

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind

# Daily Outlook

## AFGHANISTAN

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## Afghanistan Facing Profound Challenges in 2016

In an assessment that is highly skeptical about the situation in Afghanistan, a top US intelligence official has warned that the country is at risk of a political breakdown in 2016. Talking to a senate committee, Director of US National Intelligence James Clapper said that the Afghan government is facing persistent challenges to political stability in the country including increased insurgency, financial challenges and eroding political cohesion. The top American intelligence official warned that the Afghan government would face more immense and divisive issues during 2016, referring to the difficult peace talks with the Taliban and the controversial electoral reforms. The warning is coming while the government of Afghanistan is preparing for another round of peace talks with the insurgent groups, and in the meantime, is bracing for the upcoming fighting season.

The assessment is skeptical about the ongoing peace efforts to bring the Taliban to the table of negotiations aimed at ending the long-lasting conflict in the country. The US official has also warned about economic woes of the Afghan government undermining the efforts to stabilize the country. However, the Afghan government remains optimistic over the situation, insisting that the establishment has the capacity to handle the challenges. The warning is coming as a fresh alarm over the situation in Afghanistan and is predicting a difficult year for the country.

The Afghan government needs to heed the assessment and start to forge a national consensus for tackling the upcoming challenges this year. The government is preparing for starting negotiations with the Taliban under the four-nation peace initiative while the Taliban has not endorsed the plan yet and instead has set a number of pre-conditions for entering peace talks. Despite the initial hopes over the process, there is no sign of Taliban giving up to violence and coming to a genuine peace talks that could end the conflict. There is a long way ahead to see a concrete result from the ongoing efforts to strike a peace deal with the insurgent groups. For the peace process itself, this year will prove a challenging year for Afghanistan as the process would be lengthy and difficult. The four-way initiative presents a potential opportunity for success of the peace efforts, but it will also test if peace is really viable in Afghanistan. And it is still likely the initiative fails to end the conflict.

The Afghan government needs to be fully prepared politically and militarily for containing much fiercer offensives of the Taliban in 2016. The group is more powerful now than they were in previous years. Now they fight more conventional fights against government forces and gain more important victories in the battlefields. The Taliban are preparing for next season of insurgency against the government of Afghanistan. While we used to witness a lull in the fighting in previous winter seasons, the insurgents are waging a bitter campaign in southern Helmand province and Baghlan in the north. The ongoing offensive by the Taliban is an indicative of intensity of their upcoming summer offensive. The Taliban aims to have the highest possible gains from the group's military efforts this year, and the fact is that the group has the destructive potentials to expand the insurgency and further destabilize the country.

The existing financial and economic challenges further compound the problems related to the stability of the country. The ongoing insurgency makes it hard for the government to lead reforms and new programs for improving the economy and providing employment for the citizens. The electoral reforms present another major challenge for Afghanistan in 2016. Holding the parliamentary election is one of the key tasks ahead of the national unity government. However, the parliamentary elections cannot be held without the electoral reforms. The issue is of national importance and its failure would mark a major failure for the national unity government. The ongoing efforts for making the reforms is far from being sustained while there is a legal stalemate over legislating the laws that are supposed to govern the electoral processes.

The government has asserted that it is working tirelessly to resolve the issue and make a way forward over the electoral reforms. However, the difference remains in place and the relevant authorities are in continuous bickering over the reforms and election processes.

This is while there is growing discontents over power-sharing issues and the electoral politics among the government stakeholders as well as the political spectrum in the country. In recent months, a number of new political entities emerged in the arena of the Afghan politics. Some of them are in opposition to the government. There is growing discontents over the performance of the government over key national issues such as the electoral reforms, distribution of computerized ID, the anti-insurgency campaign and the inefficient governance. The government needs to come to the realization to make a broader consensus over key issues of national importance. This would help the government to better manage the affairs and deal with the challenges. It would be much helpful for the government's credibility to implement key financial, electoral and anti-corruption reforms.

# The Faculty of Wonder

By Dilawar Sherzai

Throughout thousand years of evolution human beings have learnt that the faculty of wonder is one of the basic attributes that can help them in finding answers to so many doubts that cover the facts about the universe, world and human beings themselves. Since the very inception of human beings' organized life, the search for truth has been one of the basic motives of human mind. And, the weapon that has supported him the most in achieving this motive is undoubtedly the capacity to ask questions. Today human beings would be without the piles of information and knowledge that they have collected had they not wondered, inquired and searched.

It was the human faculty to wonder that took them to the doors of philosophy and it was the philosophical questions that solved some of the very basic questions about human existence, life and about the universe as a whole. It then culminated into science and then the scientists took the difficult task of running after the truth. However, the role of the philosophy and philosophers is still very much imperative as there are many areas that can never be touched by science but philosophy has a big part in them. And, it is philosophy that supports the faculty of wonder and appreciates human beings to strengthen it in their search for the truth. Unfortunately, there have been authorities and teachings that have seen the doubting attribute of human beings with doubt. They argue that doubts and questions will lead human beings astray and may even lead them to the paths that can never reach to some destination. They on the other hand favor blind beliefs. Their arguments seem to have some strength but in fact fail to address the exact issue. If questioning, as they believe, does not necessarily lead to the fact and may even lead to infinite paths of questions, how satisfied would human beings be without knowing the truth and without asking questions? Can human beings be totally contented with the knowledge that cannot go through the simple test of their thinking and their rationality? And, what can human beings build on the beliefs that may be totally wrong? Inaccurate knowledge may not compel human beings to be really forceful against others and may not make them make others follow their thinking, but beliefs, whether right or wrong, will compel the believers to be forceful against others and force them to follow their blind beliefs. Those who possess blind beliefs are, as a matter of fact, deprived of the true awareness of life. They are the ones who themselves have locked their minds and do not know that their minds are locked and the keys are with themselves. Nothing is able to change such people as they are not open to any view or any discussion. Even education cannot change such people. If such people even go to educational institutions, there is no chance that they would improve as they take with themselves their dogmatic beliefs.

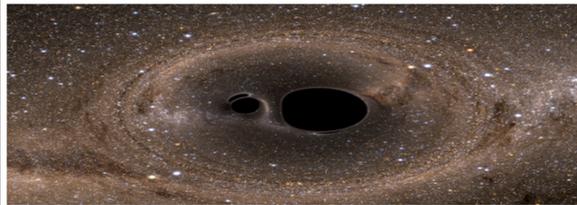
It is also important to note that the type of education the educational institutions are disseminating in our society is really controversial. The educational institutions have become the factories, where robots are generated who, themselves, cannot think anything, but act as per the commands that are fed into them. There is no room for doubt and questions in our educational institutes. Those who have the faculty of wonder and ask questions are punished in the severest way. Such institutions can only produce students who get education to negate education, and unfortunately such people are the most suitable for our society and most educated for our so-called education scholars. However, they are those puppets who play in the act based on education but themselves do not know the purpose of their act. This is really weird that our youth is being kept away from better and thought-generating education system. The endeavors are being made to keep the young and capable minds away from the food that can nourish them and make them discover the world, universe and their mysteries. True education can even reduce hatred in the hearts of the youngsters and teach them the lessons of love and brotherhood for the fellow beings. In fact, there are certain people who strive to keep such education away from youngsters because they know that it would generate so many views and perspectives which can even unveil the realities that they want to keep hidden. We should teach our youngster not to emphasize on a single perspective and try to learn how to live with different ideas and thoughts. They need to know that others can differ from what they think and what they feel and they need to realize that others can be right as well. They even need to go deeper and assume that there are many ideas that have not been thought yet and with open minds they can have the opportunity to discover such thoughts. They also require understanding that whatever has already been thought for them can be wrong; this way they can come to know about the mistakes in the history and know the real truth. Our youth have to be emancipated from following the forced beliefs. They have to be given the freedom of free thinking and their faculty of wonder must be nourished. Only those youngsters have the right of getting education who understand that they can doubt and challenge what is already known and who want to differentiate between what is right and what is wrong through their own minds. The educational institutions must first of all develop an attitude of learning, which requires a questioning nature. They should not be the places where the students are spoon fed. It has to be understood that if the educational institutions are able to generate an attitude of learning the rest will follow itself. Then the teachers do not have to force or punish the students to learn; they will learn themselves as they would be dictated by their faculty of wonder to do so.

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## Einstein Was Right; Gravitational Waves Do Exist

The collision of two black holes- a tremendously powerful incident detected for first time ever by Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO).

By Roohullah Qalandari



The last theory of Albert Einstein is associated with gravitational waves and it seemed to be the most impossible parameter to detect so far! However, a team of scientists announced on Thursday that they had heard and recorded the sound of two black holes colliding a billion light-years away.

David Reitze, the American laser physicist and LIGO executive director at California Institute of Technology made the announcement, "We have detected gravitational waves. We did it." At highly anticipated press conference in Washington.

The gravitational waves, ripples in fabric of space-time was first anticipated by Einstein hundred years ago but never observed directly until now. They are not light but a brand new communication medium that travel unimpeded through gas, dust and interstellar space. A gravitational wave, which expands and contracts all matter as it passes through, will cause a phase shift in the light that will be seen as the returning beams merge.

The waves were detected on September 14, 2015, scientists said. Since then, scientists have been evaluating their findings to make sure they were accurate. Indian scientists have contributed significantly in designing the algorithms that were used to analyze the signals recorded by the detectors and be sure that it was indeed from a gravitational wave. Furthermore, the scientists not only detected the ripples but also were able to confirm the actual source of the waves. These ripples are product of enormous collision between two massive black holes. Reitze stated, one black hole had the mass of 29 suns; the other was equivalent of 36 suns. Black holes are objects of extreme density, with such a strong gravitational attraction that even light cannot escape from their grasp. Black holes are incredibly massive but it cover only a small region it's due to the relationship between mass and gravity.

How big is this discovery?

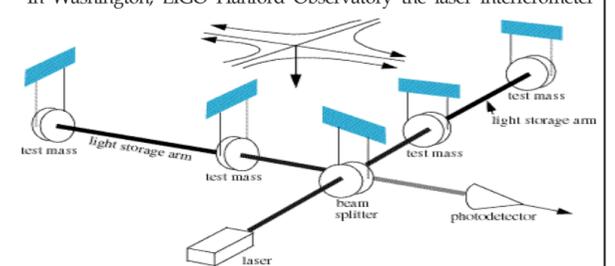
Discovering gravitational waves would be a huge deal for physics, cosmology and mankind's understanding of black holes and the universe at a larger scale. As famed physicist Stephen Hawking noted in Nature, "These amazing observations are the confirmation of a lot of theoretical work, including Einstein's general theory of relativity, which predicts gravitational waves." Apart from the fact of affirming a big piece of Einstein's theory of general relativity, gravitational waves can be utilized to probe some of the most mysterious phenomena in the cosmos. Moreover, these waves can be used as fingerprints of the most energetic events in the universe because black holes, neutron stars and other object that do not emit light which makes it extremely difficult to study from our vantage point. These fingerprints can help scientists understand how the force of gravity operates under extreme conditions.

All the previous predictions of Albert Einstein has been tested and verified such as; force of gravity is an illusion instead mass wraps the fabric of 4-D spacetime leading to gravitational motion, gravitational of light that is known as gravitational lensing, slowing of time in gravitational field and

dragging of spacetime by spinning of masses. However, only the last prediction, gravitational waves has never been observed directly, but now! Simply put, gravitational waves are vibrations in the fabric of the universe-light-speed ripples in spacetime itself, caused by such violent events as exploding stars and black hole mergers. The atoms that make up everything from the stars in the sky to the human beings on Earth are shaking a tiny bit, all the time. Group of scientists in Louisiana and Washington where two of the most sensitive detectors have been waiting and listening has claimed they have detected gravitational waves.

What devices are used to detect gravitational waves?

In Washington, LIGO Hanford Observatory the laser interferometer



gravitational wave observatory has detectors that has L-shape antenna with arms 2.5 miles (4km) long. Inside the ends of each arm mirrors of ultra-pure glass are isolated from the noise, heat and vibrations of outside world. A beam of laser light measures the separation of the mirrors, the beam is split and send towards the mirrors at the end of each arm. If the arms are precisely the same length, the returning beams cancel each other out and LIGO detectors sees no light but a passing gravitational wave that stretch one arm and squeeze the other. The resulting discrepancies' are as tiny as a fraction of the width of proton but enough to misalign the beams and light up the detector in rhythmic pattern.

A schematic drawing of a Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO)

On 14th of September 2015, LIGO detected flickering light and turned it into a sound wave, a chirp. It was the eco of the merge of those two black holes, a cosmic cataclysm that took place billion years ago.

The Future Hearing a gravitational wave has opened a new eye of Astronomy, for the first time humans have ears and eyes on the universe. In January 2016, the LISA Pathfinder space craft has arrived at its destination, a spot in space a million miles away from earth. A place where gravity of earth cancel each other, a quiet place to attempt the impossible. The mission keeps two cubes of golden platinum in perfect free fall and perfectly still position. The mission is a test and a ground work for a future mission "A LISA". Laser Interferometer Space Antenna (LISA) Pathfinder is testing certain technologies required for future LISA-like space missions that cannot be proven on Earth due to our planet's gravity. The mission aims to, demonstrate that a test mass can be put in a pure gravitational free-fall, demonstrate laser interferometry with a free-falling mirror and assess the reliability of micro-Newton thrusters, lasers and optics in a space environment.

The LISA Pathfinder is in Halo orbit about the Lagrangian point it's 1.5 million kilometers away from Earth. Three space craft a million kilometers apart linked with lasers waiting for gravitational waves.

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