalmologist)

These stories remind us that AMOSUP is a family, always caring for seafarers and their family. Together, we celebrate every achievement, overcome every challenge, and sail forward with hope and determination. Because WE ARE AMOSUP! #IkawAkoTayoAyAMOSUP!

Giving Back: Moving Forward Initiatives by AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility

By: ***Riva Jan C. Caduhada***
Photos courtesy of: ***AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility***

Educational materials that were distributed to grade school students

On June 5, 2025, AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility organized a back-to-school initiative for the Bacolod City young learners in advance celebration of AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado Oca's birthday. With a belief that every child deserves access to quality education, we reached out to several orphanages in the area with an aim of giving back to children through school supplies distribution.

Basic educational supplies were carefully prepared, each kit served as a token of love and support, inspiring kids to dream big and pursue their education with grit and optimism. These educational school supplies were distributed to a total of 35 students in different orphanages. As we distribute the school supplies to every child, we have witnessed the joy in the faces of the children who have received them. The gratefulness and joy seen in the face of every child achieves this initiative's goal to give back to the young learners and show to them that they are seen and supported.

Through the donations of members, dependents, and the collective effort of the employees of AMOSUP Bacolod, the event was successfully materialized. This project would not have been made possible without the kind donations and dedication of the members, dependents, and AMOSUP employees.

As we move forward and as the new school year begins, we are steadfast in our commitment to help educational programs and improve the lives of underprivileged children. One supply at a time, we can all work together to provide these young minds a better future.

Dr. Reyes together with the AMOSUP Bacolod nurses and the visiting resident urologists

Honoring Fatherhood and Celebrating Prostate Health Awareness in June

By: ***Riva Jan C. Caduhada***
Photos courtsey of: ***AMOSUP Bacolod Extension Facility***

In addition to school supplies distribution, AMOSUP Bacolod organized a prostate health awareness initiative with the active participation of members, dependents, and employees. This activity was held last June 28, 2025 in time for Prostate Health Awareness Month and a special late celebration of Father's Day.

AMOSUP Bacolod's Medical Director, Dr. Romeo Reyes, a urologist, and the outpatient department spearheaded this initiative, together with the help of visiting resident urologists. This initiative includes prostate cancer screening and men's health awareness program.

Urologists conducted a health education on men's prostate diseases and sexual wellness, providing informative remarks on the significance of risk factors, early detection, and prevention.

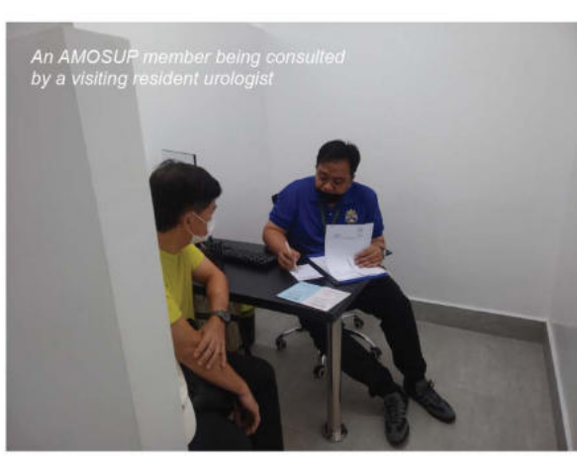
After the health education, participants had a consultation and digital rectal exam screening to promote early detection especially on men aged 40 years old and above.

The campaign to raise awareness about prostate health is a first step towards more educational outreach. AMOSUP Bacolod is dedicated to advancing the discussion around men's health and offering tools for continuing support and screenings.

We urge all men to put their health first as we wrap up this campaign—not just in June, but throughout the year. In the end, a lifetime of excellent health is the best gift we can give to ourselves and the people we care about.

AMOSUP Bacolod exhibits its collective identity as a proactive and purpose-driven primary care facility that represents health, education, and sincere service to others through these significant efforts.

Health education by the visiting resident urologist

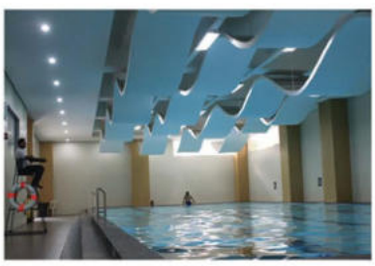


An AMOSUP member being consulted by a visiting resident urologist

JSU - AMOSUP

MARITIME MUSEUM & SPORTS COMPLEX

SPORTS COMPLEX



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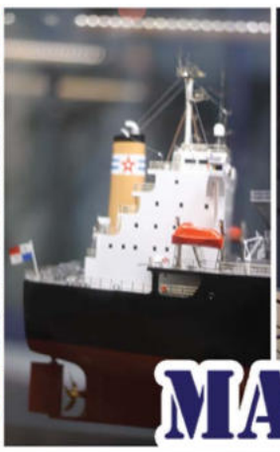

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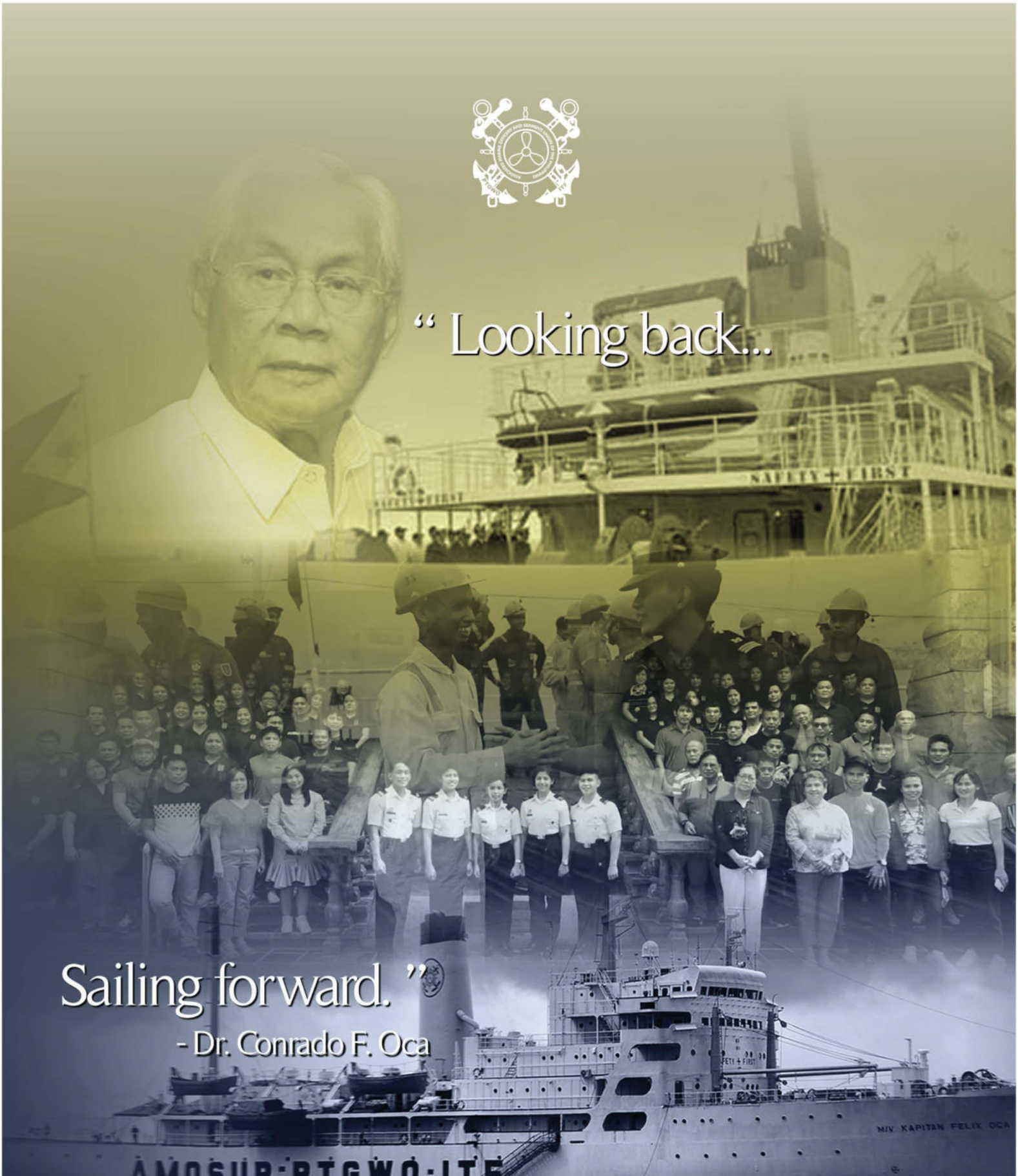

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