

Pakistan



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KEY FACTS

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Joined Commonwealth: | 1947 (left in 1972, rejoined in 1989) |
| Population: | 180,808,000 (2009) |
| GDP p.c. growth: | 1.7% p.a. 1990–2009 |
| UN HDI 2010: | world ranking 125 |
| Official language: | Urdu |
| Time: | GMT plus 5hr |
| Currency: | Pakistan rupee (PRs) |

Geography

| | |
|------------|---------------|
| Area: | 796,095 sq km |
| Coastline: | 1,050km |
| Capital: | Islamabad |

Pakistan lies just north of the Tropic of Cancer, bordering (clockwise from west) Iran, Afghanistan, China and India. The Arabian Sea lies to the south. The country comprises four provinces: (from south to north) Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab and Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa (formerly North-West Frontier Province). The territory adjoining Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa is known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Pakistani-administered parts of Jammu and Kashmir in the north-east as Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas.

Area: 796,095 sq km, excluding territory in Jammu and Kashmir, whose status is in dispute.

Main towns: Islamabad (capital, pop. 673,800 in 2009), Karachi (Sindh Province, 12.83m), Lahore (Punjab, 6.94m), Faisalabad (Punjab, 2.79m), Rawalpindi (Punjab, 1.93m), Multan (Punjab, 1.57m), Hyderabad (Sindh, 1.54m), Gujranwala (Punjab, 1.53m), Peshawar (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 1.39m), Quetta (Balochistan, 860,000), Sargodha (Punjab, 586,900), Bahawalpur (Punjab, 530,400), Sialkot (Punjab, 502,700), Sukkur (Sindh, 476,800), Jhang (Punjab, 465,200), Larkana (Sindh, 435,800), Shekhupura (Punjab, 411,800), Mardan (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 340,900), Rahimyar Khan (Punjab, 340,800), Gujrat (Punjab, 328,500), Kasur (Punjab, 314,600), Dera Ghazi Khan (Punjab, 264,700), Nawabshah (Sindh, 263,100), Wah (Punjab, 258,700), Sahiwal (Punjab, 247,700), Mirpur Khas (Sindh, 237,000), Okara (Punjab, 232,400), Kohat (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 170,800), Abbottabad (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 144,100), Khuzdar (Balochistan, 141,400), Swabi (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 111,200), Dera Ismail Khan (Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, 109,700) and Zhob (Balochistan, 55,500).

did you know?

Dr Asma Jahangir of Pakistan was appointed to the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group in 2010; the group will make recommendations for reform in the Commonwealth, to be presented to Commonwealth leaders at CHOGM in Australia in October 2011.

Cricketers Imran Khan and Wasim Akram, both born in Lahore, Punjab, achieved the 'all-rounder's double' and Wisden Leading Cricketer in the World.

Mohammed Hanif won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best First Book award, in 2009, with *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*.

Topography: Pakistan has great topographical variety. The high mountain region of the north includes part of the Himalayas, Karakoram and Hindukush. There are 35 peaks over 7,320m high, including K-2, the world's second-highest mountain. This region abounds in glaciers, lakes and green valleys. Southwards, the ranges gradually lose height. The western low mountain region covers much of Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa Province, with mountains cut by valleys and passes, including the Khyber Pass, 56km long, connecting Kabul in Afghanistan with Peshawar. The third region is the Balochistan plateau to the west. West of the Balochistan plateau is an area of desert with dry lakes, one 87km long. The Potohar upland lies between the Indus and Jhelum rivers in the Islamabad/Rawalpindi area. This is an arid region, with cultivation along the valleys. The fifth region is the Punjab plain watered by the River Indus and its eastern tributaries (Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Sutlej and Beas) and additionally irrigated by canals. The Sindh plain stretches between the Punjab plain and the Arabian Sea on both sides of the Indus river. The plain comprises a vast fertile tract with many lakes, and a desert spreading eastward into India.

In October 2005, a powerful earthquake, with its epicentre in the north of the country, close to Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir, caused some 80,000 deaths and devastation of a large area which left millions homeless.

Climate: Extreme variations of temperature. The northern mountains are cold, with long and severe winters. Temperatures on the Balochistan plateau are high. Along the coastal strip, the climate is modified by sea breezes. In the rest of the country, the temperature rises steeply in summer. Seasons are: cold season (December to March), hot season (April to June), monsoon season (July to September) and post-monsoon season (October and November). Rainfall varies from 760–1,270mm in the Himalayan foothills to 210mm in Balochistan.

Environment: The most significant issues are soil erosion, deforestation, desertification, and water pollution with untreated sewage and industrial waste and by use of commercial pesticides.

Vegetation: Well-watered mountain slopes support forests of deodar, pine, poplar, shisham, willow and other species. Towering grasses and expanses of floating lotus flourish in the lake area of the Sindh plain. There are mangrove swamps to the south. Forest covers 2% of the land area, having declined at 2.2% p.a. 2000–07. Arable land comprises 28% and permanent cropland 1% of the total land area.

Wildlife: Wildlife in the northern mountains includes brown bears, black Himalayan bears, musk deer, ibex, leopard and the rare snow-leopard. Chinkara gazelle have a wider distribution, while barking deer live closer to urban centres. In the delta, there are crocodiles, pythons and wild boar. Green turtles, an endangered species, regularly visit the Karachi coast during the egg-laying season. The haubara bustard is a winter visitor. Manchar Lake in Sindh is rich in water-birds. In 2003, there were 37,800 sq km of protected areas (4.9% of the land area).

Transport: There are 260,420km of roads, 65% paved, and 7,791km of railway, with 781 stations. Main lines run north–south, linking the main ports and industrial centre of Karachi with Islamabad, 1,600km to the north. All major cities and most industrial centres are linked by rail.

Karachi port handles the bulk of foreign trade. Port Qasim, south-east of Karachi, is also an important port. Major international airports are at Karachi, Islamabad and Lahore.

Society

KEY FACTS 2009

Population per sq km: 227

Life expectancy: 67 years

Net primary enrolment: 71%

Population: 180,808,000 (2009); density varies from more than 230 people per sq km in Punjab to 13 in Balochistan; 36% lives in urban areas and 18% in urban agglomerations of more than 1 million people; growth 2.5% p.a. 1990–2009; birth rate 30 per 1,000 people (43 in 1970); life expectancy 67 years (54 in 1970).

The population comprises Punjabis (44%), Pashtuns (15%), Sindhis (14%), Saraikis (11%), Muhajirs (7.6%), Balochis (3.6%), and other smaller groups including the tribal groups in the more remote northern areas.

Language: The official language is Urdu, but English is widely used. Regional languages are Punjabi, Pashtu, Sindhi and Saraiki. There are numerous local dialects.

Religion: Muslims 97%, the majority of whom are Sunni, with a minority (of about 20%) of Shia. There are small communities of Hindus, Christians, Qadianis and a few Parsis (Zoroastrians).

Media: The first Urdu journal appeared in 1836. In 1991 there were 2,204 newspapers and periodicals, including 271 dailies and 508 weeklies. The main newspapers in Urdu are *Jang* (Karachi), *Nawa-e-Waqt*, *Ausaf*, *Sahafat*, *Din*, *Khabrain*, *Pakistan*, *Asas* and *Al-Akhbar*. Leading English-language papers are *Dawn* (Karachi), *Pakistan Observer* (Islamabad), *Daily Times* (Karachi and Lahore), *The Nation* (Lahore), *The News* (Lahore), *The Frontier Post* (Peshawar/Quetta) and *Business Recorder* (financial daily). The principal news magazines are *Akhbar-e-Jehan*, *Herald*, *MAG*, *Newsline* and *Takbeer* (Karachi), *Pakistan and Gulf Economist* and *Pulse* (Islamabad), *The Friday Times* and *Zindagi* (Lahore).

Pakistan Television Corporation provides national and regional public TV services. About 50 private TV channels broadcast by cable and satellite; some owned by newspaper groups; one based in Dubai, United Arab Emirates; and one broadcasting in English. The Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation is the public-service broadcaster, operating some 25 stations, including an external service. More than 100 private FM stations are licensed to broadcast.

Some 56% of households have TV sets (2007). There are 113 internet users per 1,000 people (2009).

Education: Public spending on education was 2.7% of GDP in 2009. There are five years of primary education starting at age five, and seven years of secondary comprising cycles of three and four years. The school year starts in April.

In May 2009, the Higher Education Commission recognised 124 universities, 68 in the public sector. Allama Iqbal Open University was established in 1974, the first open university in Asia. Fatima Jinnah Women's University, Rawalpindi, opened in 1998 and was Pakistan's first university exclusively for women. The female–male

ratio for gross enrolment in tertiary education is 85:100 (2008). Literacy among people aged 15–24 is 69% (2008). There is an extensive literacy programme.

Health: The main teaching hospitals are in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar and Quetta. The network of medical services includes hospitals, dispensaries, rural health centres and basic health units. Family planning services are given at family welfare centres. 90% of the population uses an improved drinking water source and 45% have access to adequate sanitation facilities (2009). Malaria remains a serious problem. Infant mortality was 71 per 1,000 live births in 2009 (139 in 1960).

Communications: Country code 92; internet domain '.pk'. Mobile phone coverage is generally limited to main towns. Internet cafes can be found in most urban areas. There is a good postal service in the main towns.

There are 22 main telephone lines and 570 mobile phone subscriptions per 1,000 people (2009).

Public holidays: Pakistan Day (23 March), Independence Day (14 August), Defence Day (6 September), Allama Mohammad Iqbal Day (9 November) and Birthday of Quaid-i-Azam (25 December).

Religious festivals whose dates vary from year to year include Prophet's Birthday, Eid al-Fitr (End of Ramadan, two days), Eid al-Adha (Feast of the Sacrifice, two days) and Ashura. Christian holidays are taken by the Christian community only.

Economy

KEY FACTS 2009

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|-------------|--------------------|
| GNI: | US\$169.8bn |
| GNI p.c.: | US\$1,000 |
| GDP growth: | 4.9% p.a. 2005–09 |
| Inflation: | 12.2% p.a. 2005–09 |

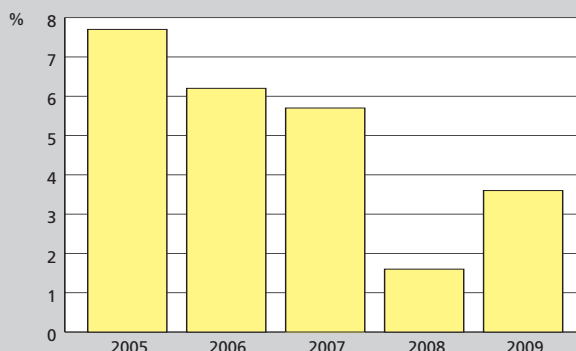
Overview: Pakistan has a predominantly agricultural economy, with agriculture (notably cotton), fisheries and forestry contributing one-quarter of GDP. From the 1950s, manufacturing took off rapidly, growing at an annual 9% up to the mid-1960s.

The economy has been developed through a series of five-year plans. From the 1960s protectionist policies were adopted, followed by nationalisations in the 1970s and, from 1988, encouragement of private enterprise and privatisation of state-owned banks and manufacturing enterprises.

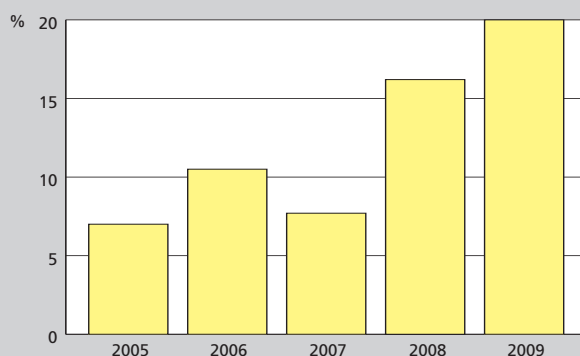
After years of strong growth, the economy stalled in the latter 1990s, with a widening trade deficit and large external debt. In March 1997, the Sharif government embarked on an economic revitalisation programme to enhance exports, reduce inflation, generate employment and widen the tax base (there were then only one million income tax payers, mainly belonging to the urban middle class). An IMF structural adjustment programme was approved in October 1997, but suspended in May 1999, until progress on economic reform was accelerated.

After the October 1999 coup, the military government set a new agenda of reforms, opening the way for the renewal of IMF support in late 2000 and resulting in good growth in the 2000s. From November 2002, the civilian government continued with this agenda which included the resumption of privatisation, giving

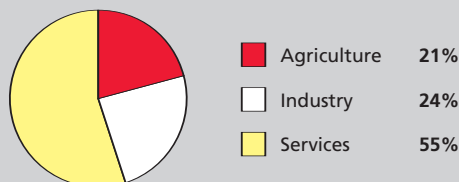
Real Growth in GDP



Inflation



GDP by Sector (2009)



priority to agriculture, smaller enterprises and oil and gas exploration, as well as encouraging the development of a computer software industry. The economy grew by 6.6% p.a. over 2004–08, but then, in 2008, growth slowed (to an annual rate of 1.6%) in response to the global downturn and collapse of world demand, recovering in 2009 (3.6%) and 2010 (4.4%), despite the devastating floods which caused massive disruption to economic activity across the country from July 2010.

Trade: Exports of goods and services account for 13% of GDP (2008). The major exports are clothing, cotton cloth, cotton yarn, rice and textiles.

Constitution

| | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| Status: | Republic |
| Legislature: | Federal Legislature |
| Independence: | 14 August 1947 |

The constitution in force at the time of the October 1999 coup was promulgated in 1973. The first amendment was introduced in

1974 and the fourteenth, in 1997. Much of it was suspended from 1977 and restored in December 1985. It was again suspended by the military government after the October 1999 coup, and was partially restored in November 2002, following the parliamentary elections.

The constitution proclaims Pakistan to be Islamic and democratic, with fundamental rights guaranteed, including the freedoms of thought, speech, religion and worship, assembly, association, and the press, as well as equality of status.

Under this constitution, the president is head of state and is elected for five years by an electoral college consisting of the members of both houses of parliament and of the four provincial assemblies. Until April 1997, the president had certain discretionary powers including the power to dissolve the National Assembly. These powers were restored by the military government immediately before the elections in October 2002 through the Legal Framework Order (LFO) together with other amendments. Under the eighteenth amendment of April 2010, however, the president's role once again became largely ceremonial.

There is a bicameral legislature. The lower house is the National Assembly. From 2002 the Assembly had 342 members, comprising 272 members directly elected by adult suffrage, plus 60 women and ten representatives of minorities (non-Muslims); these seats reserved for women and minorities' representatives are allocated proportionally to all parties gaining more than 5% of the directly elected seats. The prime minister is elected by the National Assembly. The upper house, the Senate, has 100 members (previously 87) elected for six years with about half of them retiring every three years. Each of the four provinces elects 22 senators, including four women and four technocrats; the remaining 12 are elected from the Federal Capital Territory and the tribal areas. Legal constitutional change requires the support of two-thirds of the total membership of the National Assembly and the Senate.

Politics

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|----------------------------|---|
| Last elections: | February 2008 (legislative), September 2008 (presidential) |
| Next elections: | 2013 (legislative), 2013 (presidential) |
| Head of state: | President Asif Ali Zardari |
| Head of government: | Prime Minister Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani |
| Ruling party: | coalition led by PPP |

Following victory at the October 1990 elections, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif pursued economic reforms and privatisation and instituted Sharia (Islamic) law. In 1993 president and prime minister resigned under pressure from the military, making way for fresh elections which brought Benazir Bhutto back to power by a small majority.

In November 1996, President Sardar Farooq Khan Leghari, prompted by the army high command and opposition leaders, used the eighth amendment to the constitution, and dissolved the National Assembly, bringing down the Bhutto government and alleging corruption, financial incompetence, and human rights violations.

New elections were held in February 1997. The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) – previously the main component of the Islami

Jamhoori Ittehad – won 134 seats in the National Assembly and Sharif became prime minister. Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) retained only 18 seats.

In April 1997, Sharif was able to gain the PPP's support to achieve the two-thirds majority necessary to repeal the eighth amendment, ending the president's ability to dissolve the National Assembly. He also took over from the president the power to appoint Supreme Court judges and military chiefs-of-staff.

In October 1999, Sharif ordered the dismissal of Army Chief of Staff General Pervez Musharraf, and refused permission to land for the commercial aircraft in which he was returning to Karachi (from an official visit to Sri Lanka). The army countermanded the prime minister's orders and immediately seized power, dismissing the government and arresting Sharif. Musharraf justified his actions as necessary to restore both the economy and the deteriorating political situation. Pending the restoration of democracy the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) suspended Pakistan from the councils of the Commonwealth.

In June 2001, Musharraf dissolved parliament and the four provincial legislatures, President Rafiq Tarar resigned and Musharraf became president, further isolating the country.

A referendum held in April 2002 confirmed Musharraf's position as president for a period of five years.

National Assembly elections in October 2002 produced a hung parliament. The Pakistan Muslim League–Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q), which supported Musharraf, took 77 seats, followed by PPP with 63, Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) with 45, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) with 14 and Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with 13, leaving a large block of members of smaller parties and independents. The Commonwealth observer group present said that 'on election day this was a credible election', but that 'in the context of various measures taken by the government we are not persuaded of the overall fairness of the process as a whole'.

The first session of the parliament was convened by the government on 16 November 2002 amid uncertainty as to which party would form the next government. The National Assembly subsequently elected Chaudhry Amir Hussain (PML-Q) as speaker and Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali (PML-Q) as prime minister. The continuing dispute between Musharraf and the opposition parties on the status of the Legal Framework Order (and especially his power to dismiss the prime minister and dissolve the Assembly) and Musharraf's own position as president and chief of army staff created political deadlock. Parliament was not functioning and the government ruled by decree. The MMA emerged as leader in the campaign against the Legal Framework Order as the Alliance for the Restoration of Democracy (ARD) – an alliance of PPP, Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), and several smaller parties – was weakened by the death of its leader and the absence of exiled leaders Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif.

In January 2004 Musharraf won confidence votes in the Assembly, the Senate and the four provincial assemblies. In May 2004, in view of the progress made towards democracy, CMAG readmitted Pakistan to the councils of the Commonwealth. In June 2004 the prime minister resigned and was succeeded by Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain until July when he made way for finance minister Shaukat Aziz on his winning a seat in the Assembly. In December 2004

Musharraf announced he would continue as president and chief of army staff until 2007 when elections were due.

In the presidential election held in October 2007 Musharraf was unofficially proclaimed winner pending a key ruling by the Supreme Court regarding his eligibility to run for presidency while serving as chief of army staff.

Exiled Pakistan People's Party leader Benazir Bhutto returned to Pakistan in October 2007 after the presidential election. On the way from the airport to Karachi her convoy was hit by a suicide bomb attack. She survived, but hundreds were killed and injured.

In November 2007, ostensibly because of national security concerns, Musharraf declared a state of emergency effectively suspending the country's constitution by a provisional constitutional order (PCO). A news blackout was imposed on major private television stations. Several hundred protestors, journalists and political opponents of Musharraf were arrested and eight Supreme Court judges including the Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudary, who would not recognise the PCO, were dismissed and put under house arrest.

Musharraf came under increasing international pressure to restore the country's constitution and abide by the timetable for free and fair parliamentary elections. CMAG convened in Kampala on 22

November 2007 and suspended Pakistan from the councils of the Commonwealth, pending the restoration of democracy and the rule of law in that country.

Musharraf appointed a new chief justice and a caretaker prime minister, Muhammad Mian Soomro. He resigned as army chief and was sworn in as president for a five-year term. The state of emergency was lifted in December 2007.

Nawaz Sharif, exiled leader of Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), at his second attempt in the same year, was allowed to return. By end November 2007, both he and Bhutto had registered to participate in the following parliamentary elections. On 27 December 2007, as she was leaving an election rally in Rawalpindi, Bhutto was assassinated. Violence erupted throughout the country. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Benazir's son, was chosen as her eventual successor; her husband Asif Ali Zardari was to lead the PPP, as co-chair, until Bilawal had completed his education. The elections due for January were postponed.

The parliamentary elections were held in February 2008. Opposition parties won the most seats – PPP won 121 seats and Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) 91 – but no party had an absolute majority. The party supporting Musharraf, PML-Q, suffered huge losses, taking only 54 seats and many former ministers lost their seats. With no party securing a clear majority, PPP, PML-N,

History

The region of Pakistan was one of the cradles of civilisation. Stone-age hunter-gatherers lived on the Potohar plateau and in the Soan Valley in northern Punjab 300,000 or more years ago. Excavations on the Balochistan plateau show a more advanced culture which flourished from 4000 to 2000 BC. At Kot Diji in the Khairpur district, an early bronze age culture developed in this period. These early civilisations reached their peak in the Indus valley cities, of which Harappa is the most notable. These societies had mastered town planning and pictographic writing.

In 327 BC Alexander the Great invaded with his Macedonian army. Later, Mauryans from India ruled the northern Punjab area, to be replaced by Bactrian Greeks from Afghanistan and central Asian tribes. Different religions prevailed in turn: Buddhism (under the Mauryans), Hinduism and, with Arab conquest in the eighth century, Islam.

Two main principalities emerged under Arab rule, that of al-Mansurah and that of Multan. The Ghaznavid sultans gained ascendancy in Punjab in the 11th century. The subsequent ascendancy of the Moghuls, who originated in Central Asia, lasted from 1536 to 1707; their rule lingered nominally until 1857. They established a sophisticated imperial administration and left a rich legacy of forts and walled cities, gardens and gateways, mosques and tombs.

In the early 17th century European traders arrived on the subcontinent. Through the East India Company, the British became the dominant force. After the unsuccessful uprising against Britain of 1857, the British took direct control. Slowly a national Muslim identity emerged, championed by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817–89). The All India Muslim League was founded in 1907.

As the subcontinent moved towards independence, it became clear that Hindu and Muslim interests could not be reconciled. The campaign to establish an independent Muslim state came to prominence in the 1920s and 30s. It was led by the philosopher and poet Mohammad Iqbal and Mohammad Ali Jinnah.

Pakistan was created, as an Islamic state, out of the partition of the UK's Indian Empire, at independence in August 1947. It originally consisted of two parts, West Pakistan (now Pakistan) and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), separated by 1,600km of Indian territory. Partition was followed by war with India over Kashmir and the mass migration of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs to resettle within the new borders, an upheaval which led to violence, financial loss and death on a large scale. With the arrival of Indian Muslims and departure of Pakistan's Hindus and Sikhs, Pakistan became an almost entirely Muslim society. Jinnah, who is honoured as the Quaid-i-Azam, or great leader, died in 1948.

In 1956, Pakistan became a federal republic. It has been under military rule for long periods. Its first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated in 1951. In 1958, martial law was declared and political parties abolished. General (later Field Marshal) Ayub Khan became president in 1960 and allowed a form of guided 'basic democracy'. However, failure to win the 1965 war against India and accusations of nepotism and corruption undermined his position. In the east, the Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman voiced the grievances of the Bengali population. Ayub Khan resigned in 1969 and power was taken over by General Yahya Khan, who in December 1970 held the first national elections in independent Pakistan.

Awami National Party (ANP, 10 seats) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F, 6 seats) formed a coalition government headed by PPP's Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, as prime minister.

On 12 May 2008, CMAG met in London and agreed that, since it last met in November 2007, the Government of Pakistan had taken positive steps to fulfil its obligations in accordance with Commonwealth fundamental values and principles. It accordingly restored Pakistan as a full member of the Commonwealth.

In the face of warnings by the PPP and PML-N leadership of impeachment by parliament, Musharraf announced his resignation as president in August 2008. In the ensuing presidential election, PPP co-chair Zardari was elected to replace Musharraf in September 2008. Zardari (securing 481 electoral college votes) defeated PML-N's candidate, Saeed-uz-zaman Siddiqui (153 votes), and PML-Q's Mushahid Hussain Syed (44). In the lead-up to the election PML-N left the governing coalition, which then comprised PPP, ANP, JUI-F and Muttahida Qaumi Movement.

Nine PML-N ministers resigned shortly after the presidential election, citing the apparent reluctance of the PPP to reinstate judges previously dismissed during the 2007 state of emergency. The move effectively ended the PPP- and PML-N-dominated coalition government and saw the beginning of a new one, consisting of the PPP, ANP, JUI-F and MQM.

In late February 2009 the Supreme Court confirmed the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif and his brother Shabaz from holding elected office. Following the verdict, governor's rule was imposed in Punjab Province, where Shabaz Sharif had held the post of chief minister, and Nawaz Sharif allied himself with the lawyers' movement which had been campaigning for the reinstatement of the chief justice, asserting that the Supreme Court verdict demonstrated the lack of an independent judiciary.

Confronted by the prospect of large-scale popular unrest, in March 2009 the government announced the reinstatement of deposed Chief Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry and requested a review of the Supreme Court judgment that had disqualified the Sharifs from holding elected office. In May 2009 the Supreme Court reversed the judgment and Shabaz Sharif was reinstated as chief minister in Punjab Province. In July 2009 the Supreme Court quashed Nawaz Sharif's convictions of hijacking and terrorism (brought against him following the military coup of October 1999).

In November 2009 the Supreme Court revoked the National Reconciliation Ordinances of October 2007 which had granted immunity to those officials and politicians who had been charged with corruption and other offences. The revocation of the ordinances revived corruption charges against many of its beneficiaries.

- Mujib and the Awami League won an electoral majority in Pakistan's general election on a platform demanding greater autonomy for East Pakistan. At the same time Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) gained a majority in the West. Despite Mujib's victory, he was prevented by the Pakistan authorities from becoming prime minister of the combined state and the Awami League then issued their own plans for a new constitution for an independent state in the East. As a result of the military intervention that ensued, civil war broke out in the eastern region in 1971; the Indian army intervened in support of the Bengalis; Pakistan forces withdrew and Bangladesh became an independent state. In 1972 Pakistan withdrew from the Commonwealth but rejoined in 1989.

Under a new constitution introduced in 1973, Bhutto became prime minister. He undertook agrarian reform and the nationalisation of large sections of industry and the financial sector. In July 1977 the army, under General Zia ul-Haq, intervened in the urban unrest. Zia declared martial law and arrested Bhutto who was convicted, after a controversial trial, of conspiring to murder a political opponent. Despite international appeals, he was hanged in April 1979.

Zia promised elections within 90 days, but ruled without them until his death. He assumed the presidency and embarked on a programme of Islamisation. Martial law and the ban on political parties were lifted in 1985, Bhutto's daughter Benazir returned from exile to lead the PPP and Zia died in a plane crash in August 1988.

Elections in November 1988 brought the PPP to power in coalition with the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM). However, in October 1989 the MQM left the coalition and in August 1990, Bhutto was

dismissed by the president Ghulam Ishaque Khan and charged with corruption, the National Assembly was dissolved and a caretaker leader installed until Islami Jamhoori Ittehad led by Nawaz Sharif won a decisive election victory in October 1990.

Kashmir: The dispute with India over Kashmir escalated sharply in 1999, when militants with Pakistani military support crossed the Line of Control at Kargil and engaged in major battles with Indian forces. More than 1,000 people were killed in the fighting. In July 1999, Pakistan finally agreed to withdraw from Indian-controlled territory, but the state of tension, which had been heightened by the nuclear testing of 1998 (India had detonated five nuclear devices on 11 and 13 May 1998 and Pakistan responded with six on 28 and 30 May), persisted.

At the invitation of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in 2001 President General Pervez Musharraf attended a summit in India, focusing on their dispute over Kashmir. Although there was no substantive outcome, this first face-to-face meeting between leaders of the two countries since 1999 was characterised by a new interest on both sides in seeking a resolution to this long-standing problem. However, by May 2002 India had mobilised a vast army along the Line of Control and the two countries were again on the brink of war.

Tension eased considerably in October 2002 when India reduced its number of troops along the Line of Control; diplomatic relations were restored in August 2003 and a ceasefire along the Line of Control was agreed and took effect from 26 November 2003. Peace talks between the two countries were under way in 2004.

On 19 April 2010 far-reaching constitutional reforms (the Eighteenth Amendment Bill) were signed into law, reducing key presidential powers and broadening the distribution of power within the government. The president no longer has the power to dismiss the prime minister or the parliament.

International relations

Pakistan is a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Organisation of the Islamic Conference, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, United Nations and World Trade Organization.

Traveller information

Local laws and conventions: Pakistan is a Muslim country, and local laws reflect this. Local customs and sensitivities should be respected at all times, especially during Ramadan and when visiting religious areas.

There are strict laws concerning alcohol, which is only available in major hotels to visitors who have been issued a liquor permit from the Excise and Taxation Office. During Ramadan, most restaurants close during the day, and there is a restriction on smoking and drinking in public places.

Photographs must not be taken at military establishments, airports, or any infrastructure, including bridges and dams, or from aircraft.

Importing alcohol is illegal. Possession of small quantities of illegal drugs can lead to imprisonment and drug smuggling can attract the death penalty.

Handshaking is the usual form of greeting and only the right hand should be used for the passing or receiving of objects.

Informal dress is acceptable for most occasions, but all visitors should dress modestly at all times. Appointments are necessary for business meetings and should be made well in advance. Business cards are customary. Office hours are Mon–Thur and Sat 0900–1700, Fri 0900–1230. (During Ramadan normal business hours may be interrupted.)

Immigration and customs: Most nationals require a visa to enter the country and passports must be valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. Visitors should carry with them at all times a photocopy of their passport and Pakistani visa.

A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required by those travelling from an infected area.

The import of alcohol, matches, plants, fruit and vegetables is prohibited. The export of antiques is prohibited.

Travel within the country: Traffic drives on the left and car hire is available in major cities, as well as at Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi airports. An international driving permit is required. Tourists are advised to travel with local drivers or guides.

Pakistan Railways operates the rail network throughout the country; reservations are advised on long journeys. Regular bus services run between most towns and villages. Air-conditioned coaches are recommended for long distances and should be booked in advance.

Taxis are reasonably priced and widely available, and are by far the most efficient means of getting around urban areas. Autorickshaws are also available.

Most domestic flights are operated by Pakistan International Airlines.

Travel health: Comprehensive medical insurance is strongly recommended. Visitors will need protection against malaria, and should take insect repellent and suitable clothing to discourage bites. Mosquito-borne dengue fever also exists and similar precautions should be taken. Vaccinations against Japanese B encephalitis, tuberculosis and Hepatitis B are sometimes recommended, but visitors should check current inoculation requirements well before travel.

Water used for drinking, brushing teeth or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available.

Money: American Express is the most widely accepted card, although Visa and Mastercard can also be used. Travellers cheques are generally accepted at most banks, the larger hotels and major shops, and should be taken in US dollars or pounds sterling to avoid additional charges. Banking hours are Mon–Sat 0900–1330, Fri 0900–1230.

There were 855,000 tourist arrivals in 2009.

Further information

Government of Pakistan Press Information Department:
www.pid.gov.pk

Commonwealth Secretariat: www.thecommonwealth.org

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