

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Gavriil Grigorov / TASS

Navalny protests

More than 3,500 protesters were arrested at demonstrations across Russia in support of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny, a monitor reported Sunday as prosecutors probed possible violence "on the part of law enforcement."

The arrests marked the largest number of detentions at opposition rallies in the history of modern Russia. Saturday's protests also took on an unprecedented geographic scale, spanning more than 100 cities across the country and involving tens of thousands of people.

The West has widely condemned the "harsh tactics" used against demonstrators, several of whom were injured in clashes with police. EU foreign ministers are due to consider their response to Navalny's detention on Monday.

Outer forces

The Kremlin accused the United States of interfering in Russia's domestic affairs for distributing a "demonstration alert" to U.S. citizens in Russia recommending they avoid protests.

A U.S. mission spokeswoman said U.S. embassies and consulates around the world routinely issue safety messages to U.S. citizens. The U.S. Embassy in Moscow said Saturday that Washington supported "the right of all people to peaceful protest [and] freedom of expression."

Unbending pipe

The Russian ship tasked with completing the controversial Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline has begun work in waters off Denmark, the company said Sunday.

Work on the massive project resumed in German waters in December after being suspended for nearly a year due to the threat of U.S. sanctions. The European Parliament on Friday passed a non-binding resolution urging Brussels to block the 1,200-kilometer pipeline's completion.

Refugee conspiracy

Former U.S. Embassy in Moscow employee Olesya Krasilova and two other foreign nationals were [charged](#) Friday with conspiring to steal hundreds of U.S. refugee program records.

Krasilova was reportedly briefly detained during a business trip in Spain in early 2020 but was [allowed](#) to return to Moscow after her lawyers "managed to prove that the ongoing process of her extradition was illegal."

Stamped out virus

A person in a green coronavirus-shaped costume with the word *Gripp* ("Flu") inscribed on its front was [spotted](#) among the 3,500 who were detained during Saturday's pro-Navalny protests.

Video of the arrest prompted an array of virus-related jokes, including some observers celebrating "the end of coronavirus" and others lamenting that police officers "weren't dressed as antibodies."

Embed:

Кто в России живет, в цирке не смеётся pic.twitter.com/oZifsLMhwX

— Holy Witch 2.0 (@HolyWitchAlive) [January 23, 2021](#)

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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