

WORLD

world

Nineteen people killed in bus crash in Russia's far east



The aftermath of the tragic incident where a bus with 43 passengers and a driver plunged 22ft into the Kuenga River in Transbaikal region of Siberia, 3,930 miles east of Moscow (Moscow Times)

Reuters | Moscow

Nineteen passengers died when a bus skidded off a bridge in Russia's far east on Sunday and plunged into a river, local government said.

"According to updated information, 19 people died, 21 have various injuries," the local government for the Zabaikalsk region said in a statement.

Russia's emergencies ministry said in a statement on its website that the bus, travelling from the town of Sretensk to the city of Chita, 6,320-km (3,930 miles) east of Moscow,

fell from a bridge into the Kuenga river at around 0938 Moscow time (0638 GMT).

It said about 43 passengers and a driver were on the bus.

A police spokeswoman told Russia-24 TV that the cause of the accident was being investigated.

Russia's record on road safety is one of the worst in the world. According to the country's traffic police, 18,214 people died in road accidents last year. That is more than the 15,000 Soviet servicemen who were killed during the whole of the Soviet war in Afghanistan in 1979-1989.

Burglers hit East German secret police museum in Berlin



Burglars targeted the Stasi Museum in Berlin, stealing medals and jewellery, police said

Berlin

Berlin's Stasi Museum, which showcases items of

East Germany's hated secret police, was burgled overnight, authorities said yesterday, days after a spectacular heist in Dresden.

The burglars broke in through a window on the first floor, and "smashed several showcases, and stole medals and jewellery", said police in a statement.

They made off with their spoils undetected.

The hour of the raid was unclear but a museum employee found showcases smashed in the exhibition rooms on Sunday morning.

The latest robbery came hot on the heels of a brazen heist at the Green Vault museum in Dresden's Royal Palace on November 25.

Having sparked a partial power cut before breaking in through a window, the thieves stole priceless 18th-century diamond jewellery -- including a famous 49-carat Dresden white -- from the collection of the Saxon ruler August the Strong.

Police are still hunting four suspects, and have offered half a million euros (\$550,000) in reward for information leading to an arrest or recovery of the stolen goods.

Fears are growing however that the diamonds will never be recovered.

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Terror checks intensified as London enters election fray



The aftermath of the tragic incident where a bus with 43 passengers and a driver plunged 22ft into the Kuenga River in Transbaikal region of Siberia, 3,930 miles east of Moscow (Moscow Times)

Reuters | London

Britain's Boris Johnson said yesterday the security services were stepping up monitoring of convicted terrorists released early from prison, as the London Bridge attack became embroiled in the election campaign.

The prime minister revealed around 74 people with terrorist convictions had been released early from prison in a similar way to Usman Khan, who left jail last December and went on to stab two people to death in Friday's rampage.

"They are being properly invigilated to make sure there is no threat," Johnson told the BBC in an interview.

"We've taken a lot of action as you can imagine in the last 48 hours," he said, adding he would not provide "operation details".

Khan, 28, was shot dead while wearing a fake explosives vest by police on London Bridge after a stabbing spree that also injured three people launched at a nearby prisoner rehabilitation event he was attending.

Members of the public were hailed as heroes for preventing even greater loss of life by tackling him -- one armed with a five-foot (1.5-metre) narwhal



Khan, 28, was shot dead while wearing a fake explosives vest by police on London Bridge after a stabbing spree

tusk and another with a fire extinguisher.

Police, who on Saturday searched two properties in central England believed to be linked to Khan, have said they believe he was acting alone and are not seeking anybody else.

But the Islamic State group has released a statement claiming responsibility for the attack.

'Keep you safe'

Khan, a British national, had been handed an indeterminate sentence for the protection of the public in 2012, with at least eight years in prison.

He was part of an eight-man network inspired by Al-Qaeda who had plotted to bomb targets including the London Stock Exchange, and planned to take part in "terrorist training" in Pakistan.

But his sentence was quashed by the Court of Appeal in April 2013 and he received a new 21-year term, comprising a custodial sentence of 16 years and five years on conditional release.



The incident comes two years after Islamist extremists in a van ploughed into pedestrians on the bridge before attacking people at random with knives, killing eight people and wounding 48.

He had then been conditionally released from jail last December under so-called licensing conditions after serving around half of his jail term.

Khan has become a contentious political issue ahead of Britain's December 12 election, with Johnson blaming the previous Labour government for changing the law in 2008 to allow for the early release of prisoners.

The Tory leader has vowed that if he reclaims power this month he will end early release for terrorist offences and introduce minimum 14-year sentences, with some convicted never to be released.

The proposals were not in the Conservatives' formal manifesto released last Sunday.

Johnson penned an article setting out the new stance in The Mail yesterday newspaper, under the headline: "Give me a majority and I'll keep you safe from terror".

Dad of London Bridge terror attack victim says son was 'beautiful spirit'

London

The first victim of the London Bridge terror attack to be named has been praised by his father as "a beautiful spirit".

Jack Merritt, 25, was one of two people stabbed to death by Usman Khan during the convicted terrorist's rampage on Friday.

Khan, 28, was shot dead on the bridge while wearing a fake explosives vest by police.

Merritt, a course coordinator at Cambridge University's criminology institute, was killed as he helped host an event near London Bridge to mark five years of a prisoner rehabilitation programme.

It was targeted by Khan, a former participant, who arrived armed with two knives.

"I am sad beyond words to report that a course coordinator, Jack Merritt, was killed," Stephen Toope, Cambridge University vice-chancellor, said in a statement.

"Our University condemns this abhorrent and senseless act of terror."

He added a woman also killed in the stabbing spree who has yet to be named was a former student, while one of three people injured was a member of its staff.

Fears are growing however that the diamonds will never be recovered.



Merritt, 25, was one of two people stabbed to death by Usman Khan during the convicted terrorist's rampage

Merritt was reportedly a Cambridge University graduate who was working for its "Learning Together" initiative run by the Department of Criminology to promote prison-based education.

"He was an exceptional young man, and I'm only finding out the half of it now he's gone," David Merritt, the victim's father, said in a series of messages on Twitter.

"I talked often with Jack about Learning Together & I was inspired by the stories he told me," he added.

Khan had participated in the programme while serving some of his 16-year sentence for terrorism offences at Whitemoor prison in Cambridgeshire, eastern England.

He was conditionally released from jail last December under so-called licensing conditions after serving around half of his jail term.

That has caused a political storm in Britain, which is in the grip of election campaigning ahead of voting on December 12.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson -- whose Conservatives

have been in power for nearly a decade -- is now vowing to end the practice and stiffen sentences.

David Merritt has criticised that response, writing in one social media message: "We don't need knee-jerk reactions."

In another post subsequently deleted, he said his son "would not wish his death to be used as the pretext for more draconian sentences or for detaining people unnecessarily."

It also described him as "a beautiful spirit who always took the side of the underdog".