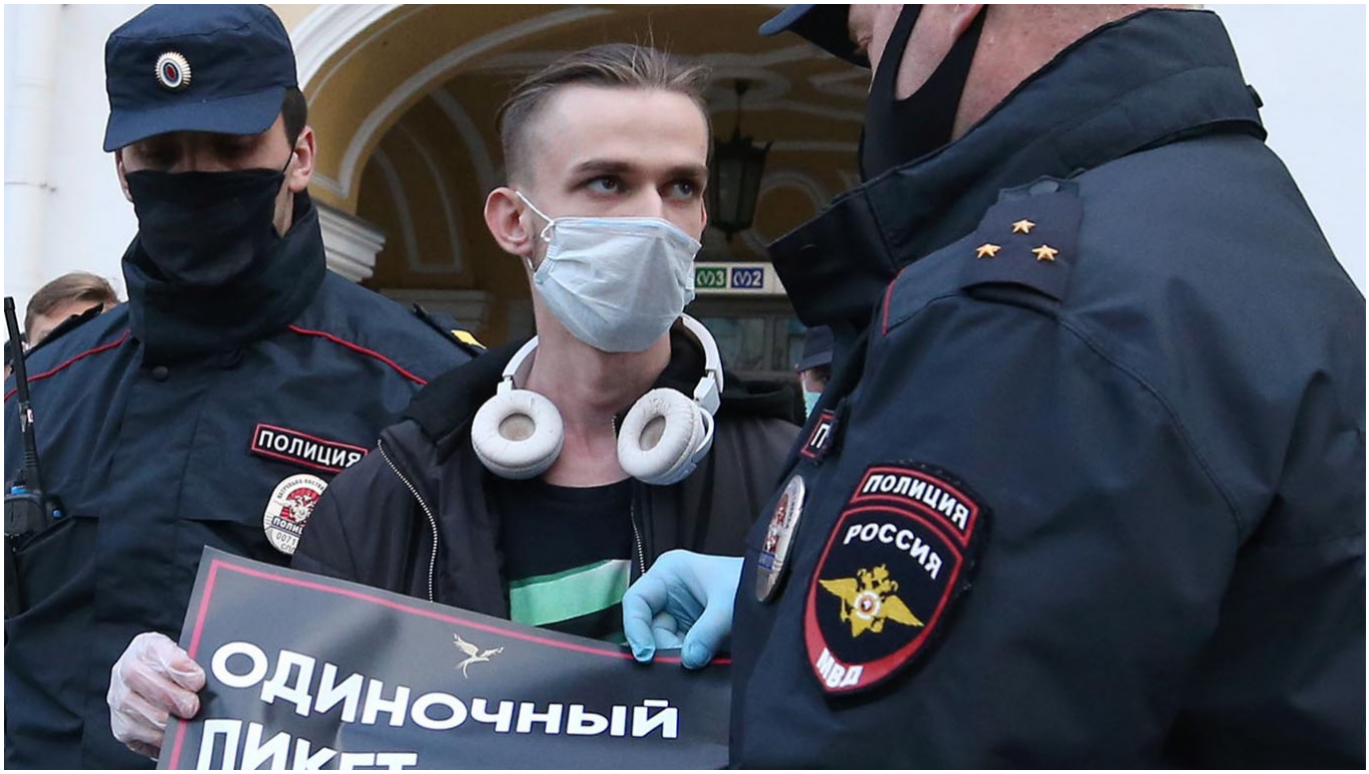
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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Peter Kovalev / TASS

'The trampoline is working'

Russia's space agency, hitherto the only one able to fly astronauts to the International Space Station, congratulated SpaceX for its successful launch of a manned rocket.

Related article: 'Trampoline Is Working': Musk Taunts Russia

Officials also said they were puzzled by the "hysteria" around the successful SpaceX flight as Elon Musk taunted Russia and U.S. President Donald Trump vowed to beat Moscow to Mars.

Saturday's launch from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida was the first of American astronauts from U.S. soil in nine years, and the first ever by a private company. Russia on Sunday put a brave face on the loss of its space travel monopoly, saying it planned to test two new rockets this year and resume its lunar program in 2021.

Solo pickets

Police in Moscow detained demonstrators holding solo pickets outside the Interior Ministry headquarters Saturday and the Investigative Committee headquarters Sunday.

Saturday's protests continued days of solidarity for a popular journalist and activist who was jailed for 15 days for a similar single-person picket. Sunday's actions, where seven people were detained and some were charged with violating Moscow's coronavirus quarantine, involved mostly lawyers supporting colleagues in the North Caucasus charged with violence against police.

U.S. protests

Russia's Foreign Ministry called on the United States to investigate the "unfounded brutality" of a law enforcement officer pepper spraying a Russian journalist from the state-run RIA Novosti news agency during protests over the death of a black man at police hands overshadowed by unrest.

Journalists covering nationwide protests over George Floyd's death in Minneapolis have found themselves under attack, by police and at times by protesters.

Forged dinars

Russia's Foreign Ministry denied U.S. claims that it had printed counterfeit currency worth $1.1 billion for Libya, which was seized by Malta.

"It's not the dinars that are counterfeit but America's statements," it said after the U.S. State Department said it "commends" Malta's seizure of the banknotes printed by Russia's Goznak. The Foreign Ministry, responding to U.S. assertion that the money was ordered by an "illegitimate parallel entity," said Libya has two central banks because the country has two de-facto governments.

Covid treatment

Russia's Health Ministry has approved the country's first drug to treat patients with the novel coronavirus, an antiviral pill known generically as favipiravir and registered in Russia as Avifavir, said the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) and the ChemRar biotechnology firm.

Health Minister Mikhail Murashko said that clinical trials for a Covid-19 vaccine will start in two weeks.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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