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30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Kremlin.ru

Meat and potatoes

Belarussian leader Alexander Lukashenko has brought four sacks of potatoes and pork fat — both staples of the eastern European nation's cuisine — into the Kremlin as a New Year's gift to Putin.

Putin took to ice on Red Square later that night and scored five goals in his team's 14-10 victory during the traditional pre-New Year game as part of a Night Hockey League tournament.

Season's greetings

President Vladimir Putin said in a New Year letter to his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump that Moscow was ready for dialogue on a "wide-ranging agenda." The Kremlin said Russian-U.S. relations are "the most important factor for providing strategic stability and international

security."

Putin also sent New Year greetings to other world leaders including prime ministers Theresa May of Britain — wishing "well-being and prosperity to the British people" — and Shinzo Abe of Japan, as well as Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Resettlement

Thirty-six Russian children have been repatriated from Syria and Iraq aboard a Baghdad-Moscow charter flight under a program overseen by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov.

Children's rights ombudsperson Anna Kuznetsova said 36 more children of jailed or killed Islamic State* members are planned to be brought to Russia from the war-torn countries in January.

Magic numbers

Russia's official statistics service has revised 2016 GDP data from contracting by 0.2 percent to growing by 0.3 percent. In 2017, the new data shows growth of 1.6 percent instead of 1.5 percent.

Products non grata

Russia has banned manufacturing and agricultural products from Ukraine, including gas turbines, alcohol and chocolate.

Russia's Economic Development Ministry estimates $510 million worth of banned products were imported from Ukraine this year.

Expensive travel

A government decree has revised the expected cost of the rail section of Russia's bridge to the annexed Crimean peninsula from 16.9 billion rubles ($243.1 million) to 19.9 billion rubles ($286.1 million).

The rail section is expected to begin operations on Dec. 1, 2019.

Avalanche

At least two people have reportedly been killed and nine rescued from a gold-mining company station in a series of avalanches in the Far East region of Khabarovsk.

One victim had been found dead and another died later at a first-aid station in the settlement of Mnogovershinny.

SAM upgrade

Russia in 2019 will deploy the S-350 Vityaz new generation short-to-mid range surface-to-air defense missile complex, the Russian Defense Ministry said, in a long-planned move to replace its aging S-300 system.

Cold turkey

Revelers this New Year's Eve will be banned from bringing alcohol and fireworks to historical sites in central Moscow, including Red Square. Moscow's City Hall says inspection zones with metal detectors will encircle Ulitsa Tverskaya, Manezhnaya Ploshchad, Ploshchad Revolutsii, Red Square, Ulitsa Varvarka and Zaryadye Park.

Fireworks displays will be launched from 31 locations throughout Moscow, among them a five-minute show over St. Basil's Cathedral and the Kremlin best viewed from Red Square.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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