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**Spain: Mariano Rajoy Ousted as Prime Minister After No-Confidence Vote**

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Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has been forced out of office after a no-confidence vote was passed in the country's parliament.

Socialist leader Pedro Sánchez, who lead the motion after Rajoy's party was implicated in a corruption scandal, is likely to become prime minister.

Rajoy is the first prime minister in modern Spanish history to be defeated in a no-confidence motion.

The vote is the second advanced by Sanchez against Rajoy in a year.

The motion received the support of six parties, including the progressive bloc of Podemos, the Basque Nationalist Party, the Catalan European Democratic Party, the Republican Left of Catalonia, and United Left, among others.

During the debate Thursday, members of these parties demanded Sanchez ensures a national discussion on self-governance and pro-independence movements, respect civil liberties, and policies to protect Spain's welfare system and repeal neoliberal reforms.

Despite repeated calls by Sanchez for Rajoy to resign, Rajoy announced Thursday he would not step down. However, Rajoy conceded defeat before the no-confidence vote according to Reuters, telling according to deputies: "Mr Sanchez will be the head of the government and let me be the first to congratulate him."

The Basque Nationalist Party, whose five seats were crucial for Sanchez securing enough parliamentary backing, withdrew support from Rajoy after dozens of people linked to his center-right People's Party (PP) were sentenced to decades in jail in a corruption trial.

Sanchez, who is expected to be sworn in by Monday and appoint his cabinet next week, has promised to start talks

with the Catalans but said he would not give them an independence referendum.

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