

Majorca Daily Bulletin

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Andalusia goes to the polls

Madrid.—The leader of Spain's most populous region, Andalusia, called a regional election for 2 Dec., in what will be the first electoral test for the country's ruling Socialist party since Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez took power in June.

Andalusia is the first of a slew of local votes expected over the next year that will gauge the public mood after Sanchez came to office with the smallest parliamentary party minority since Spain returned to democracy.

The southern region, which has one of the highest unemployment rates in the European Union, is a stronghold of Sanchez's Socialist party. But the Andalusian branch of the party has been damaged by corruption scandals.

In addition, Andalusia is the destination for

thousands of Africans who have entered Spain by sea since other European countries like Italy shut their ports to illegal migrants.

Sanchez's Socialists have taken a softer view on illegal migrants, allowing the disembarkation on Spanish shores of charity boats turned away from other European ports and restoring free healthcare for undocumented migrants.

Parties on the right such as the conservative People's Party (PP) and hard-right Vox have seized on these moves to step up their rhetoric against illegal migration.

However, polls show the Socialists riding high in the polls, with a recent well-regarded survey showing them easily winning an election if a vote were held.



Hard Brexit would cost German firms billions: report

German firms would face extra tariffs of more than 3 billion euros (\$3.4 billion) a year if Britain quits the European Union without a trade deal, and their exports to Britain might drop by up to 57 percent, Germany's IW institute said yesterday.

Talks on ending four decades of Britain's membership in the Euro-

pean Union have entered their final stage more than two years after Britons voted for Brexit. A hard Brexit would mean Britain leaving the bloc with no trade deal.

The BDI industry association - one of Germany's most influential lobby groups - said a breakthrough in Brexit negotiations was needed at a 17-18 Oct. summit in Brussels.

"Otherwise there is the risk that

Europe slides into a disorderly Brexit and that would cause a huge crisis," Managing Director Joachim Lang told a news conference in Berlin.

A hard Brexit would cause huge difficulties for tens of thousands of companies in Europe and hundreds of thousands of employees in Britain and the European Union, Lang said.

N.Ireland's Foster, in Brussels, rebuffs EU Brexit compromise

Brussels.— The leader of Northern Ireland's biggest party yesterday ruled out any checks on trade with the British mainland after the EU's Brexit negotiator tried to persuade her that such controls could be "de-dramatised". Arlene Foster, whose Democratic Unionist Party props up Prime Minister Theresa May's government in London, said the DUP would never accept the regulatory or customs controls that the EU's Michel Barnier says are an essential "backstop" to avoid a hard land border with EU member Ireland after Britain leaves. "There is only one red line," Foster told reporters after her meeting with Barnier in Brussels, as he presses to secure a deal on the Irish border issue that can unlock a withdrawal accord with London in time for a summit next Wednesday.

"We could not support any arrangement which could give rise to either customs or regulatory barriers within the UK internal market," Foster said, adding that she looked forward to further meetings in Brussels over the coming two days.

Barnier tweeted after their meeting that he was "working hard to explain and de-dramatise the backstop" - a text by which the EU proposes keeping Northern Ireland inside the EU economic space in the event that a future EU-UK free trade deal fails to find a way to avoid disruptive checks on their land frontier.