

All about unearthing a child traffickers' den

By Morshed Ali Khan

A police Sub-Inspector (SI) of Demra thana received a telephone call precisely at 12:20 am on Saturday. The anonymous caller had a tip-off to pass on to the police.

"Several children are under the clutches of child traffickers. They are now being held in a house on the western side of Matuail graveyard, next to the house of one Chan Miah," the caller said.

SI Hamidul Islam, accompanied by six constables, immediately set out for the destination 3 km away. At around 1.15 am, the one-storey house in the impoverished suburb of the city was raided by the police.

There were six children asleep, two women and three men in the three-room detached pucca house. All five were arrested.

Rabeya Khatun, one of the women, claimed that four of the children were hers and the remaining two had been brought from Sylhet to be taken to Dubai where her husband, Md Moslem Uddin, resides. They were to be used in camel races, she added.

The three men quickly confessed to the police the involvement of three others at a house at Elephant Road. After nabbing all the alleged culprits, the SI and his team raided the Elephant Road den of the alleged traffickers at 3 am on Saturday and apprehended all three of them.

According to recorded confessions by the accused, two children — Jamal and Monwar aged between five and seven — were bought from their fathers, Rangila Miah and Ramzan respectively, from a village under Bahubal thana in Habiganj district about 15 days ago. For each child, it was claimed, the traffickers had paid Tk 3,000. Police could not say how much a child would fetch after they were taken to Dubai.

After placing them in the makeshift 'creche' in Matuail area, the gang waited to arrange the papers to fly out of the country. The confession further said that the men had always 'chosen' Bangladesh Biman flights for going to Dubai. And that one courier was assigned to carry one child at a time.

Police also recovered a copy of the passport of Moslem Uddin which bears endorsement of the im-

migration and Passport department for five children. Moslem Uddin, who has been at the receiving end of the smuggled children in Dubai, had himself rented the house at Matuail.

The house, rented about three months ago for Tk 2,500 a month, was turned into a virtual day care centre. The neighbours said that a lot of people used to come here but they hardly talked to anyone in the neighbourhood. The windows remained shut and the female occupants never befriended anyone, a female neighbour said.

Inside the modest rooms, two carom boards, toys and a bicycle were scattered on the floor. In the kitchen, a big pan containing boiled rice and another with a curry were left.

"The children always remained inside the house and they were constantly kept busy by the elders, playing carom, riding bike. But the kids looked very dirty, we never suspected anything," said Rajib, a young man in the neighbourhood.

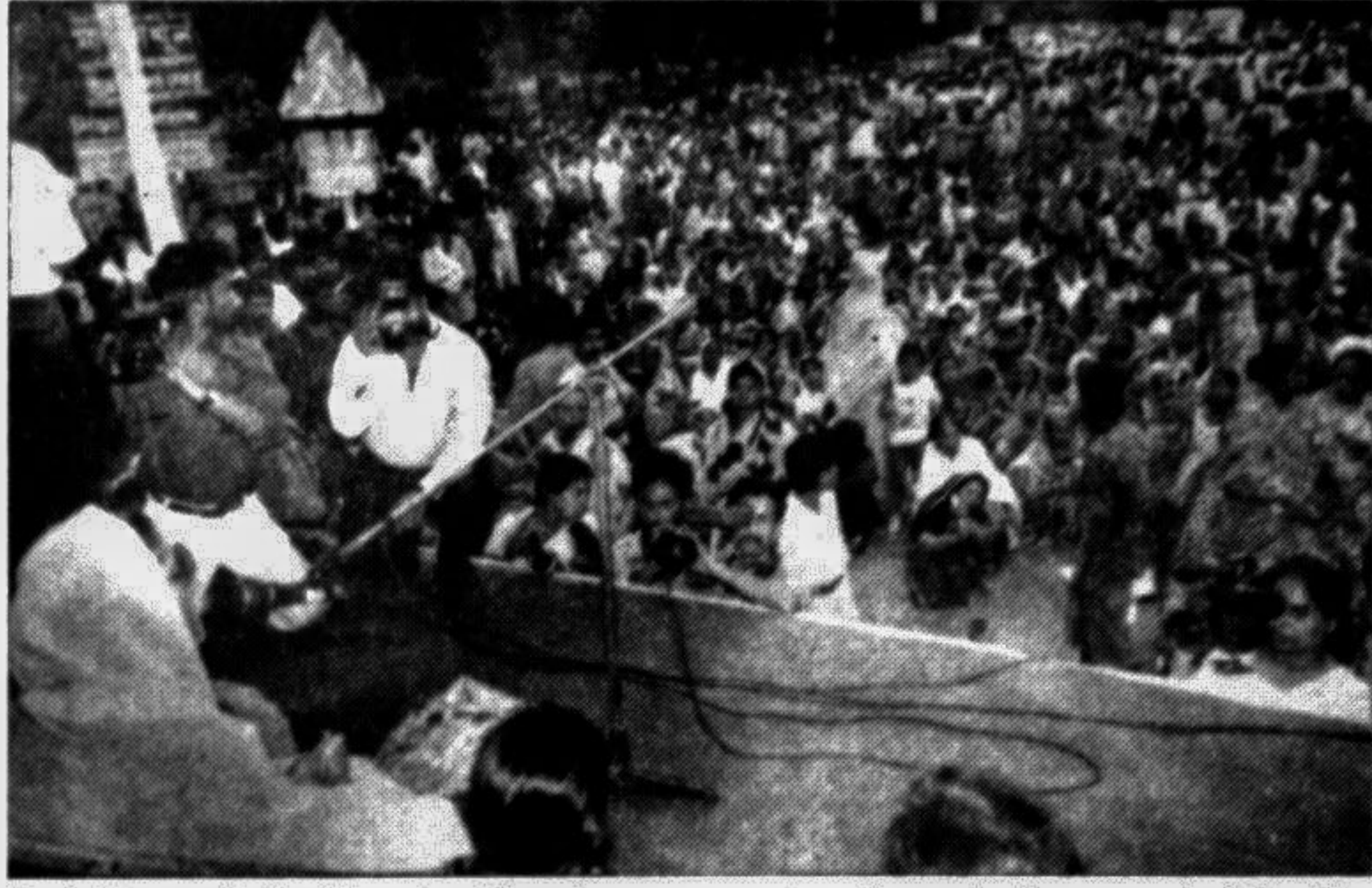
Owner of the house Azahar said that about three months ago one Jasir Molla, who has an office at Nawabpur, introduced him with Moslem Uddin and arranged the renting. "They have not paid any rent for the last three months," alleged Azahar.

A group of young men of the area caught and handed over to Demra police three persons who arrived at the house on Saturday, apparently unaware of what had happened there. Police said that the three were under their custody but they were not yet sure if those persons were involved in the mischief.

Police is still investigating about the four other children — three girls and a boy aged between three and twelve — although they have identified Rabeya as their mother.

Meanwhile, Jamal and Monwar were placed in a remand house under court orders.

Police charged the two women and the six men under Section 12 of the recently enacted Women and Child Repression (Special Provision) Act. If found guilty, they may face life imprisonment or death penalty. The eight were placed on police remand.



Poet Begum Sufia Kamal addressing a women's rally yesterday organised by the Samilita Nari Samaj in front of the Engineers' Institution in the city. — Star photo

Nari Samaj

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administrative reforms for immediate implementation of the recently signed Beijing Declaration on rights of women.

They also pledged to observe August 24, the day Yasmin was raped and killed by police, as the 'women repression resistance day' and declared as martyrs the seven persons killed in the violent protests in Dinajpur.

A good number of men from all walks of life also attended the rally.

Dressed in all their finery, sitting on the dusty road, for almost three hours they voiced their protests against repression on women, increasing violence against women including fatwa, rape and murder, and alleged police atrocities and harassment. They carried banners and placards with slogans like 'Why did Yasmin die, Khaleida explain,' 'Stop police atrocity' and 'Down with the Home Minister.'

The speakers included Poet Begum Sufia Kamal, Yasmin's mother Sharifa Begum and the widow of Shiraj, one of those killed in Dinajpur.

Several women's rights activists addressed the rally. A planned procession up to the Noor Hossain Square at the Zero Point, was cancelled as the rally ended late.

One crushed under running train in city

By Staff Correspondent

An unidentified man, aged about 35, was crushed under a running train at Khilgaon rail crossing in the city last night.

Railway police said, the accident occurred around 8:30 pm.

In another incident, a maid, who had reportedly taken poison on Friday, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) late Sunday night.

Rani, 18, used to work at the house of one Md Zahurul Haq Pathan of Rajat Ali Sarder Lane under Demra police station.

Border confce

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gling and child, drug and illegal arms trafficking, disputed land, maintenance of border pillars and violation of border guideline and miscreant activities will also come up for discussion.

The other members of Bangladesh delegation are Deputy Director General of BDR Brig Miran Hamidur Rahman, Joint Secretary of Home Ministry Syed Anwarul Islam, Commanders of different Sectors and Executive Engineer of Indo-Bangla Joint River Commission.

Inspector General of BSF N S Sandhu and the Inspectors-General of North Bengal, South Bengal, Shillong and Agartola frontiers and other senior officers are assisting the Indian delegation leader at the talks.

Filipino maid

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Balabagan to be whipped 100 times for killing her employer and then deported, her lawyer said.

The court also sentenced her to one year in jail but as she has already spent 15 months behind bars it meant she would be released, probably on Wednesday, lawyer Salman Luthi told AFP.

She would first receive "100 lashes" although he added they would be "very light."

Balabagan, who had earlier faced execution, was ordered to pay 150,000 dirhams (40,000 dollars) as a 'ditya' or blood money to her victim's family.

Philippines embassy attache Danilo Cruz said the money had already been raised and had been lodged with the court.

Accept demand, don't waste time: Hasina

Awami League president Sheikh Hasina yesterday asked the government to take such immediate steps as the Opposition would not have to enforce hartals to realise their longstanding demand, reports UNB.

"We'll withdraw hartal programmes as soon as the ruling party concedes to the demand for a neutral caretaker government," she said while exchanging views with the lawyers at the party's Bangabandhu Avenue office.

Mentioning that the BNP has now come on to the street to take anti-hartal steps, Hasina advised the ruling party: "Instead of resisting hartal, accept the demand of the people and give the nation a chance to get rid

2 children drown in Sylhet

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Oct 30: Two minor children drowned at a pond at village Barkatpur under Nabiganj thana of Habiganj district yesterday.

Selina, 5, and her cousin Manirunnessa, 9, went to the pond for bathing. The bodies were recovered after several hours.

Intending hajis advised to deposit house rent

The government will hire houses in Makkah in advance to solve accommodation problems there during the Hajj season in 1996, reports BSS.

Persons intending to perform Hajj next year under the government management and desired to stay at government-hired houses in Makkah, have been advised to deposit 1500 Saudi rials equivalent to Tk 16,000 to any scheduled bank, commercial bank positively by November 30.

The amount of house rent might be a little high or less as the present assessment is based on guess work. However, the deposited house rent money would be adjusted with the overall Hajj expenditure to be decided later.

Those who performed Hajj in 1995 paid Tk 83,815 and the expenditure of next year is likely to be the same or a little higher than that of this year, an official handout said yesterday.

The government will hire houses in Makkah only for those who will deposit rents in advance. Others should perform Hajj as done in the

Gherao programme

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tivists assembled in front of a movie house at English Road in the morning and later they proceeded towards the DC's office at Johnson Road.

Police resorted to lathi charge repeated efforts to prevent the JP activists from proceeding to the DC's office, breaking the barbed-wire fences raised by police about 200 yards off the DC's office.

At about 11:30, police also lobbed tear gas shells at demonstrators who attacked a riot police van approaching the area. Police also sprayed coloured water and hot water to disperse them.

A 10-member AL team led by Md Quamruzzaman met Additional Deputy Magistrate (ADM) Md Quddus Khan at 1:30 pm to register their demands. The leaders also alleged that police swooped on their rally and took away microphones and condemned the 'police action.'

The ADM assured the leaders that he would convey their demands to the government.

The AL leaders did not hand over any memorandum because, they claimed, it was snatched by police during a 'scuffle.'

A brief AL rally was held

20 injured in N'ganj clashes

From Our Correspondent

NARAYANGANJ, Oct 30: At least 20 people were injured in a series of clashes between two groups of bullies at Kashipara here today.

Seven persons who received bullet injuries were admitted to the Narayanganj General Hospital while others released after first aid.

According to witnesses, there was first a scuffle between the two groups at Khil Market near Kashipara-Bhola under Fatulla thana around 1:00 am. After this, the two groups of armed youths clashed for hours together. The fierce fighting continued throughout the day.

At least 50 rounds of bullets were fired and over a hundred bombs exploded during the day long clashes.

Police say, the clashes might be the outburst of an old rivalry between the two gangs over establishing supremacy in the area.

Police failed arrest anyone in this connection till filing this report late tonight.

Minor girl gangraped

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Oct 30: A minor girl was gangraped by some unidentified persons near a hill at village Marichhapalong under Ramu thana this morning.

Fatema Begum, 10, daughter of a day labourer, Amir Hossain, was taken to the Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

According to villagers, some seven or eight miscreants kidnapped Fatema when she was collecting woods from a forest early in the morning and raped her for an hour at a nearby hillside. Hearing the screams of the poor girl, people in the neighbourhood rushed to the spot and rescued her in a critical condition. The miscreants managed to escape.

Diarrhoea claims 16 in Sunamganj

SUNAMGANJ, Oct 30: Diarrhoea claimed 16 lives and attacked 2,230 people in six thanas of the district in a week, reports UNB.

Duarabazar is the worst-hit thana where 10 people died. The other affected thanas are Sadar, Chhatak, Jamaiganj, Jagannathpur and Dhirai, Civil Surgeon office sources said.

With these the total number of deaths from the water-borne disease rose to 55 during the last one month.

India to suspend construction near 'no man's land'

From Staff Correspondent

SYLHET, Oct 30: The Indian authorities today agreed to suspend construction of a Customs office building just yards off the 'no man's land' in Tamabil border till the dispute is resolved at a higher level.

The agreement was reached at a flag meeting between the BDR and BSF this afternoon at the Tamabil Customs office in Bangladesh territory. Major Jallil, Battalion Commander, BDR and M Pandey, Commander, BSF led their respective sides.

A tense situation prevailed at Tamabil border areas since Wednesday last when the Indian authorities attempted construction of a building at a place between the border pillar No 1275 and 1274, violating international Conventions. The work was stopped temporarily as the BDR protested.

WB resents stalling of JSAC programme

From Staff Correspondent

The World Bank has resented the stalling of the Jute Sector Adjustment Credit (JSAC) programme which it was financing with a 250-million US dollar credit, reports UNB.

As the stalled programme has blocked release of two instalments totalling 100 million dollar, the World Bank headquarters in Washington faxed a letter last week to the government hinting that its Board might now question the rationale of the credit.

"Given the scarcity of IDA resources and the many competing claims on these limited funds, we need to be in a position to assure our Board that the government intends to revamp the JSAC with a view to seeking continuing IDA financial support," a Jute Ministry source yesterday quoted the World Bank letter as saying.

Fred Kilby, Chief, Private Sector Development and Finance Division of the World Bank's South Asia desk, wrote the letter to the Secretary of Jute.

The source said Kilby would seek the government's latest thought on the stalled programme during his visit to Bangladesh in the first week of November.

Police yet to trace kidnapped Ctg businessman

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CHITTAGONG, Oct 30: Police could not yet trace whereabouts of the kidnapped businessman of Hat-hazari thana of the district, reports UNB.

Jogendranath, who was kidnapped on October 28 from Modhunaghat, has sent a letter to his family members from an unknown place asking to meet the demand of the kidnappers, family sources said.

Textile Policy

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sector as the prime mover of the textile sector in order to make the sector self-sufficient within the next 10 years when the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) will be completely phased out.

After the MFA is phased out, there will be no quotas or no tariff restrictions for export or import of garments or textiles. Thus the market will be totally open to competition and the garments industries of Bangladesh which annually fetch over 1.5 billion US dollars would fall into a disadvantaged position if the country fails to create backward linkages to support them.

Ctg mayor

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Noman for development of sports facilities.

Mohiuddin also threatened to stop transportation of imported goods from Chittagong Port to other parts of the country from December 29 if the demands are not met.

A series of programmes were announced including signature campaign from November 15 to December 15, black week from December 20-26, organising human chain on December 28 and stage on the port on December 28 and 29.

The Midnight File

3 more shot dead in Karachi

KARACHI, Oct 30: Three people, including a policeman, were shot dead in Karachi today as a strike called by the ethnic Mohajir Quami Movement (MQM) brought Pakistan's commercial capital to a standstill for a second day, reports Reuter.

WB resents stalling of JSAC programme

The Bank executive also suggested an urgent meeting of the project steering committee for a full scale discussion on the current state of the adjustment programme and decide next steps.

The World Bank letter expressed concern as it estimated that operating losses of the 29 public sector jute mills would amount to Tk 232 crore, equivalent to 58 million dollar, in the next fiscal (1996-97) in a no-reform situation.

The Bank claimed that losses would have been cut to Tk 120 crore if the reform programme had been implemented on schedule.

Cautioning about the adverse impact on the government's budget of the mounting losses of the public jute sector in the absence of reforms, the letter pointed out that subsidy to every person employed in the sector now amounted to Tk 38,000 a year. The figure is more than double of the average annual salary of a primary school teacher of Tk 17,700.

The letter observed that the annual expenditures in subsidising public sector employment in the jute sector would be sufficient to employ 130,000 teachers.

HBFC

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rowers are responding positively to incentives to repay their outstanding amounts.

Held at the National Press Club, the meeting was presided over by Moazzem Hossain, Editor, The Financial Express and the president of the Forum. General Secretary of the ERF Shamsul Huq Zahid was also present.

Sohel Ahmed informed the meeting that HBFC has disbursed Tk 2,040 crore loan to build as many as 1 lakh 10 thousand houses in the urban areas, mostly Dhaka and Chittagong, since its inception in 1952.

He stressed the need for more public and private financing organisation in the housing sector to meet the increasing demand for financing.

"We provide loans on 12 per cent interest in Dhaka and Chittagong and 10 per cent in district town which is the lowest in this sub-continent," he pointed out.

The Managing Director of the HBFC further said that in addition to the Tk 97 crore paid-up capital provided by the government, the funds corporation raises through issuing debentures.

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Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers & Exporters Association

BTMC Bhaban, 7-9, Kawran Bazar, Dhaka-1215.

Urgent request to garment factory owners

As per the Memorandum of Understanding between BGMEA, UNICEF and ILO Bangladesh regarding elimination of Child Labour, children below 14 years of age working in garment factories will not be terminated even after 31.10.95 until they are absorbed in the school programme. It is the responsibility of all concerned garment factory owners to comply with the above provision of the MUO.

All concerned garment factory owners are urgently requested not to terminate the child labour even after 31.10.95 until they are absorbed in the school programme.

**Secretary
BGMEA**

Editor: Mahfuz Anam

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