

world

Norway to free Russian spy suspect: intel agency

Oslo, Norway

Norway will release a Russian suspected of spying, the country's intelligence agency announced yesterday, adding that it had withdrawn its appeal against his release.

Mikhail Bochkarev, 51, was arrested on September 21 at Oslo airport after attending a seminar in Norway's parliament, accused of having collected data on the building and its network.

A Norwegian court ordered his released on Thursday, the judge ruling that investigators had failed to substantiate their case. But Bochkarev was kept in custody after the PST intelligence agency appealed the decision.

On Friday however, the agency tweeted: "The PST has decided to withdraw its appeal. He is released today." They offered no explanation for the decision.

Afghan delays elections after Taliban attack

Kabul, Afghanistan

Afghanistan postponed legislative elections in Kandahar province on Friday, after a Taliban-claimed attack on a US-Afghan security meeting killed a powerful police chief and threatened stability across the south.

Saturday's parliamentary ballot would be delayed by one week, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani said in a statement, following an extraordinary meeting of the National Security Council.

The Independent Election Commission would announce the new date, he added.

China, SE Asia to hold joint drill

AFP | Singapore

China and Southeast Asian states will hold their first joint maritime exercises next week, officials said yesterday, in a move aimed at easing tensions but which may spark US alarm.

The navies of China and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are set to hold their first joint drills, which will take place in the South China Sea.

"As we speak, the navies of ASEAN are en route to Zhanjiang in China for the ASEAN-China Maritime Exercise," Singapore Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said.

At least 50 dead in India train disaster

Over a thousand people had gathered in the area to witness the burning of Ravana effigies

● The incident took place at Joda Fatak level crossing

● PM Modi tweeted and expressed condolences

AFP | Amritsar, India

At least 50 people were killed yesterday after a train ploughed into revellers gathered to watch a Hindu festival in India's northern Amritsar city, police said.

The train hit a crowd standing on the railway line to watch a fireworks show during Dussehra celebrations, police and eyewitnesses said.

"There was a lot of noise as firecrackers were being let off and it appears they were unable to hear the approaching train," a police official at the scene said.

An eyewitness told a local TV channel there was "utter commotion" when the crowds noticed the train "coming very fast" towards them.



Indian relatives and revellers look at bodies of the victims of a train accident during the occasion of the Hindu festival of Dussehra in Amritsar

"Everyone was running helter-skelter and suddenly another train crashed into the crowds of people," he said.

"There are more than 50 casualties. The priority now is to take the injured to the hospital," Amritsar city police commissioner S. S. Srivastava told reporters.

Punjab Chief Minister Am-

arinder Singh has ordered an inquiry into the latest disaster.

"Extremely saddened by the train accident in Amritsar. The tragedy is heart-wrenching. My deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their loved ones & I pray that the injured recover quickly. Have asked officials to provide immediate as-

istance that is required," Modi tweeted.

Home Minister Rajnath Singh also took to Twitter and expressed his condolence.

"Pained beyond words at the loss of precious lives due to a train tragedy during Dussehra festivities in #Punjab. My thoughts are with the

families of the deceased and prayers with the injured," Home Minister Rajnath Singh tweeted.

The state government has announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh to the kin of each deceased and free treatment to injured in government and private hospitals.

India is home to hundreds of railway crossings that are unmanned and particularly accident prone, with motorists often ignoring oncoming train warnings.

Nearly 15,000 people die on the country's railways every year, according to a 2012 government report.



My deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their loved ones and I pray that the injured recover quickly

PM MODI

Several hurt in chopper crash on US Navy carrier in Pacific

Tokyo, Japan

A US Navy helicopter crashed on board a US aircraft carrier patrolling the Pacific yesterday, causing several injuries, the military said in a statement.

"All injured personnel are in stable condition under evaluation by Ronald Reagan medical staff. While some personnel will be medically evacuated

ashore, none of the injuries is life-threatening," the US 7th Fleet said in a statement.

There were no details on how many people were injured when the MH-60 Seahawk crashed shortly after take-off on Friday morning. "The cause of the mishap is under investigation," the statement added.

The ship was conducting "routine operations" in the

Philippine Sea at the time of the accident and remains "fully mission capable," the military added.

The massive nuclear-powered aircraft carrier patrols throughout the Pacific, including sailing through the disputed South China Sea earlier this year as part of a mission intended to reassure Washington's allies in the area.

FBI leaker jailed

Washington, United States

A former FBI agent who leaked internal documents showing how the agency used racial profiling in counter-terror investigations was sentenced to four years in prison Thursday.

In the third case this week to underscore the Trump administration's determined crackdown on media leaks, Terry Albury, a 17-year FBI veteran and son of an Ethiopian refugee, was ordered to prison

for 48 months by a Minnesota judge after pleading guilty in the case.

"We are conducting percy perhaps the most aggressive campaign against leaks in department history," said Attorney General Jeff Sessions in a statement.

"Crimes like the one committed by the defendant in this case will not be tolerated -- they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law and punished."

China to launch lunar lighting in outer space

AFP | Beijing, China

China is planning to launch its own 'artificial moon' by 2020 to replace streetlamps and lower electricity costs in urban areas, state media reported Friday. Chengdu, a city in southwestern Sichuan province, is developing "illumination satellites" which will shine in tandem with the real moon, but are eight times brighter, according to China Daily.

The first man-made moon will launch from Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan, with three more to follow in 2022 if the first test goes well, said Wu Chunfeng, head of Tian Fu



Representative picture

New Area Science Society, the organization responsible for the project.

Though the first launch will

be experimental, the 2022 satellites "will be the real deal with great civic and commercial potential," he said in an interview

with China Daily.

By reflecting light from the sun, the satellites could replace streetlamps in urban areas, saving an estimated 1.2 billion yuan (\$170 million) a year in electricity costs for Chengdu, if the man-made moons illuminate an area of 50 square kilometers.

As China's space programme races to catch up with that of the United States and Russia, a number of ambitious projects are in the pipeline, including the Chang'e-4 lunar probe -- named after the moon goddess in Chinese mythology -- which aims to launch later this year. If it succeeds, it will be the first rover to explore the "dark side"

of the moon.

China is not the first country to try beaming sunlight back to Earth. In the 1990s, Russian scientists reportedly used giant mirrors to reflect light from space in an experimental project called Znamya or Banner.

Chengdu's artificial moon project was announced by Wu at an innovation and entrepreneurship conference in Chengdu.

In addition to Tian Fu New Area Science Society, other universities and institutes, including the Harbin Institute of Technology and China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp, are involved in developing Chengdu's illumination satellites.