The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

July 05, 2021

Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

Delta spread

Russia on Sunday counted more than 25,000 new daily infections, the highest since Jan. 2, after a week of record death tolls as the highly contagious Delta variant propels a global resurgence of the pandemic.

Widespread skepticism and a sluggish rollout has seen only 16% of Russia's 146 million people vaccinated.

Bubbly beverage

Moet Hennessy's Russia office warned local partners it was suspending supplies after Russian lawmakers adopted legislation stipulating that the word "champagne" can only be applied to wine produced in Russia, while the world-famous tipple from France's Champagne region should be called "sparkling wine."

Bloomberg and Reuters reported Sunday that Moet Hennessy would comply with the new law signed by President Vladimir Putin and add the designation "sparkling wine" to the back of Russian-bound bottles.

LGBT reversal

Russian organic food retailer VkusVill pulled down a new promotional material that featured an LGBT family after the popular chain as well as the family itself received online threats.

VkusVill replaced its initial publication with an apology for "hurting the feelings of a large number of our customers, employees, partners and suppliers" that blamed "the unprofessionalism of individual employees" for its original appearance.

National strategy

Russia's latest national security strategy approved by Putin takes an increasingly anti-Western slant, according to the five-year document that was published Saturday.

After naming the United States as a threat for the first time in 2016, Russia's 2021 strategy blames cultural "westernization" and outlines closer partnerships with China and India. Additionally, the 44-page strategy reserves Russia's right to take "symmetrical and asymmetrical measures" against "unfriendly actions that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity" of the country.

Tricolor parachute

Former French prime minister Francois Fillon has been named to the board of Russian state oil company Zarubezhneft, a list published by a website specializing in business information disclosure showed.

Austrian ex-foreign minister Karin Kneissl, who notoriously danced with Putin at her wedding in 2018, was in June named to the board of Rosneft, Russia's biggest oil producer. Former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has been chairman of the Rosneft board since 2017, earning $600,000 a year.

AFP contributed reporting.

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