

CAVITE NEWS PUBLISHING

A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER THAT'S NATIONAL IN SCOPE

VOL. XXVI NO. 36
ISSN: 2651-7450

DEC. 18-24, 2025

P10.00

PH's globally-ranked HEIs up by 82% at 173-CCHED

MANILA – The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) on Tuesday said globally-ranked higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Philippines now rose to 173.

This comes as the CHED awarded leading universities among the globally-ranked HEIs at the ICONS Awards 2025 held at the Philippine International Convention Center (PICC) on Dec. 10.

"This continuity shows the strategic value of ICONS—not simply as a recogni-

tion ceremony, but as a mechanism for measuring progress, sustaining international momentum, and normalizing a culture of global engagement across our higher education system," CHED Chairperson Shirley Agrupis said in a statement.

This year's performance shows an 82 percent increase from 95 recognized HEIs in major global ranking systems in 2024.

The agency then recognized HEIs with strong performance in various global rank-

ing systems, including the Times Higher Education (THE) World, Asia, and Impact Rankings, the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Rankings, and the World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI).

Among the awarded State Universities and Colleges (SUC) or private HEI programs are Mariano Marcos State University, Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific, University of the Philippines Diliman, De La Salle-College of Saint

(Turn to p. 2)

Press Alliance Marks 6th Year, Calls for Unity Against Corruption and 'Fake News'

SAN PABLO CITY, Laguna-The Prime Alliance of Publishers, Editors, and Reporters (PAPER.PH), Inc. convened its National Press Congress on December 6, celebrating its sixth anniversary with a resolute them:

"Guardians of Accountability: Uniting the Press Against Corruption."

Held at Dioko Resort, the gathering brought together media practitioner, educators, and local officials to underscore the press's

vital role in democracy and address modern information.

In her opening remarks, PAPER.PH Chairman Nena Malaria anchored the mission of the free press on the nation's future, (Turn to p. 2)

PH's globally-ranked HEIs up by 82% at 173-CCHED



WORLD-CLASS HEIs. Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chairperson Shirley Agrupis calls on higher education institutions (HEIs) to fully harness instruction, research, and extension during her address at the ICONS Awards 2025 on Dec. 10, 2025. The CHED on Tuesday (Dec. 16) said HEIs in the Philippines have now rose to 173. (Photo courtesy of CHED)

Cancer preventable with healthy lifestyle and screening, says advocate

TAGAYTAY CITY, Cavite (PIA) — The Philippine Cancer Society (PCS) has noted that an individual's economic situation and lifestyle choices may help prevent the risk of developing cancer.

Speaking at a media forum hosted by the Department of Health (DOH) last November 27, Romeo Marcaida, Operations Manager,

warned that an individual's lifestyle such as unhealthy food choices and lack of physical activity increases their risk of developing cancer.

"But the profile of vulnerability depends on the individual's lifestyle, especially those who have no time to exercise and eat street food. Most of the 50 percent are in the low income pop-

ulation, but this data can be biased," Marcaida said.

While a patient's economic situation—specifically their ability to afford fresh and nutritious food—does contribute to various cancer risks, he cautioned that this should not be the only factor patients consider.

"Actually, the vulnerability for most cancer risk factors can be seen



among the poor not only here in the Philippines, but in other countries as well. We have data that many of our poor kababayans are availing the patient

(Turn to p. 2)

Rice imports to hit below 4MT in 2026 – DA

MANILA – The Philippines is projected to have lower rice imports in 2026, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA) on Tuesday.

In an interview, DA Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. disclosed that the import volume for next year will likely range from 3.6 million metric tons (MT) to 3.8 MT.

This is much lower than the 4.8 million MT logged in 2024,

and closer to the current year's 3.5 million MT total estimated rice imports due to the four-month rice import ban since September, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry (BPI).

The DA chief made the remarks after he conducted a consultative meeting with the rice importers on Monday to help balance the welfare of Filipino palay (un-

(Turn to p. 2)

PH's... FR. P. 1

Benilde, Quezon City University, Saint Louis University, Ifugao State University, and St. Dominic College of Asia.

Besides these awards, the CHED also stressed the importance of the ratification of the Tokyo Convention by President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., which aligns the country's higher education system with regional standards.

Agrupis, meanwhile, urged HEIs to continue advancing reforms and ensure a signifi-

cant impact on learners as they intensify global presence.

"I challenge our HEIs to fully harness instruction, research, and extension—using the strength of their academic programs, the rigor of their research, and the reach of their community engagements—to deepen global engagement and translate internationalization into meaningful impact for their learners and communities," she said. (PNA)

RICE... FR. P. 1

husked rice) farmers and consumers.

"The government will limit the quantity to protect the rice farmers from what has happened in the past," Tiu Laurel said in an interview, referring to the recent depressing levels of farmgate prices in the country.

The quantitative restriction is set to begin in the first half of 2026, wherein stakeholders agreed to calibrate their import volumes ahead of the local dry harvest season.

"This system na si-

nasabi ko (that I mentioned) will be for the first six months. (In) the second half of the year, we will formulate a new system," Tiu Laurel said.

Tiu-Laurel cited initial plans to allow import allocation to importers who have voluntarily purchased local palay (unhusked rice).

Besides these, the DA also considers the possible record-high palay output in 2026, which is projected to hit 20.3 million MT. (PNA)

CANCER... FR. P. 1

admission program of the Philippine General Hospital (PGH)."

According to 2022 data from the Global Cancer Observatory (Globocan), breast and lung cancers are the top cancer cases in the Philippines, recording 33,079 cases and 23,728 cases, respectively.

"About half of the cancer deaths are attributed to potentially quantifiable risk factors. This disease [can be attributed] to lifestyle factors and about 51 percent of these cases are potentially avoidable," said Mar-

caida.

He added, "Around one-third (35%) of cancer cases are preventable, meaning they can be prevented through medical intervention such as vaccines or screenings. Another 42% are potentially avoidable through a combination of medicine and lifestyle changes."

Access to health services, such as annual screenings and tests may also help in early cancer detection and treatment, according to Marcaida. (PBP-PIA4A)

PRESS ALLIANCE... FR. P. 1

stating, "Malayang pamamahayag para sa matatag na Pilipinas."

PAPER.PH National President Bonifacio Dacayanan echoed the call for solidarity within the industry.

"Ang malayang pamamahaya ay haligi ng demokrasya," Dacayanan stressed.

The group's Vice President Vladimir Asprec further emphasized support for community journalism.

Huweg po nating hayaan na mawala ang community papers. Suporthan natin ang isa't-isa."

The discussions extended beyond media, touching on national character.

A Department of Education representative, Sharry Ann Ganareal, outlined shifts in educational focus.

"Hinde na uso ang Abakada, babebibubo lang; phonological awareness, pagsusulat at pagbabasa ang focus ngayon sa pagtuturo," the elementary school teacher said.

She also expressed concern over resil-

ience.

"Nagpapalaki tayo ng mga batang babasagin. Kailangang patatagin ang mga susunod na mamamayang Pilipino," Ganareal said.

The threat of misinformation was a recurring concern. Laguna Board Member Angelica Jones Alarva advocated for tradition media.

"Magbasa ng dyaryo dahil nandito ang totoong balita. Hind sila nagsusulat ng kasinungalingan. Malaking tulong ng socmed pero ang disadvantage ay ang paglipana ng fake news."

Guest of honor, Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office Director Imelda Papin, highlighted the press's watchdog function and the perils of the digital age.

"The press is not just the storyteller, it is the nation's watchdog," she said.

"Sa ngayong panahon na ito, malaki ang kaibahan, nandyan ang socmed. Kapag may trending, yun na ang pinag-uusapan.

Sometimes this is not good. Para lang may pag-uusapan, kung minsan hindi tama ang inilalabas. It's very scary. Dahil kung gusto kang sirain, in a few minutes, masisira ka," Papin stated, noting the speed and potential damage of social media trends.

While acknowledging the difficulty of countering online falsehoods, she emphasized personal responsibility and faith.

"what is important right now is unahin ang Panginoon para nakakapag-contribute tayo para sa ating bansa," Papin said.

In a heartfelt appeal for support for national unity, Papin concluded, "Kung wala kayo (media), wala ang Imelda Papin. Panahon na para ilagay sa puso natin --kung ano ang makokontribute sa ating bansa."

"We have to be united

when it comes to supporting the country. Ako po ay yumuyuko at humihingi ng inyong suporta," the former singer also added.

Other highlights included a push for the adoption of pickleball in schools by PAPER.PH Past President Luisito Angeles of Bulacan, who also wished for the continued success of the alliance.

PAPER.PH Chairman of the Board Bayani Zoleta delivered the closing message, thanking his fellow media men and reminded every one to continue supporting each other.

The congress served as a platform reinforcing the critical, yet challenged, role of a free and responsible press as a guardian of public accountability and adopted a Declaration denouncing corruption.

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**A TRUE FRIEND SHOWS
LOVE AT ALL TIMES AND IS
A BROTHER WHO IS BORN
FOR TIMES OF DISTRESS**

Prov. 17:17

**CAVITE NEWS
PUBLISHING
WEEKLY NEWSPAPER**

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**MEMBER of PRIME ALLIANCE of
PUBLISHERS, EDITORS, &
REPORTERS of the Philippines Inc.**

**THIS NEWSPAPER IS EDITED, PUBLISHED AND
CIRCULATED IN THE PROVINCE OF CAVITE AT BLK. 8
LOT 19 SAINT FRANCIS ST. CARDINAL VILLAGE
SALITRAN 3 DASMARIÑAS CITY OF CAVITE**

**Commercial Advertising Rate: P200.00/col.cm
Legal Rate P160.00/col.cm**

**A joyful heart is good medicine, But
a crushed spirit saps one's strength**

Proverbs 17:22



Hundreds of Silangeños benefit from medical mission

Brgy. Anahaw 2 in Silang welcomed another stride toward accessible community healthcare as the Provincial Government of Cavite conducted a medical mission on November 26 that served a total of 325 beneficiaries.

The mission offered a full range of essential services, rendered by medical professionals from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer ensuring that quality care reached residents right where they live. A total of 308 individuals received medical consultations, while 13 ECG procedures and 4 X-ray services were provided to support early detection and proper assessment of health conditions. The OPG medical mission team, led by Mr. Geri Olaes, also successfully distributed free medicines to all recipients.

Showing strong support for the community-centered initiative, 5th District Board Members Aidel Paul Belamide and Ivey Jayne Reyes graced the event, joined by municipal councilor and Punong Barangay Lorna S. Tayson. Their presence underscored the shared commitment of local leaders to advancing public health.

Barangay Health Workers played a vital role in ensuring the smooth and organized flow of services, assisting residents throughout the activity with dedication and efficiency.

This medical mission reflects the provincial government's continuing efforts to deliver responsive, accessible, and compassionate healthcare to every Caviteño.--- OPIO



Provincial Government of Cavite Grants Educational Aid to 1,743 Students

The Provincial Government of Cavite, under the leadership of Governor Francisco Gabriel "Abeng" Remulla, continued its commitment to supporting Caviteño youth through the Iskolar ng Lalawigan ng Cavite program. Recently, a total of 1,743 students received educational assistance during a distribution event held at Cavite State University–Bacoor Campus.

The initiative aims to ease the financial burdens of deserving students and empower them to pursue higher education. Governor Remulla emphasized the province's dedication to investing in the next generation, highlighting that education remains at the forefront of Cavite's development agenda.--- OPIO



PGC distributes incentives to BHWs and BNS in Tanza

The Provincial Government of Cavite extended its appreciation to its frontline health and nutrition workers through the Distribution of Incentives for Barangay Health Workers (BHWS) and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS) held on December 10, at the Tanza Convention Center.

A total of 921 BNS received incentives amounting to ₱9,384,000, while 2,400 BHWS were granted ₱24,480,000, recognizing their vital role in delivering basic health and nutrition services to communities across the province. The initiative underscores the province's continuing commitment to strengthening grassroots health programs and supporting the welfare of its dedicated workers.

Gracing the distribution were 7th District Representative Ping Remulla, 7th District Board Members Aldrin Anacan and Camille Del Rosario, and Tanza Mayor Archangelo "SM" Matro, who all expressed their gratitude and commendation to the BHWS and BNS for their unwavering service, especially in advancing public health at the barangay level.

The activity highlighted the Provincial Government's steadfast support for its health workforce, reaffirming that the dedication and sacrifices of BHWS and BNS remain a cornerstone of effective and responsive community healthcare in Cavite.



Cavite Career Caravan brings job opportunities to Bacoor during DOLE Anniversary Job Fair

The Cavite Career Caravan organized by the Office of the Provincial Public Employment Service Manager was successfully conducted at SM City Bacoor on December 11, in line with the celebration of the 92nd Anniversary of the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE). The activity provided a valuable platform for jobseekers to explore employment opportunities and access government services in one convenient venue.

A total of 116 jobseekers tried their luck during the job fair, where 31 participating companies offered 5,913 job vacancies covering various industries and positions. Notably, 21 applicants were hired on the spot, highlighting the effectiveness of the initiative in directly linking employers with qualified jobseekers.

In addition to the participating companies, several national government agencies were present to extend on-site assistance and information to applicants. These included Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the Social Security System (SSS), and the Office of the Provincial Legal Officer (OPLO), ensuring a holistic and supportive job fair experience.

Board Member Chelsea Sarno, SK Federation President also graced the event and expressed her support for initiatives that bring employment opportunities closer to the people. The Cavite Career Caravan continues to serve as a vital program in strengthening employment generation and reinforcing the Provincial Government of Cavite's commitment to empowering its workforce through accessible and inclusive job facilitation activities.

SEARCA empowers Laguna educators on urban farming, biodiversity conservation

LOS BAÑOS, Laguna (PIA) — The Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA) steps up its efforts in bringing new knowledge and expertise to teaching and non-teaching personnel from the Department of Education (DepEd) in Laguna through a capacity-building program that equips teachers with practical skills in urban farming and biodiversity conservation.

The program, titled “In-Country Training on Urban Farming for Sustainable Cultivation to Support Biodiversity Conservation, Education, and Food Security in the Philippines,” sought to empower educators to establish science-based, environmentally sound urban farming systems within their schools and localities.

SEARCA Center Director Mercedita Sombilla emphasized the vital role of educators in shaping young minds, noting that they must be equipped with updated tools and knowledge to effectively introduce urban farming systems in schools.

“This training is designed to empower educators, the frontliners in shaping mindsets, with updated tools and knowledge to implement ecologically sound urban farming systems that serve as living laboratories for sustainability,” said Sombilla.

The group consisted of 30 educators from ten public elementary and secondary schools, along with representatives from the DepEd Laguna division committee.

The training featured two core modules: hydroponics cultivation and urban agroforestry systems.

On Day 1, participants were introduced to urban agriculture by Dr. Doni Yusri of SEAMEO BIOTROP, followed by a session on hydroponics and its role in biodiversity conservation led by Dr. Eureka Teresa Ocampo of UPLB. Attendees also visited UPLB’s advanced smart greenhouses, which feature automated irrigation systems and data-driven crop monitoring technologies.

Day 2 focused on urban agroforestry. At the UPLB Makiling Botanic Gardens, Forster Cary Maynard Olivar conducted a forest therapy session, followed by a visit to the Learning Laboratory for Agroforestry. Dr. Lorena Sabino and her team discussed integrating trees and crops, along with models for developing school-based edible landscapes.

Representing DepEd Laguna Schools Division Superintendent Dr. Editha Atendido, Assistant Schools Division Superintendent Jaypee Lopo reaffirmed the division’s commitment to cascade the program’s lessons to more schools,

Declaration of the Prime Alliance of Publishers, Editors, and Reporters [PAPER.PH], Inc. Against Corruption

Preamble: The Light in the Darkness

We, the Publishers, Editors, and Reporters of the Philippines under PAPER.PH, unite under a solemn declaration. We bear witness to a truth etched in the soul of our nation: a free and fearless press is the bedrock of democracy and the sworn enemy of corruption. Where shadows of graft, abuse of power, and deceit seek to thrive, we commit to being the unwavering light.

Corruption does not merely steal wealth; it steals justice opportunity, dignity, and hope. It poisons institutions, betrays public trust, and impoverishes the spirit of the people. We stand not as a fourth estate, but as the first line of defense.

Our Core Principles:

1. Truth as Duty: We serve no political master, no corporate interest, and no personal agenda. Our sole allegiance is to the verifiable truth. We will pursue it with rigor, present it with context, and defend it with courage.

2. The People as Sovereign: Power resides in the people. Our primary mission is to arm the public with the knowledge necessary to exercise that power-to hold leaders accountable, to make informed choices, and to demand ethical governance.

3. Fearlessness in the Face of Intimidation: We will not be silenced by threats, legal harassment, online trolling, or violence. The memory of colleagues who paid the ultimate price for this duty fuels our resolve, not our fear. We stand in solidarity, protecting one another as we protect the public’s right to know.

4. Integrity in Practice: We combat corruption by rooting it out of our own house. We pledge transparency in methodology, vigilance against misinformation, correction of errors, and clear separation between fact and opinion. We reject any form of “envelope journalism” or covert influence.

5. Solidarity as Armor: As an Alliance, we are interconnected. An attack on one publisher, one editor, one reporter-whether through libel, cyber-libel, red-tagging, or physical threat-is an attack on all. We will respond with one voice, one legal defense, and one unbreakable front.

A Call to Conscience and Action:

To those in power: Your dealings are our duty. Your declarations will be fact-checked. Your secrets are our subject. We will scrutinize not with malice, but with the profound responsibility our

emphasizing the goal of scaling local innovations into broader, globally aligned solutions.

Participants then crafted and presented school-based action

plans outlining how they intend to implement urban farming initiatives in their respective institutions. (AM/PIA4A, with reports from SEARCA)

EXTRAJUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** who died on November 09, 2023, in Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite and the deceased left three (3) real properties: 1) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-128957** with an area of **two hundred forty (240)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, 2) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-98742** with an area of **one hundred ninety-three (193)** square meters at Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and 3) **TRANSFER CERTIFICATE OF TITLE No. T-197481** with an area of **two hundred ten (210)** square meters at the Barangay San Juan II, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and has been extrajudicially settled among his heirs through the Extrajudicial Settlement of Estate of **FELICISMO MORAL PRESA** with Waiver of Rights executed on November 30, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 511, Page No. 104, Book No. III, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

Published at: Cavite News Publishing

Dates: December 18, 25, 2025 - Jan. 1, 2026

AFFIDAVIT OF SELF-ADJUDICATION

Notice is hereby given **TO THE PUBLIC** of the deceased **REYNALDO MORAL PRESA** who died on March 21, 2007 at the Philippine General Hospital, Taft Avenue, Manila and **LUCITA PORCADILLA PRESA** who died on March 7, 2020 at 095 Barangay Prinza, General Trias, Cavite, Philippines, and both left one parcel of land described as **TCT No. T-190793** with an area of **two hundred ninety-two (292)** square meters located at General Trias, Cavite, and has been self-adjudicated by their sole heir, **ALEXANDER PORCADILLA PRESA**, through an Affidavit of Self-Adjudication executed on December 9, 2025 by Atty. Nathalie T. Almazan as per Doc. No. 34, Page No. 8, Book No. 18, Series of 2025 in General Trias City, Cavite.

Published at: Cavite News Publishing

Dates: December 18, 25, 2025 - Jan. 1, 2026

roles demand.

To the public: Trust must be earned. Hold us accountable. Engage with our work. Support independent journalism. Share credible information. Be critical consumers of news. In this fight, you are not spectators; you are essential allies.

To our fellow journalists: Join this alliance of conscience. Uphold this standard. Let our collective byline be a mark of credibility and courage.

This declaration is not merely a statement of intent. It is a declaration of war-a war against the corruption that cripples our nation and the silence that enables it.

We are PAPER.PH. We remember, We resist, We report, For Truth. For Accountability, For the Philippines, Signed, The Prime Alliance of Publishers, Editors, and Reports (PAPER.PH).Inc.

DOH backs Senate move to expand zero balance billing to LGU hospitals

MANILA – The Department of Health (DOH) on Monday expressed support for a Senate amendment to the proposed 2026 national budget that provides funding for the expansion of the Zero Balance Billing (ZBB) program to hospitals owned by local government units (LGU).

"This will allow Filipinos to avail of zero balance billing not just at DOH hospitals, but even in level 3 (large) LGU-owned hospitals," the DOH said in a statement.

The agency emphasized that the move would widen access to affordable health services, particularly for indigent and financially vulnerable patients seeking care in major provincial and city hospitals.

Earlier, the DOH re-



ported that 1,078,164 patients have already benefited from the zero-balance billing program in just four months after President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s last State of the Nation Address where he announced the program.

Under the program, patients do not pay for hospital services, including medical procedure, doctor's professional fee and medications.

As an alternative, the DOH also proposed the inclusion of a spe-

cial provision under the Medical Assistance to Indigent and Financially Incapacitated Patients (MAIFIP) to ensure that the bulk of the fund will be allocated for the expansion of zero balance billing coverage in LGU hospitals.

The DOH added that the move is aligned with the government's commitment to strengthen universal health care and reduce out-of-pocket expenses of patients nationwide. (PNA)

PCG continues search for missing passenger in Batangas-Caticlan waters

MANILA – The Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) has intensified its search and rescue (SAR) operations for a missing passenger along the Batangas-Caticlan sea route since Dec. 13.

In a statement on Tuesday, PCG Commandant, Admiral Ronnie Gil Gavan, ordered the activation of SAR vessels and aerial assets as part of the PCG's commitment to protecting lives at sea, in line with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s "Bagong Pilipinas (New Philippines)" campaign.

"We have been doing all we can, no matter

how challenged we are in terms of assets, in order to provide the same quality of service, fast and right, to all Filipinos and users of our seas. This is the way of life of the PCG in the Bagong Pilipinas," Gavan said.

Gavan said the PCG is still investigating whether the missing passenger jumped overboard.

To date, PCG SAR units are actively searching in the Batangas-Caticlan route and have expanded their search through surface and aerial operations.

The PCG District Southern Tagalog is also coordinating with

the Philippine National Police to support the ongoing search, as well as constantly communicating with coastal communities and fisherfolk to widen the search area.

"This operation reflects the PCG's Intensified Community Assistance, Awareness, Rescue, and Enforcement (iCARE) Program, that ensures that every life, regardless of background or circumstance, is valued, and that Coast Guard service to the Filipino people remains decisive and unwavering, especially in times of distress," he said. (PNA)



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Father, son tagged in Bondi beach shooting; 16 dead, 40 hurt

SYDNEY – The death toll from a shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach on Sunday has risen to 16, with a father and son identified as the attackers, police said Monday.

Police in the state of New South Wales (NSW) said on Monday morning that 16 people have been confirmed dead after the shooting.

A police statement said that 14 people died at the scene and two others died in the hospital.

The deceased range in age from 10 to 87 years old and includes one of the attackers.

Another 40 people were being treated in hospital for their injuries as of Monday morning, five of whom were in critical condi-

tion.

NSW Police Force Commissioner Mal Lanyon told a press conference on Monday morning that the two alleged shooters were a 50-year-old man and his 24-year-old son.

The 50-year-old, who was killed at the scene, was a licensed firearm holder with six guns legally in his possession, Lanyon said.

The shooting occurred at around 6:47 p.m. local time on Sunday when the two men opened fire on a crowd of at least 1,000 people who gathered at the beach for an event celebrating the first day of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.

Lanyon, who on Sunday night officially

declared the shooting a terrorist attack, said Monday that investigations into the motives behind the attack are ongoing.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said that the attack was an act of "pure evil" and that Australia would do whatever is necessary to stamp out antisemitism.

"It is a scourge and we'll eradicate it together," he said.

It marks Australia's most deadly mass shooting since 35 people were killed at Port Arthur in the island state of Tasmania in 1996, which prompted fundamental changes to Australia's gun ownership laws. (Xinhua)

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A COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER THAT'S NATIONAL IN SCOPE

VOL. XXVI NO. 36 DECEMBER 18-24, 2025

P10.00

Olympian rower Delgaco, Paraon give PH 26th gold

RAYONG, Thailand — Rowers Joanie Delgaco and Kristine Paraon defied their own expectations and captured the Philippines' 26th gold medal in the 2025 Southeast Asian Games at the Royal Thai Navy Rowing and Canoeing Training Centre here on Tuesday.

Third in the preliminary, the Filipina tandem saved their best for the final with a time of eight minutes and 16.976 seconds to deny local bets Sukkaew Rawiwan and Chaempudsa Parisa from adding to the hosts' enormous medal haul.

Delgaco and Paraon were nearly five seconds faster than their Thai foes, who finished with 8:21.634.

Vietnam's Nguyen Thi Van Anh and Pham Thi Bich Ngoc rounded out the podium with 8:26.447 for the bronze.

"Iniisip po namin kagabi, nakikita po namin na parang pahirapan pa po 'yung bronze eh. Pero sabi ko sa sarili ko noong bago ako matulog kagabi, grabe talaga 'pag si Lord na 'yung gumanlaw talaga. Walang impossible Talaga (We were thinking last night, we could see that the bronze was going to be tortured. But I told myself before I went to sleep last night, it would be really great if the Lord was the one who really moved. Nothing is impossible)," Delgaco said.

Their belief in each other proved to be the winning ingredient as the younger Paraon, 23, leaned on 27-year-old



ROWING GOLD. Rowers Joanie Delgaco and Kristine Paraon celebrate after winning the rowing's women's double sculls in the 2025 Southeast Asian Games at the Royal Thai Navy Rowing and Canoeing Training Centre in Rayong, Thailand on Tuesday (Dec. 16, 2025). Delgaco and Paraon were nearly five seconds faster than their Thai foes, who finished with 8:21.634. (POC Media Pool photo)

Delgaco, the Philippines' first female rower to qualify for the Olympics.

"Hindi po namin ine-expect 'tong gold namin po kasi malalakas din po 'yung mga kalabban naming (We didn't expect our gold because our opponents were also strong)," Paraon said.

"Pero tiwala po talaga sa isa't isa at saka alam naman po namin ang mga pinagdaanan po naming training at sobrang salamat ko po kasi si ate Jo po 'yung naging lead ko. Isa rin po siya sa inspiration ko na isang rower, naging isang rower din po ako (But we really trust each other and we know the training we went through and I'm so grateful because sister Jo was my lead. She's also one of my inspirations as a rower, I became a rower too)."

Delgaco worried whether she was up to the task after a long hiatus that followed her participation in the 2024 Paris

Games.

She enlisted for military training in the Philippine Navy and only returned to action just two months ago, with the Asian Rowing Championships in Vietnam in October being her first competition after the Olympics.

But Delgaco and Paraon were prolific from start to finish of the 2,000-meter race, gaining an advantage of more than a second over the Thais after the first 500m and maintaining the lead the rest of the way.

"Yung nangyari po ngayong race, hindi ko na po iniisip 'yung pagkukulang ko sa mga training, dinaan ko na lang po talaga sa tiwala sa sarili, tiwala sa partner, and thankful din po ako dahil 'yung family ko po nasa finish line. 'Yun din po 'yung nag-ing inspirasyon ko sa start pa lang ng race hanggang dulo (What happened in this race, I didn't think about my lack of training, I just

Philippine Flag soars as Cavite's young innovators shine in World Robotics Games 2025

TRECE MARIRES, Cavite (PIA)

— Cavite's young tech talents once again took the global spotlight as the Salty Bots Club proudly waved the Philippine flag at the recently concluded World Robotics Games (WRG) 2025 in Taiwan, where more than 500 participants from around the world gathered to compete in this impressive event.

The Cavite-based student robotics team delivered an outstanding performance, bringing home an impressive collection of medals that underscored the capability, creativity, and determination of Filipino youth on the international stage. Organizers, coaches, and fellow competitors alike witnessed how these students—armed with courage, talent, and an unwavering fighting spirit—held their own in one of the world's most challenging robotics arenas.

Behind each victory were months of preparation marked by late-night debugging sessions, repeated trial runs, and meticulous strategy-building. Despite juggling academic responsibilities, the young innovators proved that age and circumstance are no barriers to achieving world-class excellence.

Carrying the banner of Caviteño brilliance, the team secured mul-



iple honors: Gold Award: Kelvin Caisser D. Javier — iBeam SR; John Macklein D. Valdez — iBeam SR; Andrei Jiggerson Samaniego — iBeam SR, Silver Award: Bryzen Villanueva — iBeam SR; Kylene Mathew M. Gaudiel — iBeam SR; Claude Ron R. Abriol — iBeam SR, Bronze Award: Kelvin Caisser D. Javier — PLT SR; Kiesha Veras — iBeam JR, Copper Award: Solenn Quejado — iBeam SR; Kylene Mathew M. Gaudiel — Beam Battle; Fiona Nathalie J. Rosga — Beam Battle, and Merit Award: Sean Adrienne Santos

For the students, these medals represent more than triumph, they symbolize the growing presence of Filipino talent in global innovation and tech-driven competitions. The team credited part of their success to generous sponsors whose support ensured that the young competitors had the tools, training, and confidence needed to excel.

went with the flow with self-confidence, trust in my partner, and I'm also thankful because my family was at the finish line. That was also what inspired me from the start of the race until the end," said Delgaco,

whose father, Bernardo, was in attendance to witness her triumph.

Another Olympian delivered a medal as Cris Nieverez bagged bronze in the men's single sculls.

Nieverez, who repre-

Equally vital were the dedicated coaches—Ma'am Cyra, Ma'am Jhing, Ma'am Amy, Kuya Justin, and Sir Rolan—whose guidance and tireless mentorship shaped the team's discipline and technical mastery from the brainstorming stage to the final match.

The victory of the Salty Bots Club extends beyond their school or province. It echoes the aspirations of countless Filipino children who dream of building, competing, and innovating at a global scale. Their achievement stands as a powerful reminder that with support, passion, and courage, excellence knows no age.

As they look toward future international challenges, the young robotics champions carry with them the proud message of a new generation of innovators: "Filipinos can do it. Youth can do it. We can do it anywhere in the world." (RBF/Cavite Press Corps/Sid Samaniego)

sented the country in the Tokyo Games in 2021, registered 8:22.121 to finish behind Indonesia's Memo (8:10.247) and Thailand's Wattananusith Premanut (8:15.827). (PR)