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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Russians marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring with a pre-Lent festival known as Maslenitsa with the burning of traditional bonfires across the country. **Sophia Sandurskaya / Moskva News Agency**

Nemtsov march

Thousands of Russians rallied across the country to mark five years since the murder of prominent Kremlin critic Boris Nemtsov, joining a march that organizers said was also a protest against planned changes to Russia's Constitution.

Related article: ‘United Dissatisfaction’: Tens of Thousands Across Russia Rally for Slain Opposition Leader

Demonstrators carried photos of Nemtsov and posters reading "No to eternal Putin" and "No to the usurpation of power." The annual march was the first major demonstration organized by Russia's political opposition since President Vladimir Putin proposed a raft of changes to

the Constitution last month.

Turkey tensions

Russia and Turkey have agreed to reduce tensions on the ground in Syria's Idlib province while continuing military action there, Russia's Foreign Ministry said ahead of Putin's talks with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan this week.

Erdogan spoke with Putin by phone, asking for Russia to step aside in Syria and leave Turkey to deal with Syrian government forces alone. Putin also discussed Idlib by phone with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and French President Emmanuel Macron, who urged Putin and Erdogan to halt hostilities in Syria and agree to a lasting ceasefire.

Coronavirus suspicions

Authorities in annexed Crimea declared a manhunt for a woman who had escaped a quarantine after being hospitalized on suspicion of having the coronavirus.

Dry-ice tragedy

Three people died at a Moscow birthday party after around 30 kilograms of dry ice, a solid form of carbon dioxide meant to create special effects, were tipped into a pool.

Two people died at the scene while a third, the husband of popular Instagram influencer Yekaterina Didenko who was marking her birthday, died in the hospital. Authorities announced a probe into the incident.

Pancake Week

Russians marked the end of winter and the beginning of spring with a pre-Lent festival known as Maslenitsa with the burning of traditional bonfires across the country.

Related article: Fires Blaze Across Russia for Maslenitsa

Millions of Russians celebrate Maslenitsa, or Pancake Week to mark the end of winter, which the Orthodox Church has accommodated as a week of feasting. Maslenitsa week began as a pagan ritual and has been absorbed into Russian Orthodox Christian tradition as a holiday marking the last day before Lent, according to the eastern Orthodox calendar.

Includes reporting from Reuters and AFP.

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