



The FIC-NCR Newsletter

First Issue

POTLUCK NEWSLETTER  
SPORTSFEST BINGO  
**BAYANIHAN FUN**  
RAFFLE PARTIES GAMES  
GIFTS BASKET VOLLEY BALL

  
**FIC-NCR**  
FIC-NCR



## Message from the President

### Art Retos

I would like to welcome all of you to the maiden issue of the first-ever FIC-NCR newsletter. As your chosen leader, I am delighted to start this initiative, which is one of the legacies I want to leave behind if only because I believe it can help bring us closer together as a community. For this same reason, I hope that the next FIC-NCR president will continue this initiative and make it better.

When you elected me as FIC-NCR President, it took awhile before that title sink in. Leading our very diverse group was a thought that didn't occur to me nor did I plan for it. Then oath-taking day came and officially I have become your President. That's when I started to dig deep in my thoughts on how best I could lead us towards achieving one goal: building a closer and more united Filipino community in the national capital region of India. I went back in time when there's no formal Filipino association, no presidents nor officers, just good old times at which Filipinos from Gurgaon came to Delhi or vice versa for our weekly potluck lunches. The theme "*Balik Saya*" jelled in my mind. I wanted to keep bringing the fun back to our community, even turn it up a notch, through activities with which Filipinos from different parts of the NCR would come together – sharing food and company, jokes and entertainment -- all geared towards our common goal.

The first General Assembly I called got a fairly good amount of support from our community and, to my pleasant surprise, from our very own Honorable Ambassador Benito Valeriano. The event was held so that we could formally register with FIC-NCR as members, and ratify its newly formulated bylaws. I invited our Ambassador and some of his staff to attend in order for those who did not know them to finally meet them. More importantly, I want our community and our Embassy to forge a closer relationship and that is why I requested the Embassy staff to also register as FIC-NCR members. The event also gave our community a chance to ask questions and raise our concerns to our Ambassador, who was very supportive and kind enough to respond to all of them.

The first salvo of our *Balik Saya* initiative was the Summer Bingo Extravaganza. To ride on the very high momentum set in our General Assembly meeting, we worked out a plan so that we could gather again to have fun and at the same time raise funds for our community and our projects. Though Bingo is already very popular among us, we procured high-end products as prizes to entice more members to join in. In terms of attendance and funds netted, the event was a huge success. For me, however, the real measure of success was seeing our community enjoy the game, feast on a potluck lunch, and generally have a wonderful time together.

For now, let me end my message with an expressed hope that the fun never stops, our community gets closer and more united, and our *Balik Saya* activities continue in the years ahead. With your support, I have no doubt that we will achieve our goal.

### Editor's Note

After toying with the idea for months, we are happy to launch the first issue of the FIC-NCR newsletter! The newsletter is designed to keep us informed of FIC-NCR activities and recent developments within our community. It is also intended to provide a medium for us to exchange news, updates, thoughts, and/or insights, which we hope our community will find useful, relevant, or just plain fun. Needless to say, we welcome your contribution (in English or Tagalog) for our next issue or your feedback to make it better. Happy reading!

# *The Filipinos in India Community (FIC): A Brief History\**

The history of FIC dates back to June 2006 in New Delhi when, during the 108th Philippine Independence anniversary celebration hosted by then Philippine Ambassador to India Laura Quiambao-del Rosario, some Filipino attendees expressed interest in forming a community group. Subsequently, Gary Kho, a Filipino expatriate formerly with IBM India, set up the online (Yahoo) discussion group Filipinos in India (FII). With only five New Delhi-based members at the outset, FII had since grown quickly as it enabled Filipinos not only in the national capital region (NCR), but also in Mumbai, Bangalore, Chennai, Kolkata, and other parts of the country to connect with one another, discuss issues of common interest, and build a support network to help members adjust to living in India.

From 2006 to 2008, Filipino residents in these cities, through FII, held various social activities, such as weekend potluck lunches or dinners, welcome and despedida parties, and Diwali and Christmas get-togethers. In New Delhi, FII also organized friendly basketball games with other expatriate communities (Bhutan and China) as well as local communities (Nagaland), held bowling tournaments, raised funds and made charity donations to orphanages, participated in melas where international cuisines and other goods were sold, and attended the screenings of Filipino films featured in international film festivals, in addition to participating in the annual Independence Day celebrations and other festivities held at the Philippine Embassy.



2008-2010 FIC officers (from L to R): Fatima Sharma (Treasurer), Cecille Manguan (Secretary), Dante Payawal (President), Ambassador Francisco Benedicto, Vicky Singh (Auditor), Noel Arellano (PRO), Doroteo Jose (Vice President), Sharmaine Buhay (Muse) Ben Baquilod (Sgt at Arms), Augusto Cabrera (Sgt. At Arms).



2011-2012 FIC officers and members (from L to R): Noel Arellano (President), Art Retos (member), Jearum Castro (member), Arthur Tongol (Vice President) Virgie Saxena (Secretary), Fatima Sharma (Treasurer), Vicky Singh (member), Lorna Kumar (Gurgaon Coordinator). Not in the picture: Dennis Marvin (Delhi Coordinator) and Gary Salcedo (NOIDA coordinator)

On September 4, 2008, the Philippine Embassy hosted a gathering at the India Habitat Centre to welcome the new Philippine Ambassador to India and Nepal, Ambassador Francisco L. Benedicto, who served in this capacity until 2010. During this event, Ambassador Benedicto urged the Filipino community to organize itself into a more formal association of Filipinos in India. In response, FII called upon its members to elect a set of officers who would be tasked with formulating the bylaws that would govern the functions of the proposed Filipino association. The election results were announced online on October 16, 2008. Two days later, Ambassador Benedicto inducted the elected officers, led by Dante Payawal as the first President, in a get-together party held in Gurgaon, Haryana. Recognized by the Philippine embassy as the official organization

representing Filipino residents in India, the group has henceforth been called the Filipinos in India Community (FIC). Under Dante's leadership along with eight other officers, FIC activities were carried out in earnest.

When Dante left India in July 2009 to return to his company's headquarters in the Philippines, Noel Arellano took over as FIC's interim President. As one of the five original members of the Yahoo group, he had been actively involved and had kept abreast with FIC activities to provide leadership during this transition period. By October 2010 when almost all the FIC officers had left India and/or had moved to other cities outside New Delhi, he proposed that a new set of officers be elected.



# *The Filipinos in India Community (FIC): A Brief History\**



2012-2013 FIC-NCR basketball players

Apart from continuing with most of the activities spearheaded by Dante even before FIC was formed, FIC also organized the first communitywide sports festival. It was during the registration for this sports fest that most members elected the new officers through ballot voting. Other votes were cast through emails sent to the Yahoo group. The results were announced at the festival's closing ceremony. Leonardo Trinchera was elected the new FIC President, but only held office for a month as his job required him to be transferred out of India. The Vice President-elect, Felix Dacasin, Jr., then took over and, along with other FIC officers, carried on with FIC's social and sports activities, adding the Easter celebration at the Philippine Embassy grounds to the mix. With the completion of their term of office, members cast their votes for the third set of officers at the Diwali party in October 2011, electing Noel back as FIC President.

With Noel at the helm, FIC continued to plan, organize, and host activities that provided plenty of opportunities for members to connect and socialize. More notably, one of the main orders of business under his leadership was to formulate the bylaws that would spell out the rules governing FIC's functions; the roles, responsibilities, and tenure of its officers; and other basic matters relating to how FIC should operate. These bylaws apply only to FIC-NCR, however, as Filipino communities in other cities/states either have formed their own FIC (e.g., FIC-Chennai) or have been running activities separate from FIC-NCR (e.g., informal FICs in Bangalore and Mumbai). Nonetheless, because it is based in New Delhi, FIC-NCR remains their main point of contact with the Philippine embassy, with which it has maintained good relations since its inception. After several deliberations and revisions, the FIC-NCR bylaws were voted upon and adopted on November 20, 2012.

At its Christmas party a month later, FIC-NCR elected its current set of officers under whose administration the provisions of the new bylaws are now being implemented. The objective of the bylaws states: To facilitate the delivery of adequate social and economic services to Filipinos in India (NCR) with the end in view of improving their quality of life within the country. Towards this objective, President Art Retos and the current officers have since been finding ways to keep the momentum up and further serve the Filipino community. On April 28 this year, the fundraising activity Summer Bingo Extravaganza was held, earning FIC-NCR its biggest amount raised at a single event to date. To reach out to more members and engage them more actively in its activities, FIC-NCR is launching its first newsletter and is planning more events in the months ahead. It also continues to participate in activities sponsored by the Philippine Embassy and works closely with Ambassador Benito B. Valeriano, the current Ambassador to India and Nepal, in the service of the Filipino community.

Today, FIC-NCR has approximately 70 registered members and counting. The five founding members, subsequent leaders, and the membership at large can stand proud for the seven years (and running) of FIC-NCR functions that have brought together most of the Filipinos in New Delhi and surrounding areas, and have fostered strong friendships, a sense of community, and bayanihan among them.



2012-2014 FIC-NCR Officers: (from L to R) Lorelie Humpage (Delhi coordinator), Lorna Kumar (Gurgaon coordinator), Pacita De Vera (Secretary), Gary Salcedo (Auditor), Arthur Tongol (Vice-President), Fatima Sharma (Treasurer), Art Retos (President)

\* with inputs from Dante Payawal

\*\*2010-2011 FIC officers: Felix Dacasin, Jr. (President), Anjo Lorenzana (Secretary), Fatima Sharma (Treasurer), Mike Ong (PRO), Arthur Tongol (Delhi Coordinator), Noel Arellano (NOIDA Coordinator)





# Summer BINGO *extravaganza!*



Steve Monnard receives the grand prize Sony VAIO laptop from caller Lorelie Humpage. Also in the picture are Sheryl Westhaeuser (extreme left) and FIC-NCR President Art Retos (behind Lorelie).

## Summer Bingo beats the heat

On April 28, the FIC-NCR and guests got together to play bingo and win prizes, with about a hundred people out to play. Ambassador Benito B. Valeriano and his wife, Mrs. Jaclyn Valeriano, graced the event dubbed Summer Bingo Extravaganza. The day's program opened with a welcome from FIC-NCR President Art Retos.

The bingo game was preceded by a sumptuous potluck lunch of mainly Filipino cuisine, after which players readied and scoured over their bingo cards. Lorelie Humpage served as the main caller for the game, assisted by Sheryl Westhaeuser. Eight major prizes were up for grabs, including the grand prize Sony VAIO laptop and other Sony products -- a smartphone, a cybershot camera, two MP3 players, PC speakers, and a headset. Steve Monnard, a guest of the Filipino community, bagged the grand prize. The 2nd to the 8th prize went to Marivic Fradin, Rose Guevarra, Beth Mehta, Christopher Samong, Nancy Barrett, Lilia Navida, and Carmi Olivar, respectively. The raffle prizes of a Sony Walkman MP3 player, dinner for two at the Hilton Hotel, and a VAIO laptop bag were won by Missy Eggy, Jinky Tongol, and Nunpuii Vanchhawng.

Judging by the attendance and the socializing before and after the games, the event was a big hit! The day ended with about Rs. 60,000 raised. The proceeds will go towards funding the community's future projects.

While the FIC-NCR donated the first three prizes for the event, we would like to send out our huge thanks to several members who contributed the rest of the prizes. They include Fatima Sharma, Lorelie Humpage, Lorna Kumar, Paz Marquez, Gary Salcedo on behalf of the Pinoy Photography Group in India (PHOGI), and FIC-NCR President Art. Special thanks are also due Matt and Sheryl Westhaeuser who provided the venue for the activity at their farmhouse in Gurgaon, served delicious treats and drinks, and opened their swimming pool for our use. To all those who volunteered their time and effort to organize the event and brought food for the potluck lunch, and to everyone who attended the event, many thanks. It had been a great day of fun.





## Filipino community in New Delhi celebrates Philippine Independence Day

The FIC-NCR joined in the two-part celebration of the 115th anniversary of Philippine Independence hosted by the Philippine Embassy in New Delhi. The first was held on April 9, which also commemorated the Araw ng Kagitangan (Day of Valor), a tribute to the heroism of Filipino and American soldiers who fought the Japanese occupation of the Philippines during World War II. The day's celebration was led by Ambassador Benito B. Valeriano and graced by dignitaries from the Indian government and from the diplomatic and business communities in the capital. The evening's guest of honor was Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar, a senior leader of the Indian National Congress and Member of Parliament from Assam state, and also Union Minister of State for the Development of the North Eastern Region and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs. During the event, most Filipino guests including FIC-NCR members donned traditional Filipino wears -- the men in their formal Barong Tagalog shirts and the women in their Maria Clara, kimona and patadyong, or Filipiniana gowns. Over cocktails and a sumptuous dinner, the guests were treated with song performances by FIC-NCR members Lorelie Humpage and Sheryl Westhaeuser.

The second part of the celebration was held in the morning of June 12 at the Philippine Embassy compound.



Tree-planting ceremony with Hon. Ambassador Benito Valeriano and wife Mrs. Jaclyn Valeriano



Members of the Filipino community inside the Residence.



members of the Filipino community sang the Philippine national anthem and recited the Patriotic Oath. Independence Day messages from the Philippine President Benigno Aquino, Jr. and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Albert del Rosario were read by Embassy officials Minister Agnes M. Cervantes and Consul General Robert O. Ferrer, Jr., respectively. The group then proceeded to the Embassy Residence garden where Ambassador Valeriano gave a welcome speech and led a tree-planting ceremony. The Ambassador's wife, Mrs. Jaclyn Valeriano, Embassy officials Minister Cervantes and Commercial Attache Vyke Roaring, along with FIC-NCR President Art Retos and members Lorelie Humpage and Virgie Saxena took turns in planting five saplings of kalamansi, a fruit tree native to the Philippines. The ceremony was followed by a Catholic mass officiated by Father John Paul. The morning event culminated with a hearty Filipino breakfast of pansit, pandesal, puto, and other native delicacies at the Ambassador's Residence.



Members of the Filipino community at the Embassy grounds during the tree-planting ceremony



Members of the Filipino community with a guest foreign dignitary during the April 9 celebration



Flag-raising ceremony

# Jass News

## Jasmine Saxena

### FIC member goes to LA for an experience of a lifetime

Our very own, Jasmine Saxena, was one of the two winners of the Talenthouse India's Love to Sing Contest held in March to April this year. Sponsored by BIG CBS, an entertainment network, in association with Talenthouse India, the contest was open to singers and musicians only. To be eligible, contestants were required to submit a solo performance of a song of their choice in MP3 or video format. From among the qualified submissions, Jasmine's entry, along with that of Nisha Schette, were declared the best by BIG CBS-selected panel of judges. As the winners, Jasmine and Nisha were flown to Los Angeles to watch the finale of American Idol, one of the world's most popular music reality shows, on May 16 and 17 at the Nokia Theater in Los Angeles, California.

Jasmine started singing when she was three years old and started writing songs at the age of 12 around the time she learned how to play the piano and guitar a little later. She wrote her winning entry titled "In Love With A Dream" last year. As she described it, it is "about falling in love with someone you haven't met. You keep seeing him in your dreams and you know that you're meant to cross paths someday."

For one who is not formally trained as a singer and songwriter but whose strong passion and ear for music are evident in her songs, watching American idol live was, to quote Jasmine, "... like a dream come true. I still can't believe I was lucky enough to be a part of the American Idol experience." The trip also gave her the chance to go to Hollywood, Universal Studios, and the beaches, and to experience the nightlife in the city. "It was all in all an overwhelming, amazing experience, something I will remember for the rest of my life." To this, she added, "I want to thank my Mom for being there for me every step of the way. She's always supported me in everything I've done, stood by my side, and helped me out the best way she can. I wouldn't have been where I am without her." Jasmine's Mom is Virgie Saxena, another longtime FIC-NCR member.



Jass Saxena (right) and Nisha Schette, winners of Talenthouse India's Love to Sing Contest





Members of the Big Band Theory (top picture): Standing (from L to R) - Leo Nudalo (keyboardist/ second male vocalist), Kristine Caneda (female vocalist), Romeo Rey Rosario (bassist), Carmi Olivar (female vocalist), and JC Gomez (drummer). Seated (from L to R): Joey Narciso (Lead Guitarist) and Junnix Daclison Jr. (first male vocalist/ second guitarist).

## THOUGHTS . . .

I started singing at the age of three. At least that was what my mama told me. Young as I was, I would already sing that classic song “Paper Roses” originally sung by Anita Bryant, holding an imaginary microphone and crooning words I could barely fathom. I guess many Filipino kids are like that. I couldn’t be any different .

When you are raised in a Filipino family, music is as ubiquitous to you as the air you breathe. The babies are bathed with crystal lullabies as they fall asleep. The children hear songs on the neighbor’s loud radio while playing in sunny afternoons. The teenagers go all Ludacris, following their favorite alternative and rock bands on MTV. And the elders settle calmly on a rocking chair at the porch, musing on how their life has gone by as they listen to Karen Carpenter’s or Elvis Presley’s soothing classic love songs.

We, the Big Band Theory, are seven of the many kids who grew up amidst music and have become seven of the many musicians who choose to perform across Asia and all over the world. Filipino musicians often get asked, “Why not play in the Philippines? Or, in our particular case, “...errrr, bakit dito sa India, pare?” (“Why here in India, brother?”) I know. I know. Even I asked the same

question when I first heard about this possibility. Why not in China? Or in Japan? Or in the Middle East where economies and climates are (arguably) better, and where more Filipinos go to live and work? The truth is, it’s a “dog-eat-dog” world for musicians back home. Not only for musicians, in fact, and everybody knows that. So any opportunity that knocks is golden. Our first opportunity came knocking, and we more than gladly opened the door! Everything felt weird in the beginning -- from an agent we have not seen until now, to a Skype audition that almost didn’t happen due to a weak Wifi signal. And when we landed in Delhi and met all the people



Original members: (from L to R) Junnix Daclison Jr. (vocalist/2nd guitarist), Carmi Olivar (vocalist), Chrysler Badiang (bassist), Leo Nudalo (vocalist/keyboardist), Franco Yu (drummer), Kristine Caneda (vocalist), Joey Narciso (1st guitarist)



Filipino community enjoying the BBT performance at @LIVE Bar

we were to work with, they stared at us as if they were seeing ghosts in broad daylight. Their faces were blank, not a smile on their lips, and their eyebrows were raised and almost meeting in the middle of their foreheads. My thoughts? “We are so dead. Do these people even like music?” But when we kicked it off on our first night, the crowd was pretty cool although we had to adjust our repertoire along the way because the crowd generally liked classic rock, alternative, and jazz music. Add to that all the moves we had to do from one venue to another.

All in all, performing for a mainly Indian audience has been a special experience. We’ve even made friends with a few of them, like Deepak Sharma, Onkar Singh, and Ronicka Kandhari. We’ve also hit it off with fellow musicians and neighbors Zorem (Toya) Maiwa and Nunpuui (Mimi) Vanchhawng of the TOYA Band. We will never forget the gang from the US Marines, then led by a humble guy named Raul who played amazing saxophone with us, lightening up our jazz nights. They would always come to listen to our music and, when they’d had more than one beer, they’d party with us all night. And then there are our Taiwanese guests who would come for their favorite Adelle and Rihanna songs. We even get to sing some old Chinese songs for them, reminding us (Leo, Carmi, Joey, and myself) of our earlier stint in China. We also have our loyal Japanese friends, whose number seems to multiply. With her fluency in the Japanese language, Carmi (female vocalist) sure keeps them coming back. We don’t have regular Korean guests though. For some reason, they don’t stay long in India. Regardless, who wouldn’t go berserk over the “Gangnam Style” dance craze? Without fail, the audience’s eyes would glow whenever they hear a skinny brown guy in specs (Leo, keyboard/second vocalist) sing a Korean song perfectly!

And then, of course, our Filipino friends come in. Yes, you read it right. Just as there are Indians in the Philippines, so are there Filipinos in India. There are only a few of us in Delhi though. It sounds sad, but the good thing about it is that it’s a lot easier to get everybody together and keep it tight. Junnix (male vocals, second guitar) is always the first one to ask about the Filipino community’s next basketball game schedule. So keen is he about these games that he won MVP in the FIC-NCR’s 2012 Winter Games League. Nonetheless, he is no match to kuya Arman’s (Marquez) basketball moves and tricks. Last year’s Diwali party at the Sony boys’ pad made memories as it was turned into a rock concert by FIC-NCR President Art (Retos). Often playing second base to Buboy (Rosario), Art never really believes that Buboy is a good basist, or so he says. Whenever Buboy plays tricks on his base, Art would quip, “Wala yan, pautot lang yan...” (“That’s nothing, it’s all gas. He’s just faking it...”), and would then burst into laughter. For many of us, it’s these jamming sessions that make our hard work here feels like a piece of cake. We would sing during, in between, or after FIC-NCR’s activities, or ate Sheryl (Westhaeuser), ate Lorie (Humpage) or kuya/chef Bhong (Santoyo) would belt it out on stage with us at the bar.

Our get-togethers are full of fun and food! Kuya Matt and ate Sheryl’s (Westhaeuser) swimming pool has always been open for everybody, along with their perfectly baked pandesal and cakes. Who would ever want to miss the sumptuous lunches prepared by ate Dolly (Manalo) and tita Alma (Ferrer)? Or lola Tiya’s (Toledo) humba and ate Mary’s (Molander) mouth-watering leche flan? After long months of us trying to drag JC (drummer) out of his room, I’m quite sure only these delectables could make him wake up early and leave his computer. We even



Diwali party at the Sony boys’ pad





Diwali party at the Sony boys' pad with a mini concert by the BBT. From L to R, Leo, Romeo and Art



Diwali party at the Sony boys' pad

got the chance to invade Rose's (Fujita) new kitchen and experimented with a lot of new recipes, while laughing our exhaustion out with ate Rose (Agupitan), ate Liezl (Maquilan), and ate Khix (Fernandez). Ate Doris (Cuizon), on the other hand, never fails to tell us about her awesome travels and give us advice on life in general. The chance to play with the kids during these gatherings makes us feel young again and somehow fills our longing for our family. There is Mia (Molander), Shaina and Airen (Westhaeuser), and Miyuna, Yujin and Yusei (Fujita). Rose's (Fujita's) kind gesture of letting us take care of Bella, her cute doggie, for almost two months eased so many stresses and left so many marks (I mean, literally... like all over the house). The singing, drinking, swimming and games, the nonsense chats and, most of all, the warm hugs and the "I got your back" conversations – these are, among others, the things that complete the story of our book's India chapter. Sad as it is, we are now reaching its final pages. Just like every musician's contract, it has an ending. This shouldn't be so hard for us actually. Yes, we face this all the time. There is only one slight problem though -- how much we are going to miss everybody. As for the question, "Why India?" Well, now we all know why.

Pardon me. I think a lot.

by Kristine Caneda

Female Vocalist

Big Band Theory



A number of our members have recently left or will be leaving India soon. We bid them a fond farewell and wish them all the very best. They are:

Yvonne and Ricky Biyo, and sons Paulo and Franco. Yvonne joined the Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) and was posted in its field office in New Delhi in June 2012 as its Finance Coordinator. The Biyos were in India for a year and returned to the Philippines last month.



Vyke Roaring. Vyke was the Commercial Attache and Director at the Philippine Trade and Investment Center (PTIC), which represents the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) at the Philippine Embassy in New Delhi. He joined DTI in 2007 and was posted in New Delhi in 2009. Having completed his India assignment, he has recently assumed his new

post at the Philippine Embassy in Paris as its Commercial Attache and Director at the PTIC.



Graeme and Evita McGuire. Graeme served as First Secretary, Management and Consul, at the New Zealand High Commission in New Delhi. He and Evita arrived in India in June 2010. Last February, they

returned to Wellington, New Zealand, for retirement.

Roy and Lilia Navida. Roy and Lilia arrived in India in August 2010. Roy is with the US Department of State and had taken up a post at the US Embassy in New Delhi. After three years in India, Roy and Lilia will soon be moving to Guangzhou, China, for Roy's next assignment with the US State Department.



Michael and Flor Schauss. Michael and Flor came to India in August 2010 when Michael joined Pullman Gurgaon Central Park Hotel as Executive Chef. Michael has recently



ly been appointed as Director of Kitchens at the Goodwood Park Hotel in Singapore. He and Flor left India in April 2013.



The Big Band Theory whose individual members had played in Asia (Korea, China, Japan), Europe, and the US before teaming up as a

band. They first played together for ten months in Davao City before coming to New Delhi two years ago. They have since been performing at @LIVE in Connaught Place. On August 2, they will head back to the Philippines where they will tread separate paths.

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