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No-one wants to splash out on former Spanish royal yacht: Inside

Madrid swings to the right

● The Madrid region's incumbent leader, the PP's Isabel Diaz Ayuso, won re-election in Tuesday's elections boosted by her refusal to close down bars and shops during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Spain's conservative People's Party (PP) said yesterday that its resounding win in Madrid in regional elections signalled "the beginning of the end" for Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's government.

However, Sanchez's mandate runs for two more years and analysts said there was little incentive right now for him to hold an early national election.

The Madrid region's incumbent leader, the PP's Isabel Diaz Ayuso, won re-election in Tuesday's elections boosted by her refusal to close down bars and shops during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The elections also strengthened the far-right Vox, saw the center-right Ciudadanos collapse, and dealt a blow to the left.

"The People's Party is ready for general elections," PP lawmaker Pablo Montesinos told EITB radio station. "This is the beginning of the end of Pedro Sanchez. The main loser was Pedro Sanchez."

PP lawmaker Teodoro Garcia Egea said the defeat of the Socialist Party in the Madrid region, where its assembly seats fell from 37 to 24 seats, was a sign that voters considered Sanchez to have mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The PP has controlled the capital re-



Ayuso: landslide victory in Madrid.

gion for the past 26 years but although its convincing win could give it impetus at a national level, the right does not have enough lawmakers in the national parliament to force Sanchez to call a snap election.

Analysts said the regional election result should only push Sanchez to aim to see through the whole legislature.

"I totally rule out elections at a national level," said Pablo Simon, a political science professor at Madrid's Carlos III university.

"What incentive does the prime minister have to call an election now? None. The budget was voted, he must wait for the impact from the vaccina-

tion campaign to be seen, and for EU funds to come to relaunch the economy."

However, insider sources have said that early elections at some point before 2023 cannot be ruled out, the question being when that could work in the Socialists' favour.

One government source pointed at the disarray on Tuesday night within Sanchez' party over their candidate's disappointing results in the regional ballot.

The Socialists run a minority coalition government with the left-wing Podemos, whose leader Pablo Iglesias quit politics late on Tuesday after a poor showing in the Madrid election.

Jobless rate falls in Spain as lockdown eases

Madrid.—The number of jobless people in Spain ticked lower for the second month in a row in April, government data showed yesterday as a gradual easing of pandemic measures started injecting a bit of dynamism into the struggling economy. Data from the Labour Ministry showed the number of people

registering as jobless slipped by 0.99% in April from a month earlier, leaving some 3.91 million people out of work.

"The data shows a positive trend in a context still marked by high uncertainty," the ministry said.

Unemployment had risen steadily from September to February as authori-

ties slapped restrictions on movement and socialising to curb a third wave of coronavirus infections.

But case numbers have ebbed since Spain's vaccination campaign gathered pace, allowing the removal of the toughest measures and relieving some pressure on the labour market.