

EVERYDAY CURRENT AFFAIRS–AUGUST

160001

TAMIL NADU

- On August 15, Chief Minister MK Stalin – hoisted the Tricolour for the first time at the ramparts of Fort St George on the occasion of 75th Independence day and received a guard of honour provided by Tamil Nadu police
- ✓ During his maiden Independence Day speech, the CM announced that the State government would release a complete document on the contribution of Tamil Nadu in the country's freedom struggle in both Tamil and English



- ✓ During his speech, the CM also recalled his father and former CM Dr. Kalaignar M Karunanidhi's letter to former PM Indira Gandhi that has started the tradition of CMs unfurling the tricolour on August 15 from the year 1974
 - ✓ Till 1973, state Governors used to unfurl the national flag on both Independence Day and Republic Day.
- ✓ CM Stalin also unveiled a 'commemorative pillar' to mark the Diamond Jubilee (75th year) celebrations of India's Independence
 - ✓ The commemorative pillar has come up at the intersection of Kamarajar Salai and Sivanandha Salai near Napier bridge.

- ✓ The CM mentioned that the 150th birth anniversary of V O Chidambaram Pillai, who sold his family's wealth to float a shipping company against the British, will be celebrated in a grand manner this year
 - ✓ The year 2021 also marks the centenary of poet Bharathiyar's death, 100 years of Mahatma Gandhi's visit to the state after which he started using simple clothes and completion of hundred years of Justice Party being voted to power in the State, the CM said
 - ✓ Chief minister Stalin named several important freedom fighters, including Veerapandia Kattabomman, Poolithevar, Velu Nachiyar, Dheeran Chinnamalai, Tiruppur Kumaran, Captain Vijayalakshmi and the Marudhu brothers, who contributed their might in the country's Independence struggle.
 - ✓ The Chief Minister announced that the monthly pension for freedom fighters would be increased from Rs.17,000 to Rs.18,000 while their family pension would be hiked from Rs.8,500 to Rs.9,000
 - ✓ He also said the Mahatma Gandhi Museum in Madurai will be upgraded at a cost of Rs.6 crore so as to attract even youngsters towards Gandhian principles
- **Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin – presented various awards on the occasion of the Independence Day on August 15, 2021**
- ✓ Kalpana Chawla award for Courage and Daring Enterprise was presented posthumously to Dr P Shanmugapriya (late) Medical Officer, Anuppanadi, Primary Health Centre, Madurai, which was accepted by her Husband.
 - ✓ During the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, Shanmuga Priya attended 582 fever surveillance camps and monitored the progress of 10,961 persons through which 302 active cases were identified.
 - ✓ She tested positive for Covid-19 and eventually passed away despite the best medical care



- ✓ APJ Abdul Kalam award was presented to Dr M Lakshmanan, Professor of Eminence, Bharathidasan University
 - ✓ Dr M Lakshmanan is a specialist in the field of non-linear dynamics in Theoretical Physics and has been named in the top 2% of World Scientists as per California Stanford University' recent list.
- ✓ Avvaiyar award was given to Dr D Santhi Duraisamy who is in the business of pure spice and masala powder manufacturing in recognition of her service to the disabled and other social service activities

- ✓ Best Third Gender award was conferred on Grace Banu, Thoothukudi, for services rendered towards the welfare of society.
- ✓ **Thanjavur received the best municipal corporation award**
- ✓ Udthagamandalam, Tiruchengode and Chinnamanur received first, second and third prizes for the best municipalities in the State
- ✓ Best Town Panchayat awards were given to Kallakudi (Trichy), Melapattampakkam (Cuddalore) and Kottaiyur (Sivagangai) respectively
- ✓ The Chief Minister's State Youth Award was presented to Aravind Jayabal, Chennai district, N Bazurudeen, Thiruvarur district, S Ranjith Kumar, Nilgiris district, G Maheswari, Dindigul district, J Amala Jenifer Jayarani, Cuddalore district and S Meena, Chennai district.
- ✓ The Chief Minister's Best Practices Award for taking personal efforts was conferred to K. Narayanasamy, Director, Government Corona Hospital, Guindy for restructuring the National Institute of Ageing building at the King Institute Campus into a dedicated hospital for Covid-19 patients.
- ✓ Presidency College was conferred the award for facilitating independent learning of differently-abled students by designing customised learning materials as per their requirements
- ✓ J. Partheeban, District Reveue Officer, Vellore district, was presented the award, for simplifying land acquisition process using e-modules and ensuring transparency in fixation of compensation.
- ✓ The Holy Cross Service Society, Tiruchirapalli, P. Padmapriya, Medical Officer, Salem, social worker Maria Aloysius Novamoney, Nagercoil, We are Your Voice, Chennai, and Erode Central Co-operative Bank were awarded for Exemplary Service for the Welfare of the Differently Aabled.
- ✓ Special medals to Covid-19 warriors were presented to 33 frontline staff from various government departments
- ✓ The Chief Minister also gave away Chief Minister's State Youth Award, awards for police and fire personnel.



- ✓ **On August 14, the Chief Minister had presented the first Thagaisal Thamizhar Award to veteran Communist leader and centenarian, N. Sankaraiah alongwith a cheque of Rs. 10 lakh.**
- ✓ Sankaraiah donated the amount for Covid-19 relief works

- **Tamil Nadu – has the second highest population of elderly people among 21 major states**
 - ✓ This was revealed in a recent study made by the National Statistical Office (NSO)
 - ✓ As per the study, population of those above 60 years in India has been increasing steadily since 1961 and touched 13.8 crore in 2021.
 - ✓ Between 2011 and 2021, the general population went up by 12.4% while the elderly population has risen by 35.8%.
 - ✓ As per NSO's projection, when the general population goes up by 8.4% between 2021 and 2031, the elderly population will increase by 40.5%.
 - ✓ Kerala has the maximum proportion of elderly people in its population (16.5%) followed by Tamil Nadu (13.6%), Himachal Pradesh (13.1%), Punjab (12.6%) and Andhra Pradesh (12.4%) in 2021.
 - ✓ On the contrary, their proportion is the least in Bihar (7.7%) followed by UP (8.1%) and Assam (8.2%).
 - ✓ As per the projections for the year 2031, maximum proportion of elderly people in its population will be in the state of Kerala (20.9%) followed by Tamil Nadu (18.2%), Himachal Pradesh (17.1%), AP (16.4%) and Punjab (16.2%).

- **The Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board - has been adjudged the second best board in the country.**
 - ✓ This was announced based on the ranking prepared by New Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)
 - ✓ The CSE ranks State Pollution Control Boards (SPCBSs)/ Pollution Control Committees (PCCs) based on public disclosure after studying them for 18 parameters over a period of one year.
 - ✓ Lab infrastructure and accreditation, latest technical publications, show cause and closure notices, public hearing, waste management and action plan for pollution control were some of the important criteria used for ranking the boards.
 - ✓ The CSE collected the data for its study from two sources - website of state PCBs/ PCCs and the annual reports of each board.
 - ✓ Of 34 SPCBs/PCCs, those in Tamil Nadu, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh and Mizoram provided a significant amount of information on laboratory infrastructure and accreditation of their laboratories, the report said.

- **The state government - has appointed former IAS officer P W C Davidar as adviser (digital and simplified governance) to Tamil Nadu e-Governance Agency.**



- ✓ The appointment comes after an increased thrust on e- governance and digitisation of the functioning of government departments
- ✓ The appointment is based on the request of chief executive officer of TNeGA that a senior person having administrative experience of handling various departments of government may be appointed as the adviser on digital and simplified governance.
- ✓ TneGA is aimed at offering services in 'anytime, anywhere model,' to citizens.
- ✓ This involves transformation of government processes, migration of paper-based file processing to e-office, creation of e-dashboards and decision support systems for increased efficiency.

NATIONAL

- **On August 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi - addressed the nation after unfurling the national flag on the 75th Independence Day celebrations at the iconic Red Fort in Delhi**

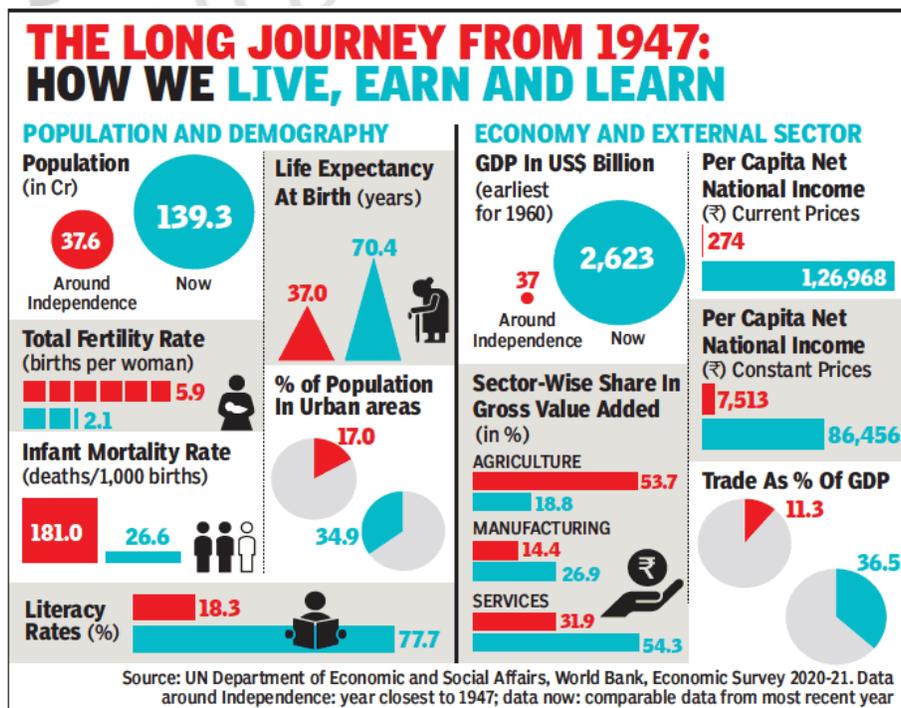


- ✓ During the 88-minute long address, PM Modi laid out the plan for the next 25 years before the nation, which he referred as 'Amrit Kaal', till the 100th year of Indian Independence

Highlights of the Prime Minister's speech

- ✓ The government to develop an e-commerce platform for the products made by women self-help groups (SHGs) in villages.
- ✓ The PM added “sabka prayas (efforts of all)” to the slogan “Sab ka saath, sab ka vikas, Sab ka vishwas” and said it is very important for the achievement of all our goals and for building a self-reliant India
- ✓ To fight malnutrition, the PM announced that all rice distributed through government schemes will be fortified with nutrients by the year 2024 under different schemes including through PDS and Midday Meals
 - ✓ The move will help improve the health of women and children in low-income families
 - ✓ The food ministry had launched a centrally sponsored pilot scheme on “Fortification of Rice and its Distribution under PDS” for three years beginning 2019-20 with a total budget outlay of Rs.174.6 crore
 - ✓ The pilot scheme covers one district each in 15 states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Punjab, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh.
- ✓ India to launch a 100 trillion rupee (\$1.35 trillion) national infrastructure plan called "Gati Shakti" that will help boost productivity of industries, generate jobs and boost the economy
- ✓ The work to connect the state capitals in the north east region with rail services will be completed soon.
- ✓ The PM set a target of becoming 'energy independent' by 2047 through a mix of electric mobility, gas-based economy, doping ethanol in petrol and making the country a hub for hydrogen production
 - ✓ The PM mentioned that India spends over Rs.12 lakh crore on energy imports every year.
- ✓ The launch of the National Hydrogen Mission that will make India the global production hub for clean hydrogen fuel production and export
 - ✓ The mission aims to make India self-reliant in clean energy and create new jobs
- ✓ The PM announced that all Sainik Schools in the country will now be open for girls also
 - ✓ At present, 33 Sainik schools are operating in the country
 - ✓ Two-and-a-half years ago, the maiden experiment of admitting girls in Sainik schools was carried out in Mizoram
 - ✓ Sainik Schools Society under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) prepares students for entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA) and Indian Naval Academy (INA).

- ✓ India has moved towards electric mobility and work is underway on 100% electrification of Indian Railways with the aim to becoming net-zero carbon emitter by the year 2030
- ✓ Promoting roads, healthcare, education, employment and nutrition in over 110 Aspirational Districts that were lacking on the development matrix
- ✓ Delimitation Commission has been constituted in Jammu and Kashmir and Indus Central University will make Ladakh a center of higher education
- ✓ The PM announced that 75 'Vande Bharat' trains will connect different parts of the country in 75 weeks of Amrit Mahotsav of Independence
 - ✓ These indigenous semi-high speed modern trains with maximum design speed of 180 kmph would be operational by August 2023
- ✓ The government will now target saturation level (100%) coverage of eligible beneficiaries of different welfare programmes launched by the government.
- ✓ The Prime Minister also highlighted the vision for new Cooperative Ministry created after the Cabinet reshuffle and assured small farmers that the government was working for their welfare
- ✓ The PM stressed his government's total commitment to strengthening the operational capabilities of the armed forces as well as boosting self-reliance in defence production
 - ✓ In this regard, the PM cited the examples of the recent maiden sea trials of the first indigenous aircraft carrier, to be named INS Vikrant, and the home-grown Tejas light combat aircraft
- ✓ PM Modi also congratulated the sportspersons who won medals in the recently concluded Tokyo Olympics and paid tribute to frontline Covid workers for their ongoing fight against the pandemic.



- ✓ For the first time, the CPM - joined the country's celebrations by hoisting tricolour flags in front of party offices on Independence Day

INTERNATIONAL

- **Afghanistan's president, Ashraf Ghani – flees the country to Tajikistan, as the Taliban takes over the control of capital, Kabul**
- ✓ Taliban had captured most of the country in the span of 10 days, twenty years after being removed from power in a U.S.-led invasion



- ✓ The militant group is planning to rename the country as Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- ✓ The name is the same one used prior to the U.S. removing the Taliban from power after 9/11 terror attacks
- ✓ Earlier, the White House had ordered about 5,000 troops to be sent to Afghanistan to provide security and assist in evacuations of U.S. personnel.
- ✓ Meanwhile, all commercial flights were suspended from Kabul airport and only military aircraft were being allowed to operate.



- ✓ India prepared to evacuate its staff and embassy personnel from Kabul in the next 48 hours.
- ✓ Earlier, President Biden announced that he was committed to a full withdrawal of U.S. troops by August 31, as against May 31 deadline pronounced by his predecessor Donald Trump
- ✓ The 20-year war in Afghanistan, the longest in American history, is estimated to have cost over \$2 trillion while resulting in the death of over 240,000 people

- ✓ Within weeks of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C., U.S.-led forces invaded the country, toppling the Taliban by year's end.

TALIBAN CAPTURES AFGHANISTAN – A REPORT

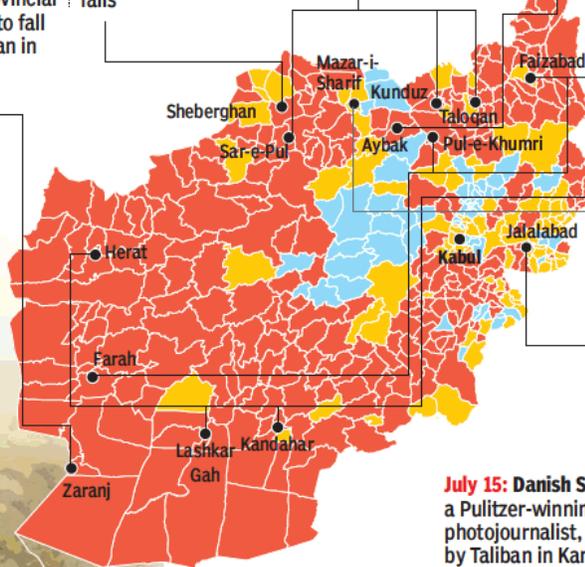
Almost 20 years after US-coalition forces ended Taliban rule in Afghanistan, the group is poised to take control again – Afghan president Ashraf Ghani has fled the country and the Taliban have entered the capital of Kabul. Fears that the Taliban will trample on people's freedoms and impose a mediaeval form of justice are already coming true. But it's not as if the past 20 years were a time of absolute calm. The US and its allies did not fully control Afghan territory, and strife and bloodshed never ceased. A look at how the country arrived at this juncture

GAINS OF 20 YEARS LOST IN JUST 10 DAYS

Since the US announced its military withdrawal in April, the Taliban have managed to capture territories they haven't controlled in years. Every major provincial capital has now fallen to Taliban

■ **Taliban control**
■ **Contested districts**
■ **Govt control** (Districts as of Aug 14)

- Aug 6:** Zaranj, in southern Nimroz province, becomes the first provincial capital to fall to Taliban in years
- Aug 7:** Jawzjan province's capital, Sheberghan, falls
- Aug 8:** Three provincial capitals in the north – Sar-e-Pul, Taloqan and Kunduz, a key strategic and economic city – are captured
- Aug 9:** Taliban capture Aybak, the capital of the northern province of Samangan
- Aug 10:** Three more provincial capitals fall – Farah in the west, Pul-e-Khumri in the west, and Faizabad in the northeast



- Aug 12:** Kandahar, Lashkar Gah & Herat become the next provincial capitals to be captured
- Aug 14:** Mazar-i-Sharif, the last major government stronghold in the north falls
- Aug 15:** Jalalabad becomes the last major city aside from Kabul to be captured

Districts by faction in control (as of Aug 14)

267
Taliban

53
government

87
contested



July 15: Danish Siddiqui, a Pulitzer-winning India photojournalist, executed by Taliban in Kandahar



20 years of Taliban's waning and growing influence

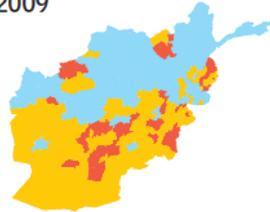
■ Taliban control
 ■ Contested districts
 ■ Govt control

2001



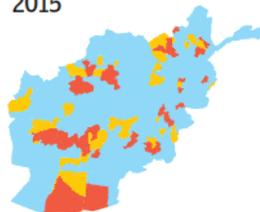
Before 9/11 and the US invasion of Afghanistan, Taliban controlled the majority of Afghanistan, with government forces – then under the Northern Alliance banner – holding just 5% of the country's territory

2009



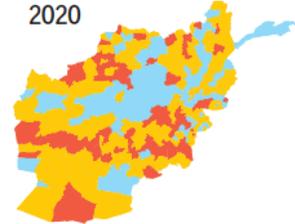
Presidents Bush and Obama launched a sharp increase in American troop presence in Afghanistan. In 2008, an additional 50,000 troops were deployed, followed by another 30,000 in 2009. Troop numbers peaked at 100,000 in 2011. By this time, Taliban had nearly disappeared from the map

2015



In 2014, after Obama announced a withdrawal plan, Taliban began regaining control in dozens of districts – by 2015 it held 39 districts and was contesting another 39

2020



Following a landmark peace deal between the US and the Taliban, the Americans announced a planned withdrawal over the next year, which prompted the insurgents to begin attacking government forces and taking over new territories

DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN CONFLICT, 2001-2021

US and allied troops

3,586

Civilian

51,613

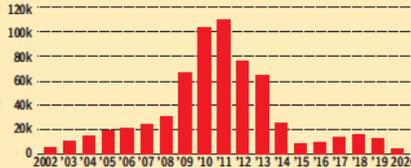
Military and police

69,000

Opposition fighters (incl Taliban)

51,191

US TROOP LEVEL IN AFGHANISTAN (2002-2020)



The Afghanistan war cost US \$978bn till 2020

APP
 STUDY CENTRE

5 DECADES OF INSTABILITY

Here's a brief history of Afghanistan's troubled past

- **1933:** Zahir Shah crowned king. Four decades of calm follow, but in the 1950s his prime minister Mohammed Daud begins a dalliance with the Soviets, setting the stage for a foreign takeover
- **1973:** Daud seizes power in a coup after being forced to resign in 1963. Declares Afghanistan a republic
- **1979:** Soviet army invades Afghanistan, installs a communist government after Daud is killed in a pro-Soviet coup. It faces resistance from mujahideen groups funded and armed by the US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia
- **1985:** Mujahideen form an alliance to fight the Soviets
- **1989:** Soviets withdraw completely, but instead of peace, civil war ensues as the mujahideen try to overthrow the government of Najibullah
- **1996:** The Taliban seize control of Kabul after a fierce civil war. They capture Najibullah and torture him to death. Recognition by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia gives legitimacy to their government in 1997
- **2001:** The 9/11 attacks on America result in quick reprisal against the Taliban for sheltering Osama Bin Laden, who planned the attacks. US-coalition airstrikes begin on October 7 after Taliban refuse to hand over Bin Laden. Taliban ousted from Kabul on November 13
- **2002:** Nato takes over security of Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai elected interim head of state
- **2004:** Afghanistan gets its new constitution on January 26. Presidential elections held in October. Karzai elected first president
- **2009:** US commits to send up to 140,000 troops to Afghanistan
- **2011:** US Navy Seals kill Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad, Pakistan
- **2013:** Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar dies in a Karachi hospital on April 23
- **2014:** US troop withdrawal begins. Afghan forces take charge of country's security from Nato amid a growing insurgency. String of bombings follows, including an attack on Parliament in Kabul, in 2015
- **2020:** As Taliban keep gaining ground, US signs a peace agreement with them on February 29, promising to withdraw all troops within 14 months
- **9/11:** Last date for remaining US troops to leave, marking 20 years of the attacks on America



Who are the Taliban?

Their name means "students" and reflects their origin in the madrassas (religious schools) of northern Pakistan that preach a hardline form of Sunni Islam. The Taliban arose in the early 1990s, during the civil war that wracked Afghanistan after the Soviets withdrew in 1989.

At first, the people preferred them over the other mujahideen factions because they promised to end corruption and lawlessness. However, the brutal punishments they enforced under Islamic law terrorised the population. Music, TV and cinema were banned, men had to grow beards and women had to cover themselves from head to toe outside home. The Taliban took Herat in 1995 and Kabul in 1996. By 1998 they controlled almost the whole country.



What's their source of income?

The Taliban are a resourceful bunch with yearly earnings of well over a billion dollars. Per one estimate, they earned \$1.6 billion in 2019-20. Their main sources:

Drugs: \$416 million per year

Mining: Up from \$35 million in 2016 to \$464 million last year

Extortion: Up to \$160 million annually in taxes on Afghan people and businesses

Donations: \$240 million in 2020, including from supporters in Gulf states

Exports: \$240 million a year in exports of consumer goods

Real estate: About \$80 million per year

Friendly states: Estimated to have received between \$100 million and \$500 million every year from countries like Russia, Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia

How are they grabbing territory so fast?

The Taliban were growing bolder since the US started reducing troops in 2014, but its hasty exit this year has paved their path. The biggest change between now and a few weeks ago is that the US does not have any fighter planes in Afghanistan. All its sorties are made from bases in the Gulf and aircraft carriers, which is not such an effective deterrent. The mechanics who fixed the Afghan air force planes have also left. On the other hand, with up to 85,000 full-time fighters the Taliban are stronger today than ever in the past 20 years.

Hall of shame

In 2001, the Taliban blew up the world's tallest Buddha statues in Bamiyan



In 2012, Pakistani Taliban shot Malala Yousafzai, then a schoolgirl, in the head while she was on her way home



Key figures at Taliban helm

The Taliban are led by the Quetta Shura, a leadership council named for the Pakistani city out of which it operates.

Since founder Mullah Mohammed Omar died in 2013 and his successor Mullah Akhtar Mansour was killed in a drone strike in 2016, **Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada** has become 'commander of the faithful' with several deputies including Omar's son Mullah Muhammad Yaqoub, co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, and Sirajuddin Haqqani, who is also head of the militant group Haqqani Network.



Graphic: Anil Dinod;
Source: Long War Journal, CNN, NYT, Council on Foreign Relations, Stanford University Center for International Security and Cooperation, BBC, The Economist, The Conversation