



## JSU Execs chat IBF Agreement at Pusan meet

All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU)'s executives – President Yoji Fujisawa, ITF Coordinator Shoji Yamashita, Director Katsuji Taki and Kanto Regional Office Deputy Chief Shinichi Tanaka – were in Pusan, South Korea on July 23-27 to attend the second round of negotiations for revising the IBF Agreement for 2008-2009.

The IBF negotiations for revising the IBF Framework TCC Agreement were the third round since the International Bargaining Forum (IBF) was established in 2003 to begin labor-management talks.

The IBF Agreement covers some 4,000 ships and 100,000 seafarers around the world, including some 1,800 ships and 37,000 seafarers affiliated with the JSU.

About 50 individuals – 25 from the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which represents workers, and the Joint



Attendees discuss IBF Agreement revisions

Negotiation Group (JNG), which represents employers – attended the Pusan meeting.

Substantive negotiations were held on revising the IBF Agreement after the previous round in Sydney and the ITF high-level-officer meeting in Tokyo on July 4.

During a general assembly held July 25-26, the ITF insisted it would never discuss during the recent round, the issue of ITF policies concerned with beneficial ownership countries, and demanded the JNG withdraw its request.

It was confirmed, as a

consequence, that the issue would not be handled during the round.

In respect to the issue of establishing a fund for promoting the employment of ratings of developed countries, which it had demanded, the ITF negotiated with the JNG to have it resolved, indicating it would be willing to expand the total crew cost (TCC) fund framework and that it would make it voluntary to employ ratings of advanced nations, without forcing shipowners to do so.

Meanwhile, the JNG did not agree with the ITF as it had not reached internal agreement whether the issue would continue to be handled as part of their central bargaining session, or it would be discussed regionally after the central bargaining session is concluded.

Stressing once again that it would be impossible to have agreement without resolving this issue, the ITF

urged the JNG to work on it again.

As for wage hikes, the ITF declined the proposal made by the JNG to increase only officers wages, the ITF demanded once again for an increase of 10 percent on the TCCs.

On July 25, two different working groups held discussions: 1) one was responsible for the proposal made by the JNG in respect to the Athens Policy (the ITF's policy for operating European ferries); and 2) the other, the International Labor Organization (ILO)'s Maritime Labor Convention.

However, both groups failed to reach agreement during the recent round; as such, they decided to have the JNG and JNG secretariats continue discussions until the final round in September.

It was confirmed the next round of negotiations would be held in London on Sept. 26-27.

## FAQ: OVERTIME Tracking it & getting paid

BY: BAYANI A. JABOLI

Recently we have received queries from some members regarding excess overtime. Perhaps, due to the implementation of various safety and security regulations, seafarers have to work more hours than usual in order to implement these measures. Below are the frequently asked questions:

**Q:** When our vessel passes the Malacca Strait, we are ordered by the Master to take a "pirates-watch" beyond our regular working hours. Since this is for the safety of the ship, is this considered as overtime?

**A:** Yes. Actually all watch-keepings are for the safety of any ship. Overtime compensation is not payable in cases of emergency work for the safety of the ship, seafarers and cargo; turning and relieving of watches; lifeboat, fire-fighting and emergency steering drills; inspection of quarters for cleanliness and taking sights of officers.

To work as an additional lookout is not emergency work but a precautionary measure implemented by the Master.

**Q:** Who will record our overtime?

**A:** Overtime shall be recorded individually and in duplicate either by the Master or Head of the Department. Such record shall be handed to you for approval every month or at shorter intervals.

Your Master and/or Head of the Department as well as you must sign both copies. One copy shall be handed over to you.

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Some manning agencies have implemented policies contradictory to some provisions under the ITF-approved agreements. The practice of withholding part of the seafarer's shipboard pay has been gaining the attention of the ITF inspectors.

However, many seafarers are reluctant to complain due to their fear of being blacklisted by the manning agency.

**Q:** While our manning agency sends 80 percent of my basic wages to my allottee, I only receive the amount of US\$210/month

as cash advance from my shipboard pay (20 percent of my basic wage plus overtime compensation) and my company withholds the rest until I sign-off. The reason, accordingly, is to avoid being robbed in case of an attack by pirates. Is this correct?

**A:** No! As per JSU agreements and the POEA regulation, 20 percent of your monthly basic wages plus your overtime compensation shall be payable onboard, unless you decide to send some of it to your allottee or to another account in your country.

It is absurd for them to say that the reason to withhold your money is to prevent pirates from robbing you.

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**Q:** When I signed-off from the JSU-AMOSUP CBA covered vessel, I went to AMOSUP to update my provident fund contributions. However, the AMOSUP informed me that my company remitted no contribution into my account. What should I do?

**A:** Inform the manning agency about the nonremittance of your provident fund contribution. Whatever happens, inform the AMOSUP legal department regarding this matter for legal action.

## Ship visits to go full steam ahead



JSU staff waiting to help the seafarers

BY: BAYANI A. JABOLI

With the recent entry to the union of new JSU International Service Staff (ISS), the JSU will now have more personnel who would be able to visit more vessels covered by the various JSU agreements. Since June 2006, only four Filipino ISS were working for the union, two were assigned at the JSU Kansai Regional Branch in Kobe while the other two were assigned at the JSU Headquarters in Tokyo.

Three new ISS officially joined the JSU in September 2007, and we are expecting another two ISS trainees to officially join us within a few months. By then, the total number of

Filipino staff at the JSU will be nine (two union officers and seven ISS) not including the two Liaison Officers from the Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) and the Philippine Seafarers' Union (PSU) who are presently working at the JSU Headquarters. It is expected that some of the ISS will be assigned to JSU branches located in major ports in Japan.

The hiring of the JSU ISS dates back to July 1995 when two senior Filipino officers were hired by the union to work in Japan and the number was increased to four in 1997. Again in 2000, another two joined,

(Continued on Page 4)

## MOL to train 5,000 Filipino mariners

Japanese shipping company Mitsui O.S.K. Lines Ltd. (MOL) will train during the next four years some 5,000 Filipino mariners to help beef up its seagoing workforce worldwide.

This is part of the expansion program the carrier is undertaking to bolster its operating fleet, which number 705 vessels.

MOL will provide training at the Magsaysay Institute of Shipping (MIS), the training center in Dasmariñas, Cavite, it founded in 1993 through a joint venture agreement with the Philippines' Magsaysay Maritime Corporation and Fairmont Shipping (Canada) Ltd.

Completion of the training in 2010 will raise the number of Filipino seafarers serving MOL's ships to 15,700 from 10,600 people, representing some 70 percent of the company's total seagoing workforce.

This will help bolster the Philippine government's jobs generation bid targeting 6 million to 10 million employed by 2010.

To increase the number of trainees from 240 to 400 people annually, about



*Spirit of MOL training vessel*

PHP100 million (US\$2 million) has been allocated to renovate the MIS so the center's floor area can be increased from about 5,700 square meters to 8,900 square meters. The work also calls for increasing the number of classrooms from 14 to 22, and construction of a 3,250-square-meter dormitory that can accommodate 350 trainees and staff.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had inaugurated this dormitory. The number of MIS training kitchens will increase from two to four rooms where trainees

will receive instructions in onboard cooking.

To provide more training space, MOL reported it will increase the project site from 28,000 square meters to 31,400 square meters. The company also plans to hire an additional six instructors with onboard practical experience to bolster its faculty of 15 instructors.

Education of MIS trainees goes beyond providing maritime technical skills as they are also trained in leadership, analysis, judgment and communication in

preparation for their expected advancement to higher posts as captains, chief engineers and shore-side marine superintendents.

MIS also offers training courses to upgrade skills of veteran marine officers and crew members.

"Filipino seafarers play key roles in operation of MOL vessels worldwide," said the company, which adapted the principles of maintaining safe navigation and environmental protection.

According to MIS, a Japanese shipping company founded the country's first seafarer training center. About 2,000 of its graduates are now serving MOL and its partners.

The MIS recruits candidates from selected Philippine maritime schools and offers them a three-month training course prior to assignment to vessels. The institute's graduates will serve as cadets on ships that MOL and its partners operate.

A year later they are entitled to take the examination for certificate of competency after which successful candidates become qualified as deck officers or engineer officers of vessels.

(PNA)

## Seafarers get valuable ally in fight against MLC

Philippine Sen. Richard Gordon has joined the Filipino seafarers in their fight against the controversial Management Level Course (MLC) set on them by the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) Marine Boards.

In his senate privilege speech given Sept. 4, Gordon questioned the PRC on their implementation of additional units to be earned by Filipino seafarers before they can fully start working.

"Why is this being done?" he asked. "Why single out the merchant marine profession for this stricture?" The one-time SBMA chairman now joins seven maritime industry groups, namely, the Conference of Maritime Manning Agencies (COMMA), the Crewing Managers Association of the Philippines (CMAP), the Seaman Party Inc. (SPI), the United Filipino Seafarers (UFS), the Philippine Maritime Institute Alumni Association Inc. (PMIAAI), the Visayan Maritime Academy Alumni Association, Inc. (VMAAAI), and the Integrated Marine Deck and Engine Officers Association Inc. (IMDEOA), against the mandatory implementation of the course.

The industry groups claimed that the PRC is pushing the MLC upon the strong and persuasive lobby of some training centers with the members of the PRC Board for Marine Deck and Engine Officers. They believed that the training centers stand to gain profit at the expense of the Filipino seafarers. The seafarers' organizations opposed the new PRC requirement on the following grounds:

- The topics covered by the course are already part of the curriculum of maritime schools;

- The courses, which are upgrading programs, should be optional;

- The courses, which cost PHP42,000 (US-\$910) for the six-week course for marine deck officers and PHP52,000 (\$1,130) for the eight-week course for marine engineers, are an added financial burden for Filipino seafarers;

- The courses are not needed to comply with the STCW Convention; and

- The courses were pushed by training centers on the PRC Board for Marine Officers.

Source: *Balitang Marino*

## Indonesia gov't adopts seafarer's ID scheme

The Indonesian government has approved verification of nine centers for Seafarers' Identity Documents ready for its imminent ratification of the ILO Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (2003).

Indonesian seafarers organizations stated that they are hoping that the ratification would take affect as soon as possible so Indonesian seafarers and vessels can enter U.S. ports.

Hanafi Rustandi, chairman of the Indonesian Seafarers' Union, stated that the immediate ratification would remove Indonesia from the United States' blacklist.

As an aid to the Islamic country, the United States has given Indonesia US-\$400,000 to set up centers to process seafarers' ID, although the cost would balloon up to a \$1 million.

The centers are located at the ports of Tanjung Priok, Belawan, Tanjung Emas, Tanjung Perak, Balikpapan, Makassar, Bitung and Sorong.

Rustandi added that Indonesia's ratification would pave the way for an estimated 15,000 Indonesian seafarers to man merchant ships bound for the United States.

Source: *Fairplay*

## Philippine vice president to support OFW fixed forex rates

Philippine Vice President Noli de Castro has endorsed a letter for President Gloria Arroyo coming from overseas Filipino workers that seeks to establish a preferential foreign exchange rate for legitimate overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) that is above the 10 percent prevailing market value.

According to the proposal, OFWs want a fixed PHP50 (US\$1) rate for migrant workers instead of the varying daily market price.

Primary signatories to the letter, Ronnie Abeto, an OFW based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and former overseas financial analyst Miguel Bolos spearheaded the petition signed by

15,000 OFWs worldwide and circulated in the Internet as well.

Abeto, the senior action officer of V-Team Advocacy and Community Service said the group is proposing that the Philippine government put up a stabilization fund to address the peso-dollar exchange rate fluctuation.

De Castro said he would endorse the letter to the president and would monitor the progress of the request.

He would also look into the possibility of the group's proposal for the government agreement with financial institutions.

The viability of the pro-

posal depends on the volume of the transaction and their ability to organize themselves, he said.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita earlier said the administration was studying the proposal to have a fixed exchange rate for OFWs.

According to him, there have been talks with the Department of Finance and the central bank regarding the matter.

Ermita has also stated the president is meeting with local and foreign businessmen to discuss the impacts of the strong peso and other pressing concerns.

Source: *Balitang Marino*

## Shortage has India kicking around foreign recruitment idea

India is actively considering a proposal to allow foreign crew to man Indian ships, to beat the growing shortage of Indian marine officers.

The shipping ministry, which has tabled the proposal in response to continued pressure from domestic shipowners, has written to the external affairs, home and defense ministries seeking their approval.

The external affairs ministry is reported to have

agreed to the proposal but replies from the other two are awaited before a final decision is made.

Indian shipping lines are currently facing an acute shortage of officers, estimated anywhere between 950 and 1,500, and double the figure two years ago.

The shortage may increase alarmingly as Indian owners have embarked on a major fleet expansion program for the next three or four years.

With a reported world-

wide shortage of marine officers, personnel serving on Indian vessels are being lured to more lucrative jobs on foreign ships.

Indian shipowners complain that there is not enough experienced crew to run ships or provide shore support.

Lack of manning skills coupled with crew shortage has been blamed for leading to poor ship maintenance and hence maritime tragedies.

Lloyd's Register - Fairplay web links

# Mr. Sandman got you down?



## Insomnia means never having to use your alarm clock

Insomnia means you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or you wake too early.

You wake feeling unrefreshed and you feel tired during the day.

For some people, insomnia lasts a night or two. For others, it tortures them for months or even years. Doctors used to think of insomnia only as a symptom of a disease such as depression or anxiety or a result of chronic pain. However, research shows it may be a condition by itself.

Insomnia might also be related to lifestyle. Do you go to bed too late? Do you exercise too close to bedtime? Do you drink caffeinated coffee after dinner?

### Prognosis

Insomnia is usually treatable whether it is a symptom of a disease or a condition itself. Getting treatment for an underlying condition, lifestyle changes and medication may help.

### Symptoms of Insomnia:

- Difficulty falling asleep

- Waking up frequently during the night
- Waking up too early in the morning
- Waking up tired

### Causes of Insomnia:

Acute insomnia can be brought on by:

- A stressful event.
- Environmental disturbances such as noise or heat or cold.
- Disruption of the sleep/wake cycle, from jet lag or caring for a newborn.
- Side effects of certain medications such as some cough and cold remedies.

Chronic insomnia can be caused by:

- Asthma, rheumatoid arthritis or other chronic pain conditions, and congestive heart failure.
- Mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety or chronic stress.
- Some medications for high blood pressure, decongestants and antidepressants.
- Caffeine, nicotine, alcohol and "recreational" drugs.
- A sleep disorder such as sleep apnea or restless leg syndrome.
- Excessive worrying.
- Disruption of sleep/wake cycle from shift work.
- Poor sleep habits.
- Perimenopause or menopause.

pause.

- Incontinence, which may require more trips to the bathroom during the night.

Medications that may cause insomnia

- Antihistamines (cold and allergy medications). These may disrupt the quality of your sleep.
- Antihypertensive (high blood pressure medications).
- Beta-blockers (heart medication).
- Hormones (thyroid medications and birth control pills).
- Asthma medications (inhalers and theophylline).

### Treatment of Insomnia:

#### Simple Things to Try When You Can't Sleep

There are many steps you can take that may help you overcome insomnia and get a good night's sleep. Some of these strategies are listed below:

1. Follow the rules of good sleep hygiene
2. See a doctor. This is especially true if your symptoms are new. Because many of the causes of insomnia are due to medical disorders, the doctor can help you sort this out. In many cases, consultation with a sleep specialist will help.
3. Take a warm bath. This often helps. Bringing heat to the muscles often relaxes them and lets you get to sleep.

4. Get a massage. Again a good muscle relaxing technique. However, make sure that whoever is doing the massage knows how to do it. Causing pain never helped anyone get to sleep.

5. Listen to music. Actually, any soothing noise (played softly) in the background may help. Rap or heavy metal music is probably not the way to go. Rather light, or relaxing, music helps many people sleep.

6. Drink warm milk. Milk has L-tryptophan, an amino acid that helps bring on sleep. Adding honey can often help. However, if dairy products give you diarrhea, then skip this one.

7. Drink herbal tea. Make sure that this is decaffeinated.

8. Sleep on a firm mattress. This is a no-brainer. Sagging or poor quality mattresses can lead to difficulty maintaining sleep.

9. Sleep with your head facing north (magnetic) and feet facing south. Some people swear by this.

10. Count something. The old counting sheep technique works as long as the setting in your mind is a peaceful, slow-moving scene. Concentrating on a mental image often relaxes the rest of the body and allows you to fall asleep.

11. Relaxation techniques. These are often very useful.

## All you need to know about onboard use of automated external defibrillators (AED)

As part of the JSU welfare-related activities, the management committee, consisting of JSU and IMMAJ members, decided to distribute AEDs to 500 commercial vessels covered by the JSU's ITF-approved agreements.

The management committee accepted applications this September. Below is a simple introduction on this life-saving device.

### What is an automated external defibrillator?

An automated external defibrillator (AED) is a portable automatic device used to restore normal heart rhythm to patients in cardiac arrest.

An AED is applied outside the body. It automatically analyzes the patient's heart rhythm and advises the rescuer whether or not a shock is needed to restore a normal heart beat. If the patient's heart resumes beating normally, the heart has been defibrillated.

### When is it used?

An AED is used to treat cardiac arrest. It is a life-saving device because cardiac arrest is a sudden condition that is fatal if not

treated within a few minutes.

Heart attacks and other conditions can cause ventricular fibrillation. In ventricular fibrillation, the electrical signals in the lower part of the heart are uncoordinated and ineffective.

Very little blood is pumped from the heart to the body or the lungs. If ventricular fibrillation is not treated, it will result in Cardiac Arrest.

You can find AEDs in public places, such as airports and office buildings (public access AEDs). Doctors sometimes recommend home defibrillators for patients with heart disease.

### How does it work?

An AED consists of a small computer (microprocessor), electrodes, and electrical circuitry. The electrodes collect information about the heart's rhythm. The microprocessor interprets the rhythm.

If the heart is in ventricular fibrillation, the microprocessor recommends a defibrillating shock.

The shock is delivered by adhesive electrode pads, through the victim's chest

wall, and into the heart. There are special low-power electrode pads for use on children.

### What will it accomplish?

The AED delivers an electric shock that stuns the heart momentarily; stopping all activity. This gives the heart a chance to restart normal electrical activity and resume beating effectively.

### What are the risks?

Most trained users can operate AEDs safely. There is some risk of electric shock to the operator and others if the operator has not been trained to avoid touching the patient. Other risks include skin burns from the electrodes, abnormal heart rhythms, and blood clots.

### When should it not be used?

The device should not be used in a patient who has a pulse. It should also be avoided under conditions where the patient cannot be isolated from other people (for example, in the standing water of a rowboat that is filled with passengers who are either touching the patient or the water).

## VOICES from SEAFARERS

"With the implementation of the ISM and ISPS codes, everybody's workload has significantly increased. In the near future, more regulations for compliance will add more burden. We suggest the JSU negotiate for seafarers six-month contracts with assurance that we will be rehired after two months off." — CAPT. FEDERICO T. CANETE W/ THE OFFICERS OF MV PROGRESS ACE



CAPT. RENANTE B. LADINES and the crew of MV NEW NADA thank the JSU ISS for taking the time to visit their ship in Osaka, Japan. The crew appreciates the ship visitations and the information they received from the union.

CAPT. RENE G. JUNTADO, Master of AZUL LIBERO thanks the JSU for the early delivery of AED (automated external defibrillator).



"On behalf of the Myanmar crew of MV LADY MADONNA, we appreciate the visit by the JSU union officer and JSU ISS, and for the important information and updates on our agreement. We hope that the JSU will continue to support us and all the Myanmar nationals who are members of the JSU CA." — CAPT. MYINT LWIN

## ICC looks to take a bite out of crime with new hot line

The ICC International Maritime Bureau has launched a dedicated hot line for "seafarers, port workers, shipping agents, shipyard personnel, brokers, stevedores and all concerned parties" to report "any information that they may have/seen/heard/known etc" relating to maritime crime and security.

The hotline will be based at the IMB's Piracy Centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as this already maintains a 24 hour watch receiving piracy reports from around the world. Reports will be passed on to relevant authorities for further action.

A spokesman said that all information received will be treated in strict confidence. The IMB would like to know its sources would not disclose them.

He added that the IMB was unsure what sort and quality of information it would get but he saw parallels with the start of the piracy reporting service which is now established as the main contact point for vessels reporting attacks.

An IMB statement addressing seafarers and other in the industry says: "Maritime crime and security concerns us all and with your help, we can try to minimise the risks and help save lives and properties."

The maritime security hotline can be contacted 24 hours a day, every day at: Email: [imbsecurity@icc-ccs.org](mailto:imbsecurity@icc-ccs.org) Telex: MA 34199 IMBPCI

The IMB was established in 1981 to act as a focal point in the fight against all types of maritime fraud, malpractice and piracy. The United Nations (UN) International Maritime Organization (IMO) in its resolution A 504 (XII) (9) adopted on 20 November 1981, has among other things urged all governments, interests and organizations to exchange information and provide appropriate co-operation with the IMB. *icpo - interpol*

## USCG tells mariners to identify themselves

The U.S. Coast Guard has warned mariners to make sure they enter their 9-digit Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) number into marine radios equipped with Digital Selective Calling (DSC) and Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).

The Coast Guard says:

"Statistics show that many mariners in distress do not properly identify themselves nor provide a precise location when radioing for help which delays rescue services in arriving at the scene quickly and providing the assistance needed." It adds that many marine communication devices

require the MMSI to identify the user of the device.

The USCG and the National Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) Task Force is concerned that many users of these devices are not obtaining, registering and/or properly entering their assigned MMSI into these de-

vices. Lack of an MMSI will make some of these devices inoperable, such as AIS, or incapable of operating advanced features or distress alerting capabilities of the device. The Coast Guard cautions: "Leaving the MMSI unprogrammed, entering a false identity or not updating a previously-programmed device with your own identity may delay a rescue and under certain situations is unlawful."

## Unique story proves PRC's Yunnan province is not to be overlooked

China's economic growth has been attracting attention in recent years, and the number of foreigners visiting the country for sightseeing, business and school has been increasing year by year. In Yunnan province, which may not be known very well to Japan, live people of 26 different ethnic groups - e.g., Han, Yi, Bai, Naxi and Hani. Yunnan hosts a larger number of ethnic groups than any other province in China.

Yunnan province, which is in the subtropical-climate zone, offers good natural environments for a variety of animals and plants.

There are some 16,000 species of animals and plants living in Yunnan province, which is, as such, called an animal and plant paradise. Yunnan attracts Chinese people who live travel, and I myself have been to the province twice.

It seems there are 18 odd stories in Yunnan, and that Chinese people from other provinces, therefore, cannot necessarily understand the province's too much oddness.

The stories include the following:

1) Chicken eggs are sold individually, bind with straw cords.

2) There is food called "er kuai," which are steamed rice that is pounded.

3) There are so many mosquitoes.

4) There are places where stone pillars rise up toward the sky.

5) Straw hats are used as pot lids.

6) Dresses for all seasons

can be seen throughout the year (because in Kunming, which is located at high altitudes, temperatures are very different from night to day).

7) Women are all hard workers, specializing in agricultural work.

8) Local people have a custom of smoking water tobacco with bamboo pipes.

9) Horses are small but tough.

10) Local residents have a custom of eating grasshoppers when they drink.

11) Delicious gourds are available throughout the year.

12) Yunnan people brag about locally produced high-quality tobacco, but it is so expensive that commoners cannot buy.

13) Yunnan is proud of its agricultural products because they are valued highly both domestically and internationally.

14) Cars are faster and more convenient than trains as there are many steep mountains.

15) Men carry babies on their backs very frequently.

16) There are many limestone caves in mountain areas.

17) Locals eat rice noodle, called "mi xian," quite often.

18) As the climate is gentle all year round, flowers bloom all the time.

Are they interesting to you? Actually, Yunnan province is so attractive a sightseeing spot that it is not too much to say it is a paradise in China.

*Yi Song  
JSU staff*

## TESDA's certification of maritime workers to go digital with new system

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) will computerize its assessment and certification process for maritime industry workers such as seamen and ship repair and maintenance personnel.

TESDA director general Augusto Syjuco said they were adopting the move in a bid to strengthen the integrity of the process as well as expedite the assessment and certification of the workers.

"We are aware that the present system has grown outdated and so we are integrating a simpler but still efficient system in place," he said.

The system upgrade will involve the online verification of documents and digitization of photos, signatures and fingerprints - entailing the building of an information database of all certified skilled sea-based workers.

"The system upgrade is expected to shorten the processing period from seven to four days," Syjuco said.

He said the computerization of the process will prevent tampering and proliferation of fake certificates that may jeopardize the agency's entire program of skills assessment and certification.

Syjuco added that TESDA is anticipating a higher volume of applicants for maritime jobs due to the growing demand for maritime workers. Foreign employers often ask technical-vocational workers to present a skill certification from TESDA.

"We are talking here of a minimum 350 applicants for assessment per day. By the end of the year, the system must be fully integrated in Luzon and ready for duplication in the Visayas and Mindanao regions," he said. *Phil. Star*

## LETTER from HEADQUARTERS

### JSU continues to protect rights, seafarers

For the purpose of protecting rights and employments of as many foreign seafarers as possible, and improving working conditions and welfare, the All Japan Seamen's Union (JSU) has strived to organize such seamen not only in its daily routines, but also in other times, by promoting flag-of-convenience (FOC) and port-of-convenience (POC) activities in cooperation with port and harbor labor unions.

As of the end of July 2007, as a consequence, the number of commercial vessels to which the JSU/AMOSUP CBA for Japanese Flag is applied had reached 97; the IBF JSU/AMOSUP-IMMAJ CBA, IBF JSU-IMMAJ CA, and IBF JSU/PSU-IMMAJ CA, 1839; the ITF-JSU/AMOSUP CBA and ITF-JSU CA, nine; and the JSU CA for Near Sea, 185, while the number of non-domicile special members had grown to 43,228 from 44 countries.

The JSU endeavors to

maintain or even improve working conditions for its non-domicile special members in International Bargaining Forum (IBF) and other negotiations. It visits commercial vessels that have agreed on the IBF Agreement on a daily basis. In case unpaid wages are pointed out, the JSU, as a labor union that has concluded the agreement, comprehensively reviews it to have it complied.

## Ship visitations-

(Continued from Page 1)

increasing the number to six. However, one ISS resigned in 2005 and another one in 2006, to pursue their maritime careers in shipping companies.

The activities of the JSU ISS are focused in serving nondomiciled members of the JSU. Ships visitations are done regularly to make contact with the seafarers, giving priority to communication as a bridge between the JSU and the seafarers.

Yearly, more than 400 ship visitations are conducted by the ISS and the opinion of the seafarers is always considered by the JSU as an important element in devising its policies dealing with the nondomiciled members.

Face-to-face communication between the ISS and seafarers makes an honest, frank and fruitful discussion on various issues related to the seafarers and the union.

With the implementation of free e-mail access on vessels covered by the JSU agreements, the ISS have been receiving many

queries via e-mail from seafarers.

Other than reports of trouble onboard ships, through e-mail, many seafarers just want to inquire about their retirement contributions or other union-related issues.

Since other ships don't call at Japanese ports, we encourage nondomiciled members to contact us using their free e-mail onboard. In Japan, we will try to visit you soon and expect us to give you the latest information regarding maritime and union matters.

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