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# Five political groups call for 'changing electoral system'

## Constitutional Movement selects five candidates for polls

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five Islamic, liberal and national political groups on Tuesday welcomed the appointment of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah as the new prime minister and urged reforms that include changing the electoral system. In a joint statement, the five groups expressed the hope that the next government will undertake reforms that lead to the election of a true representative National Assembly through the amendment of the election system and

an effective monitoring of the general polls.

This will lead to the election of reformist MPs who are expected to cooperate with government projects to serve the Kuwaiti people, the statement said. Kuwait Democratic Forum, the National Islamic Alliance, The Salaf Alliance, The Popular Action Front and the Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) signed the statement.

Sheikh Ahmad was named on Sunday to form the next Cabinet after the outgoing prime minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah resigned more

than three months ago amid a prolonged political deadlock. The ex-premier was grilled by three opposition lawmakers and a non-cooperation motion was filed against him. A large number of MPs have welcomed the appointment of Sheikh Ahmad and called on him to fight corruption and undertake reforms. After forming the Cabinet, HH the Amir is expected to dissolve the national assembly and call for fresh polls.

The ICM yesterday selected five candidates to contest the upcoming polls, one in each constituen-

cy. The candidates include current MPs Osama Al-Shaheen, Hamad Al-Matar and Abdulaziz Al-Saqaabi in the first, second and third electoral districts. They also selected Moath Al-Duwailah and Saad Al-Hajeri in the fourth and fifth constituencies.

In the meantime, leading opposition MP Hasan Jowhar said yesterday that the Kuwaiti voters should be allowed to freely elect their representatives. "Fair election is the first challenge to the credibility of the next cabinet in fighting corruption and an indicator to its reformist policy," Jowhar said on Twitter.

## Breakthrough in mysterious child hepatitis

WASHINGTON: British researchers reported a breakthrough Monday in mysterious hepatitis cases affecting young children, finding the serious liver condition was linked to co-infection of two common viruses, but not the coronavirus. The World Health Organization (WHO) has reported at least 1,010 probable cases, including 46 that required transplants and 22 deaths from the illness dating back to last October. Previous theories had centered on a spike in commonly found adenovirus infections being behind the cases.

But in two new studies carried out independently and simultaneously in Scotland and London, scientists found another virus, AAV2 (adeno-associated virus 2) played a significant role and was present in 96 percent of all patients examined. AAV2 is not normally known to cause disease and cannot replicate itself without another "helper" virus being present. Both teams concluded that co-infection with either AAV2 and an adenovirus, or sometimes the herpes virus HHV6, offered the best explanation for the severe liver disease.



Photo shows a hepatic function panel blood test tube.

"The presence of the AAV2 virus is associated with unexplained hepatitis in children," said infectious disease professor Emma Thomson of the University of Glasgow, who led the Scottish paper, in a statement. But she also cautioned it was not yet certain whether AAV2 was causing the disease or was rather a biomarker for underlying adenovirus infection that is harder to detect but was the main pathogen.

### No coronavirus link

Both papers have been posted online to "preprint" servers and still await peer review before they are published in journals. The two studies looked both at patients who acquired hepatitis and those that did not, finding that AAV2 was mostly present in those who got the illness, not those that didn't. The Scottish study further tested genes of children who had become sick and those that didn't, honing in on differences in their Human Leukocyte Antigen that might explain why some are more susceptible than others.

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## Sharp decline in real estate deals

KUWAIT: The Kuwait housing real estate scene has witnessed a sharp decline in deals by 50 percent in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. Some attributed this decline to price inflation of real estate and the static purchasing power on part of clients in Kuwait leading to a huge margin between supply and demand. There were 2,470 deals worth KD 1.13 billion (around \$3.3 billion) in the first half of this year as opposed to 4,814 deals worth KD 1.40 billion (around \$4.6 billion) in the same period in 2021.

Speaking on this issue, local real estate expert and Director General of Abraj Behbehani company, Alaa Behbehani, said Tuesday that the price inflation was the main cause of the sharp decline. Kuwait, as in the case of other countries, has been affected by the increase of interest rate announced by the US Federal Reserve, said Behbehani, adding that the latter continued to increase the interest rate of the US Dollar, which contributed in turn to withdrawal of liquidity from the world market. — (See Page 4)

## Iraq's Kurd farmers battle drought as Dukan retreats

LAKE DUKAN: Farmers in Iraqi Kurdistan seeking to irrigate crops face seeing their economic lifeline slip away as the waters of Lake Dukan recede and dams upstream in Iran stem the flow. Bapir Kalkani, who is also a trade unionist, farms near the picturesque lake but has seen marked changes over the past three years as Iraq suffers prolonged drought.

"There was water where I'm standing now" in 2019, the 56-year-old said. "It used to go three kilometers further, but the level has retreated." Sesame and beans are being grown on the plain under a blazing sun, adjacent to the lake which is fed by a

Tigris tributary, the Lower Zab river which has its source in Iran.

The large artificial lake was created in the 1950s following construction of the Dukan dam, to supply irrigation and drinking water for the region, as well as to generate electricity. But for several years both the lake and the river have been shrinking - as have all of the rivers in Iraq. The country is classified as one of the five nations most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and desertification. Its water reserves have fallen by 60 percent compared with last year, the government says.

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## NFL, rugby, soccer players face risk of brain diseases

LOS ANGELES: New research by a team of international experts has found that people playing contact sports such as American football, rugby and soccer face a dramatically elevated risk of developing degenerative brain diseases, a statement said Tuesday. The Concussion Legacy Foundation said analysis by experts at universities in the United States, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil and Britain had found "conclusive" evidence that repetitive head impacts cause the brain disease chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE).

Researchers said brain banks by the US Department of Defense, Boston University, US Department of Veterans Affairs and the Mayo Clinic had all published studies showing contact sport athletes were 68 times more likely to develop CTE than those who did not. "This innovative analysis gives us the highest scientific confidence that repeated head impacts cause CTE," said Chris

Nowinski, the Concussion Legacy Foundation chief executive and lead author of the study.

The Concussion Legacy Foundation wants more global sporting bodies to acknowledge a causal link between head impacts and CTE. A statement from the foundation said while the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Football League had already made such an acknowledgement, organisations such as football's governing body FIFA, World Rugby and the International Olympic Committee had not.

University of Michigan professor of environmental health sciences Adam Finkel said repetitive head impacts should be placed in the same bracket as other common public health hazards. "It is time to include repetitive head impacts and CTE among child protection efforts like exposure to lead, mercury, smoking, and sunburns," Finkel said.



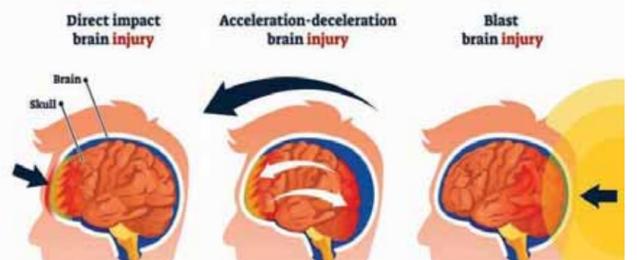
KUWAIT: Aerial photo captures Kuwait's coastal area along Kuwait City. Kuwait housing real estate scene recorded a sharp decline in deals by 50 percent in the first half of 2022 compared to the same period in 2021. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



RANIYE: Bapir Kalkani, an Iraqi Kurdish agricultural trade unionist, inspects his wheat farm in the Rania district near the Dukan reservoir, northwest of Iraq's northeastern city of Sulaimaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan region. — AFP

## CONCUSSION

A concussion is a traumatic brain injury that affects your brain function



"Repetitive head impacts and CTE deserve recognition in the global public health discussion of preventable disorders caused by childhood exposures." The research comes as more sports take measures designed to limit head contact.

England's Football Association last week obtained approval to trial the removal of heading in grassroots competitions and leagues. Similar rules have been in force in the United States since 2015 in youth football. — AFP