

# Miss Russia Contest Won by Honors Student From Yekaterinburg

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Sofia Nikitchuk, center, will now represent Russia at this year's Miss World and Miss Universe pageants.

Sofia Nikitchuk, a 21-year-old humanities and fine arts student from Yekaterinburg who is set to graduate with honors, was crowned Miss Russia on Saturday night.

She was awarded 3 million rubles (\$60,000) and a new Hyundai Solaris car, as well as the coveted golden crown at the annual event in Moscow, according to a statement on the event's website.

Nikitchuk, who plays piano, attends the prestigious Ural Federal University in Russia's fourth-largest city.

"I am proud of my education. I've graduated from both artistic and musical schools. I'm going to get a red diploma [for honors] and I know for certain that I will get a master's degree," she was quoted as saying on the event's website.

Nikitchuk will go on to compete for Russia in the Miss World and Miss Universe pageants later

this year.

But the event was not unmarked by scandal. The girlfriend of the show's master of ceremonies Alexander Belov claimed in a report carried by the sensationalist LifeNews media agency that he had beaten her up days before the finale.

The girlfriend — Anna Anisimova, a model and singer who performs under the stage name Anna Callucci — was shown in photos in the report with a black eye and a large bruise on her back.

The report said that she was hospitalized for the injuries on April 11 and has notified police, but that Belov says the accusation is untrue and he intends to sue her for defamation.

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