



REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
MARITIME INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

SONIA MALALUAN

MARINA Administrator

**49th COMMENCEMENT EXERCISE JOHN B. LACSON
COLLEGES FOUNDATION, INC. -BACOLOD**

**16 JUNE 2025, 1300H, SMX CONVENTION CENTER, BACOLOD
CITY**

Dr. Mary Lou L. Arcelo, Dr. Ronald Raymond Sebastian, distinguished members of the John B Lacson Colleges Board of Trustees, esteemed faculty and staff, proud parents and families, partner shipping and manning agencies, honored guests, and most importantly, the graduating class of 2025, ladies and gentlemen, a pleasant afternoon to all.

It is with great honor and privilege to address this gathering of accomplished individuals, as your Guest Speaker today, on the 49th Commencement Exercises and Completion Ceremony of the John B. Lacson Colleges Foundation Inc., here in Bacolod City, with the Theme “Embracing Resilience: Shaping Future-Ready Lacsonians for an Ever-changing World. On behalf of MARINA and the entire maritime community, I extend my warmest congratulations to each and every one of you on this momentous occasion.

Today marks not just the end of one chapter, but the beginning of another. For many of you, this day represents the transition from the world of structured learning to the unpredictable, fast-paced waters of real-world experience. The voyage ahead will be as challenging as it is rewarding.

The maritime career has never taken more than talent; it takes character. Compared to most jobs, this career calls you to the remotest parts of the globe, away from home, family, and comfort. It takes discipline, ruggedness, and teamwork. On board, you don't just work; you live, work as a group, lead, and protect.

Your training and education have set you up for this. Every simulation, every safety drill, every classroom lecture on maritime laws or global shipping operations—these were not academic requirements. These were your groundwork.

You are entering the maritime field at a pivotal time. Our industry is undergoing a transformation unlike any we've seen in decades. Sustainability is increasingly a universal requirement.

The shipping industry is moving towards decarbonization, cleaner fuels, energy-efficient vessel designs, and greener shipping lanes. Automation and digitalization such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, and remote operation of ships are transforming the maritime landscape. Global supply chains are changing, driven by geopolitics, climate change, and new trade patterns.

As graduates of maritime studies, you are professionals who wield a pivotal role in shaping the global economy and forging connections between nations across the oceans. Our industry serves as the backbone of international trade, facilitating the movement of goods and commodities that sustain economies worldwide. Your capabilities as seafarers are indispensable in ensuring the secure, efficient, and sustainable operation of vessels.

Beyond its economic significance, the maritime industry holds a deeper purpose. It encapsulates the essence of adventure, exploration, and cultural interchange. It nurtures ties among diverse cultures, fostering understanding and promoting peace. The maritime sector carries a rich heritage and a profound sense of responsibility to preserve the oceans and safeguard marine life for future generations.

While the challenges ahead may be numerous, with additional training requirements and years of seagoing experience to accumulate, I have confidence in your ability to surmount them. You are the vanguards of innovation, adaptability, and resilience. Embrace emerging technologies like digitalization and automation, utilizing them to elevate safety, efficiency, and sustainability in the maritime sector. Foster diversity and inclusivity, recognizing that a varied workforce cultivates creativity, collaboration, and global understanding. Today's theme is indeed very fitting to this global maritime landscape.

But that is not something to fear; it's an invitation to rise. This new era demands young professionals like you: technically skilled, digitally savvy, and open to innovation. It demands seafarers and marine professionals who can adapt, communicate, and lead with a global mindset.

I beg you to seek lifelong learning. The diploma you have today is not an end; it's a permission to grow. Stay curious. Keep updating your skills. Go for trainings. Take certifications. Read industry magazines and maritime literatures. And if it is presented, pursue further education not merely for the sake of promotion, but for purpose.

As a Filipino entering the world at sea, you carry more than your own dreams; you carry our country's reputation with you. Today, over 25% of the world's seafarers are Filipinos. That is no accident. It is the result of our work ethics, our discipline, and our uncompromising commitment to excellence. You are an ambassador of a global force—the Filipino seafarers. And that means everything you do reflects back on all of us.

So be proud of that. Be proud of getting to work early for your watch. Be proud of keeping good work done. Be proud of delivering thorough and comprehensive reports, following safety protocols, and respecting your multicultural team. Let your integrity ring out even louder than your talent.

Of course, the journey will not be smooth. Loneliness at sea is no myth. Fatigue can make your head spin. You may be in touch with family and friends very little. You will miss birthdays, special occasions, and milestones. And yes, there would be moments that you would question, "Is it worth it?"

Graduates, in those times, revisit your "why." Why did you embark on this journey? Was it to better your family? To travel the world? To prove something to yourself? To be in an industry that connects global economies? Whatever your "why" is, hold on to it.

Remember also that asking for help is not weakness; it is wisdom. When you already onboard, speak up. Ask for guidance. Look out for your crewmates. And when you have the chance to look out for someone younger than you, do so. That is what will keep this company healthy— not just ships and steel, but people looking out for people.

On the part of the government, we at the MARINA are continuously improving our policies and systems in order to ensure the continued employment and welfare of our seafarers. When I assumed the post as MARINA Administrator, I laid down the 10-point agenda of the Agency which establishes the thrust of the agency under my leadership. Allow me to share with you today the priority programs of MARINA as you are all part of the maritime industry which we yearn to sustain and protect:

Digitalization of MARINA's Frontline Services, including the MARINA Integrated Seafarers Management Online (MISMO), specifically designed for seafarers, MHEIs and MTIs, even medical practitioners. You can get your documents/certificates from MARINA anytime, anywhere, as long as you have the internet connectivity.

It is MARINA's responsibilities and obligation to ensure sustained compliance with the requirements of the STCW Convention, as amended and its associated Code.

MARINA is also preparing for IMO Strategy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Maritime Autonomous Surface Ship (MASS), we are benchmarking on how other IMO Member States have introduced the necessary skills. With the passage of the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, expect changes in the system and processes.

In closing, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the substantial support and guidance provided by your families, friends, educators, and mentors who have been steadfast companions on this odyssey. They have served as your pillars of strength and unwavering wellsprings of encouragement. Take a moment to express gratitude and acknowledge their indispensable role in your achievements.

To the parents, guardians, and families in attendance today—thank you. Thank you for your sacrifices, your prayers, and your patience. Behind every successful graduate, there is a village of quiet champions. This day is yours, too.

To the JBLCF-Bacolod officials, faculty, mentors, and staff—you have done more than impart skills; you have shaped lives. Your reach goes far beyond the classroom. Thank you for your unwavering commitment to maritime greatness. To the graduates: whatever lies ahead: storms, victories, defeats; confront them with courage. You have it within you. You were not trained just for a job, but for a calling.

So take that first ship with your head up high. Go into that company knowing you deserve your place. Sail those seas with professionalism, humility, and hope. And when you return home, return with stories of strength, resilience, learning, and pride as a Filipino seafarer.

Never forget, no matter where the winds of your profession may take you, you are always a mariner forged by the values and traditions of John B. Lacson Colleges Foundation.

Congratulations, Class of 2025. Safe voyages, firm anchors, and sure purpose be with you.

Thank you, and mabuhay ang MARINONG PILIPINO.