

world

Greek PM wins confidence vote after Macedonia name row



Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and members of his government applaud after winning a confidence vote

Athens, Greece

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on Wednesday survived a confidence vote after a row over a landmark name deal with Macedonia sunk his four-year coalition.

A total of 151 lawmakers supported Tsipras' government out of 299 present, including several independent MPs, the official count showed.

"Parliament today gave a vote of confidence to stability (and) the effort to regain the country's international credibility," Tsipras told reporters after the vote.

"To a government which has already changed Greece and will continue until the completion of its constitutionally-mandated term," he said.

Despite the victory, the subsequent fate of Tsipras' government -- and whether he will complete his four-year term which ends in September -- is far from certain.

The PM now faces an immediate challenge to also push through parliament the controversial name deal with neighbouring Macedonia, which has sparked protests in both countries.

Thailand deports Model claiming Trump secrets

- She promised to reveal "missing puzzle pieces" regarding claims the Kremlin aided Trump's 2016 presidential election victory

- It was unclear what would happen to them on arrival in Moscow

AFP | Bangkok, Thailand

A Belarusian model who claimed she had evidence of Russian efforts to help Donald Trump win office was deported from Thailand yesterday after being convicted of participating in a "sex training course".

Anastasia Vashukevich, known by her pen-name Nastya Rybka, was held with several others in a police raid last February in the sleazy seaside resort of Pattaya.

In a case that veered between salacious and bizarre, Vashukevich said she had travelled to Thailand after becoming embroiled in a political scandal with Russian aluminium tycoon Oleg Deripaska -- a one-time associate of Trump's disgraced former campaign director Paul Manafort.

She then set tongues wagging by promising to reveal "missing puzzle pieces" regarding claims the Kremlin aided Trump's 2016 presidential election victory.

But the material never surfaced and critics dismissed the claims as a publicity stunt.



Detained Belarusian model Anastasia Vashukevich (R) known by her pen name Nastya Rybka leaves Thai immigration department in Bangkok



Vashukevich pleaded guilty alongside seven others to multiple charges, including solicitation and illegal assembly at a Pattaya court on Tuesday, which ordered the group be deported

In the risqué Pattaya seminar led by Alex Kirillov, a self-styled Russian seduction guru, some participants wore shirts that said "sex animator" -- though one person at the time described it as more of a romance and relationship course.

Vashukevich pleaded guilty alongside seven others to multiple charges, including solicitation and illegal assembly at a Pattaya court on Tuesday, which ordered the group be deported.

Kirillov, who has served as a quasi-spokesman for the mostly Russian group, told reporters as they arrived at court Tuesday that he believed they were set up. "I think somebody ordered (our arrest)... for money," he said. Vashukevich looked sombre as she entered the courthouse and did not respond to questions from the media.

On Thursday afternoon, Vashukevich and the majority of the convicted were put on

an Aeroflot flight for Moscow, bringing to an end the Thai side of a baffling case.

Thailand's immigration chief Surachate Hakpurn said the last of the group would leave the country this evening.

They are also blacklisted from returning to Thailand.

It was unclear what would happen to them on arrival in Moscow but the two Belarusians on the afternoon flight -- which would include Vashukevich -- are expected to not stay overnight and transit to Belarus.

That may be preferable for Vashukevich, who has more than 120,000 followers on Instagram and penned a book about seducing oligarchs, because she also faces legal problems in Russia.

Deripaska won an invasion of privacy lawsuit against her and Kirillov in July after a video apparently filmed by the model showed the tycoon vacationing with an influential Russian deputy prime minister at the time.

"I don't think she wants to get out in Moscow," a Russian friend in Thailand who helped with the case told AFP on Thursday.

Both Washington and Moscow publicly shrugged off Vashukevich's story, which the US State Department described as "bizarre".

Kremlin-connected Deripaska and Manafort, Trump's ex-campaign manager, did business together in the mid-2000s.

Manafort has since been convicted in the US of financial crimes related to political work he did in Ukraine before the 2016 election as well as witness tampering.

Body of trapped miner found after 36 days

New Delhi, India

Indian emergency workers said yesterday they have found the body of one of 15 miners trapped inside a so-called "rat hole" mine for over a month.

The illegal and dangerous mine in the remote, mineral-rich state of Meghalaya in India's north-east was flooded on December 13.

The Indian Navy said they spotted the body inside the deluged shaft at a depth of 160-210 feet (50-65 metres) with the help of a remote-controlled probe.

"The body has been pulled up to the mouth of Rat-hole mine and shall be extracted out of the mine under the supervision of doctors," the Indian Navy said in a tweet.

The breakthrough comes after several attempts by navy divers to reach the trapped miners inside the treacherous mine. Efforts to pump out water have also failed.



Search operation to recover the rest of the miners is underway. (Picture courtesy of ANI)

"Our operation is continuing," S. K. Singh, in-charge of the national disaster relief force, said.

Rat-hole mines are deep vertical shafts dug mostly into hillsides that branch out into narrow tunnels to reach and retrieve coal and other substances.

A federal environment court banned wildcat mining in Meghalaya in 2014 af-

ter local communities complained it was polluting water sources and putting lives at risk.

But the practice continues, with mine owners and the state government challenging the ban at India's Supreme Court.

At least 15 miners were killed after they were trapped in a flooded rat hole mine in Meghalaya in 2012. Their bodies were never recovered.

Brazil museum holds first exhibition

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Brazil's historic National Museum on Wednesday displayed fossils discovered in the Antarctic at an off-site venue in its first exhibition since the Rio-based institution was gutted by fire last year.

Among the fossils on display at a sister museum -- the Palace of the House of Money -- was a bone from a pterodactyl, which the National says is the first evidence of a big reptile species from the Jurassic era being found in the continent at the southern pole.

The bone, and a few other items being shown off at the money museum, had been undergoing scientific studies at the time of the September 2, 2018 blaze that wiped out most of the National Museum's collection. Eight pieces were recovered from the ashes.

All the rest of the 160-piece exhibition had to be reconsti-



A woman takes a picture in the expo "When Not Everything Was Ice: New Discoveries in the Antarctic Continent" part of the Brazilian Antarctic Programme, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

tuted using fossils collected from other areas.

The director of the National Museum, Alexander Kellner, told reporters that the exhibition was "major proof that the museum is alive and operating

with available tools."

The 200-year-old institution was considered the main natural history museum in Latin America, and was known for its paleontology department and its 26,000 fossils.