



## ***EDITORIAL***

# **Globally competitive**

WITH the rising number of foreign ship owners seeking dependable seafarers to man their ocean-going vessels, the Philippines, through concerned government programs designed to ensure the availability of globally competitive Filipino mariners.

Like nurses, medical doctors, engineers, information technology (IT) professionals, domestic helpers and other land-based workers, Filipino mariners are in great demand in the world market due to their exceptional skills, good command of the English language, loyalty, honesty and ability to easily adapt to foreign culture.

In fact, some quarters have been urging the government to stop exporting our women to work as domestic helpers (DHs) in foreign lands. Instead, they urged the authorities to export more Filipino seaman, who receive higher pay than many land-based workers.

Thus, we commend Sen. Loren Legarda for spearheading a move to guarantee humane working conditions and just compensation for the country's sea-based workers due to the existence of foreign employers, who skirt laws that guarantee job security and entitlement of migrant workers to benefits.

Legarda urged her colleagues in Congress to immediately pass Senate Bill (SB) No. 1351, otherwise known as the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, and SB No. 1404, which calls for the setting up of a National Seafarers Commission, to address the specific concerns and needs of maritime workers.

"We need to establish the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers to ensure that manning and crewing agencies provide adequate information about on-board conditions as well as local and international laws that apply to the Filipino seafarer," said Legarda, chairman of the Senate foreign relations committee.

The proposed commission will serve as the centralized government agency that will provide the necessary services, supervision, regulation and guidance the Filipino seafarer needs to develop as a globalized professional.

In urging the approval of SB Nos. 1351 and 1404, Legarda said: "We have to understand that the seafaring profession has unique demands and conditions, thus, we must guarantee that they will be given equal attention and protection by our government."

It must certainly be saddening and lamentable of Filipino seamen, who work as ship skippers, engineers, electricians, cooks, waiters and waitresses, cannot maintain their edge over their foreign counterparts because of lack of government support to the maritime industry.

So, let's look for ways to satisfy the Filipino mariners' demand.