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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

Pandora Papers. Covid death record. Billionaire arrest.

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Channel One general director Konstantin Ernst and Russia's President Vladimir Putin. **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Offshore assets

Leaked papers published by an international group of investigative journalists Sunday implicated Russian President Vladimir Putin's close associates — including his alleged mistress Svetlana Krivonogikh — in amassing secret assets offshore.

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists's (ICIJ) project dubbed the "Pandora Papers" also named Sergei Chemezov, one of Putin's oldest friends, and Konstantin Ernst, the CEO of one of Russia's most-watched state-run broadcasters, in alleged offshore dealings.

Back-to-back

Russia broke its daily coronavirus deaths record Sunday with 890 fatalities, while the 25,769 infections were the third-highest since the start of the year.

Russia has now reported record-high numbers of Covid deaths for five out of the past six days.

International warrant

An Azerbaijan-born Russian billionaire wanted by Moscow over his alleged role in two murders has been arrested in Montenegro, media reports and his lawyer said on Saturday.

Telman Ismailov was arrested in Podgorica late on Friday on an international arrest warrant issued by Russia, local media reported. Russia suspects Ismailov of financing the murder of two entrepreneurs in Moscow in 2016 to the tune of $2 million.

Political crisis

Georgia's ruling party was leading on Sunday in local elections the opposition criticized as fraudulent, deepening a long-running political crisis in the Caucasus country exacerbated by the arrest of ex-president Mikheil Saakashvili.

The vote was held against the backdrop of a long-running political standoff between the country's main parties that had embroiled EU negotiators and deepened this week after Saakashvili returned from exile and was arrested.

Extraordinary rendition

Gennady Mozheiko, a veteran reporter for the popular Belarus edition of Russia's Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper, has been detained in Moscow and is being held in Minsk, activists and his mother said Saturday.

Belarus last Wednesday blocked KP's website after it published an interview with the classmate of 31-year-old IT worker Andrei Zeltser, who was accused by the authorities of shooting and killing a KGB officer during a raid of his Minsk apartment. The KGB said its officers killed Zeltser in return fire.

AFP contributed reporting.

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