



NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Kuwait Times extends to our readers best wishes for the Kuwait National & Liberation Day holidays! The newspaper will not publish 26 February. Our next issue will be published on February 27, 2017.



Employers of Filipina maid found in a freezer arrested

Nader Essam Assaf in Lebanon custody; Wife in Syria custody



KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior yesterday urged motorists to be cautious on the roads due to the rainy weather. Drivers must ensure that their vehicles remain reasonably apart, keep the lights on, adhere to all traffic regulations and call without hesitance the emergency room at 112 if accidents occur. Kuwait witnessed heavy rain, coupled with cloudy skies and moderate visibility yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 2)

BEIRUT: The employers of a Filipina maid found dead in a freezer in Kuwait were both arrested in the Syrian capital Damascus, a Lebanese judicial official said yesterday. Syrian authorities surrendered Nader Essam Assaf to Beirut on Friday because of his Lebanese citizenship but his Syrian wife Mona remains in custody in Damascus, the official said. The murder of Joanna Demafelis sparked outrage in the Philippines and prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to impose a departure ban for Filipinos planning to work in Kuwait. The 29-year-old's body, which allegedly showed signs of torture, was found earlier this month inside a freezer in the abandoned apartment unit of the detained couple.

The couple have been the subject of an Interpol manhunt since Demafelis's body was found more than a year after her family reported her missing. "The couple were arrested in Damascus. They were the subject of an Interpol red notice and the Syrian authorities handed the husband over to Lebanese custody on Friday morning," the official said. "Syria kept custody of the wife because she is a Syrian national," he added. "Lebanon has asked Kuwait to pass on the husband's police record." The official said that after leaving Kuwait, the couple had made a very brief stopover in Lebanon before travelling to neighboring Syria.



KUWAIT: Ciriaco A Lagunzad III (center), Undersecretary for Workers Protection, Human Resource, and Internal Auditing Services Cluster in the Filipino Department of Labor, speaks during a meeting with the Filipino community at his country's embassy in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Duterte has vowed to bring justice to Demafelis's family, lashing out at the Gulf state and alleging Arab employers routinely rape Filipina workers, force them to work 21 hours a day and feed them scraps. Kuwait has said it is investigating reported deaths and abuses, and insisted there were only a small number considering that there are more than 250,000 Filipinos working in the emirate. Duterte this week sent a team of labor officials to Kuwait to seek greater protection for migrant workers. — AFP

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