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News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

September 03, 2018



Sergei Karpukhin / Reuters

Pension protests

Thousands of people across Russia joined protests against government plans to raise the retirement age despite President Vladimir Putin's recent promises to soften the unpopular measure.

Around 9,000 people gathered 2.5 kilometers from the Kremlin, according to the White Counter NGO that counts participants at rallies, but Moscow police put the numbers at 6,000.

Many carried the red flags and banners of the principal organizer of the protest, the Communist Party.

Zakharchenko killed

The leader of Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk region was killed in a

blast at a cafe in Donetsk city.

President Vladimir Putin called the killing a "dastardly" act but did not accuse Ukraine. Russia's Investigative Committee said it was treating the killing of Zakharchenko as an act of international terrorism.

Meanwhile, Zakharchenko's funeral drew vast crowds over the weekend.

Cop killer

A police officer was killed in a shooting at Moscow's Kurskaya metro station on Sunday night, setting of a nighttime manhunt after which a suspect was reportedly detained.

Pumping oil

Russia kept pumping oil near post-Soviet records in August as it reaped benefits from a deal with OPEC easing output caps and oil prices in rubles at an all-time high.

The nation extracted an average of 11.21 million barrels of crude per day last month, according to the Energy Ministry's CDU-TEK unit data. The numbers show little change from volumes in July, when Russia's output soared to just shy of a peak in 2016.

Related article: Tearful Mourners Bid Farewell to Separatist Leader Zakharchenko

Putin's show

The state-run Rossia broadcaster has premiered "Moscow. Kremlin. Putin," a television show dedicated to the Russian president's work and life. "He's a very humane human," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told news anchor Vladimir Solovyov in the pilot episode, which featured footage of Putin's travels in the past week.

Analysts interviewed by the BBC Russia service theorized that the show was launched in response to the president's falling ratings in the wake of government plans to raise the retirement age.

Number 1 fan

Kolya Vasin, an artist best known as "Russia's No. 1 Beatles fan," has reportedly died after falling from the third story of a St. Petersburg shopping center. Vasin became fascinated with The Beatles in the 1960s and created a long-standing exhibit to the group at St. Petersburg's Museum of Non-Conformist Art.

Stalin's street

Residents of Kaspiysk, on the western coast of the Caspian Sea in the Russian region of Dagestan, voted during public hearings in favor of renaming a street to "Stalin." Out of 30 people who voted, 28 were in favor.

Speakers in favor of the renaming reportedly defended the Soviet dictator's repressions as "a disputed issue." One of the two opposing voters was reportedly told to "leave if you don't like it."

Electric bus

A Russian-made electric bus shuttling Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin, among others, stalled three stops into its inaugural journey. All passengers had to disembark and the bus made its way to a nearby car park.

Two subsequent attempts to start one of the electric buses, which were due to replace some of the city's trolleybuses, were reportedly unsuccessful the next day.

Kobzon funeral

Around 6,000 people, including President Vladimir Putin, paid their last respects to Iosif Kobzon, an iconic Russian singer and a controversial State Duma deputy who died last week after a long battle with cancer.

Related article: Moscow Mayoral Race Kicks off With Sobyanin Expected to Coast to Victory

Mix-up magic

Two major state-run television channels mistakenly labeled one student interviewee as coming from two different regions during separate broadcasts. The student later complained: "I became infamous across the Russian internet due to a cameraman or director's error."

Another mishap took place in the southern region of Krasnodar, where a memorial stone honoring a local football team that beat their Nazi counterparts in 1943 was unveiled featuring an image of Argentine striker Lionel Messi.

Unwanted guest

A student was photographed in a group of people surrounding Putin while wearing a t-shirt of opposition leader Alexei Navalny's erstwhile 2018 presidential campaign during a photo-op at an educational center in Sochi.

The student told the Tjournal news website the photo-op "was planned as a ROFL [Rolling On Floor Laughing], but became a ROFL of the Year."

Unwanted prisoner

A transgender man will be incarcerated in a hospital at the infamous Matrosskaya Tishina detention center after male and female detention centers refused to accept him.

Nazar Gulevich, who was once a contestant on a popular reality television show about psychics, was detained last week on fraud charges.

Moscow music

Bands from various countries brought their colorful musical performances to Moscow's streets as part of the international military orchestra festival named "Spasskaya Bashnya" (Kremlin's Savior Tower).

Along with the stunts of a 96-year-old Dutch orchestra on bicycles, Muscovites were invited to watch 1,000 performers from 15 countries during the 10-day musical extravaganza that ended on Sunday.

Includes reporting from Reuters and Bloomberg.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/09/03/news-from-russia-september-3-a62748