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Barbados says it will remove Queen Elizabeth as head of state

Barbados wants to remove Queen Elizabeth as its head of state and become a republic, the Caribbean island nation's government has said, reviving a plan mooted several times in the past.

A former British colony that gained independence in 1966, Barbados has maintained a formal link with the British monarchy as have some other countries

that were once part of the British empire.

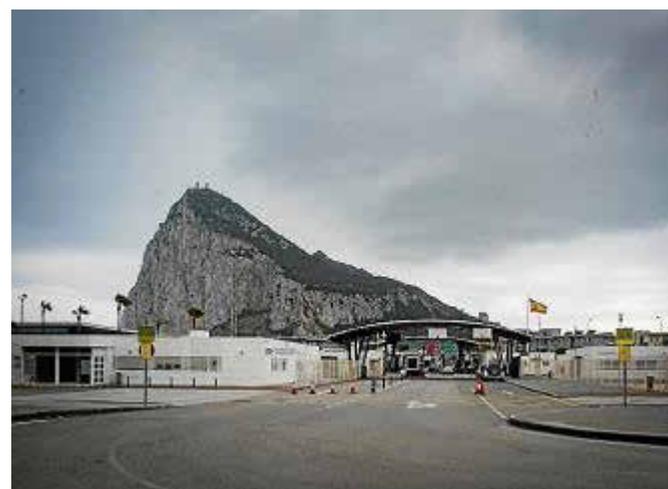
"The time has come to fully leave our colonial past behind," said Barbados Governor General Sandra Mason, delivering a speech on behalf of the country's Prime Minister Mia Mottley. "Barbadians want a Barbadian Head of State. This is the ultimate statement of confidence in who we are and what we are capable of achieving. Hence,

Barbados will take the next logical step toward full sovereignty and become a Republic by the time we celebrate our 55th Anniversary of Independence."

That anniversary will come in November of next year.

Buckingham Palace said the issue was a matter for the people of Barbados. Britain's Foreign Office said the decision was one for Barbados to take.

Spain is not renouncing claim to Gibraltar, Foreign Minister says



Spain will not renounce its claim to the British territory of Gibraltar, Foreign Minister Arancha Gonzalez

Laya said yesterday as the countries negotiate the future relationship between Spain and the rocky peninsula on its southern shore now

that Britain has left the European Union. In an interview with the radio station COPE, Gonzalez Laya said the Spanish claim did not pre-

vent the two countries working to build shared prosperity for Gibraltar and the adjacent Spanish border region.

"Europe's moment" EU chief calls for unity to confront crises

The European Union's chief executive laid out ambitious goals to ensure that the bloc is more resilient and united to confront future crises after the coronavirus pandemic, which has plunged Europe into its deepest recession in history.

In her annual State of the Union address, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen doubled down on the flagship goals she set out on taking office last December: urgent action to combat climate change and a digital revolution.

"This is the moment for Europe," von der Leyen told the European Parliament in a wide-ranging speech that ran for around 80 minutes. "The moment for Europe to lead the way from this fragility to a new vitality."

Von der Leyen, who wants Europe to become the world's first climate-neutral continent by mid-century, unveiled a plan to cut the EU's greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55% from 1990 levels by 2030, up from an existing target of 40%. She also pledged to use green bonds to finance those climate goals.

"There is no more urgent need for acceleration than when it comes to the future of our fragile planet," she said. "While much of the world's activity froze during lockdowns and shutdowns, the planet continued to get dangerously hotter."

She acknowledged her proposals would divide member states because the goals will require huge investments in transport, heavy industry and energy, and businesses will also face higher carbon costs under a plan to revamp the EU's carbon market.



Lockdown confusion: P5

Madrid to toughen COVID-19 measures on with targeted lockdowns

The Madrid region, one of the worst hit in Spain, is to introduce targeted lockdowns and other restrictions on movement on Friday in areas with high COVID-19 cases, local authorities said yesterday.

Madrid accounts for around one-third of active coronavirus cases in Spain, with a higher incidence in high-density and low-income neigh-

bourhoods, mainly in the south of the city. "We are taking measures but it is not enough ... Nothing will work if we are not responsible," Antonio Zapatero, head of COVID-19 response in Madrid, told reporters.

"There has been a relaxation of behaviour that we cannot afford." He said people were organizing parties, drinking in the street and not respecting quarantine rules.