

Local

10,000 Filipino helpers bound to Kuwait shift to alternate destinations after ban

Vacationing helpers allowed to return back to Kuwait

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Around 10,000 Filipino household service workers bound for Kuwait during the first quarter of 2020 are now shifting their destinations after the Jan 3 ban implemented by the Philippines Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). Effective 5 pm of Jan 3, 2020, Filipinos seeking employment in Kuwait are no longer allowed to process their documents, said administrator Bernard Olalia during a radio program (Global Pinoy) in Manila.

"We will try to help them get alternate job destinations abroad. We advised them to upgrade their skills so they can be competitive - we have free trainings given by TESDA, like housekeeping, caregiving, etc. We want to upgrade their skills so that they no longer seek employment as domestic helpers. We know how hard it is to work inside a stranger's house, so we want to help our kababayans (countrymen)," Olalia noted.

Olalia once again reminded recruitment agencies of their responsibility to continuously monitor the condi-

tion of their deployed workers, including issuing regular reports on the situation of workers abroad. "At the interview panel before getting the license, we always remind recruitment agencies of their responsibilities to monitor and submit reports of HSWs wherever they are," he added.

Based on governing board resolution 01, series of 2020, the POEA declared a partial ban on the sending of Filipino workers, particularly newly-hired HSWs. The board immediately drafted the provisions of the ban and imposed the decision immediately. Estrelita Hizon of POEA's governing board clarified that the partial deployment ban only covers first-time domestic helpers, who are not allowed to come to Kuwait, and their documents will not be processed after the Jan 3

ban date.

Helpers who are planning to go on vacation and planning to return will be allowed to do so, provided they are coming back to the same employer. Meanwhile, all skilled workers (visa 18) - new and

returning - are allowed to apply and enter Kuwait. "We will be having another round of meetings this coming Friday to further discuss the ban - probably on the coverage of the ban, and confusing points will be clarified too," Hizon said.

Filipinos in Kuwait were confused by the revised rules issued by the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait yesterday, which says domestic helpers planning to go on vacation and return will no longer be issued an Overseas Employment Certificate (OEC), and therefore

cannot return to Kuwait even if they have valid visas and are returning to the same sponsor. "We shall follow the provisions agreed upon in the meeting of the governing board members last Friday," Hizon noted.

In Feb 2018, the Philippines imposed a total deployment ban on Kuwait after authorities found inside a freezer the body of domestic helper Joanna Demafelis, who was killed by her employers. The ban was lifted three months later after Manila and Kuwait signed an agreement on the protection of overseas Filipino workers. The employer of Demafelis was later found guilty of murder. The ban was lifted in May 2018 after then Foreign Affairs Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano and Kuwaiti officials signed an agreement on the employment of domestic workers.

In May 2018, another maid died at the hands of her employer. Constanca Dayag, 47, was reportedly found with her body covered in bruises and with a "cucumber" inside her private parts, according to the Philippine media. She was rushed to Sabah Hospital but was declared dead on arrival.



'Visa 18' workers can enter Kuwait

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Minister defends right of expression 'as a citizen'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: As the debate of the grilling motion filed against the Minister Of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri is scheduled for today's parliamentary session, Aseeri placed stumble blocks towards this discussion by requesting explanations and proofs of the items included in the motion. Aseeri's request came ten days after MP Adel Al-Damkhi filed the interpellation, said informed sources, noting that the government is displeased with the motion and deems it absolutely unconstitutional and should be referred to the parliamentary legislative affairs committee. "Unlike rumors that Aseeri intends to resign from office, the government insists on keeping her as a Cabinet member," the sources underlined, noting that the grilling motion's discussion might be annulled if Damkhi fails to present the requested explanations.

In her request filed yesterday, minister Aseeri argued

that the grilling motion is void of explicit facts and proofs, namely those related to allegations that the minister had violated the principles of cooperation between both the legislative and executive authorities without explaining in what way. She added that the motion also accuses her of challenging lawmakers and making fun of them and their voters without listing or explaining the actions or words she said in doing so.

"All in all, the grilling motion does not involve any of my actions as a minister, but rather as a citizen who had used her constitutional right stipulated in article 36 of the constitution which says that 'Freedom of opinion and scientific research is guaranteed and that every person shall have the right to express his opinion by speaking or writing or otherwise,'" Aseeri elaborated, urging Damkhi to define the relation between statements attributed to her as a citizen and the ministerial performance for which she can be politically questioned.



Dr Ghadeer Aseeri

Govt summons Jleeb workers' sponsors

KUWAIT: The joint ministerial committee for following up the situation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh is working on summoning sponsors of expat labor in the area, in order to transfer their residence addresses to that of their sponsors after inspection campaigns revealed that most of these laborers are registered as 'domestic helpers.'

A local daily reported quoted head of the committee, Kuwait Municipality Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi as saying that preliminary reports the committee received from state departments confirm that the work mechanism in the area is progressing well, noting that "half of the first

stage is now completed, as measures continue to close violating shops as planned, in addition to canceling more than 12 government contracts in regards to labor residence in the area." "The municipality is working in preparing solutions for the area in coordination with Public Authority for Civil Information and Public Authority for Manpower," Manfouhi added.

In other news, Al-Rai reported yesterday that the prices of some medicines in Kuwait should witness a drop by the middle of this year. Head of the Medicine Pricing Department of the Drugs Control Sector at the Ministry of Health Pharmacist Hiba Al-Shayji spoke about several factors that the price reduction process relies on, including the expiry of patent, having its price reduced in a certain country, or renewing its registration. "Revision of pharmaceuticals prices is done regularly, and pricing relies on several factors, most importantly the medicine's price in 30 reference countries that are similar to Kuwait as far as population composition and economic levels are concerned," she explained.

Assembly to look into minister's grilling today

KUWAIT: The National Assembly is set to discuss today several issues on its agenda including looking into the interpellation motion submitted against Minister of Social Affairs Dr Ghadeer Aseeri. The grilling, forwarded by MP Dr Adel Al-Damkhi, will focus on the claim that the minister had slacked in her duty to promote cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities in addition to accusation of breaking constitutional oath. MP Damkhi had submitted the interpellation to Deputy Speaker of Parliament Essa Al-Kandari on December 29. The Cabinet said in a statement last week that the government was eager to commit to its oath to serve the interest of the people. Minister Aseeri said during the meeting that MPs' interpellations were guaranteed by the constitution, adding

that she will abide by it within the boundaries of the constitution and in respect of the National Assembly statute. Other items on the agenda of the session include a request by a number of MPs to assign the State Audit Bureau to prepare a report on the state funding derived from future generations' oil reserves. Issues such as the government's handling of fake academic certificates and accreditations, policies towards bedoons (stateless people), forgery of Kuwaiti citizenship documents and others will be discussed during the session. The session will also touch on Kuwait's foreign policy agreements including a military agreement with Ukraine, a commercial accord on maritime navigation with Morocco as well as the issue of establishing a headquarters for the EU in Kuwait. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A group picture taken during the visit.

NBK Group Human Resources visits KOC

KUWAIT: A staff mission from the Group Human Resources at the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) made a visit to Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) to discuss means to boost strategic partnership between both parties especially in field of development.

During the visit, NBK's staff mission discussed the Group Human Resources' business model, in addition to the bank's development tools, best methods to enhance positive behavior as well as employees' incentive plan. The mission also touched upon methods to bolster the teamwork, productivity, comprehensive quality system in addition to the best digital solutions.

Then, the staff mission comprising Anwar Al-Sabti, Team Leader - Personnel Services; Haneen Al-Mansour, Senior MIS Officer - Group Human Resources; Sarah Al-Rayes, Employee Relations Officer and Faisal Dashti, Manager in Foreign Corporate, Oil and Trade Finance Group, has paid a visit to KOC

Ahmed Al Jaber Oil and Gas Exhibition. This exhibition represents a prominent cultural icon that helps the documentation of the oil history in Kuwait, in addition to the latter's role in the petroleum industry.

NBK continues to play a key role for the oil sector companies, given its strong commitment to KPC and its affiliated units, together with its prominent role in developing the human capital in the state-owned entities, thanks to being the strategic partner to public sector. The NBK is also keen on developing the human capital especially in the state-owned entities in line with its social responsibility framework. The NBK's annual initiatives underline its profound strategy aimed at investing in the human resources, and further echo its primary role in the community service for decades. NBK's programs continue to reflect the leadership role it has undertaken for decades in the local sector.

Last year, the bank's Human Resources completed the second phase of the training program held for employees of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiaries. The program was aimed at developing the technical skills of KPC employees and covered several business divisions including treasury, finance and accounting.

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