

## JCD already into tender manipulation?

**BNP must be ruthless against these elements, if it wants to be credible**

THE incident on Wednesday at Shikha Bhaban and other places where JCD activists of the ruling BNP prevented genuine businessmen from buying bid documents is a frightening bit of history repeating itself. We have just thrown out the AL government for tender manipulation, among other matters. BNP itself was guilty of such activities last time around. So how can, having seen what people did to AL, BNP's student wing JCD be at into tender manipulation within weeks of returning to power? Although, the last election tells what people power can do, it seems history teaches little to politicians.

Breaking the law is despicable but when it's done by members of the ruling party, the matter is far more serious. It affects the way governance is perceived and sends the message that some, especially ruling party members, are considered above the law. This feeling is sufficient to trigger a slide in public popularity.

The other thing is the necessary official attitude and action regarding law and order. Considering that the Government's law and order committee headed by a senior cabinet member is sitting twice a week, one would have thought that this issue was being taken more seriously. But with unruly incidents growing, it may be asked, if such concerns apply when they refer to boys from the BNP.

If the rulers don't want the law to be broken by anyone or wish to punish the lawbreakers, they easily can. But they often choose not to. Law and order problems usually arise, when the rulers decide to have one set of laws for themselves, another for the opposition and perhaps a third for the rest. This has happened with frightening regularity for over 30 years and threatens to go on. It will until the governing constructs decide that there are other ways of managing political cadres without allowing them a free ticket to do anything.

The BNP should be more sensitive to these matters because they know the people are smarting from having lived under a regime where application of law was partisan. They should also know that public patience on such matters have worn very thin. If this situation continues, the people could very well lose faith in them.

If the BNP cares about a giving a good accounts of themselves, they must rein in their unruly supporters before too much damage is done. The people voted for law and order. It was promised by the BNP. Now it must be delivered.

It may soon become more and more difficult to convince people that those who can't control a few thousand activists can manage the lives of millions of people. BNP must be ruthless against law breaking JCD members. We know once that is done, these ugly incidents will disappear like dust in a refreshing rain. We wait for the rain.

## Treat arsenic patients immediately

**Government and donors must support treatment programmes**

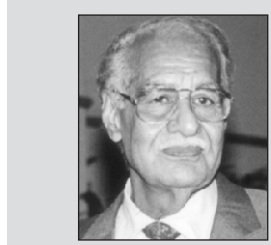
THE picture of a young man waiting to die as a result of the horrific effect of arsenic poisoning in a Dhaka hospital (Daily Star Oct 31) shows how bad the situation is. Although it has been almost eight years since the well kept secret of the government was pried open, things haven't improved. While there may be some movements in the water management sector very little is being done in the case of treatment of patients.

Arsenicosis is basically a case of prolonged poisoning. There is no treatment for poisoning but its impact can be reduced and controlled by intake of necessary vitamins, proper food and safe water. But the situation is difficult because in many cases the patients have lapsed into the secondary and tertiary stage where they suffer from gangrene, cancer, severe internal disorders, neuropathy etc. Since such ailments are directly connected to drinking arsenic laced water, special attention to their treatment is critical. These are not the usual victims of incurable diseases but victims of a bad policy. As feared, the problem is already disappearing from the sight of public concern.

The combined 'wisdom' of the Government and the donor brought about this crisis. It ranges from initiating irrigation fed agricultural policy to setting up of drinking water systems like tube well supplied drinking water which had high vulnerability and hasn't proved to be sustainable. It's therefore the responsibility of the very same construct to ensure treatment of the victims.

Nothing less than the absolutely necessary will do. One certainly shouldn't wait for court decisions to fulfill obligations long overdue.

# The tragedy of Afghanistan



**KULDIP NAYYAR**  
writes from New Delhi

THE Taliban have confined Afghanistan to a narrow corridor Masood Khalili to a wheelchair at his house in New Delhi. They eliminated his leader, Commander Ahmed Shah Masud, and nearly killed Khalili. But he, who carries on his body the scars of battles against the Soviets and the Taliban, remains undaunted. In the past years, he has seen his government of the Northern Alliance (also called the United Front) pushed to mere 10 per cent of Afghanistan's territory. But he has never faltered in the confidence that the government he represents will one day return to Kabul. He has felt relieved over the turn of events. There was a time when our Foreign Office was distancing itself from Khalili because it did not want to annoy the Taliban further. When Kabul fell, he was worried. The then Prime Minister, Iqbal Khan, assured him that President Rabbani of the Northern Alliance would continue to enjoy India's recognition. When he was Afghanistan envoy in Islamabad, Khalili took up the role of the ISI-Taliban alliance with the then Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. She expressed her helplessness. Still he warned her that the Taliban could one day destroy Pakistan. He feels vindicated now.

New Delhi had friendly relations

with Kabul till the Taliban came to the scene some seven years ago. Islamabad, through the ISI on the one hand, and the madrassas on the other, created a situation where the fundamentalists came to prevail and where New Delhi had no place. Liberal, happy-go-lucky Afghans looked odd in the ill-fitting clothes of fanaticism. But the gun and the glib talk of the mullah silenced them. Islamabad's interest in Afghanistan has been strategic, not religious. The idea is to have 'depth' by having access to the Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan. Islamabad began to

Paktoonistan alternative. Daoud had assured Bhutto that he would accept the 'verdict' on behalf of the Afghan government. On his return visit to Pakistan in March 1978, Daoud said at Lahore that the Pakistanis were his 'brothers.' Subsequently, the Afghan press, radio and TV stopped all propaganda against Paktoonistan. However, neither Daoud nor Bhutto lived to work their agreement through.

Things changed when pro-communist Hafizullah Amin came to power in April, one month after

effect peace and assumed the role of an armed evangelist to spread 'genuine Islam' all over the world.

The international community is at a loss to understand the phenomenon because all that the Taliban represent is religious frenzy. There is no system except the command of Mullah Mohammad Omar to whom the Taliban swear personal allegiance. The government at Kabul takes pride in being fundamentalist. The reason why the efforts to find an alternative are stalled is because autocracy, religious or otherwise,

or countries like India and Russia in the neighbourhood ever agree to the Taliban's inclusion in any government when they have sponsored terrorism in Kashmir on the one hand and Chechnya on the other? The Taliban have to go lock, stock and barrel.

Musharraf must face the fact that the Taliban signed its own death warrant when it said that it would not surrender Osama Bin Laden, wanted for the September 11 happenings. The Taliban cannot be part of the next government because its hands are as much

enough. But they gave vent to the feelings of Islamabad that it was no use employing military means for influencing future developments in Afghanistan. The reason why Pakistan had the assembly demand and return of King Zahir Shah was the recognition of his unbiased approach and his insistence of having an interim 120-member set-up drawn up from different ethnic groups. There is no go from Loya Jirga, a gathering of different tribal heads at one place - the Pushtoon, Tajiks, Uzbeks and others - to decide the complexion and the content of the future set-up. It goes without saying that it will be broad-based. Islamabad could have made the Loya Jirga possible on its own in the last seven years when it had the run of Afghanistan. But it came to believe that it could control the Taliban through the ISI. Above all, it wanted Afghanistan all to itself.

Probably, the best way may be to give representation to different ethnic groups and tribal leaders instead of picking people from military and political formations including the Northern Alliance. The tragedy of Afghanistan has been that some of the ethnic groups, which have captured Kabul, have seen to the exclusion of others. The arrangement did not work because those who were left out tried to get in through force or deceit. Outside powers invariably put their pressure on one side or the other. Afghanistan was seldom left alone. How can the same mistake be repeated?

Pakistan has to realise this more than any country. It still insists on 'saving its interests.' They cannot transcend the interests of Afghanistan. But what does one do to stop the killing of civilians in the meantime? Nobody is bothered about their interest to live.

Kuldip Nayyar is a leading Indian columnist.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

**Had Pakistan opposed the inclusion of the Northern Alliance in the future set-up at Kabul on ethnic considerations, it would have made some sense. But Islamabad still believes that it can bring back the Taliban through the back door. When Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf talks about a broad-based government, he has the representation of the Taliban in his mind.**

give shape to the plan when the republics seceded from the Soviet empire.

Pakistan has also wanted to bury once and for all the demand for Paktoonistan which Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (popularly known as the Frontier Gandhi in India) had raised. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then the Pakistan Prime Minister visited Kabul in the beginning of the seventies to meet Mohammed Daoud Khan, then Afghanistan's head, and decided to bury the issue of Pushtu-speaking state. While writing my book Report on Afghanistan 20 years ago, I came to know about a secret pact.

Under it, Pakistan agreed to hold a plebiscite in its Pushtu-speaking area. But it was to be rigged so as to return a 'no' verdict to the

Daoud's visit to Lahore. Amin was so anti-Pakistan that he claimed that the territory 'from the Amu to the Indus' belonged to Afghanistan. He was the one who told the then India's foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, "Let us have a secret pact: You take one part of Pakistan and we take the other," when the latter visited Afghanistan from September 18 to 20, 1978.

After the ousting of the Soviet troops in the late eighties, Islamabad worked towards having Afghanistan as its satellite and gave all help to the Taliban. The Pakistan army saw to it that the Northern Alliance, friendly to India, was pushed out to a small tract of land. Things would have shaped better but for the Taliban's own follies. They stymied every UN effort to

knows no broad-based set-up. The Taliban are primarily Pushtun and comprise 40 per cent of Afghans. The Northern Alliance has Tajiks, Uzbeks and the Hazaras but very few Pushtuns. Its pull among the Pushtuns weakened further when the Taliban killed Abdul Haq, the Pushtun leader, the other day.

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How can the Northern Alliance

stained with blood as those of Osama.

The West knows that there is no difference between the moderate and the hard Taliban. But its dilemma is how far it can push Pakistan? Without its ground help - Jacobabad in Baluchistan is the entry point to Afghanistan of troops belonging to the different countries of the "coalition" - the West cannot do much. Even otherwise, Pakistan's consent is necessary to sustain the support of the Muslim world. Still Islamabad is not taking chances. It had "The Assembly for Peace and National Unity" sponsor a shooraa at Peshawar a few days ago. The Pushtu-speaking tribal leaders, who attended it, were neither representative enough nor tall

## OPINION

# US-led terror war in Afghanistan

**UN's role most deplorable**

AMM SHAHABUDDIN

THE ruthless and merciless bombings and cruise missile attacks on an impoverished least developed country like Afghanistan by the only super power America and its closest ally, United Kingdom, has been continuing since 7 October, round the clock, in the name of a war against terrorism on behalf of the so-called 'international coalition'. But why this devastating war under the leadership of the only super power left in the world? Because they are searching for a world-renowned 'Culprit' Saudi-born-turned Afghan-hero since Afghanistan's war against Russian occupation forces a decade ago, Osama Bin Laden, identified by America, once Laden's mentor, as the 'mastermind' and 'prime-suspect' behind the terrorist attacks of September 11 on the 'Twin Tower' (World Trade Center) in New York and Pentagon in Washington.

Hence, like a desperate person, facing a desperate situation at home, President George W. Bush, is now desperately searching for a 'remedy' to heal the fatal 'disease', like Osama (also read Anthrax), to catch him 'dead or alive.' But the air strikes, now over two weeks, could only cause widespread destruction and devastation and killing of innocent Afghan's men, women and children, but they had failed to trace that mysterious 'evil men', as designated by Bush.

Malaysia's Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, had said that the current war against Afghanistan would be "useless" and "unproductive". The tragedy is whether America succeeds in capturing Osama, 'dead or alive', the Anglo-American forces had already 'killed' and gives an indecent burial to all norms of international laws and principles laid down in the UN charter to deal with such a situation, by openly conducting an aggression against a

sovereign state.

But who has authorised Bush to commit this act of gross and naked aggression against Afghanistan? Has the United Nations (UN) shown the way? Did Afghanistan commit an act of aggression on America or on any of its allies, like what Iraq did against Kuwait inviting its own disaster? Did Afghan air force jet flew all the way to hit and crush the 'heart of America' in New York and Washington? If not, why this reckless bombings and missile attacks on innocent Afghan people? They say that they are targeting Afghan army installations and defence equipments in order to punish them for not handing over Osama to America for trial. Under which law or UN resolution, America can venture this! When no concrete evidence against Laden could be made public?

### 'Right of self-defence': Against whom?

America claims that it is resorting to such activities against Afghanistan involving UN charter's provision of "Inherent right of self-defence." But application of 'right of self-defence' against whom? Such a gigantic air operation against Afghanistan cannot be mounted, exercising "right of self-offence" to catch the "prime-suspect" and 'mastermind' behind the terrorist attacks in America. (Did America ever think of bombing and missile attacks against Libya 'to catch' the two highness whom the Libyan government had refused to hand over to America?)

In this context, UN's much-expected role is conspicuous by its absence when it was most needed. Since the day of terrorist attacks in America, the UN seemed to have gone 'underground', hiding itself from onslaughts of America. The UN secretary-general stands before the world community as the symbol of the UN. In fact, the UN and its secretary-general are so

interlined and interrelated that they supplement each other. It was, therefore, not surprising that the two shared this year's Nobel Peace Prize. But SG Kofi Annan seemed to have missed another grand opportunity to show his responsibility in handling the situation arising out of the 11 September terror attack. The whole situation could have been brought to the UN forum for settlement, instead of leaving it in the hands of others who prefer to project their personal image more than going for solving the crisis.

### UN SG's responsibility

The UN charter 'empowers' under Article 99, the secretary general "to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security." On the other hand under Article 39, the Security Council 'shall determine the existence of any threat to the peace, breach of peace, act of aggression and shall make recommendations, or decide what measures shall be taken in accordance with Articles 41 and 42, to maintain or restore international peace and security.' The measures may include blockade, and other operations by air, sea or land forces of the UN Member States and any recommended operation would be conducted by the Security Council with the assistance of the Military Staff Committee. And the questions relating to the command of the armed forces contributed by the UN member states will be worked out subsequently.

Now the question is: How much time the Secretary General took 'to bring to the attention' of the Security Council the incident of terrorist attacks in America, from the date of the occurrence on 11 September, and how long the Security Council took to decide, under Article 39, about what action to be taken against 'culprit' state. It, however,

looks strange that for about one month from the date of incidence, i.e., 11 September, till the first week of October, nothing was heard from the Security Council, ostensibly, providing America to prepare and mount air strikes on Afghanistan on 7 October by involving the UN Charter provision to exercising the "inherent right of self-offence" against a member state, Afghanistan, for which there was complete silence on the part of UN.

It is true that Article 51 of the charter provides the exercise of "the inherent right" of individual or collective self-defence "If an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security." It was all right in the case of Kuwait where in 1990 "an armed attack" occurred by Iraq. But in this latest case of terrorist attacks in America, there had been no armed attack" by Afghanistan that America went all out for intensive air operation on behalf of the world community, taking the leadership in its own control. And within a day or two of the air operation on Afghanistan, the Security Council suddenly came out of its hibernation to shamelessly offer unanimous support to the US-led air strikes against Afghanistan. In fact, the Security Council repeated its earlier "History of Legalising US-led air and ground attacks against Iraq in 1990, a single operation in which an estimated 100,000 Iraqi men, women and children were killed. The role of the UN during the Gulf War was so pathetic that a Western commentator in a Canadian paper, after alia, said that the UN was acting like "The duties willing servant of George Bush (Sr)". The present role of the Security Council vis-a-vis the US-led air attacks on Afghanistan is also most deplorable. It is already showing its slips!

### UNGA and Terror War

The UN General Assembly, on the other hand, has definitely took a bold step, perhaps the US administration couldn't spread much 'pressure' and 'influence' on the 189 members of the world body. The Assembly in a brief three-day special session held in the last week of September voiced the universal demand that UN must be a "major player" in the global fight against terrorism. That was a direct slam on US-brokered "international coalition" to fight terrorism ignoring of by-passing the world body.

The General Assembly was more explicit, when its week-long debate on a draft resolution on war against terrorism at its regular session from 1 October, ended in a decision "to shelve" the resolution, as there was sharp division on the question of definition of terrorism, the basic thing to identify a terrorist before declaring "crusade" (quote from Bush) against terrorism. The debate was participated by some 156 speakers, the largest number of speakers even participated in a single issue in the Assembly. The assembly's 'negative' decision was undoubtedly in sharp contrast with the legally-binding Security Council resolution extending "unanimous support" to US-led, call it 'Afghan operation, or operation Osama,' launched by President Bush. (His 'illustrious' father George Bush Sr. raised 4-day 'Operation Desert Fox' to teach a hard lesson to that little Hitler of Iraq). According to Assembly members, it raised "doubts about the global coalition that the US is trying to organise. According to agency reports, the UNGA debate 'revealed' more "shades" of opinion than the 'Stark Choice' given by New York Governor Giuliani, saying: "There is no room for neutrality. You are either with civilisation or with terrorist" (Palestinian Ambassador in New Delhi, in an interview with an Indian TV Channel dubbed George Bush's earlier declaration: "Either

with us, or with terrorists" as sheer black mailing"). Indeed, New York Governor's offer of choice between 'civilisation or terrorism' is now being experienced by the poor Afghans because of daily bombings of hard doses of 'civilisation.' Some call it a naked display of 'state terrorism'. Thus the Security Council had treaded the path which America wanted it to follow, while the General Assembly took the path that its 189-member states wanted it was a bitter taste for America, particularly when many third-world countries said that it was "important to come up with a clear definition of terrorism."

So the big question still remains unanswered as to what is terrorism and who is a terrorist, because what is considered as 'terrorism' by some, is likened as 'freedom struggle' by others.

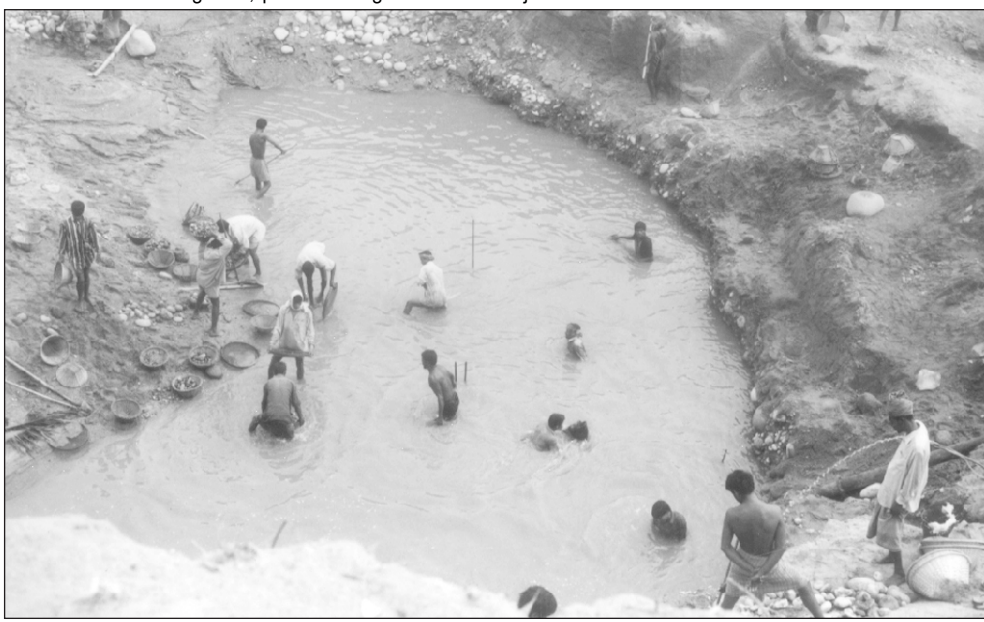
### A Tail-Piece

The question of questions is: who is responsible for creating a 'Frankentine' out of the peace-loving Saudi millionaire? Is it not a fact that it was no other country than America and its "invisible government," CIA? Can America or CIA deny it? It is now an open secret that Osama is the direct 'creation' of the CIA-led 'coalition' that grew out of Afghanistan's war against Russian occupation a decade ago. He was recruited, financed and trained by CIA, in cooperation with Pakistan's army officers. America spent billions of dollars to use the 'services' of a known 'extremist fundamentalist' and 'terrorist' Osama to lead the Russians ousted. So, if Osama is a 'terrorist' America is the 'creator' and 'protector' of that 'terrorists.' Hence, before Osama is captured 'dead or alive', the world community should give its verdict preferably through the world body, the UN, as to who is a 'terrorist' Osama or America, or both?

The writer is a retired UN Official

## PHOTORIAL

Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.



STAR PHOTO: AKIM MOHSIN

### Fishing for stones

Knee deep in brackish water, these desperately poor people in Bangladesh-India border area of Jafflong search for stones that are collected and sent to cities to be used in the construction sector. Paid a pittance for their work, these stones are used in buildings where they will never get to stay in. In stone-starved Bangladesh, the irony is that the finders never get to keep the stones.

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

### "An American opinion"

The statements by an American ("An American opinion", October 30) are not only irrelevant in the context of the bombings of Afghanistan, but also over-blown boasts.

People of the world know very well that the history of the USA is full of hypocrisy, intimidation and humiliation of other nations and corrupting the leaders of selected nations. How the American (Whites) killed the Red Indians to occupy their land and the extreme kind of humiliation to which the blacks are subjected over centuries are well documented facts. The USA utilised the Shah of Iran and President Marcos of Philippines for its own purpose. But when they were ousted from their respective countries, they were not even given shelter in the USA.

With a few exceptions (Taiwan, South Korea etc) American aid has failed to ensure sustained development of the poor countries. Officials of the American agencies, on the other hand, have successfully

corrupted the top level of our society. The consequence is predictable. At this very moment there are many USA-aided projects in which the local officials do not have any say. The Americans decide whether we are hungry or not.

**A Bangladeshi, one-mail**

### A Muslim opinion

This is in reference to "An American opinion" (October 30).

We never had and would never support any kind of terrorism committed by any group. We also condemn the September 11 tragedy. But the Americans should also start respecting others be it the Muslims or the Jews.

The 'American opinion' clearly reveals how arrogant and biased they are. Though they always preach peace, it is they who are ruining the peace around the world. Why do they follow this double standard? They have bombed Iraq, supports Israel who are killing the innocent Palestinians everyday and now in the name

of war against terrorism they are bombing and massacring the innocent Afghans. Still they want to be a hero and demand everyone's respect!

If we consider history, it would be clear to everyone that the real terrorists are Israel and America, not the Muslim world.

**Md. Abdullah Mustafa**  
An Muslim, one-mail

### I want my vote back

I voted for change and my vote brought the BNP back to power. Thousands of others like me voted for them with the same thought in mind - it's time for a change, hopefully for the better.

I did not vote for the BNP so that they could run amok and "capture" halls and bus terminals, and I especially did not vote for them so that they could abuse and torture the minority community. After all the pre-election preaching, they have proved themselves undeserving of my vote. Now, I want it refunded. Where do I apply?  
**Vox Populus, one-mail**

### BTV News

Soon after the assumption of power, the new Information Minister said that the state-run electronic media would be made free in order not to make it a party instrument.

This move received appreciation of all. It was not merely for the political gain that the government desired to reduce its control over national electronic media. Perhaps it was also a response to the need to increase the credibility of the state-run electronic media.

It also indicated the maturity of the new government to correctly identify the limitations of mere propaganda. No matter how much a government trumpets its imagined success to influence the opinion of the people, transparent media help identify the failures of the government and the subsequent opportunities to correct the mistakes. Expectation of the people from national electronic media is the responsible coverage of facts. It discards both the suppression and the exaggeration of facts.

The concept of autonomy of the

national electronic media gains importance because it can then play a correcting role both for the opposition and the government. Unfortunately the right to autonomy has been misused by different institutions in our society increasing the vulnerability of the state.

BTV news team is not immune to perform this responsibility. It is a great relief for the viewers that the BTV news does not invariably start with the item on the Prime Minister on every occasion. In the new arrangement the activities of the members of the cabinet are covered in a single slot, which reflects good taste. However the coverage of the item on the Information Minister separately conflicts with the declared spirit of curbing the role of the sycophants. Pampering or not it is a contradiction of what the respective Minister uttered.

BTV news should also take care to prevent everyday broadcast of the cabinet members' items turn into a cliché.

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