

Written by Yella Dimes Rico

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The Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) held the Commissioning Ceremony of its newest training ship, the M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca on 31 January, 2019, at 1500H, at Pier 15, of the South Harbor, Manila. The M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca is envisioned to provide the best learning platform for maritime scholars studying at the MAAP IMMAJ Campus. The training ship is a proud product of industrial cooperation and partnership among the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP), the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU), the International Mariners Management Association of Japan (IMMAJ), and the Philippine-Japan Manning Consultative Council, Inc. (PJMCC). Named after MAAP's founder and the Father of Filipino Seafarers, the ship is truly a fitting tribute to the legacy of the late Captain Gregorio S. Oca.

MAAP President, VAdm. Eduardo Ma. R. Santos gave the welcome remarks and explained the reason why the gathering was held. After time honored traditions like the Keel Laying Ceremony which was held on April 10, 2018, the Christening held on August 8, 2018 and launching which was held on August 9, 2018, the vessel was delivered on December 25, 2018 and formally turned over to the 4-party group comprised of IMMAJ, JSU, AMOSUP and PJMCC

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on January 17, 2019. The tradition culminates with the Commissioning Ceremony in order to help welcome the ship into the fleet. “We are officially accepting the ship and will soon use it as another learning platform for our cadets,” declares VAdm. Santos. “We witness the commissioning as a Philippine flag, dedicated training ship. We hope we will achieve the noble purpose of the ship for which it was built and donated and that is to maintain and surpass the standards of development and capability of Filipino seafarers.”

IMMAJ Chairman Capt. Koichi Akamine is very hopeful of what the new training ship, M/V Kapitán Gregorio Oca will offer to the Japanese economy. “About 90% the Japanese merchant wing is under FOC and about 75% of seafarers onboard such vessels are Filipinos. We are truly grateful for the commitment and hard work of the Filipino seafarers. Being a small island country without many natural resources Japan depends on trade for its economy and is able to rise. Over 99% of our trade volume is transported by ship. So safe navigation by ship is crucial in sustaining the Japanese economy and lives.”

JSU President Mr. Yasumi Morita welcomes the cooperation between Japan and the Philippines, “I am convinced that many excellent Filipino seafarers will be generated thru M/V Kapitán Gregorio Oca and they will be onboard the Japanese merchant fleet. So far AMOSUP and JSU have been working on various projects mainly for the welfare benefit of the Filipino seafarers onboard the Japanese merchant fleet based on the understanding of the social partners. These projects are in line with the ideal policy and we will continue to promote the thing positively. Now we are enhancing the alliance between the vessel ownership countries and the seafarer supply countries at ITF; and I do expect certain alliances will be further strengthened and promoted as a result of this model after the relation between Japan and the Philippines. “

PJMCC President Eduardo U. Manese is very happy because the new training ship will greatly improve the competence of the Filipino seafarers. “The M/V Kapitán Gregorio Oca, a new and modern training ship would be a very big help for us. To us in the industry we can assure you that we will do our job. As we all said, we always send qualified and competent crew and we will do our best to do that.” He is also grateful to all who made this project possible, “To those who made this come true, my congratulations and thank you.”

AMOSUP President Dr. Conrado F. Oca believes in the capabilities of the Filipino seafarer and that they should be supported to bring out the best in them, “We have always believed in the potential, perseverance and passion of aspiring Filipino seafarers; but we also believe that in order to bring out the best in them, it takes comprehensive training, coupled with discipline and hard work. And from what we have heard earlier, it is clear that we are one with many in our

commitment to provide excellent maritime education to our students by equipping them with knowledge, technical skills and the necessary tools and opportunities to better hone their capabilities. “

Dr Oca is optimistic that the training ship shall contribute to their mission, “Now here we are and we see M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca in her full glory and beauty. The ceremony today highlights our goal to provide another venue for our students to enhance the quality of their shipboard training. And now we are about to witness the M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca contribute to our mission to produce globally competitive Filipino seafarers and to remain as the leading provider of highly skilled and hardworking officers, seafarers and women. I am honored to share this very important day with you all. The M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca will become an avenue for learning, experience in advancement, among our young aspiring seafarers before they set out sail forward and take on the world.”

Dr Oca then introduced the Guest of Honor, Cabinet Secretary of the Philippines, Honorable Karlo Alexei B. Nograles who shared that MAAP’s commitment to excellence is parallel to the government’s vision. “M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca is not just a modern training ship; it is a symbol of MAAP’s commitment to pursue the highest level of excellence in maritime training and education. It also represents our government’s resolve to promote the highest standards of safety and professionalism in the maritime industry. In the end it is the Filipino seafarer who shall benefit from our investments in shipping technologies and infrastructure. Equipped and empowered our sailors can venture further out into the world’s vast seas conquering new territories and continue to excel amongst seafarers of the world.”

In closing, the Cabinet Secretary reaffirms the excellence Filipino seafarers are known for. “What the MAAP and AMOSUP is bequeathing our seafarers is as invaluable and precious as M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca. You are validating what the world’s top shipping companies already know, that the Filipino seafarer descendants of the ancient Balangay seamen, is in a class of its own, intelligent, resourceful, skilled and passionate.”

The M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca is a 70M type training vessel built by the Miho Shipyard Co., Ltd. It has an overall length of 78.60 m and a gross tonnage of 2,098 tons. It has a sea speed of 13.8 knots. It has a complement of 138 passengers made up of a crew of 24; with 6 trainers and 108 cadets. The M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca now sails in pursuit of excellence.

## M/V Kapitan Gregorio Oca Commissioning Ceremony: A Commitment to Pursue the Highest Level of Excellence

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