



Tunisian president appoints new govt

US couple arrested for selling nuclear warship data

US, UK warn citizens of threats

Avoid hotels in Afghanistan, authorities warn

KABUL: The United States and Britain warned their citizens yesterday to avoid hotels in Afghanistan, days after dozens were killed at a mosque in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group. The Taliban, which seized power in August and declared an Islamic emirate, are seeking international recognition and assistance to avoid a humanitarian disaster and ease Afghanistan's economic crisis.

But, as the hardline Islamist group transitions from a rebel army to a governing power, they are struggling to contain the threat from the Afghanistan chapter of IS. "US citizens who are at or near the Serena Hotel should leave immediately," the US State Department said, citing "security threats" in the area. "In light of the increased risks you are advised not to stay in hotels, particularly in Kabul (such as the Serena Hotel)," Britain's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office added.

Since the Taliban takeover, many foreigners have left Afghanistan, but some journalists and aid workers remain in the capital. The well-known Serena, a luxury hotel popular with business travelers and foreign guests, has twice been the target of attacks by the Taliban. In 2014, just weeks before the presidential election, four teenage gunmen with pistols hidden in their socks managed to penetrate several layers of security, killing nine people, including an AFP journalist and members of his family. In 2008, a suicide bombing left six dead.

US aid pledge discussed

In August, during a chaotic evacuation of foreign nationals and at-risk Afghans, NATO countries issued a chorus of warnings about an imminent threat, telling people to stay away from Kabul airport. Hours later, a suicide bomber detonated in a crowd gathered around one of the airport gates,

killing scores of civilians and 13 American troops. The attack was claimed by IS, which has since targeted several Taliban guards, and claimed a devastating bomb attack in Kunduz city on Friday that ripped through a mosque during Friday prayers—the bloodiest assault since US forces left the country in August.

In recent years, the Islamic State's Afghanistan-Pakistan chapter has been responsible for some of the deadliest attacks in those countries—massacring civilians at mosques, shrines, public squares and even hospitals. The terror threat has partly overshadowed Taliban efforts to improve their international standing. Over the weekend, senior Taliban and US delegations held their first face-to-face talks in the Qatar capital Doha since the US withdrawal.

The talks "focused on security and terrorism concerns and safe passage for US citizens, other foreign nationals and our Afghan partners," according to State Department spokesman Ned Price. "Human rights, including the meaningful participation of women and girls in all aspects of Afghan society," were also raised, Price said in a statement. According to the State Department, the discussions were "candid and professional" and US officials reiterated that "the Taliban will be judged on its actions, not only its words".

The Taliban said the United States had agreed to send aid to Afghanistan, though the US said the issue had only been discussed, and that any assistance would go to the Afghan people and not the Taliban government. "US representatives stated that they will give humanitarian assistance to Afghans and will provide facilities for other humanitarian organizations to deliver aid," the Taliban's foreign ministry said, warning that the aid should not be linked to political issues. — AFP



Taliban seek international recognition



KANDAHAR: People with their belongings rush to pass to Pakistan from the Afghanistan border in Spin Boldak. — AFP

The 2021 Nobels: An almost 100% male affair

STOCKHOLM: Press freedom, the plight of refugees and climate modeling: 12 men and only one woman won Nobel Prizes this year for conferring "the greatest benefit to humankind". While four women won Nobel prizes in 2020 - close to the 2009 record of five—the awards remain male-dominated as much of the prizewinning work dates back 20, 30 or even 40 years when fewer women reached the top levels of academic research. In 2019, there was only one woman laureate, and in 2017 and 2016 there were none. Here are the 2021 winners in each discipline:

Medicine

US scientists David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian won the Medicine Prize for discoveries on receptors for temperature and touch. Their discoveries "unlocked one of the secrets of nature by explaining the molecular basis for sensing heat, cold and mechanical force," the jury said. The duo's research, conducted independently of each other in the late 1990s and 2000s, is being used to develop treatments for a wide range of diseases and conditions, including chronic pain.

Physics

Awarded for the first time to two climate experts, the Physics Prize went to Klaus Hasselmann of Germany and Syukuro Manabe of Japan and the United States, as well as to Italian theorist Giorgio Parisi. Working in the 1960s, Manabe showed how levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere correspond to increased Earth surface temperatures. Crucially, he recognized the role of water vapor in trapping heat, which is much more than carbon dioxide alone. Hasselmann was credited for working out how climate models can remain reliable despite sometimes chaotic variation in weather trends. Parisi was meanwhile honored for his work in the 1980s on the theory of complex systems. His work helped physicists understand apparently entirely random materials, with wide-ranging applications including mathematics, biology and machine learning.

Chemistry

Germany's Benjamin List and Scottish-American

David MacMillan won the Chemistry Prize for developing a pioneering type of catalyst. Working independently of one another in 2000, they created a tool to build molecules that has spurred new drug research, scaled up production and made chemistry more environmentally friendly. The new technique, called "asymmetric organocatalysis" and which relies on small organic molecules, is used to control and accelerate chemical reactions.

Literature

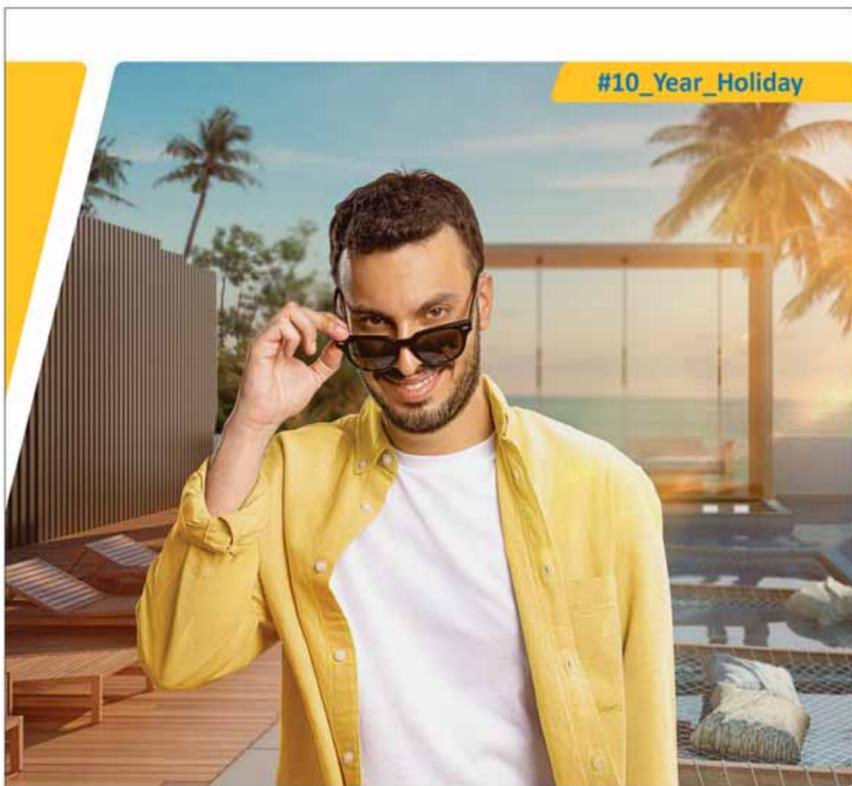
Novelist Abdulrazak Gurnah, who was born in Tanzania but has lived in Britain for more than 50 years, won the Literature Prize for his portrayal of the effects of colonialism and the trauma of the refugee experience. The Swedish Academy said Gurnah was honored "for his uncompromising and compassionate penetration of the effects of colonialism and the fate of the refugee in the gulf between cultures and continents". He is the fifth African to win the prestigious honor.

Peace

Investigative journalists Maria Ressa of the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov of Russia won the Peace Prize for their work promoting freedom of expression at a time when liberty of the press is increasingly under threat. Ressa, also a US citizen, is co-founder of Rappler, a digital media company for investigative journalism, and a vocal critic of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte. Muratov in 1993 co-founded Russia's leading independent newspaper Novaya Gazeta, one of the few media outlets left voicing criticism of Putin. Muratov has served as chief editor several times. Novaya Gazeta's opponents have responded with harassment, threats, violence and murder.

Economics

Three US-based economists, Canadian-American David Card, Israeli-American Joshua Angrist and Dutch-American Guido Imbens, won the Economics Prize for work on the labor market using "natural experiments", or observational cause-and-effect studies, that have revolutionized empirical research in the field. Card's work has focused on the labor market effects of minimum wages, immigration and education. Meanwhile, Angrist and Imbens figured out a methodological way to interpret data from "natural experiments", demonstrating how precise cause and effect conclusions can be. — AFP



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Afghan Shiites stunned but not broken by blast

KUNDUZ: The imam had just led his congregation in a chorus of "Allahu Akhbar" (God is Greatest) when Abbas recalls hearing a "terrible sound" before being knocked to the ground. "It was a noise I had never experienced in my 24 years," he told AFP from his hospital bed in the northern Afghan city of Kunduz. Now Abbas knows that a suicide attacker had detonated his bomb, ripping through the crowd during Friday prayers at the Gozar-e-Sayed mosque and instantly killing dozens of Shiite worshippers.

But despite the distress and his injuries, Abbas vowed to continue his work as a prayer caller (muezzin) and reciter (Qari) at the mosque, saying he sees it as his "human responsibility" to carry on. Friday's blast killed around 100 Shiite Muslims, according to locals, the latest in a string of attacks on Afghanistan's minority community, considered heretics by Sunni Muslim extremists like the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) group, which claimed the attack.

Disoriented and realizing his leg was injured, Abbas dragged himself to the side of the octagonal room. "I was afraid of a second explosion so I and some others threw ourselves out of the window," he said. He then crawled from the scene and was taken

to hospital by rickshaw. Lying in the orthopaedics ward, wrapped in blue sheets and with bandages on his right arm and leg due to shrapnel wounds, he said those responsible for the carnage were "worse than animals". "The mosque is a place that every Muslim should go and pray," he said defiantly. "Terrorists that want to sow discord among us or want us to leave our sect or religion must know that their wish will not come true and they will take it to the grave."

The Azizullah Safar Regional Hospital in Kunduz was still treating 16 patients on Sunday, doctors said, with seven in the intensive care unit (ICU). Women nurses tended to the wounded who were hooked up to drips and heart rate monitors. Nuriya Ahmadi, a nurse in the ICU ward for the past five years, said attacks like Friday's traumatize the victims, but also the medical staff caring for them. "Patients in a critical condition affect our mental condition too, especially patients who are brought from such incidents," she told AFP.

"We try to do everything we can to fulfil our responsibility to them." Since coming to power two months ago, the Taliban have imposed strict restrictions on women workers, but Ahmadi said staff at the ICU ward were yet to face any problems. "In this ward, female patients are admitted in one section, and in two others, male patients are admitted," she said. Some work was only supposed to be carried out by men, she said, adding though that generally, "we will continue our work as before." Ghulam Rabbani Sherzai, a junior doctor in the main ward, described the heavy strain of dealing with mass casualties. — AFP