

# Panjshir valley

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**In news-** The Panjshir Valley is Afghanistan's last remaining holdout where anti-Taliban forces are working on forming a guerrilla movement to take on the Taliban forces.

## **More information-**

- The region, which is located 150 kilometers northeast of Kabul, **now hosts deposed Afghanistan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh**, who had earlier declared himself to be a 'care-taker President' after the Taliban took control of Kabul on August 15.
- Famed for its natural defenses, the **region tucked into the Hindu Kush mountains** never fell to the Taliban during the civil war of the 1990s, nor was it conquered by the Soviets a decade earlier.
- The only access point to the region is through a narrow passage created by the Panjshir River, which can be easily defended militarily.
- Most of the valley's 150,000 inhabitants belong to the **Tajik ethnic group**, while the other majority are **Pashtuns**.
- The **valley is also known for its emeralds**, which were used in the past to finance the resistance movements against those in power.
- The history of the valley's independence has been closely linked to **Ahmad Shah Massoud**, Afghanistan's most famed anti-Taliban fighter, who led the strongest resistance against the Taliban from his stronghold in the valley until his assassination in 2001.
- Born in the valley in 1953, he gave himself the name "Massoud" ("the lucky one," or "the beneficiary") in 1979.
- After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989, civil war broke out in Afghanistan, which the Taliban

ultimately won.

- However, Massoud and his United Front (also known as the **Northern Alliance**) succeeded in controlling not only the Panjshir Valley but almost all of northeastern Afghanistan up to the border with China and Tajikistan, thus protecting the region from the Taliban.
- In 2001, he was assassinated by suspected al-Qaeda militants.
- Now, his son, Ahmad Massoud is following his father's footsteps and recently unverified images show that the flag of the 'Northern Alliance' or the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan has once again been hoisted in Panjshir.
- This is the first time since 2001.

### **Panjshir Valley-**

- The Panjshir Valley is a valley in north-central Afghanistan, 150 kilometres north of Kabul, near the Hindu Kush mountain range.
- In April 2004, it became the heart of the new Panjshir Province, having previously been part of Parwan Province.



- The name **Panjshir means "five lions"**.
- The name is related to the five Pandavas from the ancient Hindu Epic "Mahabharata".
- The Pandavas visited the place during their journey to find "moksha".