

world

Iga Tokarczuk, Peter Handke win Nobel Literature prizes

● Tokarczuk and Handke each take home a cheque worth \$912,000

● Tokarczuk is the 15th woman to have won the prestigious distinction

AFP | Stockholm

Polish writer Olga Tokarczuk yesterday won the 2018 Nobel Literature Prize, which was delayed over a sexual harassment scandal, while Austrian novelist and playwright Peter Handke took the 2019 award, the Swedish Academy said.

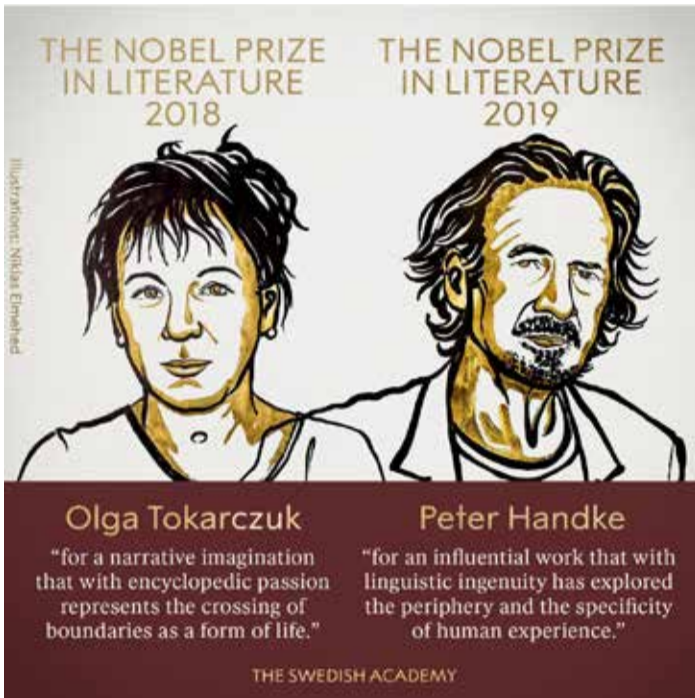
Tokarczuk, 57, considered the most talented Polish novelist of her generation, was honoured “for a narrative imagination that with encyclopaedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life”.

Her books portray a polychromatic world perpetually in motion, with characters’ traits intermingled and language that is both precise and poetic.

Tokarczuk’s first novel, “The Journey of the People of the Book,” released in 1993, chronicles a failed expedition to find a mysterious book.

The daughter of a school librarian, she won the Booker International Prize along with her translator Jennifer Croft for her 2007 novel “Flights”, whose English version came out in 2017.

Her 900-page “The Books of Jacob”, which the Swedish Academy hailed as her “magnum opus”, spans seven



Olga Tokarczuk
“for a narrative imagination that with encyclopaedic passion represents the crossing of boundaries as a form of life.”

Released in 2014, its pages are numbered in reverse in the style of Hebrew books.

The Academy called it a “remarkably rich panorama of an almost neglected chapter in European history.”

The peculiar art of Peter Handke is the extraordinary attention to landscapes and the material presence of the world, which has made cinema and painting two of his greatest sources of inspiration.

‘Linguistic ingenuity’

Handke, 76, was meanwhile honoured “for an influential work that with linguistic ingenuity has explored the periphery and the specificity of human experience,” the Academy said.

Ironically, in 2014 Handke called for the Nobel Literature Prize to be abolished, saying it brought its winner “false canonisation”.

The son of a German soldier he only met in adulthood, Handke “has established himself as one of the most influential writers in Europe after the Second World War,” the Academy said.

Handke also stoked controversy when he attended former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic’s funeral in 2006, and expressed sympathy for the Serbs in the 1990s Yugoslav wars.

His works are filled with a strong desire to discover and to make his discoveries come to life by finding new literary expressions for them, it added.

Notable works include “Short Letter, Long Farewell”, the poetry collection “The Innerworld of the Outerworld of the Innerworld” and “A Sorrow Beyond Dreams” about his mother, who killed herself in 1971.

He has also described Thomas Mann, a giant of German literature and a 1929 Nobel laureate, as a “terribly bad writer” churning out “condescending, snotty-nosed prose”.

Tokarczuk and Handke each take home a cheque worth nine million kronor (\$912,000, 828,000 euros).

Tokarczuk becomes just the 15th woman to have won the prestigious distinction, out of 116 literature laureates honoured since 1901.

The magnum opus of Literature Laureate Olga Tokarczuk so far is the impressive historical novel ‘Księgi Jakubowe’ 2014 (‘The Books of Jacob’). She has in this work showed the supreme capacity of the novel to represent a case almost beyond human understanding.

Pakistan says Khan could visit Saudi, Iran, after US mediation request

Reuters | Islamabad

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Imran Khan is likely to visit Saudi Arabia and Iran, the foreign office in Islamabad said yesterday, weeks after Islamabad said Washington had asked it to mediate with Tehran.

“The possibility of a visit of the prime minister to Saudi Arabia and Iran is on the cards and I will update you as things

unfold,” foreign office spokesman, Mohammad Faisal, told a news briefing.

The announcement of the possible visit comes after Khan last month described a request by US President Donald Trump, asking the Pakistani leader to help defuse tensions with Iran. Washington had blamed Tehran for an attack on the world’s biggest crude oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia.

Hong Kong shopping malls, metro close early ahead of protests

Reuters | Hong Kong

Hong Kong shopping malls started closing early yesterday to avoid becoming targets of planned protests and the city’s metro, which has borne the brunt of violent unrest in recent weeks, will close three hours early.

Hong Kong is one of the world’s top shopping cities but four months of often violent protests have severely dented that reputation, with more than 100 shops closed, scores vandalised and malls now becoming sites for sit-ins by protesters.

Protesters are playing cat



People are seen at Yau Ma Tei metro station in Hong Kong

and mouse with police, organising demonstrations at different locations via social media and stretching security resources.

Apple Inc on Wednesday removed an app protesters have used to track police, prompting some to say they may “visit” Apple stores in Hong Kong.

Putin: Russia is fully complying with WADA

Reuters | Moscow

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday in televised comments that Russia was fully complying with demands made by the World Anti-Doping Agency

(WADA).

The anti-doping agency said last month it had opened compliance proceedings against Russia’s anti-doping agency after examining the vast bank of historical testing data it received in January.

Indonesia minister stabbed by IS-linked pair: official

AFP | Jakarta

Two members of an IS-linked terror network stabbed Indonesia’s chief security minister Wiranto yesterday, the intelligence head said, as the powerful politician underwent emergency surgery for his wounds.

Television images showed security officers wrestling a man and woman to the ground in Pandeglang on Java island after the attack on Wiranto, who goes by one name, as he was exiting a vehicle.

The suspects were identified as 31-year-old Syahril Alamsyah and Fitri Andriana, 21 -- a married couple, according to local media.

They were members of Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD), an extremist group responsible for deadly suicide bombings at churches in Indonesia’s second-biggest city Surabaya last year, State Intelligence Agency chief Budi Gunawan told reporters in Jakarta.

JAD is among dozens of radical groups that have pledged loyal-



Soldiers carry Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Wiranto on a stretcher to a waiting helicopter (Courtes of AP)



Indonesian Coordinating Minister for Politics, Law and Security Wiranto gestures as he speaks during a press conference in Jakarta

ty to the Islamic State group in Indonesia, which has long struggled with Islamist militancy.

Wiranto, 72 -- who police have said was one of several targets in an earlier failed assassination plot -- was rushed by helicopter to the capital where he was treated for two knife wounds in his stomach.

“He is currently in surgery and I ask that all Indonesians pray that he gets well soon,” said President Joko Widodo.

“And I ask for everyone’s help

in fighting radicalism and terrorism because we can only do it together,” he added.

The assassination attempt comes just over a week before Widodo kicks off a second term as leader of the Southeast Asian archipelago of some 260 million people, the world’s biggest Muslim majority nation.

Three others -- a local police chief and two aides -- also suffered knife wounds in Thursday’s attack but authorities said they had non-life-threatening

injuries.

‘Fought the police’

An eyewitness said the female attacker was dressed in a body-and-face-covering niqab.

“When the car stopped, there were people circling around, protecting him,” he said.

“But a man got into the circle and stabbed Wiranto. The woman also tried to stab him. He was arrested and the woman fought the police.”

Last year, JAD staged a wave

of suicide bombings by families -- including young children -- at churches in Surabaya, killing a dozen congregants.

Many past attacks by Indonesian militants have been against police and other state symbols.

Authorities routinely arrest suspected IS-loyal militants that they claim were planning bomb and other attacks.

“JAD members are targeting what they call Ansharut Thaqut

(tyranny) and that includes senior government officials,” said Muhammad Syauqillah, program director of the University of Indonesia’s Terrorism Study Center.

Wiranto, the retired chief of the armed forces and a failed presidential candidate, was appointed to his post in 2016 and oversees several departments, including the foreign affairs and defence ministries.

He has faced controversy over alleged human rights violations and allegations of crimes against humanity linked to Indonesia’s brutal occupation of East Timor.

In May, police said Wiranto and three other top officials were targeted in a failed assassination plot linked to deadly riots in Jakarta after Widodo’s re-election victory.

A group of six people -- arrested before they could carry out the killings -- planned to murder the officials and an election pollster in a bid to plunge the country into chaos, police said at the time.