



Irish, Scottish, Welsh parties unite to challenge UK union

Leaders say their nations belong in a future European Union

● Three nationalist parties sign agreement

● Leaders demand self-determination rights

AFP | Cardiff

Leaders of the main Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh nationalist parties yesterday declared their right to choose whether to remain in the UK, with all three seeing their future as nations within the European Union.

The rare meeting in the Welsh capital comes just days after US President Donald Trump waded in on the issue saying he would back a united Ireland.

His comments showed “the unity debate is very much alive”, Northern Ireland’s Michelle O’Neill said alongside fellow party leaders as they announced a memorandum of understanding.

All three parties -- the Scottish National Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru in Wales and the pro-Irish unity Sinn Fein -- want to break away from the UK.

“Our nations have the right to self-determination. No Westminster government (the UK government) has the right to block democracy or undermine the principle that our people will decide their own future,” the agreement said.

SNP leader John Swinney, Rhun ap Iorwerth, leader of Plaid Cymru in Wales and Mary Lou McDonald and O’Neill, lead-



Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) leader John Swinney, Rhun ap Iorwerth of Plaid Cymru in Wales, Mary Lou McDonald, president of Irish Republicans Sinn Fein and Michelle O'Neill, vice president of Irish Republicans Sinn Fein pose together with a memorandum of understanding as they attend a meeting in Cardiff, Wales to press for self-determination votes in their territories



For the first time, all three nations have first ministers committed to independence, and the parties are the biggest in their respective parliaments simultaneously

er and deputy leader of pro-Irish unity Sinn Fein met in their capacity as party leaders, rather than as officials in their respective governments.

O’Neill is also Northern Ireland’s first minister while Iorwerth and Swinney are first ministers of their respective nations.

Announcing the agreement, Swinney said the three parties were “absolutely united by that principle of self-determination”.

‘Independence’

For the first time, the nations each had first ministers “committed to independence from the United Kingdom”, the agreement said, adding: “The future of our nations belongs in the European Union.”

The independence parties are the biggest in both the Scottish and Welsh parliaments for the first time since devolution measures began in 1999. Sinn Fein has been the biggest party in Northern Ireland’s assembly since 2022.

Israeli minister urges probe into sources in award-winning Gaza film



Director Yuval Abraham and Director Rachel Szor winners of the Special Jury Prize for “Naza” at the 83rd Venice Film Festival

AFP | Jerusalem

The Israeli culture minister yesterday called for an investigation to identify the anonymous military sources featured in the award-winning documentary “NAZA” who accused the army of mass civilian killing in Gaza.

In the film, directors Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor spoke to 24 anonymous Israeli military whistleblowers who outlined the AI-powered targeting systems used to bombard Gaza that have killed tens of thousands of civilians.

The 80-minute documentary won a special jury prize at this year’s Venice Film Festival.

In a post on X, Culture Minister Miki Zohar said he had asked authorities to “investigate how the materials were

obtained, who is behind them, and whether in the process of obtaining or publishing them, actions were taken that amount to aiding the enemy during wartime”.

He also said he had requested the interior ministry to consider revoking the citizenship of the two filmmakers on account of “treason”.

“Freedom of expression is not a licence to betray the state. Anyone who acts against Israel during wartime should know that there will be a price to pay,” Zohar wrote.

The revocation of nationality is legally possible in Israel, although it is rarely applied.

In 2022, Israel’s Supreme Court confirmed that the state may strip people of their nationality for a breach of “loyalty to the State”, for example by committing acts of espionage or treason.

Rights group says Israel trying to ‘eliminate’ Palestinian nationhood

AFP | Jerusalem

Israeli rights group B’Tselem said yesterday that Israeli actions in the occupied West Bank form part of a greater project designed to eliminate Palestinians as a people.

In a report titled “The Elimination Project”, the group alleged that five Israeli tactics and policies in the West Bank were connected — “violence, ethnic cleansing, movement restrictions,

economic strangulation, social and political destruction”.

The report pointed to violence by settlers and the military against Palestinians, which has left 1,108 dead — both civilians and militants — since October 7, 2023, according to an AFP tally based on data from the Palestinian health ministry.

It applied the term “ethnic cleansing” to the process by which dozens of small isolated Palestinian com-

Potential new TB vaccines could save millions of lives: Gavi

AFP | Geneva

New tuberculosis vaccines expected to become available from 2029 could save over seven million lives over a decade, Gavi said yesterday, but only if sufficient supply is ensured to the countries most in need.

New TB jabs in the pipeline have the potential of becoming the “next blockbuster immunisation tool”, said Sania Nishtar, head of the Gavi global vaccine alliance.

“However they will only realise their potential if we are

able to ensure sufficient, predictable and affordable supply for those countries with the highest disease burden,” she said in a statement.

Tuberculosis, or TB, remains the world’s leading infectious killer, claiming an estimated 1.23 million lives in 2024, according to the latest statistics available from the World Health Organization.

The only vaccine currently licensed to protect against the disease is the Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine, which is over 100 years old.



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TWEETS

01



Cluster munitions kill & injure civilians indiscriminately. Their consequences haunt people & communities for generations. Countries must strengthen political commitment & scale up resources to clear contaminated land & support survivors. Let's act decisively for a safer future.

@antonioguterres

02



From a rapidly expanding reactor fleet to SMRs and fusion, China is advancing across the nuclear sector. Just opened its #IAEAGC exhibit, a chance to see the scale and range of China's nuclear programme.

@rafaelmgrossi

03



@WHO's 69th mpxv situation report is available. Global risk remains moderate. DG @DrTedros standing recommendation for #mpox have been extended to Aug 2027

@mvankerkhove

04



At the #BRICS Leaders' Summit I spoke with Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla about the health situation and urgent medical needs in #Cuba, and how @WHO can extend its support.

@DrTedros

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)

Sweden faces political uncertainty after election thriller

AFP | Stockholm

Sweden faced political uncertainty yesterday, after an election thriller that saw the left-wing opposition holding a slim lead with votes still left to count.

Sunday’s election also served up a surprise setback to the far-right Sweden Democrats, who lost ground for the first time since entering parliament 16 years ago.

The leader of the left-wing opposition, Magdalena Andersson of the Social Democrats, and outgoing conservative Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson have each said they want to explore coalition options to secure power, but both would have to make major concessions to obtain a majority.

Both the Social Democrats and Kristersson’s Moderates held party meetings yesterday to hammer out their strategy.

While the left-wing held a slim lead, the bloc was expected to face thorny negotiations to form a government, with the talks expected to drag on for



Social Democratic Party leader Magdalena Andersson walks on her way to cast her vote

several weeks.

Parliament can vote on a new prime minister on September 29 at the earliest.

After the 2022 election, it took 37 days to form a government, much shorter than the 134 days it took to do so in 2018.

Political analyst Mats Knutson told public broadcaster SVT that both blocs were likely to end up in a “stalemate that

paves the way for a long and troublesome process of forming a government, which could end in a snap election”.

“One or several parties may have to abandon their ‘red lines’,” he said, a point echoed by Kristersson yesterday.

“If all the ‘red lines’ remain, then Sweden will not get any government at all,” he told reporters.