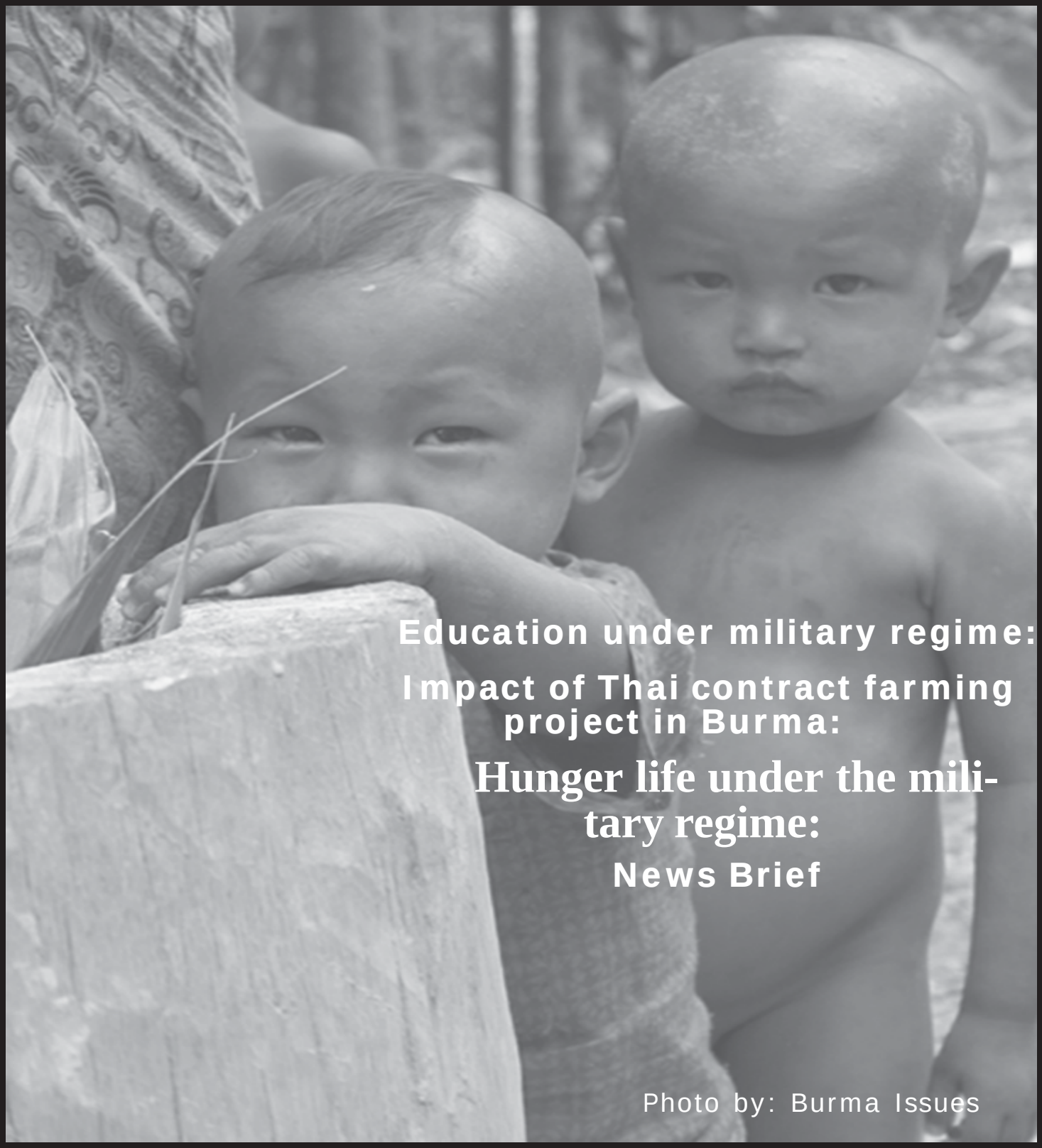


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A large, black and white photograph that serves as the background for the main text. It depicts two young children. The child in the foreground is leaning their head and arm on a thick, vertical wooden post. They have a somber expression. The child behind them is also looking towards the camera with a serious face. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

**Education under military regime:
Impact of Thai contract farming
project in Burma:
Hunger life under the mili-
tary regime:
News Brief**

Photo by: Burma Issues

Education under the military regime in Burma:

Are students in Burma really threatened to the military power?

By: Naw Cha Mu

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Education means not only teaching people to read and write. Education is a combination of schooling whether it takes private institution, home setting public institution, but it is a process of promoting individuals through gaining knowledge and experiences. So let your children experience all aspects of life and let them make mistakes without interference from them because when they get out in the world they need to know how it feels to "mess up" and know on their own how to correct it. Kids in school maybe able to learn the history of World War II, but do they know why this is relevant to them by learning this topic? Learning is not just enough. It needs to be able to put yourself what you know into practice. There's no end to learning, as well as knowing how to learn and where to turn to when there's something you want to know. Someone who has their head filled with facts but isn't capable of figuring out things on their own is lacking of their education.

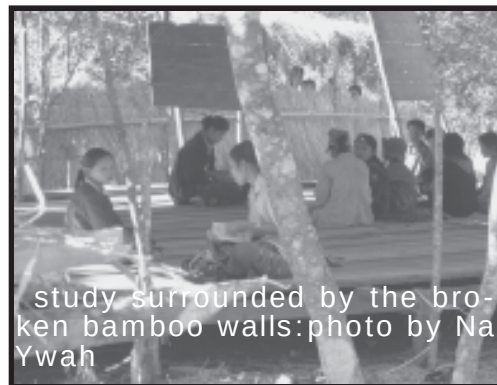
There are so many aspects of

education that it is easy to get confused with. If you ask a child at that age of 7, "what is education?" they would respond "education mean when we grow up we become a doctors or engineers" and some would say "we come to school to learn. We must not play." These are a very common responses from the children. If you ask university students some would answer "education means the opportunity to learn new things, the ability to inspire other with knowledge and find out the

answer to the questions."

Education is for everyone, including Kindergarten kids, school children, college students, adults, the unprivileged, the poor, the

unhealthy, and the disabled ones. However in Burma I would say that the current education in Burma is just for rich people and military generals' families. Most of the ordinary people can't afford to pay for school fee plus bribery and therefore they have to leave their education at middle school or high school level. "Bribe" is very famous in Burma to succeed everything. Students bribe their teachers in hope of passing the exam, or gain the first position in the class. In this case if the students who have nothing to bribe the teachers even they are at the first place, they have to step down to the second place. Sometimes teachers sell the questions to the students for their income as their salary is very low. Nowadays the education system in Burma is about to col-



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lapse and most of the graduates are not well qualify. As a result Burma will be the country with the lowest education system in South East Asia region. The high rates of education are essential for the country to be able to achieve high level of country development. The regime doesn't want the country to develop, but just want the military to hold power forever. They use learning centers as propaganda machines to promote their military power and systemically brainwash the students and the people that the regime is essential in the country to united country.

Despite the current military regime is not supporting educational program, they are closely monitor as well as control the activities of killing the future generation by destroying the education system as much as they can. the reason why the regime kills the future generation is because they are afraid of the educated people to overthrow them. The educated people are intellectual and they know what is wrong and what is right. The regime fears the educated people and they hate to see students in the school compound, universities compound, and college compound. So they intentionally minimize the level of educational system, and nearly all universities and colleges have been shuttered since students lead the 1988 democracy movement.

Additionally, the regime has systematically wiped out the education sector in ethnic area by limiting resources, reducing expenditure and strictly censoring the curriculum. The Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG) reported in rural Karen areas (one of the ethnic from Burma) Burmese soldiers have directly obstructed education by restricting the expansion of educational facilities, prohibiting instruction in Karen language, confiscating school materials provided independent of SPDC channels and destroying schools as part of the army's mass relocation campaigns. Moreover, the military has indirectly hindered access to education through constant demands for labour,

“...the youth generation has been denied their universal right to education, because they are viewed as a threat to the military's totalitarian rule.”

food, finances and other supplies and restrictions on travel and trade with all erode civilian live hoods and frustrate villagers' attempts to fund their children's education.

Likewise, in some rural areas Burmese soldiers destroy schools and school materials, sometimes they arrested and accused school teachers as being the rebel supporters even though these teachers have not been involved in the arm struggle. The children are studying surrounded by the broken bamboo walls and connecting two pieces of timber as a white board. With constant disruptions to the learning, the level of education children receive is very basic and low –standard. It is difficult for them to progress their knowledge, their future, their living standard, and their critical thinking skills to fight against injustice in their life.

It is obvious that the education system in Burma has been deteriorating and no longer reorganized by the international communities. It is essential that in order to ensure a brighter future for Burma. The future of a country is its youth and now education is a way of ensuring the youth's future. In Burma the youth generation has been denied their universal right to education, because they are viewed as a threat to the military's totalitarian rule. It is not surprise to see that “right to education” in Burma is being disturbed by the governing regime. The students have not right to speak or discuss matter that will affect their educational life. The students have no right to criticize, complain, question, and express their feeling; even sometimes they don't have the right to know what their right is?



kids reading environmental magazine:photo, Kwe Say

Impact of Thai contract farming project in Burma:

Foreign investment creates land confiscation to the people of Burma

By: Saw Kwe Say

"Contract Farming", a project on agricultural cooperation, was proposed at the Second Ayawaddy-Chao Phraya-Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy (ACMECS) Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand early November 2005, involving Cambodia, Laos, Burma, Thailand and Vietnam. ACMECS aims to reduce development gap between member countries and enhance sustainable development through programmers and projects which create jobs and income especially in border areas.

In December 2005, Burma and Thailand agreed to cooperate in farming under contract system initiating some Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Myanmar Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries and Thai Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and covers cultivation of many types of industrial crops, and energy crops such as; sugarcane, corns, soybeans, castor oil plant, and palm.

This project is attracted a lot of Thai private investors, and the government is urged to negotiate with Burma to support and facilitate more on its business. Thailand will invest in infrastructure development while Burma will provide land and labor for the project.

Thailand as the developing country has expanding the agriculture in a wide range to meet the command of the growing population. Through the expanding of the agriculture in a recent day Thailand has no more land to expand the agriculture work internally. Burma is rich of land with very high quality soil which draws high attention for Thailand to invest in Burma. Aside from land Burma has high number of un-employ citizen which ready to work for the low wage labor which meet the need of the Thai investors.

In 2006, Thai investors in coordination with government authorities have proposed that the Burmese government set aside more land in contract farming projects for bio-diesel crops in

Burma's border regions.

Meanwhile, the contract farming projects are going together with the establishment of special economic and industrial zones in major cities of Burma. The three zones are proposed to be set up in eastern Burma, such as Shan state, Thesauri Division, Karenni state and Karen state as part of the economic cooperation strategy program between Thailand and Burma.

"The human rights violation is getting worse which many of them come direct from the foreign investment."

Thai government expected that these contract farming will create more benefits and jobs opportunities to the people in Burma's country and expand solid agricultural cooperation between

both countries. It also expected to decrease illegal worker migration and solve the border dispute effectively, as well as build up the better relation between Thailand and its neighboring countries.

However, the reality in Burma, the conflict between the military regime and ethnic groups along the border is remaining. The human rights violation is getting worse which many of them come direct from the foreign investment. Forced labor and free labor often happen in the contract farming which land confiscation if the major problem facing by the communities living in the contract farming zones.

No matter what conflict lies in Burma the Thai investment (foreign investment) does not stop as long as the Burmese military has an open arm. Compensation to the lost of properties of the community is not the matter of the investors as no action will be taken to violate the rights of the people as full authority is

granted by the military regime. This is the key factor that encourages the foreign investors to widely flow into Burma. As the neighboring country and best partner of the regime, Thailand has received an extremely great opportunity to build up a stronger economy relation with Burma.

Shan State:

According to the 'Deserted field' report released in 2006 by Shan Relief and Development Committee (SRDC) stated that the Burma army has seized the villagers' land without compensation and forced them to work in Nai Township, southern Shan state due to the contract farming project. The report also reveal that the Burmese military operation to local villagers cause difficulty of their lives.

Before 1994, this area has rich natural resources, but now there are only 25 from 57 villages has left. The population left around 25,000 who are Burman, Shan, Pa-O, Lisu, Lahu, Kokang and Paluang. Approximately, 30 percent of population has migrated to Thailand because of the forced relocation program and they were denied to go back to work on their own land. It caused more than 10117 acre of fertile land became 'deserted field'.

The abandon fields have been confiscated by Burmese military and forced other villagers and companies rent them for the cultivation.

Tenessarim Division:

According to Burma Issues field research team, since 1997 several villages in Tenessarim Township, Mergui-Tavoy district (Tenessarim Division) were destroyed due to the SPDC offensive and many of the community land were destroyed. The majority of the villagers in this area earn their living by traditional cultivation, gardening and farming. Since the offensive in 1997 the villagers were force to move to the relocation site and they have no access to come back to their villages and look after their garden. Many years passed by and all their farm and garden tuned into forest.

Tenessarim division is very suitable for

growing palm oil, the SPDC has rapidly expanded the area for plantation and to implement this plan the government has asked the companies to come into the Tenessarim Township and operate their companies work. Even though the companies own the authority to work in the areas they have to implement their companies work based on the SPDC plan.

The impacts for villagers are that their lands were widely confiscated by the companies. The land owners have no document to prove that the land belong to them and their garden have turn to forest so they have no evidence to prove that the lands are really belong to them.

The land confiscation did not come directly from the SPDC troops but when the companies have to follow and implement the plan of the SPDC they have to forcefully take the land from the people who seem like the companies are confiscating the land of the people but behind them there is the SPDC.

For instance; the SPDC set up a place for the "Wate" Company at Bawkrokee (Tenessarim township) and they have to grow up to 3000 acres. The SPDC did not take the land by themselves but they have granted full authority to the companies to do it. Some places which the SPDC set up for the companies are the paddy field and garden which belong to the villagers, and some are the pastures for the animal. To be able to timely and quickly implement the plan of the SPDC, the companies try to expend the land for plantation by taking the land of the people and no one can raise the issues.

Villagers do not want these companies to operate in this area. They request for help to get back their land so they can work for their livelihood.



Karenni state:

In year 1969-70 in Karenni state at the Lawpitat water fall the government plan to build the electrical energy and for that they have build a dam called Moe Bwe at the Northern part of Shan state. When they build this dam there were 24 villages relocated and many thousand acres of land lost by this project. Some land owner got 200 kyats for 5 acres of their land as the compensation and many of them got nothing.

In 1991-92 there was a rail road construction between Shan and Kaenni state and this rail road construction taken away and destroyed many thousand of the villagers land. The villagers got no compensation for the lost land and they were even forced to work in the rail road construction with out paid.

In 2006-2007 again the government started another project for the castor plantation. The government forcefully took the land beside the road from Loi Kaw to Taung Kyi and Loi Kaw to Prusoe and the land belong to the villagers. Villagers got no compensation and other then that they have to find castor seeds by themselves and they were force to work on their land confiscated by the government. If they fail to go they will be fined and punished.

In 2007 the government planed to build the industrial zone in the south of Loikaw, Nwalabo village and again the government confiscated

land from the villagers. After the government forcefully confiscated the land of the villagers they called the villager and gave them a hundred thousand kyat for each acres for their land and gave them fifty thousand for each garden and the villagers have to accept it even the price is not fair. Then the government measure and cut the land by each hundred feet and sell them a hundred square feet for five hundred thousand to the businessmen. The entire factories settle in town have to move to the government set up the industrial zone with out fail. In early 2008 the government asks for more money for the land and finally it cost thirty five thousand kyat for each hundred square feet.

Presently, Burmese army continually seizes land of local villagers especially in the ethnic areas as result from the SPDC development policy and using the strategies to wipe out the ethnic people by forcing them to move to the relocation site that controlled by Burmese army. Also, widespread human rights abuses and forced labour are still systematically practice by the army and ethnic area is getting worse. The villagers stay under control and they do not have any opportunity to promote their living standard. The severe repression of Burmese military has caused the villagers to flee from their homes. Many of them are hiding in the jungle as internal displaced person, and many people were force to leave their homes looking for a safer place to live in Thailand. According to Thai Burma Border Consortium report on June, 2008 there are around 138, 970 population in refugee camp along Thai Burma border



Palm plantation from Tenessarim Division,
Photo by Burma Issues

Hunger life under the regime: The regime offensive create food crisis in Northern Karen State:

By Karen Human Right Group (KHRG)

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Thousand of civilians in Northern Karen State, eastern Burma fled into the jungle as the Burma Army fired guns at their villages, and hunted for the villagers in the jungle after they had fled, either capturing or killing them. Moreover, the Burma Army continued to expand its network of military camps establishing bases on farms and in villages of the local Karen people in the area. The Burma Army forced people from different areas to do different kinds of work for them and obstructed the villagers' movement and travel. Civilians facing difficulties ensuring their basic needs for their family and children are met, such as food security and education. The villagers themselves to make end meet, have to leave their home and find a better job in another place.

A food crisis has emerged from this instability and the villagers capable of evading capture or execution by the military are now threatened with malnutrition and potential starvation. Furthermore, by actively destroying villagers' food stores and farm fields, the Burma Army hopes to starve villagers into leaving their hiding sites and submitting to a life under the military regime control in the plains

The military regime assaults on Toungoo, Northern Karen state residents have seriously disrupted regular planting cycles, creating a food crisis in the region that further endangers the IDPs living there. Villagers are forced to remain in dangerous hiding places, often going without food for days at a time. It takes several days for villagers hiding in the area to travel and obtain food from the nearest accessible market. It is an exhausting journey and civilians risk being killed if met by the military regime troops.

The current rainy season makes life even more difficult for displaced villagers in hiding. Having few building materials, the villagers are only able to construct small huts, some of which don't have roofs. There are often also not enough blankets and mosquito nets to go around, frequently leaving many displaced vil-

lagers exposed to the elements. Many have run out of food and rely on Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) forces for stores, as was the case in February 2008 when KNLA Brigade #5 Brigadier Baw Gkyaw Heh distributed rice sacks to struggling villagers living in the three designated hiding sites.

The military regime continues to pressure villagers by building military camps on or near villagers' cultivation areas and forcing them to abandon their farms and fields. Civilians who decide to secretly return to their crops risk being discovered and killed. In the face of en-



croaching the military regime Army units and the threat of living under their control - meaning a life of forced labour and other forms of extortion - many villagers in Toungoo District choose instead to flee into the forest.

Many Toungoo IDPs have had to make difficult decisions about their futures. Some villagers who had attempted to make a living in the plain areas have been unable to find jobs and are constantly conscripted into forced labour by the military regime forces. As a consequence, many of these villagers surreptitiously return to the mountains to cultivate crops and risk being discovered by the military regime troops. If discovered, they will be conscripted into forced labour, shot on sight, or detained and executed.

News Briefs

Karen civilians force to leave refugee camp: New York based Human Rights Watch yesterday blasted Thailand for forcing 52 Karen refugees to return to a conflict zone in Burma on Asarnha Bucha Day.

On 18th of July, Paramilitary troops forced the Karen civilians, most of them women and children, to leave two refugee camps in Mae Hong Son province and cross back to Burma, where they had fled a military offensive early this year.

"Sending this people back to conflict zones dominated by the Burmese army is disgraceful. Forcing civilians back into an active war zone may be an easy answer for Thailand, but it's brutal a completely inhumane and unacceptable solution," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Right Watch.

Human Right Watch called on the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the European Union, the United States and other countries to pressure the government to immediately cease the refoulement of refugees and continue to provide sanctuary to people fleeing fighting or persecution in Burma.

Indonesia taking an active role in Burma: Indonesia's interest in playing a more active role in Burmese affairs was first signaled in early June when they country's foreign minister said in an interview with the Australian that his government wanted to act as a mediator to help resolve Burma's longstanding political deadlock.

The detailed plan, put together by a team of experts, involves Indonesia's experience of forming

a transitional government which gave both military officers and civilians a role as the country moved from dictatorship to democracy. Indonesia is recognized today as having one of the strongest democracies in Asia.

Highlighting Indonesia's potential importance as an agent for change in Burma, UN Secretary – General Ban Ki- Moon and his special envoy, Gambari, met with the ambassadors of India, China and Indonesia on June 26 to discuss the political and humanitarian situation in Burma.

Observers say that the newly democratized Indonesia should use its influence within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to help resolve regional problems.

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