

## Israel, 4 Palestinians killed in violence

JERUSALEM, Dec 22: Violence exploded across the West Bank and Gaza Strip today, leaving five people dead, including an Israeli woman killed in a suicide bomb attack at a restaurant that left seven others hurt, including two seriously, reports AFP.

Four Palestinians, including the suicide attacker, also died in clashes with Israelis. Friday, declared a "day of rage" by Palestinian militant groups.

The suicide attacker exploded a bomb, apparently strapped around his waist, at a restaurant often frequented by Israeli soldiers near the Jewish settlement of Mehola in the northern West Bank. Israeli medical officials and media reports said.

The identities of those involved were not immediately known.

Also Friday, a Palestinian farm worker was killed during a gunfight between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians at the Nezirim Jewish settlement in the Gaza Strip. Both sides blamed the other for his death.

A Jewish settler further shot dead a Palestinian disguised as an Israeli policeman who attacked him with a knife at a settlement in the southern West Bank Friday, an Israeli army spokesman said.

The Palestinian had made his way into the Beit Haggai settlement near Hebron in the southern West Bank and tried to stab the settler, who managed to fire his pistol at the attacker.

The dead man was not immediately identified, and his body was taken into custody by the Israeli army, a military spokesman said.

Israeli soldiers also shot and killed a Palestinian teenager Friday during clashes near Hebron, hospital officials said.

Medical officials said Arafat Mishael, 17, died in hospital after Israeli soldiers shot him in the

**Old man hacked to death by terrorists in Bagerhat**

BAGERHAT, Dec 22: An old man was hacked to death by terrorists at village Khalisi in Sardar upazila early today, reports UNB.

The victim, identified as Niranjan Das, 60, died on the spot.

Police and witnesses said the terrorists numbering 7-8 attacked the old man at his home as he refused to give them toll.

Local people caught three of the terrorists, including a woman, and handed them over to the police. They are Haider, 35, and Idris, 40, and his wife Mahmuda Begum, 30.

A case was filed with the police in this connection.

**Two snatchers held with arms at Rajshahi**

**From Our Correspondent**

RAJSHAHI, Dec 22: Police arrested two snatchers and recovered one shooter gun and some lethal weapons from their possession in the city this morning.

The snatchers were identified as Zana, 20, and Zony, 21.

Patrol police of Boalia thana caught the snatchers while they were trying to snatch gold ornaments from a woman in Kalabagan area in the morning.

A case was recorded with Boalia thana in this connection.

## Women's quota bill

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the 239-member upper house or Rajya Sabha.

The bill, first introduced in 1996 by a previous government, has met with opposition in almost every session of parliament and has never come to vote.

Successive governments have run into problems with the bill, which originally set out to reserve half the legislative seats for women. Following pressure from the mostly male lawmakers, the government reduced the quota to 33 per cent. Most lawmakers want it pegged at between 10 per cent and 15 per cent.

Further complicating matters, lawmakers who rely on the votes of Muslims and other minorities,

head with a live round in clashes on a road used by Jewish settlers near the Arab village of Sir near Hebron.

Friday's deaths brought number of people killed since violence erupted in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Israel on September 28 to 356, the vast majority being Palestinians.

Hospital officials in Gaza City identified the dead farm worker as Sallama Eish al-Sawarka, 52.

The Israeli army said al-Sawarka had been working in the on the outskirts of the Nezirim south of Gaza City and was killed by Palestinian gunfire.

Palestinian security officials, however, said that he was shot by Israeli soldiers.

Seven other Palestinians were shot in clashes with Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers near the Kfar Darom Jewish settlement in central Gaza, medical officials said.

The fighting there broke out after settlers tried to bulldoze a strip of Palestinian-owned farmland.

In other violence on Friday, at least 14 Palestinians were injured in clashes with Israeli soldiers as thousands held demonstrations to commemorate Jerusalem Day and denounce peace talks with Israel.

In the West Bank town of Ramallah, Israelis fired live ammunition and rubber-coated steel bullets at Palestinians who threw stones at them at a checkpoint on the outskirts of the Palestinian-run city, medical officials said.

Of the 14 Palestinians injured there, officials said four of them were hit by live rounds.

### BNP

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The Standing Committee meeting was held at a time when top BNP leaders are divided on whether the opposition would spend its energy to force the government to resign or start preparing for the next general election under the cover of an anti-government movement.

Besides, controversy is still there among the alliance partners on the questions of agitation and preparations for the election.

BNP's committee of the alliance has meantime formed a sub-committee to chalk out fresh agitation programmes. It is due to submit its suggestions at the December 24 meeting of the Liaison Committee.

Opposition sources said, chances are bleak for the opposition lawmakers' return to the Jatiya Sangsad that goes into winter session on January 11, although there is mounting pressure from within.

Their long-pending decision to resign from parliament is also being discussed in the rank and file of the opposition parties. But the Opposition Leader is learnt to be unwilling to end the nearly two years' boycott of parliamentary proceedings.

### Hemayet

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among the city dwellers, particularly residents on the Dhaka University campus.

Failure of police to arrest him has now raised questions among various quarters.

Meanwhile, Dhaka University authorities expelled Hemayet after an inquiry committee found him involved in the untoward incident.

He was also expelled in the past for his involvement in violence at Ziaur Rahman Hall. He is also involved in various criminal activities on the campus, sources said.

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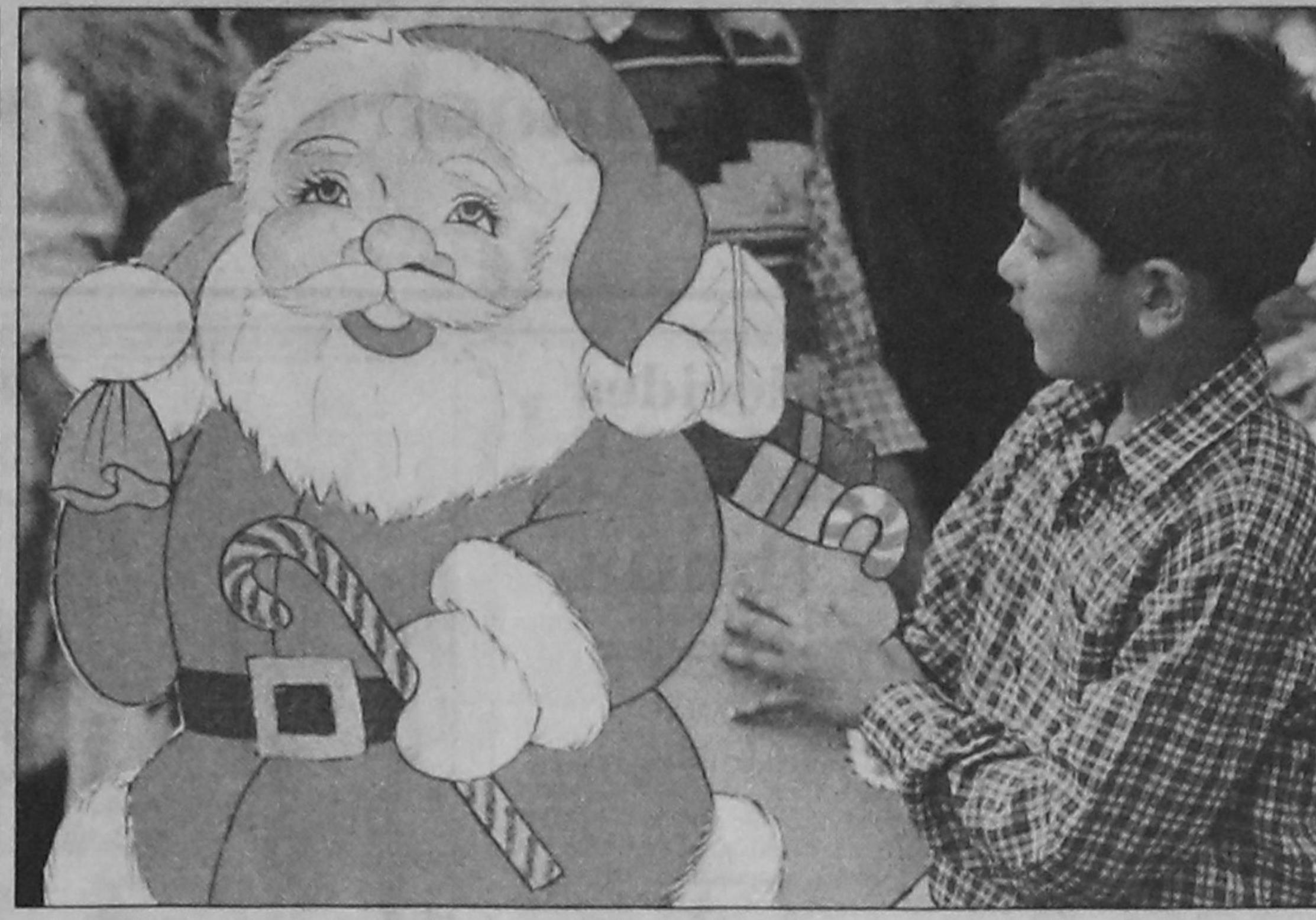
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A Calcutta schoolboy looks at a Santa cut-out he bought at a market yesterday. Though India's population counts only 2 per cent of Christians, most stores have adopted Christmas decorations and special sales.

—AFP photo

## Jail siege ends in Turkey : 26 dead

ANKARA, Dec 22: Turkish soldiers bombarded rioting prisoners with tear gas today and forced hundreds of inmates to surrender, ending a four-day jail siege that left at least 24 prisoners and two soldiers dead, reports AP.

The riots began earlier this week when 5,000 soldiers stormed 20 prisons across the nation to end a two-month hunger strike by leftist inmates protesting plans to move them from open wards to individual cells that prisoners say make them more vulnerable to abuses from authorities.

Soldiers cut holes into the roof of the last prison holding out today, and lobbed inside so many tear gas grenades that at least 18 ambulances had to evacuate soldiers and inmates suffering

from tear gas inhalation. About 430 inmates of the Istanbul prison surrendered.

Also today, the bodies of three inmates were discovered and three others were killed in clashes, raising the death toll from the prison siege to 24 prisoners and two soldiers, the government said.

Prisoners' support group Ozgur Tayad said the death toll was much higher but gave no figures.

Many inmates set themselves ablaze and burned to death rather than surrender. At least five of the bodies bore gunshot wounds, an autopsy report revealed.

Turkish prisons are overcrowded and prisoners often live in open wards that house up to 100 people. Left-wing, Kurdish

and Islamic groups control many of the wards, and use the cellblocks many bedecked with wall murals of political figures and flags to indoctrinate new followers.

Soldiers had been lobbing tear gas canisters into Istanbul's Unmraniye prison for four days but they apparently increased their attack today. Some inmates were reportedly wearing makeshift masks.

Hundreds of soldiers surrounded Unmraniye prison, and during the night, smoke billowed from it as inmates inside set fire to mattresses and blankets, resisting calls to surrender until the government assault today.

A day earlier, inmates promised to fight until "death or victory."

## Govt to launch AIDS project

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drug users are Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) positive. Among commercial sex workers, the rate is equally high.

Transmission of the disease from blood and blood components is the second most common way in which HIV spreads. In Bangladesh about 80 per cent of all blood donors in hospitals and private clinics are professional. Most of them are intravenous drug users.

Unfortunately, the government is struggling to implement the nearly three million dollar "safe blood transfusion programme" across 97 centres in the country. The National AIDS Committee, too, is a total disappointment, experts working within the committee said.

On evaluation of HIV/AIDS in Bangladesh, Kang said, "In the early stages of the project the World Bank assessed the

HIV/AIDS situation in the country. As of now our assessment says it is still in the early stages of HIV. It's not an epidemic yet. If the government moves quickly, as it is planning to do, there is every possibility that Bangladesh will be able to address the problems before it becomes serious."

"What we are aiming at is to stop spreading of the disease among the general population since we already know that HIV exists in the high-risk groups. What we worry about is the behaviour pattern of the high-risk groups. For instance, recent surveys showed that there has been a definite rise in the number of brothel going young men and the use of condoms is still very low," said an NGO official working with the HIV patients.

Since HIV is primarily associated with high-risk behaviour, bringing about changes in individual's conduct can go a long way in preventing the disease. All educational programmes must, therefore, stress on this aspect, experts talking to this correspondent said.

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The project was prepared in a very co-operative way where the UNAIDS assisted the World Bank by providing technical assistance and also helped the Bangladesh government.

Commercial sex workers, intravenous drug users and other high-risk groups were consulted before preparing the project.

Dr Uton Muchtar Rafiq, World Health Organisation's South East Asia's Regional Director in his message on AIDS Challenge said, "HIV which causes AIDS knows no bounds. No one is immune. All countries and communities are vulnerable. It has been demonstrated that high level of commitment and sustained efforts can prevent the spread of HIV and minimise its future impact."

## Sonia weathers storm over Bofors scandal

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Quattrochi, who was released on bail shortly after his arrest by Malaysian police on Wednesday, is charged in India with accepting money from the Swedish arms firm Bofors to clinch a howitzer deal 14 years ago.

The scandal ultimately led to the defeat of Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party in general elections in 1989.

From the Bofors documents released by the authorities, prima facie, there is evidence against the London-based Hinduja business family and some against Quattrochi," said Bidwal.

"Nothing in those papers suggest Sonia and her husband Rajiv got rich on Bofors kickbacks."

Biographer and political analyst Rita Pannikar said Sonia was being "targeted" because Prime

Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's government was miffed at opposition attempts last week to bring down three ministers implicated in the raising of a mosque by Hindu zealots in 1992.

The Congress embarrassed Vajpayee for betraying the secular credentials of the country. Now the BJP is desperate to come up with something to bring Sonia down by a notch or two," Pannikar said.

Sonia Gandhi responded quickly to the BJP attacks.

"Let the government continue with its investigations. The law will take its own course," she told reporters Thursday at her party headquarters.

The opposition leader rejected charges she, or any member of her family, was involved in the Bofors kickbacks scandal and

asked the BJP government to back the allegations with evidence.

"Let the government come out with proof of involvement of my family," she said.

Vajpayee's government, while speeding up its moves to have the high-flying Italian tycoon extradited to face trial in India, has denied suggestions the efforts were being fuelled by domestic politics.

Indian authorities allege Quattrochi was the conduit of Bofors bribes deposited into secret Swiss bank accounts held by Rajiv Gandhi's then Cabinet colleagues and close associates.

Quattrochi, following his arrest and release, asserted the efforts to extradite him to India were linked to his close association with the Gandhi family.

## Autorickshaw driver shot dead in Laxmipur

LAXMIPUR, Dec 22: An autorickshaw driver was shot dead by miscreants in Battal area on the Battal-Dulapara road early this morning, reports BSS.

Police said the driver, Harunur Rashid, 32, came under attack near the Battal autorickshaw stand at about 4 am when he along with a passenger was passing the area.

Police recovered the body and sent it to the morgue of Laxmipur Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

A case was registered with Sadar thana, but none was arrested in connection with the killing.

**Police yet to recover rifles in Satkhania**

From Staff Correspondent  
CHITTAGONG, Dec 22: Police are yet to recover the rifles looted from three constables by the terrorists at Satkhania on Wednesday, police sources said.

Police began a hunt for the terrorists to recover the rifles soon after the incident.

Police sources said none was arrested in this connection despite a drive for the third day today.

The armed terrorists opened fire on the patrol police at Aochia in Satkhania and looted three rifles from three policemen. The policemen received bullet wounds during the attack and were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

**ZIA customs**

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unloaders," said the senior ZIA official.

The surge also created unprecedented jams in and around the parking lot affecting the highway passing by the ZIA. "Nothing was moving for hours," said Nayem Ahmed who went to receive his friend.

Many passengers alleged that the "organised groups" at the airport took the opportunity of the Supreme Court, that is on January 8, it will come up in the list. On a query, Advocate Anis said the convicts who are in custody now would only be able to prefer application of appeal to the Appellate Division.

About the usual procedure, Anis said if the Appellate Division also upheld the judgement of the High Court, then the last resort for the convicts awarded death sentences would be to seek mercy from the President.

Confirming the death sentences against all the 15 convicts, junior judge Kairul Huq on Dec 14 said in his judgement "... there is no extenuating or mitigating circumstances in the case, the death sentence under section 302/304 passed by the Sessions Judge upon the accused is hereby affirmed."

Both the justices said the sentence of death, in respect of

## Bush names Ashcroft as attorney general

AUSTIN, Texas, Dec 22: President-elect George W. Bush today named outgoing Missouri Senator John Ashcroft as his choice for attorney general in his new administration, reports AFP.

"John Ashcroft will perform his duties guided by principle, not by politics," Bush told a press conference here.

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