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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

News From Russia: What You Missed Over the Weekend

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Andrei Nikerichev / Moskva News Agency

New mutation

The new, heavily mutated coronavirus variant Omicron may be spreading across Russia by tourists returning from Egypt, Senator and Honored Doctor of Russia Vladimir Krugly said Sunday.

Russia's consumer protection watchdog Rospotrebnadzor, which leads the country's Covid-19 response efforts, later denied Krugly's claims.

Ammo blasts

Several explosions at an ammunition plant injured at least two people in central Russia's Nizhny Novgorod region, authorities said Saturday.

Authorities opened a criminal case into safety violations at the Sverdlov arms plant.

Rock loss

One of the earliest performers of rock music in Soviet Russia, singer and composer Alexander Gradsky, died at age 72 on Sunday.

Gradsky, who co-created one of the first Soviet rock bands Slavyane in 1965 and later Skoromokhi in 1966, was hospitalized in Moscow on Friday for a suspected stroke.

EU blacklist

The European Union has banned a Russian air carrier for the first time — the Kaliningrad-based charter operator Skol Airlines — for failing to meet international safety standards.

The EU said Friday that its Air Safety List acts as a "strong preventive tool" that could spur Russia to "improve [its] safety oversight to avoid seeing [its] air carriers on the list."

Space module

Russia's new docking module Prichal on Friday successfully docked with the International Space Station (ISS), the Russian space agency Roscosmos said.

Prichal — which means "pier" in Russian — is the second permanent addition to the Russian segment of the ISS this year, after the long-awaited arrival of the Nauka science module.

AFP contributed reporting.

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