

Summary: Governments

South Asia's Governments

Since gaining independence, the nations of South Asia have chosen different forms of government. In 1964, Afghanistan became a constitutional monarchy. Then the Soviet Union invaded and set up a Communist government. After Soviet troops left in 1989, an Islamic republic was declared. A group of fundamentalist Muslims, the Taliban, took control.

Bangladesh gained independence from Pakistan in 1971. It became a parliamentary government. Since 1975, the military has taken over the government several times. Bhutan has a king. In 1953, an assembly was formed, which passes laws. In 1968, a Council of Ministers was created to advise the king.

The Maldives gained independence from Great Britain in 1965. Three years later, it became a republic. The president appoints judges, who follow Islamic law. Nepal was ruled by kings and then by prime ministers. In 1962, the nation became a monarchy. In the 1990s, Nepal set up a constitutional parliamentary system.

Sri Lanka gained independence from Great Britain in 1948. Today, it is a democracy with a president.

Pakistan gained independence from Great Britain in 1947. A parliamentary government was set up. In 1958, martial law was declared. The military controlled the government until 1988. Now, Pakistan is a republic with a president and prime minister. Both must be Muslim. People in Pakistan have different views about the role of Islam in their government. Some think Islam holds people together. Others feel that Islam does not meet everyone's needs.

The World's Largest Democracy

India is the world's largest democracy. The president is the head of state, but the prime minister runs the government. The constitution gives all citizens the same rights, including freedom of speech and religion. It states that women and people of all castes can vote.

Today, small villages are governed by the *panchayat* system. The *panchayat* works on three levels. The first represents a village or a group of villages. The second is made up of *panchayat* chiefs from 100 villages. The third represents a district.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

martial law *noun*, when the military takes control of the government

panchayat *noun*, a village council in India

After You Read

REVIEW What two attitudes do Pakistanis have about the role of Islam in their government?

Underline the sentences that explain the two attitudes Pakistanis have about the role of Islam in their government.

REVIEW How are the three levels of *panchayat* different from one another?

Draw a box around the sentences that tell how the three levels of *panchayat* are different from one another.