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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Moves to Cancel Major Events as Coronavirus Looms

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Russia is canceling a slew of major events, festivals and concerts to prevent the virus from spreading.
Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to spread globally, with over 125,000 confirmed cases and over 4,900 deaths in 126 countries, governments have stepped in and canceled large-scale events in an effort to contain the virus' spread.

Italy, one of the epicenters of the outbreak, has been placed into a full lockdown. Spain has closed schools and banned all events with over 1,000 people. Germany has also closed schools in some regions and will hold major sporting matches without spectators.

Russia, with 46 confirmed cases as of Friday, 18 of which have been reported in Moscow, has not yet issued nationwide shutdowns. However, Moscow and St. Petersburg have both banned large events from taking place, and some Russian companies are beginning to encourage their employees to work from home.

Russia's consumer safety watchdog has also advised citizens to avoid public transport,

shopping malls and other public places during rush hour to protect themselves against the coronavirus.

Here's a look at the large-scale events that have been canceled in Russia so far:

- The main celebrations of Moscow's "Crimean Spring" festival, which celebrates Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine and were scheduled for March 16-18, have been canceled.
- Officials from Rosgvardia [the National Guard] canceled a scheduled concert to celebrate Rosgvardia Day on March 27 in the State Kremlin Palace.
- The Sakharov Center in Moscow will move its public discussion events online as of March 23, the museum and cultural center announced in a Facebook post.
- A March 15 rally in support of President Vladimir Putin's constitutional amendments on Tverskaya Street in central Moscow has been canceled.
- A planned April 22 protest in Moscow by the Civil Society movement against Putin's constitutional amendments and presidential term "reset" has been denied by the Moscow Mayor's office. Critics have attacked the cancellation of protests against Putin's constitutional amendments as an excuse by Moscow City Hall to use the health crisis to their benefit.
- Rapper Yegor Kreed's March 21 concert at Moscow's Megasport stadium has been canceled.
- Lindemann, a metal duo featuring the vocalist from popular German group Rammstein, did not cancel their concert on March 15 at VTB Arena. Instead, the band will play two concerts back-to-back on the same night in order to keep the audience below the 5,000-person limit. The rock band Chaif's 35th anniversary concert on March 20 at VTB Arena may still be canceled, the band's press representative told a Moscow radio station.
- A March 15 religious procession planned by members of the Russian Orthodox Church in Lipetsk to fight the virus was canceled.
- The Moscow International Security Conference, set to take place on April 22-23 and with 1,000 delegates from 115 countries set to attend, was canceled by the Russian Defense Ministry.
- The annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum due to be held on June 3-6, was canceled. The annual event attended by Putin is seen as Russia's most prestigious foreign investment summit.
- The annual Russian Business Week summit, also attended by Putin, was canceled.
- Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin announced that all sporting events, including football and hockey matches, were to be restricted to 5,000 attendees.
- The World Rallycross Championship, set to take place in St. Petersburg on July 18-19, was canceled.
- The international Ski Track of Friendship competition in Murmansk on March 14 was also canceled.
- The European Weightlifting Championship, scheduled to take place in Moscow on April 13-21, was postponed to June.
- The 2019-2020 VTB United Basketball League season has been temporarily suspended.

Events that haven't been canceled:

- Moscow's Victory Day celebrations on May 9 have not been canceled and preparations

are continuing as planned, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Thursday. This year's Victory Day events mark the 75th anniversary of the Soviet defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II.
- Concerts by singers Leonid Agutin and Uriah Heep are still taking place at the 7,300-seat Crocus City Hall outside Moscow. Other concert promoters are bypassing Moscow's large-event ban by limiting the number of tickets sold to 5,000.
- The Russian Football Premier League announced on March 11 that all matches in Moscow would take place at their originally scheduled venues, but that attendance would be limited to 5,000 people.

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