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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Anton Novoderezhkin / TASS

SPIEF 2021

The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) closed on Saturday with some 800 deals worth 3.8 trillion rubles ($52.2 billion) inked at what organizers have hailed as the world's first post-pandemic event of its kind.

At President Vladimir Putin's address to the forum's business and political elite Friday he opened the pathway to vaccine tourism, addressed climate change and warned U.S. President Joe Biden ahead of their summit that "empires think they're powerful enough" to threaten other countries.

Exiled opposition

Prominent Kremlin critic and former opposition lawmaker Dmitry Gudkov said he had left Russia for Ukraine due to pressure from authorities ahead of September parliamentary

elections.

Gudkov, 41, was briefly detained last week over unpaid rent from 2015 and faced up to five years in prison. He and his supporters have called the criminal case a form of punishment for his plans to take part in elections.

Gudkov's departure comes as the Russian opposition says the authorities are stepping up a campaign of intimidation against dissenters and potential challengers, claims the Kremlin has rejected.

'Back to normal'

Russia recorded one of its lowest monthly jumps in fatalities since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in April, according to official statistics published Friday.

Nationwide deaths from all causes during the month were 14,500 higher — or 9.6% — than during April 2019, data published by the Rosstat federal statistics service showed.

Russia recorded some 475,000 excess fatalities between the start of the pandemic and the end of April, the latest month for which data is available, according to calculations by The Moscow Times. That is one of the world's highest tallies both in overall terms and adjusted for population.

Uniform upset

Ukraine stoked Moscow's ire when its football federation unveiled Euro 2020 uniforms that feature Russian-annexed Crimea and nationalist slogans.

Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova derided the new uniforms of the ex-Soviet state, saying Ukraine's football team "attached Ukraine's territory to Russia's Crimea."

Last liberator

David Dushman, the last surviving soldier who took part in the liberation of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz in 1945, has died at the age of 98.

Dushman, a Red Army soldier who later became an international fencer, died on Saturday, the International Olympic Committee said in a statement.

On Jan. 27, 1945, he used his T-34 Soviet tank to mow down the electric fence of Auschwitz in Nazi-occupied Poland, helping to set prisoners in the death camp free.

Attention to detail

Online observers spotted an error on the new monument to Tsar Alexander III at St. Petersburg's Gatchina Palace where Putin laid flowers in an unveiling ceremony Saturday.

Sculptor Vladimir Brodarsky attributed the error, in which Alexander III is depicted wearing a six-ray instead of eight-ray Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, to "nerves" and said it has since been fixed.

Embed:

> «Скала! И человек-скала, и по делам своим. Супер! Очень красиво, поздравляю авторов»: Путин открыл в Гатчине памятник Александру III pic.twitter.com/bOxjgtValx
>
> — Дмитрий Смирнов (@dimsmirnov175) June 5, 2021

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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