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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Russia's Federal Statistics Agency Rosstat said Friday that 44,265 people died of coronavirus in the country in September **Maxim Shipenkov / EPA / TASS**

Excess deaths

Russia's Federal Statistics Agency Rosstat said Friday that 44,265 people died of coronavirus in the country in September — double the official government figure.

That brings the agency's tally of Covid-19 deaths in Russia to nearly 450,000, the highest toll in Europe. A Moscow Times analysis places Russia's excess death toll since the start of the coronavirus pandemic at 723,000.

Lockdown in Russia

New coronavirus restrictions came into effect across Russia on Saturday with authorities looking to stem soaring infections and deaths in Europe's worst hit country by fatalities. The paid holiday lasts until next Sunday and can be extended if Covid-19 cases do not fall.

Russia has held back on imposing significant nationwide measures since ending a short lockdown at the beginning of the pandemic and instead placed its hopes on the rollout of several homegrown vaccines, including Sputnik V.

Sputnik woes

Russian President Vladimir Putin complained Saturday about lack of international recognition for its Sputnik V Covid-19 vaccine at a G20 summit, where leaders agreed to step up global inoculation efforts.

"This happens mainly because of dishonest competition, protectionism and because some states, especially those of the G20, are not ready for mutual recognition of vaccines and vaccination certificates," Putin said in video message comments to counterparts.

Not our drone

Turkey is not responsible for Ukraine's use of an Ankara-made drone in its conflict with pro-Moscow rebels, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said in comments published on Sunday.

"If a state buys (weaponry) from us, it's no longer a Turkish product. It might be manufactured in Turkey, but it belongs to Ukraine," Cavusoglu told reporters after meeting his Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, on the margins of the G20 summit in Rome.

Ukraine last week said it destroyed the artillery of pro-Russian separatists in the country's east using a Bayraktar TB2k, its first combat deployment of a Turkish drone. The Kremlin had later said that Ankara's supply of drones to Kiev risks destabilizing the eastern Ukraine conflict despite Russia's "special" relations with Turkey.

No cheeky matter

Police on Saturday detained 31-year-old model Irina Volkova for posing in thong underwear in front of St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg on charges of "insulting religious feelings."

A court, which said the graphic photo dates back to the summer of 2020, ruled Sunday to release Volkova from custody. It added that the model blamed debt collectors for the snapshot online.

Her detention came on the heels of Russia's first real prison sentence for "insulting religious feelings," with a couple convicted for posting a photo in which they simulated oral sex across from St. Basil's Cathedral on Red Square.

AFP contributed reporting

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