

SNP sweep renews Scottish hope

AFP, Glasgow

The Scottish National Party (SNP) won a landslide in Scotland yesterday, destroying the Labour party north of the border in a historic leap forward which could increase pressure for a fresh referendum on independence.

The nationalists won 56 of 59 parliamentary seats in Scotland in Thursday's general election, final results showed, up from just six at the last vote in 2010.

"It is an extraordinary statement of intent from the people of Scotland. The Scottish lion has roared this morning across the country," former SNP leader Alex Salmond said.

The final result gave Labour just one seat, down from 41 in 2010, while Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservatives held their single seat and the smaller centrist Liberal Democrats went down from 11 seats to just one.

The SNP's historic landslide is all the more astonishing as it comes just months after voters rejected by 55 percent the party's call for independence from the rest of Britain in September's referendum.

"What a result!" tweeted Nicola Sturgeon, who took over as SNP leader after the referendum.

With the Conservatives majority in the new parliament, the SNP will no longer have a chance to play kingmaker, as it had hoped when opinion polls pointed to an uncertain result. But the size of their bloc will give them a powerful voice at Westminster, led by Salmond, who was elected to the House of Commons in the northeastern Scottish seat of Gordon.

Speaking after his re-election as the member of parliament for Witney, in southern England, Cameron promised to "bring our country together" if as expected he is returned to Downing Street as prime minister.



(From top anticlockwise) Outgoing opposition Labour Party leader Ed Miliband, outgoing Liberal Democratic Party leader Nick Clegg and British Prime Minister David Cameron attend a ceremony to mark 70 years since victory over Nazi Germany at the Cenotaph on Whitehall in London yesterday; Ed Miliband arrive at Labour party headquarters in London after Labour's humiliating defeat in the polls; David Cameron and his wife Samantha are applauded by staff upon entering 10 Downing Street in London; and Scottish National Party (SNP) supporters celebrate as election results are announced in Glasgow, Scotland.

PHOTO: AFP



Danish PM's husband wins polls battle in UK

AFP, Copenhagen

Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt yesterday congratulated her husband Stephen Kinnock on winning a Labour seat in British parliament.

"I'm so happy on Stephen's behalf," she told Danish daily Berlingske. "He's done so well and the result is really great for him," she added.

Kinnock, the 45-year-old son of Britain's 1980s Labour Party leader and longtime European Commissioner Neil Kinnock, won a seat representing the coal-mining town of Aberavon in south Wales.

He has been dubbed a "red prince" in the British media, the term used for sons of senior Labour Party figures selected for safe seats.

Thorning-Schmidt and Kinnock met at the Bruges College of Europe in 1993. Together they have two daughters.

Gone after polls humiliation

Ed Miliband, Nick Clegg, Nigel Farage resign as party leaders

AGENCIES

The leaders of Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP) all stepped down yesterday over their parties' electoral poor show in the election.

Ed Miliband stepped down as Labour leader after the party's worst general election defeat since Margaret Thatcher's final victory in 1987.

Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg has also said he will quit, with his party set to be reduced from 57 to eight MPs.

"The results have been crushing," Clegg, who was the deputy prime minister for five years under David Cameron, told supporters.

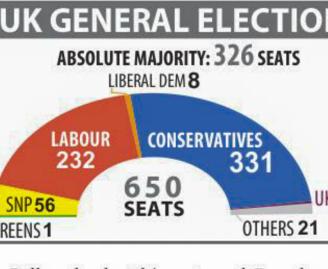
UKIP leader Nigel Farage is also quitting after he failed to win Thanet South, losing by nearly 2,800 votes to the Conservatives.

"Britain needs a strong Labour Party. It's time for someone else to take leadership of this party," Miliband told supporters in his resignation speech

yesterday.

"I am truly sorry I did not succeed, I have done my best for five years," he said, adding: "I take absolute and total responsibility for the result".

In the space of just hours Labour Party lost its three most senior personnel: Miliband, shadow chancellor Ed



Westminster.

Farage himself failed to win a seat in parliament in Thursday's general election and his party, which also campaigned against austerity and mass immigration, only managed to secure one House of Commons spot.

CAMERON RETAINS KEY MINISTERS

Meanwhile, David Cameron has opted for stability as he assembles his new Government, keeping the top four Cabinet ministers in their roles.

George Osborne has been reappointed as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Theresa May as Home Secretary, Philip Hammond will stay in charge of the Foreign Office and Michael Fallon will remain as Defence Secretary.

Osborne will also serve as First Secretary of State - effectively the Deputy Prime Minister and a role that suggests he will lead Britain's renegotiation with the European Union before the proposed 2017 referendum.

EU wakes up to 'Brexit' nightmare

AFP, Brussels

Europe wakes up to the cold certainty of an unprecedented British referendum on EU membership after David Cameron's election win, with two years of tough negotiations ahead to prevent a so-called "Brexit".

Work was to start quickly at the European Union's headquarters in Brussels after Cameron, whose Conservatives secured a surprise majority, confirmed his intention to let Britons vote in 2017 whether to stay in or leave in Downing Street victory speech.

Cameron has vowed to renegotiate London's relationship with Brussels and then go to the electorate, saying he wants Britain to remain in a reformed EU.

The EU said it was ready to talk with Cameron on the reforms that he has demanded, but stressed that its red lines on the bloc's four key principles such as people's freedom of movement were "non-negotiable".

Cameron's demands have however put him at odds with many other European leaders including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the continent's power-broker.

Many in Brussels had been hoping Cameron's Labour rival Ed Miliband would win, given that Miliband had ruled out an EU referendum.

But the sheer scale of the Conservative victory could increase Cameron's negotiating power, analysts and officials said. The failure of Nigel Farage's eurosceptic UK Independence Party to win more than one seat was a particular boost to Cameron, meaning that he may not have to pander so much to the anti-EU wing of his own Conservative Party.

NEWS IN brief

Salman Khan's jail term suspended

AFP, Mumbai

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan's five-year prison sentence for killing a homeless man with his SUV after a night out drinking 13 years ago was suspended yesterday pending an appeal. The actor was on Wednesday found guilty at a sessions court of culpable homicide and other charges for driving his vehicle into a group of homeless men sleeping rough in suburban Mumbai in 2002.

34 killed in ISIS assault on Syria city

AFP, Beirut

Fierce battles between Syrian regime forces and the Islamic State jihadist group in eastern Syria have left 34 fighters dead in 24 hours, a monitor said yesterday. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said 19 pro-government forces and 15 ISIS extremists had been killed since clashes began late Wednesday in the city of Deir Ezzor and around its nearby military airport.

Qaida leader linked to Hebdo attack killed

REUTERS, Washington

A US operation has killed the senior al-Qaeda figure who issued the claim of responsibility for the Charlie Hebdo attack in Paris, according to US sources familiar with the matter and a reported video posted by the group. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) said that its ideologue Nasser bin Ali al-Ansi was killed with his eldest son and other fighters in Yemen in a US air strike, according to the SITE Intelligence Group.



A makeshift tent is pitched in front of a damaged house in Kathmandu yesterday. The United Nations said it had received just 22 million dollars of the 415 million dollars it had appealed for in Nepal following the recent earthquake, and called for aid contributions to be "dramatically ramped up".

PHOTO: AFP

Fresh tremors rock Nepal

UN urges donors to fulfill pledges on aid

AGENCIES

Two fresh tremors were felt in Nepal yesterday, triggering panic among the people still reeling from the impact of the devastating earthquake that has claimed nearly 8,000 lives.

Aftershocks continued to rock Nepal with two more mild tremors being felt in central Nepal this morning. The epicentre of the tremors being Sindhupalchowk and Dolakha districts, east of Kathmandu.

A 4-magnitude tremor was felt at 2.19 AM this morning with the epicentre at Sindhupalchowk district, according to National Seismological Centre.

Another tremor measuring 5 on the Richter scale was felt at 6.17 am with the epicentre being at Dolakha.

However, no damage was reported from the tremors. About 150 aftershocks measuring 4 or more on the Richter scale have been reported after the April 25 quake.

The death toll due to the earthquake has reached 7,885 so far while the number of injured has shot up to 16,390, officials said.

Sindhupalchowk is the worst-hit district with nearly 3,000 people dead while 1,209 have been killed in Kathmandu.

Meanwhile, the United Nations yesterday said it had received just \$22 million of the \$415 million it had appealed for in Nepal following the recent earthquake, and called for aid contributions to be "dramatically ramped up".



Jamie McGoldrick, UN resident coordinator for Nepal, warned of a race against time to deliver relief supplies to remote areas -- some of which are accessible only on foot -- before heavy monsoon rains arrive, expected in June.

"We need to (deliver relief) urgently, so that people have roofs over their heads and their other urgent needs are addressed before the monsoon season starts," he said.

US Senate to have final say on Iran nuke deal

AFP, Washington

The US Senate overwhelmingly passed legislation Thursday giving Congress the right to review and perhaps even reject any nuclear deal with Iran, the culmination of weeks of wrangling over how to hold Tehran to account.

The bill passed 98-1 after overcoming initial objections from President Barack Obama.

Republican Tom Cotton was the lone member voting in opposition to legislation that would give lawmakers at least 30 days to review any final Iran accord.

The bill now heads to the House of Representatives, where it has the support of the chamber's Republican leaders.

According to White House spokesman Eric Schultz, Obama "said he would sign the legislation in its current form."

If it goes through, it would also prevent Obama from easing economic sanctions against Tehran during the review period. The legislation would also compel the president to assert to Congress every 90 days that Iran was complying

YEMEN CRISIS Saudi-led jets pound rebels

AFP, Sanaa

Warplanes from a Saudi-led coalition struck Yemeni rebels in their northern stronghold as Riyadh vowed "harsh" punishment for deadly cross-border bombardments, hours after proposing a humanitarian ceasefire.

The raids targeted control centres, a communication complex and a landmine factory and other rebel positions across Yemen's northern Saada province, which borders Saudi Arabia, state media in Riyadh said yesterday.

The United Nations has renewed its plea for a ceasefire in Yemen, where weeks of war have now killed more than 1,400 people and injured nearly 6,000 -- many of them civilians.

Climate change a UN-led hoax!

AFP, Sydney

Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott's top business advisor yesterday claimed climate change was a ruse encouraged by the United Nations to create a new authoritarian world order under its control.

Maurice Newman, chairman of the Prime Minister's Business Advisory Council, said the real agenda was "concentrated political authority. Global warming is the hook".

In a column for The Australian newspaper to coincide with a visit by UN climate chief Christiana Figueres, he added that the world had been "subjected to extravagance from climate catastrophists for close to 50 years".

"It's a well-kept secret, but 95 percent of the climate models we are told prove the link between human CO2 emissions and catastrophic global warming have been found, after nearly two decades of temperature stasis, to be in error," he said, without providing evidence.

Newman, a former chairman of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, is a known climate change sceptic but he went further by accusing the UN of being involved in a scam.

"This is not about facts or logic. It's about a new world order under the control of the UN. It is opposed to capitalism and freedom and has made environmental catastrophism a household topic to achieve its objective."

Europe marks WWII victory

AFP, Paris

Europe held sombre ceremonies to mark 70 years since victory over Nazi Germany yesterday. Victory day is celebrated across Europe on May 8, the day Germany surrendered, ending WWII in Europe.

Poland opened Victory Day celebrations with a midnight ceremony in northern Westerplatte, where the first shots of the war were fired on September 1, 1939 as Nazi forces swept across the border.

In France, President Francois Hollande laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier at a solemn ceremony under the Arc de Triomphe in Paris after urging citizens not to grow complacent about war.

US President Barack Obama also marked the anniversary, expressing solidarity with Europe and hailing the victorious Allied troops as a "generation that literally saved the world."