

Lecture on Disaster Risk Management Fund: Progress

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Disaster Risk Management Fund: Progress

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It is an oft-repeated statement that disaster management is not disaster response alone. No doubt, the response phase is the most visible and striking of all. From governance point of view, however, it is necessary to give attention to other aspects as well. In order to highlight the importance of all the components of the disaster management cycle, the usage of 'disaster risk management' has gained prominence. It denotes a gamut of activities including disaster risk assessment, mitigation, prevention, training, capacity building, preparedness, post-disaster reconstruction and community participation, apart from efficient and timely disaster response. It is therefore not surprising that the Fifteenth Finance Commission consciously recommended creation of funds called National Disaster Risk Management Fund and State Disaster Risk Management Funds. Not only was the concept introduced by the XV FC in their recommendation of November 2019 for 2020-21 but was also reiterated in the main report of October, 2020 for the period 2021-26. In fact, the chapter 8 of the main report is titled, 'Disaster risk management'. This indicates the high importance of the holistic paradigm that comprehensively views all the necessary components. State-wise allocation¹ of State Disaster Response Fund, including State share and central share, for the period 2021-26 is provided below at Annexure A. State-wise, component-wise allocations may be seen at Annexure 8.4 and 8.5 of the Report of the XV FC. It may be noted that the XV FC recommendations, which have been accepted by Government of India, have created funding windows at the national level and State level, to deal with Preparedness and capacity building (10%), mitigation (20%), recovery and reconstruction (30%) and response and relief (40%). These four windows constitute the National disaster risk management fund and the State disaster risk management funds. In monetary terms, the SDRMF for the period 2021-26 is to the tune of ₹1,60,153 Crore, of which the central share is ₹1,22,601 Cr. Out of the SDRMF, ₹1,28,122 Cr is for SDRF and ₹32,031 Cr is for mitigation. At the national level, NDRMF is to the tune of ₹68,463 Cr, of which ₹54,770 Cr is for NDRF, while ₹13,693 Cr has been earmarked for mitigation. As an

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example, we may see that based on the Disaster Risk Index tool used by the XV FC, the State of Andhra Pradesh got an allocation of ₹6,183 Cr towards the Union share and ₹2,056 Cr towards the State share of SDRMF for the period 2021-26. Of the total of ₹8,239 Cr, 20% i.e. ₹1,648 Cr is meant for SDMF while 80% i.e. ₹6,591 Cr is meant for SDRF. The year-wise break up for 2021 to 2026 is given as indicated at Annexure A. Out of the total commitment of NDMF for all these six years in India, ₹2,500 Cr is further earmarked for reducing urban flood risk in 7 most populous cities, ₹1,500 Cr is for preventing erosion, ₹1,200 Cr is by way of catalytic assistance to 12 most drought prone States and ₹750 Cr is for mitigating seismic and landslide risk in 10 hill States. ₹12,000 Cr have been provided for enabling the States to meet shortages of vehicles and equipment in fire services and to strengthen the fire services. As we have completed four of the six years, it is an appropriate time to review progress achieved so far.

2. Before we undertake this task, we may note that even though the Fund was created based on the recommendations of the XV FC, a realisation already existed that holistic and proactive disaster management was needed, rather than responding only when a disaster strikes. Indeed, the High-Power Committee headed by J.C. Pant, which was set up in August 1999, observed in their reportⁱⁱ submitted in 2001, *"Disaster Risk in India is apparent in the physical and socio-economic vulnerability profile of the country. The devastating Orissa Super Cyclone, the Gujarat Earthquake, and the Bhopal Gas Tragedy are still fresh in our memories. Hazardous encounters and fatalities also mar our daily lives. A holistic approach to Disaster Management would therefore include-growing environmental concerns and risk assessments towards a safer India"*. In its recommendations, the HPC highlighted the culture of preparedness and prevention. This was also the basis for Parliament enacting the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Act gives specific and well-defined role to each Ministry/Department of Government of India as well as to all the State/UT Governments. Therefore, a legitimate question that arises is why the XV FC had to make such a recommendation in 2019 on a matter that was already realised a couple of decades ago.

3. In this context, it may be noted that while the mechanism of National Disaster Response Fund and State Disaster Response Funds provides for disaster response and to some extent, capacity building, a clear funding mechanism did not exist in practical terms to meet the rest of the requirements. Of course, theoretically, several opportunities were provided. As listed out in National Disaster Management Plan, 2016ⁱⁱⁱ, the statutory provisions to finance

prevention, mitigation and preparedness included Sections 6 (g), 18 (2)(f), 35 (2)(c), 36(e), 38(2)(d) and 39(c) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005. However, they are merely enabling provisions, without any binding requirement on the concerned Government. When Governments had resource constraints, they were according lower priority to disaster management concerns. Typically, for a disaster of severe nature, when the Inter-Ministerial Central Team arrived in a State to assess the damages and interacted with the State team, the State would seek funding support to rebuild the damaged assets, whereas the central team would be constrained by the stipulation^{iv} that disaster preparedness, restoration, reconstruction and mitigation should not be a part of SDRF or NDRF and is to be met from Plan funds. Now, when the time came for attempting to access the Plan funds, there would always be a trade-off situation, as the total size of the Plan generally did not increase and one had to accommodate it within the Plan allocation, with the constraint of accommodating competing demands and other priorities. Certain exceptions were made like the reconstruction package for Uttarakhand after the 2013 Kedarnath GLOF disaster, for which additional resources were provided. But generally, the approach was to defer the decisions to Plans that did not materialise. Certain items of damage stood excluded from the assistance under NDRF/SDRF. For example, colleges and Government buildings were not covered. But damages to such assets did affect public services. In case of certain other items, the norms were inadequate in comparison with the prevailing market prices. Further, the overall prevailing approach in those cases considered admissible for assistance was to 'bring the asset to its pre-calamity condition', rather than to enhance disaster resilience.

4. On the positive side, there were some developments even before the XV FC gave its recommendations. The need to make future investments meaningful from the point of view of disaster resilience found expression in several provisions of Disaster Management Act, 2005. Some progress was achieved in actually realising the paradigm shift to bring in a proactive, disaster risk governance. It was in pursuance of these requirements that Government of India introduced in 2012, the procedure for self-certification by the concerned Secretary to Government of India in the format^v of the Memorandum before the Expenditure Finance Committee. The certificate required to ensure that when the proposed new project involved creation or modification of structural and engineering assets or change in land use plans, disaster management concerns brought out in an Office Memorandum dated 19.6.2009 of Ministry of Finance, Department of Expenditure were assessed. It prescribed a detailed procedure for assessment. The assessment was to see that the proposed project was designed

to address disaster risk and that the mitigation measures would not create new risks. It required confirmation regarding compliance to land-use directives and regulations. As the format required such certificate, it meant that it percolated down and suitably enhanced the responsibilities on part of all concerned, including the contractor who would actually intend to execute the work. Thus, in terms of disaster risk governance, introduction of this format was an important milestone, as it addressed to some extent the need for main-streaming of disaster management concerns into development planning. However, the experience indicates that there have been ups and downs in disaster management governance. This format of 2012 was since modified in 2014. The modified format still requires a written answer^{vi} to a question: *"Whether the proposal is secured against natural and man-made disasters like floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis etc. If the proposal involves creation/ modification of structural and engineering assets or change in land use plans, disaster management concerns should be assessed and specifically commented upon."* As the requirement of a 'certificate' has been done away with and the detailed procedure prescribed earlier for assessment stood removed or ignored, in usual practice of the manner in which the Government machinery works, it is viewed as some kind of dilution. The diligence with which it was being dealt with earlier by the hierarchy down the line including at the level of the project executant may not now be being maintained, unless a particular public functionary is particularly conscious about this key consideration. Of course, many instances have been reported in the media indicating how important this consideration is. For example, one can see the experience of Silkyara tunnel in Uttarakhand^{vii} The need for disaster resilient infrastructure and enforcement of flood zoning regulations has been highlighted during every monsoon season. This year monsoon period has already seen instances like road sinking in Ahmedabad, water linkage in Ayodhya Ram temple, potholes on the road leading to the temple, water tank collapse in Mathura, cracks on Atal Setu at Mumbai and a number of bridge collapse incidents in Bihar. All these show that we may have done very well in disaster response; but in respect of other components, a great deal of work is required to be done.

5. Coming back to the general position before the XV FC, it may be noted that the areas of disaster mitigation, preparedness & capacity building, recovery & reconstruction were being addressed by and large in an ad hoc manner. The inter-State allocation of resources in these areas were also not clearly and rationally determined. To what extent the provisions of DM Act regarding budgetary responsibilities were being honoured by each Ministry is left completely to the Ministry concerned. Thus, it is a reasonable assumption to hold that the need for XV FC

recommendations arose in order to enable much stronger commitment of financial resources to the cause of holistic, proactive disaster risk management in a much more transparent and accountable manner than before. Therefore, one needs to examine how each funding window has been worked towards fulfilling this commitment. In this regard, we may examine the progress in release of operational guidelines, physical progress and expenditure.

6. The following are the references to the operational guidelines for each of the funding windows:

Preparedness & capacity building ^{viii}	---22.4.2022
State disaster mitigation fund	---14.1.2022, with corrigendum ^{ix} on 11.3.2022
National disaster mitigation fund ^x	---28.2.2022
Items and norms for Response & relief ^{xi}	--- 14.3.2020 with revisions on 28.3.2020, 27.5.2020, 14.7.2020, 23.9.2020, 1.12.2020, 15.4.2021, 25.9.2021 and 10.10.2022, further revised on 11.7.2023
Guidelines ^{xii} on constitution and administration of SDRF and NDRF ---	12.1.2022
National guidelines for recovery and reconstruction	--- Not in public domain yet ^{xiii}
Expansion and modernisation of fire services ^{xiv}	---- 4.7.2023
Guidelines ^{xv} for mitigation of coastal and river erosion	--- 20.6.2024
Policy ^{xvi} on rehabilitation of people affected by erosion	--- 20.6.2024

7. It is understood that the guidelines for the earmarked funds towards reducing urban flood risk, seismic & landslide risks in hill States and catalytic assistance to drought prone States are being finalised. Even though the guidelines for recovery and reconstruction window have not been placed in public domain as of July 2024, it did not seem to have deterred Government of India from sanctioning Rs. 1,658 Cr for dealing with landslides and ground subsidence in Joshi math in Uttarakhand, if we go by the media reports^{xvii} of November, 2023. It may be noted that some of the other important recommendations of the XV FC include utilising mitigation funds for local level and community-based interventions that reduce risks and promote environment friendly settlements and livelihood practices, exploring alternative sources of funding including reconstruction bonds, crowdsourcing and corporate social responsibility and setting up risk pool for infrastructure protection and recovery.

8. Regarding physical progress of execution of works under the components of the NDRMF and SDRMF, it is noted that management of Covid-19 understandably caused considerable delays in finalising the operational guidelines. It also required ad hoc decisions^{xviii} by which more flexibility had to be given to the State Governments regarding the amount that can be spent under SDRF towards Covid management, vis-a-vis other natural disasters. A circular was issued by the Government by which SDRF/NDRF guidelines were clarified for the purposes of accounting, to indicate that works like assistance for rebuilding of damaged or collapsed houses or repairs of damaged irrigation works or low-tension power lines, which were anyway being met all along from SDRF or NDRF as the case may be, would be considered to be met from the 30% window towards recovery and reconstruction. Similarly, it was clarified that the amount spent on procurement of search and rescue equipment or communication equipment, which were anyway being met from SDRF or NDRF, would be considered to be met from the 10% window towards preparedness and capacity building. However, it is a matter of concern that the updated progress report on physical works taken up and progress of utilisation of fund available under each of the funding windows is still not placed in public domain, though the tasks of covid management have abated. Not only at Government of India level, but even the State/UT Governments are not making their updated reports on progress available on public domain.

9. It is not out of context at this stage to note how we have been reporting progress under Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. India takes justified pride in having contributed to this framework covering the period 2015-30, as we did for the Hyogo

Framework of Action during 2005-15. We have a Sendai Monitor^{xix}, being coordinated by UNDRR, in which each Country self-reports progress. The progress is to be reported in respect of seven targets. Target A is about reducing disaster-related deaths and number of missing persons, excluding mortality due to Covid. Target B is to reduce disaster-affected population. Target C is to reduce economic losses. Target D is to reduce damage to critical infrastructure and disruption of basic services. Target E is to have a national and local disaster reduction strategies. Target F is to enhance international cooperation towards DRR. Target G is to promote multi-hazard early warning systems. These are all legitimate targets, for which India is committed. In this case also, half the period of the Framework is over. Several countries have been reporting progress through Sendai monitor. Some countries have reported progress even for 2023. For the year 2022, India has reported 'in progress' for Targets E and G. For the remaining five global targets, India's report for 2022 has 'not started'. In respect of the year 2023, it shows India 'has not started' in respect of any of the seven targets. Certainly, this does not represent the actual ground position. But it is a sorry state of affairs that the concerted work required in terms of reporting data by all agencies involved at the States and the Centre, seems to be clearly lacking. It may be noted that for the years 2016 to 2021, for some of the indicators the progress in respect of India is shown to be reported in the Sendai Monitor. By and large, the web sites of the State/UT Governments do not report progress in each of the funding windows following the XV FC recommendations. It may also be noted that XV FC has observed the need for an outcome framework. They recommended^{xx}, "*Such a framework calls for the States' commitment to achieve SFDRR indicators. An annual report at the national level may record all the allocations, expenditures, key achievements and results against various indicators developed for the implementation of SFDRR. The ministries of Finance and Home Affairs and the NDMA may lead a mid-term review of the entire allocations and assess the impact of expenditures through different windows. The contribution of these allocations to national and state capacities and resources may be evaluated against a set of indicators determined by NDMA*".

10. We may note that the thrust of Disaster Management Act, 2005 is to urge the State to take up all the measures required for a proactive disaster risk management. In general, the sense of urgency that is given to disaster response is not given either by the media or by the Government departments to other important components in disaster risk management. All the measures by various State functionaries form 'tasks in progress'. Perhaps the intention is to avoid having a 'State within the State'. However, if the required measures are not taken

adequately, there is no provision for penalty or disincentive on the concerned State agency. For example, NDMA has published 34 Guidelines on various aspects of disaster risk management. If these guidelines are not followed, there is no mechanism spelt out, other than nudging the concerned State/UT Governments or central Ministries to look into them once again. Similarly, the requirement to have Disaster Management Plan of each central Ministry or of the State Government. Having a Plan is one important step. Ensuring its compliance strictly is another. The key feature of having NDMA or SDMA as technical or expert bodies with advisory powers and no other powers of mandatory nature vis-a-vis Government Ministries shows that the spirit of the Act is based in trusting the Governments. It does not envisage NDMA or SDMA to act as quasi-judicial authorities or Tribunals, who can look into why a Ministry or State/UT Government has failed or delayed in any particular matter. Experience has shown that on several occasions, this trust is not honoured, due to other pressing financial and other demands of various Ministries. It is like a fast automobile driver, who does not honour the seat belt or other safety requirements in the urge to travel speedily. Perhaps we are reaching a situation where this key feature of the Act may have to be subjected to thorough review. It may be noted that Disaster Management (Amendment) Bill has been tabled in Lok Sabha on 1.8.2024. However, this concern of giving teeth to the National Authority or the State Authorities is not addressed by the provisions of the Bill.

Conclusion

We may conclude that the progress in physical and financial terms in utilising the risk management fund is not known. We may have done excellent work; but that has not been reported for public information. XV FC has recommended an 'outcome framework'. It needs to be examined where we stand with regard to it in the interest of transparent and accountable governance. The set of recommendations of XV FC need to be utilised effectively to strengthen District Disaster Management Authorities and District Emergency Operation Centres. The long felt need of having qualified, trained human resources at the district level can be met by leveraging access to the new funding windows in a transparent and accountable manner. If we have to make a better claim for future, it needs to be ensured that considerable progress has to be achieved by end of 2026 by accelerating the pace of work. Firstly, it will require faithful and timely reporting of progress by all stakeholders. It needs to be noted that an adverse or slow progress report is also welcome, as it will help the system to learn its shortcomings, rectify them and move forward. Secondly, it needs to be noted that the bulk of the fund will have to be utilised by the State/UT Governments. Therefore, considerable capacity enhancement will

have to be done at the State/UT Governments and their functionaries in the hierarchy, including engineering departments. In this context, it is necessary to examine why certain States are functioning well in disaster risk governance and to enable official visits and interactions of functionaries of other States to such model States in order to enable enhanced learning. Thirdly, more result-oriented engagement with community-based organisations, Panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies will have to be worked out. In areas like mitigation of lightning/ thunderstorms and heat waves, good participation by civil society has already been attempted. It needs to be taken forward. Fourthly, technical manuals have to be prepared by active involvement of domain experts for risk mapping and for hazard-specific mitigation works. Fifthly, capacity building at all levels needs to be taken up seriously. India is a vast, multi-hazard prone country and all Ministries and State/UT Governments have their roles to play in disaster risk management. Lastly, it needs to be noted that financial support for disaster risk reduction will reduce losses to the economy. Therefore, investments in this area are not luxuries but are extremely necessary for the economy. Such investments need to be made by all Ministries, without considering NDRMF or SDRMF as a 'ceiling'. Therefore, while the recommendations of the XV FC are effectively implemented, the Ministries must continue to make additional budgetary allocations for mitigation as required under DM Act, as indicated at Para 3 above, in pursuance of Disaster Management Plan of each Ministry. Ministry of Finance needs to support this cause by not yielding to the typical bureaucratic temptation of taking an unreasonable plea of 'avoiding duplication' or taking a reductionist approach of assuming NDMA or Ministry of Home Affairs to be solely responsible for every aspect of disaster management.

**Annexure A: State-wise allocation of State Disaster Response Fund during 2021-2026
(Including Central as well as State share)**

₹ in crore

S1. No.	State	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total 2021-26
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Andhra Pradesh	1,192.80	1,252.80	1,315.20	1,380.80	1,449.60	6,591.20
2	Arunachal Pradesh	222.40	233.60	45.60	256.80	270.40	1,228.80
3	Assam	686.40	720.80	756.80	795.20	834.40	3,793.60
4	Bihar	1,510.40	1,586.40	1,664.80	1,748.00	1,836.00	8,345.60
5	Chhattisgarh	460.80	484.00	508.00	533.60	560.00	2,546.40
6	Goa	12.00	12.80	12.80	13.60	15.20	66.40
7	Gujarat	1,412.00	1,482.40	1,556.80	1,635.20	1,716.00	7,802.40
8	Haryana	524.00	550.40	577.60	606.40	636.80	2,895.20
9	Himachal Pradesh	363.20	380.80	400.80	420.00	441.60	2,006.40
10	Jharkhand	605.60	635.20	667.20	701.60	736.00	3,345.60
11	Karnataka	843.20	885.60	929.60	976.00	1,024.80	4,659.20
12	Kerala	335.20	352.00	369.60	388.00	408.00	1,852.80
13	Madhya Pradesh	1,941.60	2,038.40	2,140.80	2,248.00	2,360.00	10,728.80
14	Maharashtra	3,436.80	3,608.80	3,788.80	3,978.40	4,176.80	18,989.60
15	Manipur	37.60	39.20	41.60	44.00	45.00	208.00
16	Meghalaya	58.40	60.80	64.80	67.20	71.20	322.40
17	Mizoram	41.60	43.20	46.40	48.00	50.40	229.60
18	Nagaland	36.80	38.40	40.80	42.40	44.80	203.20
19	Odisha	1,711.20	1,796.80	1,886.40	1,980.80	2,080.00	9,455.20
20	Punjab	528.00	554.40	582.40	611.20	642.40	2,918.40
21	Rajasthan	1,580.00	1,659.20	1,742.40	1,828.80	1,920.00	8,730.40
22	Sikkim	44.80	47.20	49.60	52.00	54.40	248.00
23	Tamil Nadu	1,088.00	1,142.40	1,200.00	1,260.00	1,322.40	6,012.80
24	Telangana	479.20	503.20	528.00	555.20	582.40	2,648.00
25	Tripura	60.80	63.20	67.20	70.40	74.40	336.00
26	Uttar Pradesh	2,062.40	2,165.60	2,273.60	2,388.00	2,507.20	11,396.80
27	Uttarakhand	832.80	874.40	918.40	964.00	1,012.00	4,601.60
28	West Bengal	1,078.40	1,132.80	1,189.60	1,248.00	1,311.20	5,960.00
	Total	23,186.40	24,344.80	25,565.60	26,841.60	28,184.00	1,28,122.40

Endnotes and weblinks

- i. <https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW1851>
- ii. Page 35 of the report of the High-Powered Committee on Disaster Management
https://nidm.gov.in/pdf/pubs/hpc_report.pdf
- iii. National Disaster Management Plan, 2016 <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/ind168183.pdf>
- iv. Para 10 of the Operational guidelines
<https://dea.gov.in/sites/default/files/Guidelines%20for%20National%20Disaster%20Response%20Fund%20%28NDRF%29.pdf>
- v. Department of Economic Affairs Office Memorandum dated 9.3.2012
https://doe.gov.in/files/circulars_document/Revised_EFC_Format090312_0.pdf
- vi. Department of Economic Affairs Office Memorandum dated 31.3.2014
[https://morth.gov.in/sites/default/files/circulars_document/APR-2014.03.31-Circulation%20of%20Revised%20formats%20of%20EFC,%20PIB%20Memorandum%20for%20Original%20Cost%20Estimates%20\(OCE\)%20and%20revised%20Cost%20Estimates%20\(RCE\).pdf](https://morth.gov.in/sites/default/files/circulars_document/APR-2014.03.31-Circulation%20of%20Revised%20formats%20of%20EFC,%20PIB%20Memorandum%20for%20Original%20Cost%20Estimates%20(OCE)%20and%20revised%20Cost%20Estimates%20(RCE).pdf)
- vii. <https://thewire.in/government/escape-route-alarm-systems-absent-in-silkyara-tunnel-in-uttarakhand-expert-panel-report>
- viii. <https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=G8>
- ix. SDMF guidelines <https://srcodisha.nic.in/dmrule/SDMF%20Guidelines.pdf> and corrigendum at <https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW150>
- x. NDMF guidelines <https://srcodisha.nic.in/dmrule/NDMF%20guidelines.pdf>
- xi. <https://revenue.punjab.gov.in/sites/default/files/Revised%20items%20and%20Norms%20of%20assistance%20from%20the%20SDRF%20and%20the%20NDRF%20for%20the%20period%202023-23%20to%202025-26.pdf>
- xii. Guidelines on constitution and administration of SDRF and NDRF
<https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW2005>
- xiii. Though the national guidelines on R & R are still not available in the website of MHA or NDMA, a copy of the draft guidelines is found on the web site of Uttarakhand Government at https://usdma.uk.gov.in/PDFFiles/Draft_Guidelines_Recovery_Reconstruction.pdf
- xiv. Expansion and modernisation of fire services in the States
https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-07/FireServicesinStates_10072023.pdf
- xv. River and coastal erosion mitigation guidelines
<https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW2003>
- xvi. Rehabilitation policy for people affected by erosion
<https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW2004>
- xvii. Press Information Bureau report
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1981140>
- xviii. MHA circular dated 23.9.2020 allowing SDRF to be used for containment measures of Covid-19
<https://ndmindia.mha.gov.in/ndmi/viewUploadedDocument?uid=NEW1826>
- xix. Sendai Monitor <https://sendaimonitor.undrr.org/>
- xx. Section 8.118 XV FC report
https://finance.cg.gov.in/15%20Finance%20Commission/Report/XVFC-Complete_Report-E.pdf

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