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Northern Irish First Minister resigns amid political crisis

NORTHERN Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson said he will step aside and that all but one of his Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) ministers will also resign amid a crisis over an IRA-linked murder.

The DUP, the province's largest pro-British party, failed to win support from rival parties to adjourn the power-sharing administration earlier yesterday and Robinson had said his ministers would resign if London did not agree to suspend parliament.

"In light of the decision to continue with business as usual in the Assembly, I am therefore standing aside as first minister and other DUP ministers will resign with immediate effect with the exception of Arlene Foster," Robinson told reporters, adding that the British government could still suspend. "I have asked Arlene to remain in her post as finance minister and acting first minister to ensure that nationalists and republicans are not able to take financial and other decisions that may be detrimental to Northern Ireland."



Catalan "National" Day today.

Tight poll points to political struggle over Catalan independence

● Key vote could determine future shape of Spain

SEPARATIST parties are on track to win a slim majority of seats in Catalonia's parliament in a 27 September election, a poll indicated yesterday, potentially paving the way for the wealthy northeastern region to declare independence from Spain.

The poll of 3,000 Catalan voters by the state-run Sociological Research Centre (CIS) found that the main pro-independence movement Junts pel Si would win 38.1

percent of the vote, or 60-61 seats in the 135-seat Catalan parliament.

Together with a predicted eight seats for the left-wing, pro-independence party CUP, it would give separatists a very slim majority with 68 or 69 seats.

Separatist parties are portraying the regional election as a proxy vote on independence and have said that winning a majority of seats, and not necessarily of votes, would allow them to launch a "road map" to secession within 18

months. That is fiercely disputed by centre-right Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, who has ruled out a Catalan breakaway.

If the opinion poll results were confirmed on election day, it would give ammunition to opponents of independence -- as they may well argue that a 44 percent share of the vote for the separatist parties and a tiny majority of seats does not give them a mandate to push ahead with an independence campaign.

Palma market hit by rain



The medieval market which has been set-up next to the Paseo Maritimo by the Es Baluard museum was hit by the heavy rains yesterday. Organisers are hoping for better weather for the weekend. See What's On.



PLAYA DE PALMA HOSTEL FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES: See Page 3