

Business Maritime

Going paperless using blockchain technology

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FUTURE seafarers from the Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP) will no longer need to carry their voluminous certificates with them whenever they depart for sea duty to their oceangoing vessels.

Sailing full speed ahead on its bid to go paperless, MAAP launched an e-wallet that would contain all the records of all its cadets from enrollment to graduation using blockchain technology.

"It is very difficult to hack. So, what we did is all our cadets now, their certificate will have QR codes. There's a photo taken of [these], and they are loaded into the e-wallet of the cadet. The cadet will only show his e-wallet to show his certificates," said Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos, MAAP president and concurrent vice president of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (Amosup).



Vice Admiral Eduardo Ma. R. Santos, MAAP president and concurrent vice president of the Associated Marine Officers and Seamen's Union of the Philippines. PHOTO from CIH

The adoption of the digital wallet starts this academic year 2022-2023, Santos told reported shortly after the launch, which served as one of the highlights of the celebration of the Nautical Institute Philippine Branch of the 50th Anniversary of The Nautical Institute held at Amosup Convention Center last November 18.

"Lahat ng estudyante may e-wallet na; ilo-load na namin 'yung mga certificates na natapos na nila. Pati COC (Certificates of Competency) at COP (Certificates of Proficiency), ikakarga na namin sa e-wallet," he said.



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This development will eliminate the need for seafarers to carry their numerous documents onboard or whenever they transact with the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina) or their manning agency.

"Sa blockchain, wala na silang bitbit na certificates from enrollment to graduation until they become seafarers and a marine officer, nasa blockchain na sila; personal record na nila iyon," Santos said.

"If the Port State Control would like to see their certificates they can scan their QR code; all the records are in the e-wallet," he added.

As for security, manning agencies of cadets and seafarers may have access to their e-wallet, but they can only read the records and cannot tamper with them.

Only cadets and seafarers can make changes. If the files were accidentally deleted, "may back up kami sa server sa MAAP," assured Santos.

In no time, it is expected that the industry especially from maritime higher education institutions(MHEIs) will adopt this pioneering initiative of the Amosup-run MAAP.

Santos said the e-wallet project needs no sizable investment and is free for the cadets.

His statement is corroborated by Capt. Jitesh Jaipuriyar, MAAP's partner and the provider of the technology in the e-wallet initiative.

"It is pricey since it has a lot of value in it, but it's inexpensive," Jaipuriyar said.

"In the e-wallet that we just launched, it is important that we don't charge any single centavo to seafarers. Seafarers can have the e-wallet free for their lifetime," declared Jaipuriyar.

He explained that "there's a certain amount of subscription charges to the user of the data, they could be shipowners or manning companies, but the seafarers do not pay."

Jaipuriyar, who spent many years sailing along with Filipino seafarers, is proud to have pioneered the e-wallet project in the Philippines and MAAP.

"Hats off to VAdm Santos; he is our guiding pillar who is there to adopt new technology. We need a leader like that to overcome new challenges to become relevant in changing times," he said.

Under Santos' watch, the nation's leading maritime institution based in Bataan is a consistent trailblazer in the use of modern information and communications technology to enhance the quality of its education and to remain at par with maritime institutions in developed countries.

It recently partnered with GenuineIN Technologies to start building MAAP's talent ecosystem that will be connected with industry stakeholders for credential exchange, student profiling, talent analytics and, eventually, recruitment.

GenuineIN Technologies, the provider of the world's first genuine profile system with a network of credential providers and data authentication, will use artificial intelligence (AI) technology to enhance the employability of MAAP graduates.

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