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Calls for justice as Filipina maid's body returns home

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ILOILO, Philippines: More than a hundred relatives and supporters of a Filipina maid whose body was found stuffed in a freezer in Kuwait brandished banners demanding justice as her coffin was returned home yesterday. The family of Joanna Demafelis openly wept as the white casket was unloaded at an airport cargo terminal in the central city of Iloilo.

"Justice for Joanna D Demafelis," was emblazoned on banners and on T-shirts worn by the crowd which included a congressman and local officials expressing their anger over the death of the Filipina whose body was found in a freezer in Kuwait earlier this month after her employers, a Lebanese man and his Syrian wife, disappeared in 2016. The incident worsened a diplomatic flap between the Philippines and Kuwait with President Rodrigo Duterte alleging that employers routinely rape their Filipina workers, force them to work 21 hours a day and feed them scraps.

He has also banned the deployment of new workers to Kuwait and ordered airlines to fly home any of the 252,000 Filipinos working there who wish to return. About 10 million Filipinos work abroad and the money they remit back is a lifeline of the Philippine economy. Their treatment abroad is often a political issue at home. Kuwait's foreign minister previ-

ously condemned Manila's "escalation" of the issue but Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano said Friday the Kuwaiti ambassador had assured him his government was "outraged" over the killing and determined to find those responsible.

Cayetano said while the death was tragic, it would be a "rallying point" for governments to work harder to protect Filipinos overseas, while conceding that Philippine-Kuwaiti relations were going through a "very rocky period". He said only about three to five percent of Filipino laborers in Kuwait were having problems but acknowledged the government needed to do more. His department said Monday authorities were repatriating 10,000 Filipinos who had overstayed their visas in Kuwait, with more than 700 flown home already under an amnesty program announced recently by the Kuwaiti government.

A distraught Eva Demafelis could only say "I am sad," when asked by reporters about the death of her daughter. "She does not deserve the manner in which she died. She was beaten up," said an aunt, Rosela Demafelis Taunan, referring to local news reports about the 29-year-old maid's death. "She decided to go abroad because she wanted to help her

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ILOILO, Philippines: Eva (third left), mother of Filipina worker Joanna Demafelis whose body was found inside a freezer in Kuwait, cries in front of the wooden casket containing her daughter's body shortly after its arrival from Manila at Iloilo International Airport yesterday. — AFP

India, Iran agree to support Kabul, ink pact to lease Chabahar port

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani agreed yesterday to step up efforts to bring stability to war-ravaged Afghanistan. Modi reiterated India's commitment to help Afghanistan become "a peaceful, secure, permanent, prosperous and pluralistic country" after holding talks with Rouhani in New Delhi on the last day of his three-day visit. "Looking at our common interests, we are committed to stopping the expansion of such forces that promote international organized crime in terrorism, extremism, illegal drug trafficking, cyber crime and various forms," Modi said "We want to see our region and the world free from terrorism."

There was no mention of financial assistance or providing weapons to help Afghanistan fight militants by either leader. They did not name Pakistan but it has long been accused of supporting insurgents in Afghanistan. India has been a key supporter of Kabul's government and has poured more than \$2 billion into the country since the Taliban were toppled



NEW DELHI: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (left) shakes hands with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi before a meeting at Hyderabad House yesterday. — AFP

in 2001. In 2016, India offered \$1 billion in economic aid to strengthen various sectors in the war-torn nation including education, health and agriculture.

Modi said both countries wanted to increase economic cooperation, regional connectivity and improve energy security to reach landlocked Afghanistan and central Asia via the southern Iranian port of Chabahar. The port, which was inaugurated in December, has been touted as a way for India to establish trade routes that bypass its rival Pakistan. India has been a key purchaser of Iranian oil and gas, and maintained trade ties even as international sanctions were imposed on Tehran over its nuclear program between 2012 and 2016.

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Pak child killer handed four death sentences

LAHORE: A Pakistani court yesterday handed four death sentences to a man charged with raping and murdering a six-year-old girl, in a case that shocked the country and sparked major riots in his home district. Imran Ali, 24, was on trial for killing Zainab Fatima Ameen in the eastern city of Kasur last month. He faces further charges in the cases of at least seven other children attacked in the Punjab city - five of whom were murdered - in a spate of assaults that had stoked fears a serial child killer was on the loose. He has confessed to all eight attacks, including the death of Zainab.

Ali was handed four separate death sentences after being convicted of the rape and murder of Zainab, as well as terrorism charges, prosecutor general of Punjab province Ihtesham Qadir said after a special anti-terrorism court passed its judgement. Under Pakistani law, crimes that are considered to have spread terror in society can be charged as acts of terrorism. The prosecutors said he also received life imprisonment and fines totalling 3.2 million rupees (\$30,000) for additional charges of hiding his victim's body.

One million rupees of the fine would be given in compensation to Zainab's family, public prosecutor Abdul Rauf Wattoo told AFP. The trial was held in Lahore's Kot



ISLAMABAD: Ameen Ansari, the father of six-year-old Zainab who was found raped and murdered, leaves following a court verdict yesterday. — AFP

Lakhat prison under tight security. Journalists were stopped 500 m from the prison and only relatives of the victim were allowed in court for the hearing. Zainab's mother Nusrat Bibi demanded he be executed in public. "I want him to be hanged publicly at the place where he took Zainab," she told reporters after the verdict.

Zainab's murder last month sparked outrage across Pakistan, with riots erupting in Kasur as thousands swarmed police stations and set fire to politicians' homes, while Pakistanis across the nation took to social media demanding action. Television stations repeatedly broadcast chilling CCTV footage purportedly showing the young girl walking hand-in-hand with an unidentified male in what may have been her last moments.

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'Screaming Mummy' displayed in museum

CAIRO: The Egyptian Museum in Cairo has put on display the "Screaming Mummy" of the son of a pharaoh who may have been hanged for plotting his father's murder. Dubbed "the unknown man E", the mummy - which is not usually exhibited - appears to be of a man who died an agonizing death. Egypt's antiquities ministry has said DNA analysis confirmed the mummy was a son of Ramses III, who ruled between 1186 BC and 1155 BC.

It showed signs that the man had been hanged and shrouded in sheepskin, which the ancient Egyptians considered impure. Pentawere, the son of Ramses III, was sentenced to hang for his role in the plot, according to an ancient papyrus record of the conspiracy. Pentawere conspired with his mother Tiye, the second wife of Ramses III, to murder the king. It is not clear if Ramses III was



CAIRO: A picture taken yesterday shows the "Screaming Mummy", known scientifically as "the unknown man E", on display at the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square. — AFP

killed in the plot, but there are indications that he was stabbed in the neck. An Eye of Horus amulet, representing healing and protection, was placed around Ramses III's throat, the ministry statement said. — AFP

MoH to open ENT depts in all hospitals

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah said the ministry has completed nearly 80 percent of the goals of a health survey that aims at early discovery of hearing disabilities in newborns. Sheikh Basel was speaking during the opening of a conference on the latest developments in throat and vocal cord surgeries, which ended yesterday. He said the survey, which was launched in 2013, aims at taking quick treatment and rehabilitation measures while reducing the rate of hear-

ing disabilities in newborns.

The conference coincided with health ministry's preparations to launch a Comprehensive National Program for the Prevention of Deafness and its celebration of the International Day for Hearing in March. Sheikh Basel said participants in the conference will carry out several tests and operations at Zain, Farwaniya and Adan Hospitals, adding that involving world experts in such conferences contributes to easing pressure on the treatment abroad program and enhancing Kuwaiti doctors' experience.

Sheikh Basel said the ministry is keen on opening ear, nose and throat (ENT) departments in all hospitals, in addition to developing the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali hearing and diction center and



KUWAIT: CEO of Central Circle Co Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (second left) discusses the latest ear, nose and throat technologies with Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah (second right) at an ENT conference.

equip it with state-of-the-art systems. Chairman of the Conference Dr Humoud Al-Arouj said the conference, in which 12 consultants from Kuwait, Saudi

Arabia, UAE, US, Australia, Canada and Turkey participated, included 20 lectures, four workshops and two roundtable discussions. — KUNA