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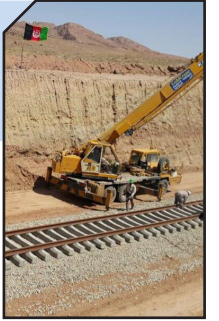
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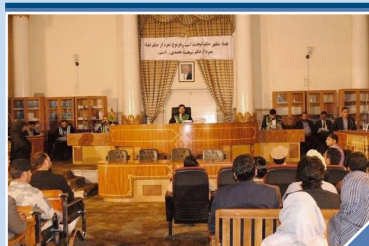
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Pompeo: Attempt to Silence Brave Afghan Women Leaders Will Not Succeed

The U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Monday "unreservedly" condemned the assassination attempt on Maidan Shar Mayor Zarifa Ghafari. Ghafari survived an armed attack in Kabul on Saturday morning while she was travelling to Wardak province. She is also a recipient of the 2020 International Women of Courage award which is given by the State Department. "As I have said before, the future of Afghanistan will not be won by those who seek to accomplish their political goals through violence and terror," the statement by Pompeo said. "Women belong in the public square, in Afghanistan and every other country around the world... The use of violence to intimidate will only undermine the process. Any attempt to silence Mayor Ghafari and other brave Afghan women leaders will not succeed." ... **P2**



Primary Court Gives Death Sentence in Kidnapping and Murder Case

The Primary Court of Crime Against Internal and External Security in Kabul's PD3 on Tuesday, gave out death sentences to three men and a woman charged with kidnapping leading to murder. The Office of the Attorney General (AGO) said the four death row convicts were members of a group of seven people. They were identified as Shazia, Ahmadullah, Bator, Mohibullah, Sherbaz, Sharifullah and Dilawar. Among them, Bator is the son of the director of the Counter-Terrorism Department while Mohibullah's father is in the Paktia Police. The court handed the death sentence to Bator, Ahmadullah, Shazia and Mohibullah, while the other three were acquitted. However, Sherbaz was sentenced to two years in prison on another charge. ... **P2**

Abdullah: India role vital for lasting peace in Afghanistan



India is a 'strategic partner' of Afghanistan and its role in establishing lasting peace in the war-torn country is 'vital', said Afghanistan Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HCNR), Abdullah Abdullah on Tuesday. Abdullah Abdullah on

Tuesday departed for India for his official visit on an invitation by the Government of India to discuss the peace efforts and the need for regional consensus and support for the Afghan peace process. He is accompanied by a high-level delegation. During this visit, he

will meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, and deliver a keynote speech at the Institute for Defence Studies & Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi. "The Chairman of HCNR during his stay will exchange views with the

leadership of the Republic of India on the AfghanPeaceProcess, peace talks in Doha, regional support for the process, & overall bilateral relations between the two countries," Abdullah wrote on Twitter. "Abdullah before his departure to India stated: 'India is a strategic partner of AFG, & has continuously supported the government & people of AFG. Our historical relations with India is very important to us, & the role of India in establishing lasting peace in AFG & the region is vital. I am visiting India up on an official invitation by the Gov. of India to discuss the peace efforts, & the need for regional consensus & support for the AfghanPeaceProcess,' he added. Abdullah's visit comes at a time when the Afghanistan government and Taliban are trying to negotiate a deal in order to restore peace in the country. Abdullah Abdullah recently had visited Pakistan and discussed the Afghan peace process with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Foreign Minister, and other Pakistani officials. The peace talks between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban began on ... **P3**

Afghanistan, Intl Partners Prepare for Geneva Conference

Afghanistan and international partners in Kabul yesterday officially launched preparations for the 2020 Afghanistan Conference, scheduled to take place 23-24 November at the Palais des Nations in Geneva and be co-hosted by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA), Finland and the United Nations. The launch event was attended by representatives of more than 70 countries and international organizations, as well as ... **P2**



Khalilzad renews call for reduction in violence

President Ashraf Ghani has met US special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Doha on efforts for bringing peace to Afghanistan.

American and NATO forces commander in Afghanistan Gen. Scott Miller was also present at the overnight meeting in Qatar's capital.

Khalilzad tweeted after the meeting that he discussed Afghan peace with Gen. Miller. The US supported an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process, he wrote.

"I told the president Afghans should not let the opportunity for peace slip away. I support the Islamic Republic negotiators doing their work as long as it takes," the envoy said.

The veteran ambassador added he was encouraged by what he heard



from all sides, including the two teams' commitment to peace.

"We call on all nations, especially the neighbors and other key players, to do the same," he said, adding a significant reduction in violence would save lives.

It would also boost trust, broaden

support for peace and help the negotiating teams make progress at a faster pace, he argued. This is what the Afghan people want. And the US stands with them."

"Violence is too high, and too many Afghans are dying," Khalilzad lamented. "We are pressing ... **P2**

Germany...

electoral calendar to organise elections within 18 months and demilitarise Sirte. In his remarks on Monday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said he felt encouraged by recent developments, including a lull in fighting and the freezing of confrontations between the two sides. Monday's meeting "highlighted the need to seize the opportunity created by the positive developments over the past few weeks to achieve peace and stability in Libya," Maas and Guterres said in a joint statement.

Primary Court...

The court said that the bodies of three of the victims were found in the courtyard of a house that was rented by Bator, Ahmadullah, Mohibullah and Shazia in PD7. The fourth body was found in PD8, in a house where Dilawar, Shazia, Ahmadullah and Sharifullah were living.

The prosecutor said that Ahmadullah had forced Shazia, a 20-year-old married woman from Paktia, to move to Kabul and live with them. He also coerced Shazia into inviting other people to their home where he would rob them and kill them.

Pompeo: Attempt...

He added that the peace negotiations in Doha represent the "best chance" in a generation for a "durable, inclusive peace" in Afghanistan. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack on Ghafari yet.

By Jyoti Malhotra

Keep low profile on Afghanistan, as Pakistan holds key to war and peace – Abdullah to Modi

The winds of the Hindu Kush are astir once again with the premeditated actions of a variety of actors from a variety of nationalities attempting to end the strife and bring peace back to Afghanistan. The main action is taking place in Doha, Qatar, where talks between the Afghan government delegation and the Taliban have been stalled for 22 days since they were launched with much fanfare on 12 September. The two sides haven't even begun direct talks with each other. They can't even seem to agree on a common agenda – will an Islamic Republic of Afghanistan mean that all its citizens will be equal, or will some be more equal than others?

In fact, these past few hours and days, the action has shifted out of Kabul – besides Doha, to Islamabad, Delhi and the Tajik capital, Dushanbe.

On Monday afternoon, Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani landed in Doha with a high-powered delegation that includes first vice-president Amrullah Saleh, acting foreign minister Hanif Atmar and national security advisor Hamdullah Mohib.

But officials said Ghani would not talk to the Taliban directly because of the recent string of terror attacks across Afghanistan. In Nangarhar Saturday, a car bomb blast killed 16 people. In Laghman province Monday, hours before Ghani's plane landed in Doha, the governor survived a suicide attack, but eight people were killed.

Today, Afghanistan's chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah is arriving in Delhi. He is expected to brief the Indian leadership on the Doha talks, tell Delhi to continue with its patient support of peace in Afghanistan and to explain that the Taliban may have been anathema so far, but they now need to be dealt with.

Basically, Abdullah would like India to be a little more enthusiastic about the ongoing Doha negotiations, not take the hands-off attitude it has taken so far but not do anything to upset it either.

Kabul would like India to continue to behave like the strong, silent type it has been these past so many years – not upset the apple cart, especially with Pakistan once again looming large on the horizon. Continue to help out with project aid, like building dams and schools – but at least in the short run, keep a low profile.

Pakistan matters

Significantly, Abdullah was in Islamabad last week to meet Pakistan Army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, Prime Minister Imran Khan and others – perhaps his



most important port of call in recent weeks. Certainly, this was an attempt to persuade the Pakistani government to intervene in a positive way in the stalled Afghan peace process in Doha.

Abdullah knows, as do Ghani and the rest of Afghanistan, that if the Taliban is back to the negotiating table after so many years, it is the Pakistanis who have nudged them. That Pakistan holds all the major cards.

Certainly, the realisation that Afghanistan is caught between a huge boulder and a hard place is terribly difficult to swallow. Who wants to be told, after 19 years of fighting the Taliban, that you may soon have no option but to have them sit on the throne of Kabul? That your election may really be worth a piece of straw? That another country – Pakistan – has its finger on both war and peace?

And yet the Afghans are braver than most. They won't give up. Hours before he left for Kuwait and Doha, Ghani told a crowd in Paktika province that the Taliban should provide a plan for peace, not slogans. NSA Hamdullah Mohib told a Pashto TV anchor: "We have made promises to the people... If Pakistan bombs our soil, we will respond to it. We won't break our promise." And foreign minister Hanif Atmar told a gathering of ambassadors in Kabul that the Taliban had failed to adhere to their commitments to stop the violence despite thousands of Taliban prisoners released in exchange.

Taliban's demands

So, why are the talks stalled in Doha? According to Tolo News, both sides are in agreement on 18 out of 20 points, but the two that remain are fundamental to the nature of the future state. Namely, what is the foundational religious jurisprudence for the talks, and therefore of the Afghan state? And, will the US-Taliban deal signed in February this year be the "overarching authority" under which the peace negotiations can take place?

It seems that the Taliban want the Hanafi school of Islam to be the only religious guidelines. Tolo News reports the Afghan government team has conceded to this, but wants Shia personal law as well as the laws of other religious minorities to be respected as well. As for the Taliban also insisting on its deal with the US to act as the mother agreement for talks, the Afghan government team has suggested a variety of alternative options, including a "loya jirga", or a gathering of elected Afghans and civil society.

Delhi understands the message

Certainly, the Doha talks need to get back to the table, sooner than later. A resolution to the strife in Afghanistan is the most important story for the next few years, especially because it impacts India in so many ways. Abdullah's message to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to have India lie low for the moment, while Pakistan and the US brave the limelight, ... **P3**

By Richard A. Clarke

America in Afghanistan

In the recently released Showtime documentary "Kingdom of Silence" by Alex Gibney and Lawrence Wright, I made the statement that with hindsight the U.S. may have been better off never having occupied Afghanistan. That comment has brought some questions and responses, so let me be clear about what I mean and why.

Prior to 9/11, in both the Clinton and Bush administrations, there had been discussions about attacking al-Qaeda in Afghanistan using cruise missiles, bombs, U.S. "commando" raids, and by sending in U.S. advisors to assist the so-called Northern Alliance of tribes that were fighting the Taliban group that controlled the southern two-thirds of the country. I supported all of those options for attacking al-Qaeda. None had gained much traction with other Cabinet-level principals for a variety of reasons that I have discussed in the book *Against All Enemies*. Never, however, in that

period was there any discussion of U.S. forces militarily occupying the entire country and staying there for an extended period of time.

After 9/11, the U.S. decision making process lacked analytical rigor. As a participant in that process I can say that the preceding sentence is an understatement. Some principals wanted to get on with attacking Iraq (even though it had nothing to do with the 9/11 attack). Others thought we had to attack Afghanistan first, at least for appearances' sake. There was a consensus, of which I was a part, that the al-Qaeda bases and personnel had to be "cleaned out." There was strong sentiment to punish the Taliban for harboring al-Qaeda. There was not much detailed planning or serious thought at senior levels about what we would do after that. U.S. forces were in Afghanistan by October 2001 and had routed both al-Qaeda and the Taliban and occupied the entire country by December. Paraphrasing the

words of Colin Powell (speaking about Iraq), we owned it. We then set about trying to figure out what to do with it, engaged in multi-party diplomatic efforts, and the creation of a European (NATO) force to help us secure the country by training up indigenous forces. What followed next, rather predictably, was that the Taliban went into an insurgency fighting mode, largely based out of Pakistan. The new Afghan national forces created by the U.S. and NATO were never very successful in dealing with that insurgency, nor were U.S. and NATO forces. Part of the reason for the failure to quash the insurgency was that the Bush administration withheld the needed U.S. forces to invade Iraq. There were other reasons, as well. Defeating Afghan insurgents, however, has been something that armies from Alexander the Great's Macedonians, to the Royal Army of the UK, to the Red Army of the USSR have all failed in doing. In an attempt to ... **P3**

Khalilzad renews...

for a significant reduction in violence that will lead to a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire."

The envoy continued: "Gen. Miller and I affirmed ongoing US support to Afghanistan, our partnership and a peace process meant to produce a political settlement and an end to decades of war."

The US special envoy and Gen. Miller also met Taliban's deputy leader Abdul Ghani Baradar and discussed the implementation of the Doha agreement, said Mohammad Naem

Implementation of the February 29 pact was significant for the resolution of the issues facing Afghanistan, the US officials

Afghanistan, Intl...

and is expected to renew civil society representatives either virtually or physically at the Presidential Char Chinar Palace in the Afghan capital.

The 2020 Afghanistan Conference is the last pledging conference of the Transformation Decade (2015-24), which aims to take the country towards self-reliance,

said. However, National Security Adviser Hamdullah Mohib said on Tuesday that the current negotiations which are underway in Doha are taking place between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban, stating that there are no foreign mediators in the room, nor are any wanted.

Mohib said that Kabul did not want the terms of the US-Taliban peace deal to be imposed on the Afghan people.

Mohib added that Kabul was not involved in the US peace agreement with the Taliban and would like to see a new process at work in the negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban.

and is expected to renew international community and Afghan commitments to the development and stability of Afghanistan up to 2024.

The main conference will take place on 24 November, with side events to discuss key challenges and accomplishments for Afghanistan occurring the day before.

Iran's Side of Herat-Khaf Railway Nearly Complete

The Iranian section of the Khaf-Herat railway route will be completed in the next two months, the Iranian Deputy Minister of Transport and Urban Development Abbas Khatiti has said. In a trip to the Afghan western province of Herat on Monday, Khatiti said that 93 percent of the work on the Iranian portion of the railway route has been completed.

Meanwhile, Afghan railway officials in Herat said that the Afghan government will start work on the 4th phase of the Khaf-Herat railway project within the next ten days. The 4th phase of the project is to lay the track from Ghoryan district of Herat towards the Herat airport.

Economic significance

Referring to the economic significance of the project, officials of Herat Chamber of Commerce and Industries have said that the implementation of the project will help to further expand exports and imports relations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and Afghanistan. "We are very optimistic we will complete this project within

the next one or two months and ensure that the project becomes operational 100 percent during this period," Khatiti told reporters in Herat on Monday. "In the 4th phase, 40 percent of the work will be focused on the geotechnical portion and surveying of the project," said Sayed Aqa Azizi, the head of the Herat Railway Directorate.

Work is ongoing by a Kazakh company hired for the project, said Azizi. Overview of Khaf-Herat Railway Khawaf-Herat railway will be 130 km long, of which 70 km is inside Iran soil and 60 km is inside Afghanistan. With the completion of this project, Afghanistan can take advantage of a railway for the first time that provides access to Turkey and Europe with Iran ports in the Persian Gulf.

The project was started in April 2007 with Iran's aid at a cost of \$75 million and was due to finish in 2009, but was delayed. Completion of the project will increase transit opportunities in Afghanistan and is intended to solve many investors' and merchants' problems.



"Khaf railway project will help to connect Herat to the entire world and develop our export ability," said Abdul Latif Qanawizyan, the deputy head of Herat Chamber of Commerce and Industries.

Iranian officials have said that the project will also help Afghanistan to get easy access to Iranian ports at Chabahar and Bandar Abbas.

The development takes place as security threats still remain high against the project in Ghoryan district.

"When there is development and work in an area, and infrastructure comes there, of course security also increases, but we are fully ready to deal with these threats," said Najibullah Safai, the commander of the Khaf-Herat security department.

The Herat-Khaf railway is the largest joint infrastructural project between Iran and Afghanistan.

Iran and Afghan officials have said that they do not see any problem in the way of completing the project.

Keep low profile...

is sure to be understood in the right spirit.

As Deng Xiaoping said, hide your light and bide your time – a piece of Chinese advice New Delhi would gladly keep close to its heart at this moment. Certainly, Pakistan, which holds the aces in a future role for the Taliban, will not want Delhi to rear its head. For the same reasons, perhaps the US, with which India has a great and burgeoning relationship, will want Delhi to stay down.

Abdullah doesn't need to spell it out to PM Modi – he understands. Nor does Abdullah need to tell the PM that Kabul and Delhi will continue with their special relationship, even if it's behind the purdah.

Abdullah's visit to Delhi is a small turn in the wheels of history. But it signifies the consolidation of an old bond that is special, and at the risk of a cliché, can only grow from strength to strength.

Abdullah: India role...

September 12 in Qatar's capital Doha to end decades of war in which tens of thousands have been killed. Violence, however, has not abated in the country even as Afghan negotiators have been engaged in direct talks for the first time.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar had participated in the opening ceremony of Afghan peace negotiations in Doha through video conferencing and reiterated that the peace process should be Afghan-led and ensure the interests of minorities and women. He said that Afghan soil should never be used for carrying out anti-India activities and supported the need for an immediate ceasefire in order to establish long-lasting peace in Afghanistan. On September 25, Jaishankar had met former Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum and said India remains fully committed to an Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled peace process.

America in...

redress the problem of insufficient U.S. forces, when he became president, Barack Obama raised the number of U.S. troops from about 30,000 to over 100,000. Vice President Joe Biden opposed the surge, saying that it would lead to increased U.S. casualties and that when the U.S. forces went back to lower levels, the Taliban would regain territory. Biden proved correct.

Biden had advocated an approach that emphasized U.S. air-power, supporting U.S. Special Forces, some of which would be embedded with Afghan units. The U.S., NATO, and the Kabul government would not secure and hold all of the countryside, but would prevent any Taliban threat to control a major city. In my view, that was a realistic strategy and one which we should have pursued in 2001 or in 2011 when Biden proposed it.

After cleaning out the al-Qaeda camps and punishing the Taliban in 2001, regular U.S. ground combat forces could have left the country. We could have supported the Northern Alliance with embedded advisors and perhaps air cover operating from a northern airbase. The Taliban would probably have regained control in the south, but with less area under their rule than before. Al-Qaeda, however, would have been routed and if it reappeared, it could have been smashed again. It is that scenario I had in mind when I said that we might have been better off if we had not done the full invasion and complete occupation of the country. It would have reverted to something like what it was before 9/11, but without al-Qaeda. The only real U.S. interest in the country would

have been satisfied.

Instead, we have lost 2,372 American military personnel and have had 20,320 Americans wounded. Estimates of the financial cost of what we actually did vary widely, depending upon whether you include the cost of long-term care for U.S. veterans, and the various U.S. aid and development programs. Department of Defense operations alone have come in at a price of about a trillion dollars. That's with a T. You can think of any number of alternative uses for that sum, all of which would likely have made Americans better off than the way in which it was spent in Afghanistan.

Where are we now? The U.S. force presence is at 8,000 and falling fast. Taliban control of the countryside has grown. The U.S. has negotiated directly with the Taliban and finally forced both the Taliban and the Afghan government to the table together. These talks constitute a diplomatic success for the United States and are due in part to the toll that U.S. strikes have taken on Taliban commanders and the active role that the U.S. has been able to convince Pakistan to play diplomatically.

The talks between the two Afghan sides are, however, unlikely to succeed anytime soon because the Taliban believe they can just wait until all of the Americans leave. The Trump administration's apparent desire to leave Afghanistan completely "come hell or high water" creates a circumstance in which the Taliban are not sufficiently motivated to compromise. It also demoralizes our Afghan allies, many of whom believe that without a U.S. force presence, they will eventually

be driven out of the cities by the Taliban.

Having the Taliban militarily eject from Kabul and the other major cities the Afghans allies whom we supported for 20 years would further erode U.S. credibility globally, would result in the torture and death of many to whom we promised protection, and would create the circumstances in which terrorist groups could again use the country as a base for attacking elsewhere, including in the United States.

If Biden is elected, he should revert to his original plan for Afghanistan in which we do not worry about what faction controls the vast empty spaces of the country. Under the Biden plan from 2011, we would continue to have a Special Forces and airpower presence so that we could destroy any recrudescence of al-Qaeda, or now ISIS. That small force would also continue to provide support to the Afghan government so that they do not lose control of a major city.

We should have had clear and limited goals in Afghanistan after 9/11. We should have had thoughtful and informed planning. If we had, perhaps we would not have inserted a major force, occupied the entire country, or had thousands of U.S. casualties. That, however, is the road not taken. On the road we find ourselves on now, abandoning Afghanistan in the absence of a viable peace should not be the policy we choose. Maintaining a small U.S. residual force until there is a real peace would place our forces at minimal risk.

We did not think clearly about our future role in Afghanistan in 2001. We can do that now, or at least, in January. Inshallah.

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Kyrgyzstan vote result cancelled after clashes

Kyrgyzstan's chief electoral body said Tuesday it was cancelling the results of a parliamentary vote that plunged the Central Asian country into violent protests and political chaos.

The Central Electoral Commission said in a statement it had "invalidated the election results," which saw parties close to President Sooronbay Jeenbekov score big wins amid accusations of mass vote-buying campaigns.

The decision to cancel the results was made in order to "prevent tension" in the country, the head of the Commission Nurzhan Shaildabekova told the Interfax news agency.

The Kyrgyz parliament will convene later on Tuesday for an emergency session amid protests against the results of the parliamentary elections, press secretary Ibrahim Nurakun uulu said.

"Today, the parliament will convene for a special session at 16:00 (10:00 GMT), at Dostuk hotel," the press secretary wrote on Twitter.

Former Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev was released by protesters from a detention center of the State Committee for National Security on Tuesday, local media and Russia's TASS news agency reported.

Earlier, people protesting against the results of a parliamentary election in Kyrgyzstan broke into government and state security headquarters. The protesters then freed Atambayev and a few other former senior officials.

Atambayev, who was Kyrgyzstan's president from 2011 to 2017, was detained in August 2019 and charged with using force against law enforcement agents, organizing mass riots, a murder and an attempted murder, hostage taking, illegal release of a crime boss and other crimes, including corruption. He denied all the charges against him as politically motivated.

The preliminary count showed two pro-presidency parties, Birimdik and Mekenim



Kyrgyzstan, who both favor deeper integration with Moscow, together taking around half of the vote. Protesters demanded that the vote results be canceled and the Central Election Commission said on Tuesday it would consider their request, local news website 24.kg reported. In a statement on his website, Jeenbekov

described the actions of protesters who took over government and security headquarters as a bid by some political forces to seize power illegally.

Meanwhile, he urged his opponents to stop the protests and reiterated his readiness to have the election results annulled.

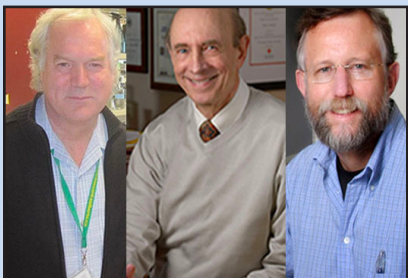
A look at the world

Black hole discoveries win 2020 Nobel Prize for Physics

Britain's Roger Penrose, Reinhard Genzel of Germany and U.S. scientist Andrea Ghez won the 2020 Nobel Prize for Physics for their discoveries about one of the most exotic phenomena in the universe, the black hole, the award-giving body said on Tuesday.

Penrose, professor at the University of Oxford, won half the prize for his work using mathematics to prove that black holes are a direct consequence of the general theory of relativity.

Genzel, of the Max Planck Institute and University of California, Berkeley, and Ghez, at the University of California, Los Angeles, shared the other half for discovering that an invisible and extremely heavy object governs the orbits of stars at the centre of our galaxy.



Physics is the second of this year's crop of Nobels to be awarded, after three scientists won the medicine prize for their discovery of Hepatitis C on Monday.

Among the Nobel prizes, physics has often dominated the spotlight with past awards going to scientific superstars such as Albert Einstein for fundamental discoveries about the make-up of the universe, including the general theory of relativity.

"The discoveries of this year's Laureates have broken new ground in the study of compact and supermassive objects," David Haviland, chair of the Nobel Committee for Physics, said on awarding the 10 million Swedish crown (\$1.1 million) prize.

"But these exotic objects still pose many questions that beg for answers and motivate future research."

Ghez is only the fourth woman to win the physics prize, after Marie Curie in 1903, Maria Goeppert Mayer in 1963 and Donna Strickland in 2018.

The Nobel prizes were created in the will of Swedish dynamite inventor and businessman Alfred Nobel and have been awarded since 1901.

This year's awards occur under the long shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic that has curtailed much of the usual festivities surrounding the prizes and sent the scientific world racing to develop a vaccine and treatment. (\$1 = 8.9108 Swedish crowns)

U.S. court orders Iran to pay \$1.4bn over missing ex-FBI agent



A court in the United States has ordered Iran's government to pay more than \$1.4bn in punitive and compensatory damages to the family of a former FBI agent who disappeared during a visit to an Iranian island in March 2007.

In an order issued late last week, US District Judge Timothy Kelly said he adopted a special expert's recommendation that Robert Levinson's family be awarded \$107m in compensatory damages. The judge awarded punitive damages of \$1.3bn. The court cited the case of Otto Warmbier, an American college student who died in 2017 shortly after being freed from captivity in North Korea, in deciding to award the significant amount of punitive damages to Levinson's family.

"Iran's conduct here is also unique, given that - astonishingly - it plucked a former FBI and DEA special agent from the face of the earth without warning, tortured him, held him captive for as long as 13 years, and to this day refuses to admit its responsibility," Kelly said. "His wife and children, and their spouses and children - while keeping Levinson's memory alive - have had to proceed with their lives without knowing his exact fate."

A handful of CIA officials were forced out of the agency and several more were disciplined after an internal investigation.

Germany 'cautiously optimistic' over efforts to end Libya war

Germany's foreign minister has expressed "cautious optimism" about the prospect of ending Libya's long-running conflict, encouraged by what he described as a shift to "political logic" after the warring sides in the North African country appeared unable to achieve their aims militarily.

"We believe that there is now a window in which much has become possible that was not possible before. I think we must seize that," Heiko Maas told a virtual ministerial meeting of 23 countries that was co-hosted by the United Nations and Germany on Monday.



"There are grounds for cautious optimism. We are seeing increasing signs of a rethink from military to political logic."

A major oil producer, Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising in 2011 overthrew and killed longtime ruler Muammar Gaddafi.

Since late 2015, the country has been split between two rival administrations: The internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) in the capital, Tripoli, and the House of Representatives (HoR) based in eastern Libya.

With backing from the United Arab Emirates, Russia and Egypt, eastern-based military commander Khalifa Haftar in April 2019 attempted to wrest control of the capital.

His plans, however, collapsed in the face of a Turkish-backed counteroffensive more than a year later, which saw the GNA push Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA) to the central city of Sirte, where the battle lines have since solidified.

Recent weeks have witnessed a flurry of diplomatic activity, with Egypt and Morocco hosting talks that saw GNA and HoR representatives agree on an ... **P2**



Shigal

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