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Spain's restive Catalonia heads towards snap regional election

Barcelona.— Pro-independence head of Catalonia's regional government said yesterday he planned to call a snap parliamentary election in the restive Spanish region, in a move that could have a major impact on national politics.

Quim Torra said the election would be called after the regional parliament has approved Catalonia's budget plan for the year, providing no precise date.

"The political course of this legislature has come to an end... It's essential to again give voice to the citizens," he said in a televised address. Torra's term was due to end in 2021 but

on Monday he was stripped of his rights as a regional lawmaker by parliament following a court ruling, pushing the coalition government between two separatist parties to the brink of collapse.

"No government can function without unity and loyalty among its partners," Torra said, addressing the internal squabbles.

Catalonia has been a major driver of Spanish politics since the region unilaterally declared independence in October 2017 following a referendum deemed illegal by courts, prompting Spain's biggest political crisis in decades.



"Eco-friendly" giant docks in Palma port

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Britain prepares to say goodbye European Union

Brussels.— Britain's ambassador to the European Union passed documents formalising Brexit to a senior EU official yesterday. Three-and-a-half years after Britons voted to leave, a smiling Tim Barrow handed over a dark blue leather file embossed with the emblem of the United Kingdom, against a backdrop of British and EU flags at the bloc's Brussels headquarters.

After protracted and often tortuous divorce talks, the UK will leave the club it joined in 1973 at midnight Brussels time (2300 GMT) tomorrow, when British flags will be removed from EU offices and the EU flag lowered on the British premises there.

On his last working day as a member of the European Parliament, leading Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage told reporters there was "no going back" once the UK leaves. "The UK didn't fit, we'd be better off out," he said, describing euroscepticism as a settled view in the UK, where the 2016 referendum was won by a narrow 52 to 48 percent margin.

While Farage was beaming, his compatriot Jude Kirton-Darling, a socialist member of the Parliament, held back tears. "It's probably the saddest day of my life so far. Brexit is something that attacks the very foundation of our identity," said Kirton-Darling.

● In your *Bulletin* tomorrow: 16 page Brexit special. Britain is leaving but the strong bond will remain.



British Members of the European Parliament say goodbye.