

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Sexting scandal

French authorities arrested Pyotr Pavlensky, a Russian dissident artist who published screenshots of sexual images that forced President Emmanuel Macron's candidate for Paris mayor to pull out of the race.

Under French law, so-called "revenge porn," or the publishing of pornographic material without a person's content, can be punished by up to two years in prison and a 60,000-euro (\$65,000) fine.

Pipeline politics

The United States is confident that Russia will not complete the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which aims to deliver natural gas from Siberia to Germany while circumventing Ukraine, U.S. Energy Secretary Dan Brouillette [said](#).

At the same time, a Russian pipe-laying ship left its Pacific port last week, in a sign that Gazprom is attempting to complete Nord Stream 2, Bloomberg reported. The pipeline was 94% constructed when U.S. sanctions halted work in December.

Lost gold

The International Biathlon Union (IBU) said it was stripping two Russian champions, Svetlana Sleptsova and Evgeny Ustyugov, of medals received between 2013 and 2014 for doping violations.

The IBU's ruling means Ustyugov loses a gold medal title won during a relay competition in the 2014 Olympic Games, which were held in Sochi in Russia. The Russian biathletes will also be disqualified from the sport for the next two years, the IBU said.

Prisoner talks

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke by phone about the release of Ukrainian citizens detained in Russia, eastern Ukraine and Crimea, Zelenskiy's office said.

They also discussed preparations for the next meeting of the leaders of Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France.

‘Ice storm’

Dozens of sports lovers started a three-day “Ice Storm” endurance race on Siberia’s frozen Lake Baikal, aiming to cover 205 kilometers in high winds and frost through breathtaking landscapes.

Participants can choose which vehicle to use during the race, with most people opting for bicycles, skates and kicksleds to cross the icy expanse. The ice in Baikal naturally makes a soft crackling sound, which does not pose danger but adds a thrill for those trying to cross the lake.

Includes reporting from Reuters.

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