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August 19, 2021: National / International [Current Affairs](#)

1. Taliban open talks to form inclusive govt

- Amid rapidly evolving situation in Afghanistan with the Taliban`s sudden sweep to power after a gap of over two decades, former president Hamid Karzai and senior official in the ousted government Abdullah Abdullah on August 18, 2021 met the Taliban as part of efforts to have Enalnegotiations with the top political leader of the group Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar to form an inclusive government.
 - But many Afghans remain deeply sceptical, as the Taliban quashed a rare public show of dissent in the eastern city of Jalalabad, where dozens of people who had lowered the white Taliban flag in an attempt to raise the national flag were baton-charged. Video footage later showed the Taliban firing into the air and attacking people with batons to disperse the crowd. A local health official on condition of anonymity said at least one person was killed and six were wounded
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2. Cabinet to decide on recognising Taliban govt: minister

- Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on August 18, 2021 said Prime Minister Imran Khan and his cabinet would decide on recognising the Taliban government in Afghanistan.
- Speaking at a press conference, Mr Ahmed said a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was in the interest of Pakistan.
- `We are advocates of peace and we will not allow our land to be used against any other country. At the same time, we will not allow any other`s land to be used against us,` he said.

3. UK Supreme Court rules in favour of PIA in key duress case

- The United Kingdom Supreme Court on August 18, 2021 ruled in favour of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC) in an appeal filed by a travel agency over a contract for tickets and commissions.
 - The issue put before the court was what constitutes as economic duress, and whether such duress can arise where lawful acts or threats are made by one party in support of a demand which that party genuinely believes it is entitled to make.
 - PIAC`s legal counsel, solicitors at Farani Taylor, said the ruling was a `huge victory` for PIA that averted the loss of considerable amounts of money
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4. Pakistan stands 153rd in E-Govt Development Index

- Pakistan was ranked 153rd among the 193 countries surveyed in the 2020 UN E-Government Development Index (EGDI) report which marks a decline in ranking in comparison with the report published in 2018 [148th].
 - Earlier, UN EGDI solely tracked the e-government development but now includes elements of digital government development of member states by ranking them across three distinct indicators including Online Services Index (OSI), Human Capital Index (HCI) and Telecommunication Infrastructure Index (TII).
 - This warrants a closer examination of the country`s digital transformation journey, and efforts to identify the reasons for both the low rank and the decline in 2020. Potential solutions that can help enhance Pakistan`s EGDI ranking and as a result, citizens` experience with the government through the use of technology, should also be explored
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5. Microfinance borrowers cross 8m mark

- With the number of active borrowers crossing the eight million mark for the first time, microcredit outreach in the country grew 5.8 per cent on a quarterly basis in April-June.
- According to the latest data released by the Pakistan Microfinance Network the national association for retail players in the microfinance industry the gross loan portfolio of the entire sector amounted to Rs355.7 billion at the end of the quarter, up 4.5pc from the preceding three-month period

6. No unilateral recognition, Pakistan assures US, others

- Pakistan's US and UN envoys have assured the international community that Islamabad would follow their lead, particularly that of the 'extended troika' in offering diplomatic recognition to a Taliban government in Afghanistan.
 - In an interview to CBS News broadcast on Tuesday evening, Pakistan's US Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan said how the Taliban conduct themselves now will also influence Pakistan's decision.
 - 'They want acceptance and recognition by the international community and we should use that leverage in order to ensure good behaviour on their part,' added Pakistan's UN ambassador, Munir Akram
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7. Taliban escort 150 Indians to airport for evacuation at midnight

- Outside the main iron gate of the Indian embassy in Kabul, a group of Taliban fighters waited armed with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers.
 - Inside the compound were 150 Indian diplomats and nationals -growing increasingly nervous as they watched news of the Taliban tightening their grip on the capital, which they took a day earlier without a fight. Their position was a precarious one. But the Taliban fighters outside the Indian embassy weren't there to extract revenge, but rather to escort them to Kabul airport, where a military aircraft was on standby to evacuate them after New Delhi decided to shut its mission
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8. EU, US 'deeply worried' about Afghan women, girls

- The European Union, the United States and 19 other countries issued on August 18, 2021 a joint statement saying they were 'deeply worried about Afghan women and girls', urging the Taliban to ensure their safety.
- The statement was released as concerns soared about the Taliban's return to power after their 1996-2001 rule that prevented Afghan women from working or studying, or travelling without a male 'guardian'.
- 'We are deeply worried about Afghan women and girls, their rights to education, work and freedom of movement,' the joint statement said

9. Teenager takes to the skies on round-the-world record bid

- Teenage pilot Zara Rutherford took her ultralight sports plane into the skies on August 18, 2021 on the first leg of a 52-country, five-continent flight around the world.
 - The intrepid 19-year-old British-Belgian dreams one day of becoming an astronaut, but for now her goal is to become the youngest woman to circumnavigate the planet flying solo. The first leg was a short hop across the Channel from her Belgian home town of Kortrijk to England. Her three-month voyage will then take her over oceans, deserts and the vast Siberian wilderness.
 - She will try to avoid daunting main air hubs apart from New York`s busy JFK airport in her tiny 325-kilogramme Shark UL prop plane, and touch down instead on smaller airports and airfields for overnight rests and refuelling
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10. Seventh team added to next KPL after Hawks win first edition

- The Kashmir Premier League (KPL) organisers on August 18, 2021 announced a seventh franchise named Jammu Janbaz will be part of the second season next year a day after Rawalkot Hawks clinched the inaugural edition of the new Twenty20 League in Muzaffarabad with a close win over Muzaffarabad Tigers.
 - The announcement by KPL president Arif Malik came following the grand success of the tournament in which six outfits Hawks, Tigers, Mirpur Royals, Overseas Warriors, Bagh Stallions and Kotli Lions competed at the Muzaffarabad Cricket Stadium
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