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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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A well-preserved Ice-Age woolly rhino has been found in Siberia. **Valery Plotnikov / Siberian Times**

Frozen pipes

The U.S. Senate overrode President Donald Trump's veto of a sweeping defense bill Friday, authorizing further sanctions on companies helping Russia's disputed Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline to Germany.

Russia intensified work on the nearly completed pipeline last week ahead of the anticipated penalties for companies that provide certifications and insurance for the project. Norway's DNV GL, which suspended Nord Stream 2 work in fear of sanctions late last year, confirmed Sunday that it had stopped control activities for the duration of the sanctions.

Metro women

The Moscow metro said Sunday it had hired female drivers for the first time in its recent history, following recent changes in controversial Russian legislation prohibiting women

from jobs deemed harmful to their health.

Russia's Labor Ministry cut the number of exclusively male professions from 456 to around 100 in September after the ban on access for women was widely criticized. The justification that driving metro trains was dangerous because it meant being underground for long periods came under fire because the metro also employs women as cleaners, cashiers and escalator monitors.

Woolly rhino

A well-preserved woolly rhino with most of its soft tissue still intact has been found in the thawing permafrost of the Siberian Arctic, The Siberian Times has reported.

The animal, believed to have drowned at age three or four during the Ice Age some 20,000 to 50,000 years ago, was recovered with its limbs, many organs and even its tusk intact on a river bank in Russia's republic of Sakha.

Oil slump

Russia's oil production in 2020 declined for the first time in more than a decade and fell to its lowest level in nine years, according to data cited by Reuters and Bloomberg.

Energy Ministry statistics showed Russia's output at 512.68 million tons of crude and condensate, or 10.27 million barrels per day, following OPEC+ production curbs and low demand caused by the coronavirus.

Sputnik V

Hungary is unlikely to use Russia's coronavirus vaccine due to its limited production capacity, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Sunday while criticizing the EU's vaccine acquisition approach.

In November, Budapest boasted that Hungary was the first European country to receive test samples of the Russian vaccine. Critics have described Sputnik V as a tool to bolster Russia's geopolitical influence.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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