

Summary: Pakistan

History of Pakistan

The Indus River flows through eastern Pakistan. This river valley was the site of one of the world's oldest civilizations. In A.D. 712, Arab Muslims brought Islam to the region. Around the year 1000, Muslims from Central Asia built their kingdom in the Indus River valley. In the 1600s, the British East India Company set up trading posts in India, including the region that is now Pakistan. In the 1700s, the ruling Mughal Empire grew weak, and the company took control.

Under British rule, Muslims lost power in the government, while Hindus gained power. Differences between Hindus and Muslims led to violence. On August 14, 1947, India gained independence. Pakistan was declared a separate Muslim nation. Millions of Muslims living in India moved to Pakistan, and Hindus in Pakistan moved to India.

Pakistan included East Pakistan and West Pakistan, but 1,000 miles separated the regions. War broke out between the two regions. In 1971, East Pakistan became Bangladesh.

The Land of Pakistan

Pakistan (once West Pakistan) is divided into four provinces: Baluchistan, North-West Frontier, Punjab, and Sindh. Most Pakistanis live in Punjab. Western and northern Pakistan are dry and mountainous. Sindh and Punjab get little rain, but the Indus River flows through them and irrigates the land.

Language divides the people of Pakistan, but Islam unites them. More than 20 languages are spoken. Punjabi and Sindhi are the most common. Urdu, Pakistan's official language, is taught in schools. Pakistani films are usually in Punjabi or Urdu. The most popular newspapers are in Urdu, Sindhi, or English.

The country's official name is the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. More than 97 percent of Pakistanis are Muslims. Schools base their teaching on Islam. Since the countries were divided, both India and Pakistan have claimed the region of Kashmir. The region is important to both because of its water resources. In 1998, both nations tested nuclear weapons, but they refused to sign a nuclear test ban treaty. Efforts to create a better relationship between the two countries continue.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

partition *noun*, a division between two areas

nuclear test ban *noun*, an agreement not to test or use nuclear weapons

After You Read

REVIEW What problems led Pakistan to become a separate nation from India?

Draw a box around the sentences that tell about the problems that led Pakistan to separate from India.

REVIEW What is the difference between the way the Punjabi and Urdu languages are used in Pakistan? Underline the sentences that tell the difference between the way the Punjabi and Urdu languages are used.