

Public Sector University Governance in Punjab: a case of University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore

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Abstract

Governance is the policy level decision making. The day to day functioning and implementation of policies may be referred to as management. In this research, we have studied the governance and management mechanism of the public sector universities in Punjab by taking University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences as a case. The qualitative methodology was applied in conducting this study. Two methods of data collection were used; secondary documents, and guided semi-structured interviews. After the reforms introduced by the HEC in the higher education system of Pakistan, and the up gradation of the university, the overall mechanics of governance, and management have taken a paradigm shift. The policy making process is structured in a way that syndicate being the highest organ of governance in this manner. Syndicate provides the direction. Vice Chancellor is the head of administration and is responsible for the daily academic and administrative functioning of the university. However, in making decisions university has to face a certain level of external interference.

Keywords: Governance, Public Sector, University Governance, Punjab

1. Introduction

In the year 2000, a Task Force on Higher Education (TFHE) was formed by UNESCO and World Bank. The TFHE was assigned to debate over the future status of higher education in developing countries. The TFHE after lengthy deliberations observed that developing countries need to make basic structural changes in their higher education system in order to take the benefits of knowledge based economy of this era. It was stressed that governance standards of institutions of higher learning should be improved (Task Force on Higher Education Society, 2000). TFHE proposed certain principles of good governance. Moreover, they recommended the way through to the implementation of these recommendations. It was also suggested that good management is necessary for the better exploitation of scarce resources at the disposal of higher education systems. In order to implement the recommendations of TFHE, the Ministry of Education Pakistan, also established a task force in 2001 called Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education (TIFHE) in Pakistan. Vice chancellors, senior teachers, deans, educational administrators, and students were the member of the task force. The task force gave a call for the input from various stakeholders. The input received from the Boston Group (The Boston Group, 2001) is worth to mention here and one on which TIFHE developed many of its recommendations. The Boston Group consisting of Pakistanis abroad recommended that the higher education system of Pakistan needs institutional reforms. "Good governance challenges must also be tackled", was one among the many recommendations. The root causes of many issues in the higher education institutions of Pakistan stem from the poor governance of universities, especially the public sector universities (The Boston Group, 2001).

The Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan gave its recommendations for the improvement of system of Higher Education in Pakistan after detailed considerations and consultations with the stakeholders. TFIHE highlighted many problems in the system of higher education inflicting the efficient functioning of system of education. The most important and the one requiring immediate attention was the issue of governance and management inefficiency (Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan, 2002). It was observed that recent organizational structures, consisting of syndicate and a senate, are coupled

with a lot of flaws. The prime weakness of which is inadequate provision of responsibilities and functions to the management for the efficient management and governance of institutions (Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan, 2002).

The TIFHE also recommended that for policy making and governance matters of the university, there must be an autonomous and stronger body in place. Such a body also should ensure the accountability of performance. TIFHE suggested that the body may be called as the Governing Board. The Chancellors should be the appointing body of the board. The board may comprise of the members recommended by a nominating committee. The TIFHE also suggested that the Vice Chancellor/Rector/President may be appointed after an open and formal search process. The chief executives of universities should be appointed by the governor/president with the recommendations of governing board and search committee (Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan, 2002).

According to recommendations of Task Force on Higher Education and Society, administrative and academic organizational structure should be built in a manner determined by the requirement to facilitate the institutional functions, while keeping in regard that the institutional functionality is characterized by varied disciplines and may alter as the time passes (Task Force on Higher Education Society, 2000). In conformance with these recommendations The Boston Group, and Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education advocated the establishment of commission for the supervision of higher education (The Boston Group, 2001, Task Force on Improvement of Higher Education in Pakistan, 2002). With the establishment of Higher Education Commission started a new era of governance and management mechanism in the universities. The research has been undertaken to study the governance and management pattern of the University of Veterinary and Animal Science, Lahore. World Bank recommended that there is a need for an inquiry in detail in the restrictions face the universities in pursuit to exercise their autonomy (The World Bank 2006).

In the light of the above discussion, this research has tried to meet these objectives: (i) To analyze the pattern of governance in University of Veterinary and Animal Science, Lahore; (ii) To analyze the decision making mechanism in University of Veterinary and Animal Science, Lahore; (iii) To analyze the relation between governance pattern and performance of University of Veterinary and Animal Science, Lahore.

2. Literature Review

“University Governance” being a complex concept reflects the university structure, decision and power entrustment, path and consistency of the institutional functions, planning, morals and ideals of institution, managerial and financial duties, and moreover, the interactions among all of them (Gallagher, 2001).

Public sector universities offer a unique, contested, and complex set of or governance (Bradshaw and Fredette, 2009, Rytmeister and Marshall, 2007). According to OECD (2006), the governance concept emphasizes the relations, processes, and mechanism wherein, policies for education are framed, practices, and assessed at both the organizational and national level. Governance is composed in a way to include legal framework, institutional dynamics and system interconnectedness, financial resources availability, and the way financial expenditures are made accountable. It also includes the way structure is defined, and the maneuvering mechanism (Santiago, 2008).

According to Shin (2009), the dimensions of higher education governance include; (I) external relations context in making of decision and, (b) participation of faculty in the context of institutional perspective. The dynamics of external relations according to Shin (2009), are perceived by the academicians as a way and a constraints for autonomy of institutions. The context of institutions is characterized by a decision making as a form of shared governance among faculty, administrators, and students. El-Khawas (2002) highlights the significance of shared governance. The extent of internal stakeholder perception of the degree of shared governance boosts or restrains the institutional role in learning and teaching.

Governance encircles management, leadership, and strategy. The scholarly discipline of governance have connections with other social institutions in which a university may turn as jointly alert and externally referenced. The governance shapes the personality of a higher education institution in a social and cultural perspective. The perspective of governance is not clear in this regard in such manners. First, it is a way of subservience of university in front of societal designs and actors. Second, it offers exclusive manners wherein individual institutions of higher education may redefine their structures. The individual institutions may present a self-invention mechanism to the society in this way (Marginson and Considine, 2000).

Jarratt report, a report prepared by Vice Chancellor and Principal for UK higher education system, noted, the government policy has a considerable influence on the public sector higher education governance (Jarratt, 1985). In 1997, while emphasizing on the management and governance arrangements in universities, the Dearing Committee established the following principals of governance; (i) the regard of institutional autonomy; (ii) the

protection of academic freedom; and (iii) responsive and open arrangements of governance (Dearing Report, 1997).

According to Bleiklie and Kogan (2007), the decision process arrangement and organizational hierarchy vary in line with broader thoughts concerning governance of universities which may be referred to “republic of scholars” and an “stakeholders’ organization”. Furthermore, it is regarded that academic autonomy and institutional freedom are the flip of one coin. It means that the collegial matters are decided by the scholars independently. In the perspective of a university, the institutional freedom is called as a base intended for a longer term decision. The decisions are made through those privileged with the prime mission of the foremost stakeholders’ interests. Academicians are one of the stakeholders of decision process. Academic autonomy is therefore constrained by addition of many stakeholders. The decisions are done in hierarchical system which means that the power provision to administrators while allowing them to implement the decisions.

European Commission (2005) in its report recommends that the universities should be able to operate in a decentralized environment where financial autonomy, the ability to making decisions without financial barriers. Universities must have the freedom to decide their organizational and decision structures. The institutions of higher learning should be autonomous in deciding the research streams. They must also be capable to put in position effective, and competent management combining the traditions and values.

There are five dimensions for governance of universities. These include: (i) *stat regulation*; it relates the authority that has been conferred by the state meaning the regulations by directions, wherein the state guides in detail the activities in a defined situation; (ii) *guidance by stakeholder*; relates with the actions which guide the universities in defining the goals. In public sector universities, the main stakeholder is the state however, but not the sole stakeholder; (iii) *academic freedom*; is the responsibilities held by the experts inside the universities. In universities, this system may be characterized by a situation referred to as system of collegial decision making. (iv) *managerial self-governance*; it means the arrangements of hierarchy in the academic organizations. In such arrangements, roles of leadership are in danger. (v) *Rivalry*: for material and non-material resources inside and among university occurs. This is a phenomenon of “quasi markets”. The tasks of assessed by those who claim to substitute the clients’ claims (De Boer et al., 2007).

The OECD distinguishes among different essentials related to governance of higher education (Wolter, 2007). (1) Institutional autonomy: Autonomy of institutions of higher learning differs in different countries to a larger extent. The university autonomy is higher in Anglo-American region. However, in turkey, Japan, and Europe, the university autonomy is lower as compared to Anglo-American region. While the universities in the rest of the world are even less autonomous to a considerable level. (2) Financing/funding: in many countries, the distribution of funds have taken many forms. The level of state funding has also changed over time. (3) Quality assurance: the enhancement of quality has been made a condition for the granting of autonomy in many countries both at national and local level. (4) Institutional steering and management: there is a need to deal with consensual decision making in major bodies of universities for better institutional management and institutional steering (Wolter, 2007).

There two pillars of governance in many universities; board of governors, and an academic board. There is external representation on the board of governors, while there is internal representation on the academic board. The academic board deals with standards and quality issues. The governance pattern of university includes; state regulation and guidance by external stakeholders as external factors, and managerial and academic self-governance with institutional competition (Gillies, 2011). There is generally no decline in competition among institutions and self-governance of academic affairs (Schimank, 2005). Many higher learning institutions have observed changes in internal systems of steering and management. These institutes may be called as a slack joint entity which has smaller management, two pillar of hierarchies, stronger faculty, slight need for stronger and proper headship, and a less number of goals and objectives (Cohen and March, 1986).

The university administration, which for sometimes is referred to management, have extended and become adept at most of the stages. In this situation, any urge for the reform may be dual in its nature. First, the expert administration may be required in a larger capacity. It may be accountable and be responsible to ministries, with outside relations, as a result of extended demands to be made on system of internal administration. Second, internal steering, performance management, incentive system, and reporting system have become more important. Particularly, over the last decade there is an enhancement in the managerial orientation of focus on HRM, stronger procedures, teaching and research reports, and financial procedures in a novel manner. Although, institutes of higher learning are achieving freedom in setting of internal composition of management, the trend is moving towards isomorphism in deciding on the mechanism of governance (Christensen, 2009).

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to the study pattern of governance in the Public sector universities of Punjab. The literature on methodology suggests that for these kind of studies the qualitative methodology suits best. Moreover, if the researcher is concerned with deeper investigation, the case study best serves the purpose. According to Yin (2009), if the researcher is not looking to create generalizations rather the purpose is to unleash the phenomenon in depth, the most appropriate methodology is case study design. Furthermore, the case study design suits best in those situations where the researcher wants to find the answer to what and why questions.

a. Population and sample

Governance refers to “power”. Governance is the setting up of goals and objective of organization and formulating the policies of the organization. The policies are implemented by the management. In an organizational setting, those on the key positions hold and implement such powers. In an academic institution of higher learning, those who hold the key positions are vice chancellors, registrar, treasurer, deans, principals, directors, and heads of teaching an administrative departments. For our research, the decision makers were the population of this study.

The decision makers of university constitute the study sample. Administrators are the busy individuals of the university. Moreover, there was shorter span of time to collect the data. The criteria for inclusion were the willingness of the individuals to participate in the study. Interviews were conducted with 13 respondents out of a total strength of 28. According to Yin (2009), for reliable conclusions of a case study research, a sufficient sample of 10 respondents may produce reliable conclusions. In order to refine the interview guide, the first two interviews conducted as pilot interviews. After the pilot interviews some changes were made in the guide for interview. The total sample for this study turned out to be 11 individuals. Following ethical guidelines of conducting the research, the interviewees’ identity has not been revealed. The issue of anonymity is also necessary to develop reliable conclusions.

b. Data collection

For meeting our research objectives, data were collected by two ways: semi-structured interviews with the key personnel of the university, and from various published annual reports of the university and the UVAS Ordinance, 2002 (The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore Ordinance, 2002). According to Burgess (1984), the informal style semi-structured interviews are “purpose based conversations” giving an impression of the discussion between the interviewer and the interviewee. The assumption is that the data source is the interviewee (Mason, 2002). The guide for interview was prepared based on an extensive literature review. The semi-structured interviews help in covering the areas arising out in the course of discussion. It was expected that the additional points may arise out since the interviewees were the experienced officials of the university.

As the objective of this investigation was to study the governance mechanism, the respondents were the administrative officials of the university. The interviews were conducted on the appointment with the officials on prior basis. In order to enhance the validity, the response noted by the interviewer were reconfirmed by repeating them in front of the interviewees at the end of interview. The recorded responses were transcribed afterwards for further analysis.

c. Procedure of Data analysis

Data were analyzed by applying the pattern matching technique. The in-depth semi-structured interviews may better be analyzed using pattern matching technique (Flick, 2006, McNabb, 2008). The interviews were recorded where the respondents allowed to do so, while for others the notes were taken. Later on, notes and recordings were transcribed capturing the complete picture. For finding out the similarities and differences in the responses, the transcriptions were further analyzed. Nvivo software was used for this purpose. Transcriptions were analyzed by running queries. Queries helped to determine the common themes arising out of the data. Both the frequency query, and text search query were run on the transcriptions. Taking into consideration, the variables and their dimensions, tree nodes and free nodes were created and the relevant responses were categorizes below them respectively. Common themes were synthesized to present the findings. In the analysis section, the relevant excerpts from transcriptions have been given in order to support our analysis.

4. Analysis and Discussion

In the data following line data interpretation has been presented after identification of themes in the process of data reduction. The interpretation has been supported by the excerpts wherever required.

a. Pattern of governance

A university system is governed by an array of bodies and organs. These set of organs and bodies may be referred to as the pattern of governance. The structure of governance of University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences have been established on the foundations provided by the UVAS Ordinance, 2002. They syndicate,

Academic Council, Vice Chancellor, and Chancellor make the governance structure of UVAS. The Hoare (1996) holds that the responsibility to set the long term policies and plans rests on governing body of the University. The governing boards is also responsible to review and monitor the performance of the university. Ultimately, the responsibility of the institutional matters rests on the governing body. According to the Hoare (1996) report, the purpose of the governing body should be to provide a guideline and review the performance, but not the management. The governing body members must come up with the diverse input and they should not advocate any agenda based on specific motives. At UVAS, syndicate is the highest governing organ and corresponds to the board of governors. The following excerpt from the themes in the interview shows that:

“The apex governing body of the university is syndicate. Syndicate decides all the policy issues. Syndicate is free to delegate its powers to the vice chancellor, who, in urgent scenarios can take necessary decisions. Such steps are taken in anticipation of the approval of the syndicate afterwards. Over the past, no such instances have been seen where there was difference between the vice chancellor and syndicate. However, at certain points, syndicate looks as stamping body only. Whatever, the Vice Chancellor looks for approval is approved without discussions among members.

The objective of the syndicate is to guard the policy interest of the university. The syndicate must carry out its functions to the fullest.

Chief executive officer of the university is the Vice Chancellor. For the appointment of Vice Chancellors, the chief minister advises the Chancellor, the governor. The advice is given from amongst panel of three nominees for the appointment on the post. The role of the vice chancellor is evident from the following (UVAS ORDINANCE 2002, 2002):

“The vice-chancellor is the chief administrative and academic officer in charge of the university. The injunctions of the ordinance of university are implemented by vice chancellor. Along with the ordinance, all other regulations, statues, rules are also the responsibility of the vice chancellor. Moreover, the administrative oversight on teachers, students, and employees is also the responsibility of vice chancellor”.

The excerpt explains that the vice chancellor has responsibility for the administrative and academic functioning of the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences. The right to chair all the decision making organs including syndicate, academic council, and faculty boards of the university also lies with the Vice Chancellor. Gillies (2011) views that the university governance also includes the right of self-governance. Schimank (2005) describes that institutional competition and academic self-governance have a common contraction. Furthermore, the professional communities within the university system have a responsibility of self-governance (De Boer et al., 2007). This kind of a system has been embedded in the collegial decision-making of the universities. The function of academic self-governance at University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences is executed by the academic council. At UVAS, the academic council is the uppermost organ, which ensure the academic governance right of the university. According to the interview excerpts:

“Academic council performs the functions of teaching, examinations, research, and publications. The relevant guidelines regarding above principles are laid down by the academic council. The academic council meets frequently to decide on these matters”.

In contrast to the above, it was found in the interviews that statutory organs are not working according to the spirit of the ordinance of the university (UVAS ORDINANCE 2002, 2002).

“The bodies like syndicate, academic council don’t perform as per the spirit of the ordinance”.

The above excerpts from the interviews and their analysis answers our research questions. According the analysis, it is shown that there are three of governance in the University of veterinary and animal sciences. These are the syndicate, academic council, and the vice chancellor. They syndicate is responsible for making policy decisions at the university. Academic council makes the policy decisions on academic matters. Vice chancellor is responsible for day to day functioning of the university. Over the last few years, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences have shown progress in the expanding the physical infrastructure and addition of new disciplines of study. This progress can be attributed to the proper functioning the university organs.

b. Decision making mechanism

The mental procedures involved in the selection of a particular action amongst the many alternatives may be referred to decision making. There are always certain outputs of the decisions. University governance entails

decision making power regarding fundamental practices and policies in many important areas (Anwar et al., 2011). In an institute of higher learning, the decision areas include; financial, academic, and administrative. The decisions concerning research, admission policies, curriculum development, and examination procedures (Anwar, 2005). Academic council and Board of Advance Studies and Research are responsible to make the academic decisions. Decisions regarding academic issues are also made by the faculty boards and board of studies. For making the academic decisions, academic council is the highest body. The highest organ of academic decision making is the academic council. The council make their decision in the meetings as planned. The following excerpts explain the situation:

“In order to set the agenda for meetings, the requests are communicated from the bottom to upwards. The highest body to make academic decisions is the academic council. The responsibility to decide on research and curriculum rests with Board of Advanced Studies and Research”.

The responsibility of coordinating among the different faculties also rests with the academic council. It has the role of sustaining and developing the university standards academically. It also exercises the supervision over the academic affairs of the university. Such matters include, inter-faculty coordination, study courses, admission qualifications, and the awards of degrees after the examinations.

Under the academic council, there are two more organs of governance. These are Advance Studies and Research Boards, and Board of Studies. The council delegates some powers to these boards from time to time. Both of these organs suggest and recommend decisions on certain matters to the academic council. As per the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Ordinance, the Board of Studies:

“Gives advice to the higher authorities on matters research and publication, teaching and examination. The advance studies and board of research also gives advice on research promotion and research degree conferment”.

The Finance and Planning committee makes the financial decisions. Finance and Planning Committee advises the syndicate on the investment, development, planning, and financing matters as and when required (Anwar, 2005). The Finance and Planning Committee has the focus to ensure that university initiates those projects which can reasonably be afforded and started. The treasurer is the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences. CFO has the duty to ensure that funds are properly allocated. The treasurer also performs as secretary to the Finance and Planning Committee. According to the excerpts:

“The Government of Punjab appoints an auditor in the university, called resident auditor. The AG office of the government of Pakistan conducts the audit of the accounts of university. If there raises an audit objection, the same is forwarded to secretary livestock, and is evaluated by the finance ministry”.

The registrar makes the administrative decisions after the approval of Vice Chancellor. Administrative decisions are concerned with the implementation of established laws, statutes, and procedures of the university (Anwar, 2005). According to the interview transcripts:

“all the matters linked with the administration and other such functions of the university are entrusted upon the registrar”

Under the command of Registrar, there are four other sections, for the proper functioning of the university system. A deputy registrar heads each section. The sections are: administration section, establishment section, student record section, and general section. The functions of the administration section are recruitment, salary matter, ACR maintenance and the matter related to the employees employed in BPS-17 and above. The establishment division works the recruitment, salary determination, ACR maintenance, and other affairs relevant to BPS-16 and below employees. The duties of student record section include scholarships/financial aids, maintenance, and records verification, and all such matters related to students. The general section works for the constitution of committees, and statutory bodies, and for the conduct of meetings of all such bodies. It also works for the preparation of annual reports.

We can infer from the above analysis that the decision structure includes both non-academicians and academicians. The decision makers from the academic cadre include elected and nominated directors and heads of institutes, departmental chairpersons. The lecturers have also representation on various committees and boards in the structure of decision making of the university. The non-academicians include the vice chancellor, registrar, treasurer, and controller of examinations. The inclusion of both the academicians and non-academicians in the structure of decision making, makes it diverse and helps to make effective decisions.

c. Progress

There have been many benefits of the governance reforms of in the College of Veterinary Sciences (CVS). With

the up-gradation of CVS to the UVAS in 2002, there has been an increase in the number of disciplines taught in this institution. The number of degree programs have also increased. Previously, only the degree of Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) was being offered. With the passage of time, the elevation to the status of university has resulted in the increase in the number of degree programs. Presently, the university is offering many new degree programs such as bachelors, masters, and PhDs. This also has stretched out the access of education to the masses. According to the collective opinion of interviewees:

“After the establishment of UVAS in 2002, many developments have taken place. There are 22 teaching departments and 5 faculties. Every department. All departments have programs ranging from Bachelors to Doctorate. Education is being imparted in 45 different disciplines. Many labs are fully functional. Research culture has started. There are also two sub-campuses”.

In the modern times, “creation of knowledge” characterizes the university system. Within the last few years, the UVAS has created a stronger research base. Recently, an office for the promotion and commercialization of knowledge has been created. The office titled “Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization” is responsible for establishing a conducive culture for research, and commercializing the university research output. The above proposition is supported by the following excerpts:

“Recently, Office of Research, Innovation, and Commercialization (ORIC) has been established. The mission of ORIC is to commercialize the academic research. There is an increase in research output”.

Labs are an important part of the infrastructure for a Veterinary University. Moreover, the labs should be equipped with necessary equipment so that the necessary experimentation may be carried out. Moreover, labs are a requirement for all the academic departments of the university given the nature of disciplines being run by all the department, the availability of fully functional labs becomes necessary for the provision of quality education. Previously there are only 5 labs. After the up-gradation, there are more than 35 labs catering to the need of researchers. As a result of expansion program, the UVAS has established its sub campuses at Jhang and Pattoki city. The Jhang campus is catering to the skills manpower needs of the biggest livestock district of the province. The other campus has been established at Ravi. The purpose of this campus is to build the university dairy farm. The resources for the purpose have been provided by the government of the Punjab.

In Pakistan, the instability of the political system and political policies have been an impediment to the progress of institutions. The educational establishments have also been effected by this problem. Moreover, the interference sometime leads to a dictations on recruitments, and admissions. Had there been no such issues, institutions could flourish smoothly. The above discussion leads us to infer that reforms bring a lot of benefits to the institutions. Similarly, governance reforms have produced many fruits for University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The pattern of governance of University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences includes three layers. These are Academic Council, the Vice Chancellor, and above all the syndicate. The syndicate being the highest decision making body is responsible for the efficient governance of the university. The academic council has the mandate to deal with the academic issues, while the Vice Chancellor remains the administrative head of the university. The decision pattern of University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences is such to include both the faculty and administrative personnel. The faculty in the decision process includes directors of institutes, department chairmen, and by being the members of the decision organs. After the new governance arrangements, the university has shown notable progress. The teaching disciplines have increased up to 15. There has also been manifold increase in the number of degree programs. The physical infrastructure have also expanded.

The context and origin of governance reforms introduced in universities is western in nature. Those who have formulated reforms and are in charge of implementation of the same have a western orientation of the countries like USA, UK, and Canada etc. A deeper look into the reforms shows that there is an alien context at the base of reforms. This study recommends that all the relevant circles should be consulted in order to formulate any reform policies. Such consultations may also ease the change management for reform implementations. It is further recommended that the formal training should be given to the administrators before appointment on any decision positions. These kind of training programs should be conducted routinely. The decision making personnel should have knowledge of modern management techniques. University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences has made satisfactory progress over the years. The progress has been multi-pronged: in terms of physical infrastructure, in terms of degree programs, and in terms of research output. However, it is strongly

recommended that the research output should be contextual and relevant. The research should cater to the needs of economy of Pakistan.

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