

Local

Filipinos stay on despite free tickets, appeal by Duterte

Embassy officials concerned by no-shows at the airport

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Despite an offer of free tickets to all undocumented Filipinos, many have opted to stay and there have been some no-shows at Kuwait International Airport too. "I want to go back home but I have financial responsibilities in the Philippines," said Cynthia, not her real name. "If I go back home, how can I provide for my family? I have three kids and I am a single mother," said Cynthia, who was cleared to leave Kuwait a few days after submitting an application at the embassy. However, on the day of her flight, she decided to back out and did not go to the airport.

The Philippines Embassy admitted that despite free air tickets, 203 Filipinos who applied during the amnesty and were cleared by the immigration authorities did not show up, resulting in a big loss, as the tickets were booked and fully paid by the Philippine government. Embassy officials said many people applied during the amnesty in the hope they could come back under a new sponsor. However, with the current labor-related problems with Kuwait, returning to Kuwait is not possible, as President Rodrigo Duterte has banned all new Filipino workers from heading to Kuwait. Duterte is expected to visit Kuwait for bilateral talks soon.

"Out of the almost 3,000 undocumented Filipinos sent home under the amnesty program of the Kuwaiti government, 203 did not

appear on the scheduled flight date," said Vice Consul Charleson Hermosura. "I am particularly concerned about the number of no-shows on the day of their flights at the airport. We are talking about millions of pesos in losses here - flights and seats have been paid for, and we cannot get a refund. My advice to all those availing of the amnesty is to take it and leave Kuwait, or else legalize your status here," he said.

Reported deaths

The total ban on Filipino workers was triggered by the death of Filipino housemaid Joana Demafelis, whose body was found inside a freezer in a Maidan Hawally apartment and the deaths of seven Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in a span of two months, which were reported and verified by Kuwaiti authorities. "If I go home without any assurance that I could come back, then I better stay. Anyway, I have lived in Kuwait for many years and I am safe here, so I am willing to gamble to work," said Cynthia.

She has been working as a seamstress at a dressmaking shop in Hawally governorate. "I am safe here. No one is bothering me when it comes to my visa. I want to go home, but what if the ban remains for years," asked Cynthia. "My accommodation is just across the shop where I work. I don't go out much, so I'm staying for now," she said.

The Philippine's department of foreign

affairs has sent a 10-member team to help process the documentations and repatriations of their countrymen. The team is headed by Alexander J Riosa, who also expressed frustration that people who applied for the amnesty failed to show up at the airport. "We are really thankful to the Kuwaiti government for this opportunity for our people to leave without being penalized. However, there are some sad stories and experiences shared with us. But we are happy that we can help and assist our countrymen," Riosa said.

Underwhelming results

The interior ministry extended the amnesty for residency violators for two more months as the results of the initial period were not as good as hoped for, as only 10-15 percent of illegals benefited from it. Security sources quoted in a report published by Al-Rai yesterday expressed doubts over the benefit of extending the period, as results show that some workers do not really want to correct their status and leave the country.

While the interior ministry considers the amnesty extension as a reflection of Kuwait's humanitarian approach towards those who live in it, the ministry did not give reasons for the low percentage of those who took advantage of the decision. The sources said that the interior ministry does not have answers, as the decision provided major concessions to violators in order to correct their status or leave



KUWAIT: A picture showing members from a 10-member DFA Team from Manila which is currently in Kuwait to assist Filipinos who are availing amnesty. —Photo by Ben Garcia

the country without having to face legal procedures or pay fines. Despite this, the percentage of beneficiaries is very low compared to the number of registered violators at the ministry, which is around 154,000.

"The interior ministry aims at giving the largest possible number of residency violators time to take advantage of the grace period, be it to leave or correct their status," the sources said. They added that the ministry also extended the period to counter those claiming they

had no knowledge of the decision, and to keep some embassies that demanded an extension in check, as they claim they want to send violators residing in their shelters back to their countries. The results of the initial period the interior ministry gave to violators to leave the country without having to pay fines show that around 15-20,000 had left, which is no more than 13 percent of the number of illegals, although the ministry had hoped 100,000 out of 154,636 violators would leave, Al-Rai reported.

Ex-convict kills brother in Omariya

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man shot and killed his brother before being arrested in Omariya yesterday. Police responded to a call about a shooting incident in which a citizen shot his brother in the head and escaped. The victim was pronounced dead on the scene, and a manhunt began in pursuit of the suspect who detectives discovered was released from prison only a week before the crime took place. The suspect was arrested after his car ran out of fuel, and police found the murder weapon - an AK-47 - in the car, the interior ministry's relations and security information department said. The man had reportedly served time in prison over a case in which he was found

guilty of physically assaulting a family member. He was sent to the proper authorities for further action.

10,700 tickets issued

Police issued 10,700 traffic tickets, impounded 596 vehicles and 53 motorcycles, sent 70 juveniles to concerned authorities, and arrested 53 persons during the national celebrations. They also dealt with seven cases of run-over accidents and 80 fights, while arresting 10 people in possession of drugs.

Drunk policeman arrested

Mubarak Al-Kabeer police arrested a Lieutenant Colonel who was busted driving under the influence of alcohol. Patrol police pulled the driver over at a street in the area, and placed him under arrest after discovering that he was drunk. Furthermore, police found two bottles of liquor inside the man's car.

Worker rescued

Firemen rescued a worker who fell from a height while working at a Farwaniya building, and handed him to paramedics.

terminated teachers would include teachers of Islamic and computer studies, science, social studies, mathematics, as well as Arabic and English languages in both the intermediate and secondary stages.

SMEs' budget

The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development's 2019-2019 budget due to commence in April showed a reduction from KD 10,032,000 to KD 9,025,000, said informed sources, explaining that the budget includes KD 6,933,000 for payrolls and KD 2,092,000 for general expenses. The sources added that estimated revenues are KD 2,000, and that this would leave the budget with an estimated deficit of KD 9,023,000, which would be funded by the finance ministry.

Highest flag

Kuwait Municipality approved a request by the Amiri Diwan to allocate the beach opposite Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center to build a flag pedestal that would be the highest in Kuwait, and an artificial island, said acting director Abdullah Emadi.

in filing 10 warning notices and destroying 10.6 kg of rotten fish. The center's manager Khaled Al-Mayyas said the rotten fish included two types of fish and that warning notices were filed for various violations including not wearing uniforms, hygiene, personal hygiene and lack of health certificates. Meanwhile, headed by the center's manager Abdullah Al-Siddiqi, the Capital center inspected various stores at Mubarakiya market, Mirqab and Sharq. Siddiqi said the tour resulted in filing three citations and 27 warning notices.

Kuwait Food Bank

Kuwait Livestock Trade and Transport Company (Al-Mawashi) signed a renewable one year contract to provide Kuwait Food Bank (KFB) with meat products to be distributed to needy families in Kuwait. Al-Mawashi CEO Osama Boodai said the contract was signed as part of the company's social responsibility duties and humanitarian activities. KFB Secretary Salem Al-Hamar said the contract was an achievement in the field of humanitarian activities and providing destitute families with their needs.

Ministry terminates 'hundreds' of expat teachers

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has started preparations to hand over termination letters to hundreds of expatriate teachers and employees this month, ministry insiders said. The employees to be released include supervisors and heads of departments whose service exceeded 34 years, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. No exceptions would be made, the sources said, adding that terminations will include Syrian teachers who had been previously exempted because of the situation in their home country. The sources explained that

854 kg of foul food items destroyed

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The imported food department at the public authority for food and nutrition destroyed 854 kg of foul food items imported via Shuwaikh Port. An examination for a coconut and mixed fruits' shipment revealed mold, and inspectors decided that the imported products are unsafe for human consumption, the department's manager Ali Al-Khanfour said. The shipment included 750 kg of coconut and 104 kg of mixed fruits, Khanfour added.

Meanwhile, an inspection tour conducted by Al-Kout food and nutrition inspection team at Ahmadi fish market auction site and the meat market resulted

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