

YAYASAN AFS ANTARABUDAYA MALAYSIA

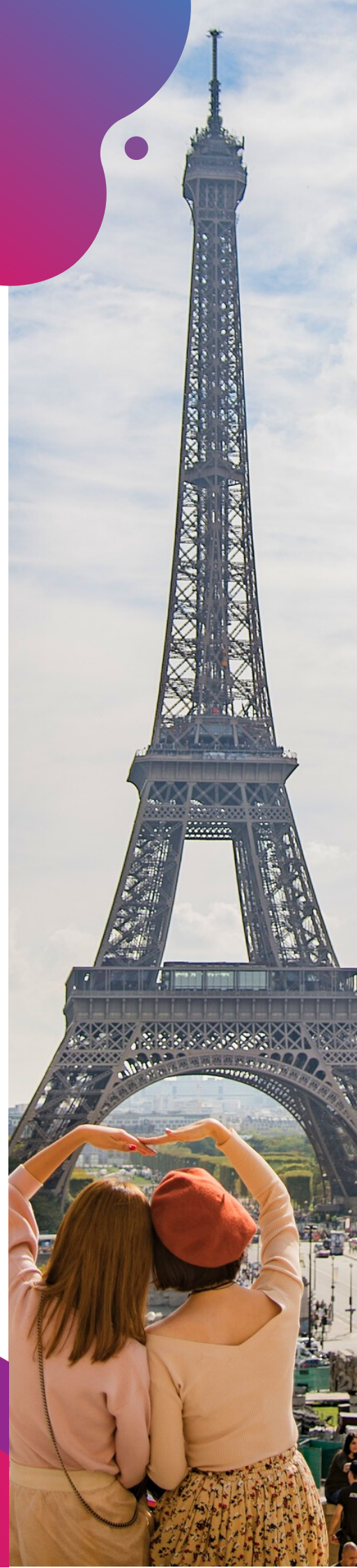


ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2020



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A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a person with dark hair and sunglasses, wearing a grey and black patterned sweater and dark pants, jumping joyfully with arms raised in a vast, flat, white landscape. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue with a few wispy clouds on the horizon. The person's shadow is cast on the white ground.

What we believe in

By linking our “learning to live together” philosophy to the defining global issues facing humanity, AFS fosters intercultural understanding as a powerful and productive tool for building a more just and peaceful world. The AFS global community embraces differences and believes our world is stronger and more interesting because of them.

AFS Mission

To engage Malaysians to embrace our differences and celebrate our commonalities through committed volunteerism for a united Malaysia.

A decorative graphic at the bottom right of the page consists of overlapping, wavy shapes in shades of purple, pink, and blue, creating a modern, abstract look.

“Broadening the perspectives of our next generation of leaders and empowering them to communicate, negotiate and collaborate across differences is mission critical if we want to combat the rising tide of intolerance we see everywhere.”

– DANIEL OBST, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF
AFS INTERCULTURAL PROGRAMS



National Director's Foreword

2020 has been an extraordinary year.

The beginning of 2020 started with new hope and vigour that things may turn around after unprecedented challenges of the past year. Even after the news broke that Coronavirus had reached our shores, we were still optimistic for a better year. In March, after much deliberation, and with strict SOP in place, we proceeded with a Leadership Retreat with Board, Staff and Key Volunteers getting together for reflection and planning for the future. Little did we know the havoc that would soon be unleashed not just on Malaysia but the world.

Following a WHO Announcement on the Global Pandemic on 6th March, AFS International followed suit with an announcement of Program Suspension for all AFS Programs on the 13th March.

March & April 2020 saw us fighting against time to send all hosted students back to their homes safely and the return of all our students who were abroad. AFS Staff and Volunteers around the world worked around the clock trying to keep up with the changes that were happening by the hour. Lockdowns, borders and airports closing, airlines ceasing operation, flight re-routes were our daily challenges on top of having to adapt to a lifestyle of The New Normal caused by the virus - i.e. temperature checks, masking up, sanitizing, working from home, online meetings etc.

To ensure that all our participants continue with their Intercultural Learning despite having their program cut short, AFS International curated the Global Competence Certificate - Special Edition which was adapted from the award-winning Global Competence Certificate developed by AFS for our 18+ participants.



The program was well received and it also provided a safe space for our participants to meet their peers from all around the world, manage their confusion, anger and frustration as well as make sense of the ever changing world around them.

Although there was no in-person exchanges, the YES Abroad Program sponsored by the US State Department still continued and we hosted the YES Students virtually. The students had language classes, cultural activities and virtual experiences with their Malaysian host families.

We also had a silver lining in October when the Kakehashi Program went ahead and we were able to send students to Japan on the program that is fully sponsored by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan (MEXT).

We managed to secure sponsorship from MCIS Life for School Teachers to participate in a Global Competence Certificate - At Home Program, which ran for 5 weeks in November.

AFS Malaysia was also given the honour of hosting the AFS Asia-Pacific Initiative's (AAI) Volunteer Recognition Ceremony that was held virtually on International Volunteers Day on the 5th December. The "best volunteer" selected from all nine participating countries took part in training sessions and forums prior to the event and took center stage in the online ceremony streamed live on facebook and zoom.

2020 has been difficult financially, but we managed to keep afloat through government subsidies, sponsorships and cost cutting measures.

Nevertheless, we are blessed with the greatest resource available, our volunteers, board and staff who supported us wholeheartedly in this difficult time.



Atty Sulaiman
NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Chairperson's Foreword

The impact of Covid-19 has taught us much about how quickly the world can change and has demonstrated our ability to collaborate, adapt and find new ways forward in unforgiving circumstances. The loss of many lives the world over will remain a constant reminder of the fragility of life, how connected we are, and the impact of globalisation on us all.

Like every business and organisation, the impact of Covid-19 on our programs is greatly felt; from new health and safety protocols, employees working from home, to the loss of some of our volunteers - its mark has been indelible.

As the Board, we are proud of the manner in which our National Office staff have responded to the Covid-19 challenges, especially in ensuring that our programs continue to function. The stressful conditions they were under when making arrangements for the safe return of in-program students as travel rules and flight schedules became fluid and ever-changing, cannot be over-emphasised and we applaud them for staying calm under pressure and their efficiency in handling the situation. It also was a time when the spirit of ONE AFS truly came to the fore as partner countries worked tirelessly round the clock communicating with each other on arrangements for their respective students' journey home and personally ensuring their safety and comfort until they boarded their planes.



Our staff have also shown resourcefulness and creativity in keeping volunteers engaged, finding program sponsorships and adapting quickly to the New Normal. On behalf of the Board, I would also like to thank the management staff for volunteering to take salary reductions during these trying times. When we come into a crisis like the one we have right now—where it's a difficult time for the economy, for workers, people are losing their jobs, people don't know what to expect—their sacrifice is a signal that they understand that every little bit helps towards the organization's survival and future. Our volunteers too have shown resilience, understanding and patience by continuing to be invested in the AFS brand, vision and mission. Thank you for your continuous support.

The global economy is expected to recover by end 2021 and borders will re-open cautiously, but we are confident that the strategic calls we have made and our clear focus for 2021 will deliver an optimistic 2021 financial performance. Moving forward, we remain hopeful that we can continue to connect, collaborate and innovate for the benefit of all our stakeholders across the world.



Khalilah Talha

CHAIRPERSON



PROGRAM OVERVIEW: SENDING

2020 was certainly a year that impacted every aspect of our lives and changed our norms - including AFS Programs. For many years, our programs and its operations have been conducted traditionally with in-person programming and events. The pandemic necessitated drastic changes to fit the new norm.

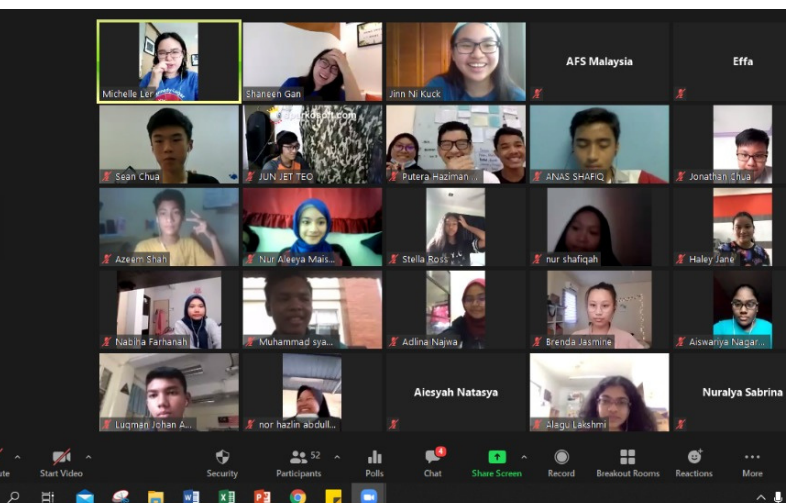
We experienced many unprecedented events - from cutting short our program, hosting program cancellations, student repatriation, new re-entry regulations, imposition of quarantine, virtual orientation and selection, and many others.



Recruitment & Selection

During the recruitment campaign for 2020, chapters and volunteers displayed strong support and enthusiasm in promoting AFS programs. Outreach programs were conducted from the month of January until March by staff of the National Office and chapters/volunteers. Visits to schools and state education departments were part of the outreach program initiatives. However, due to a lockdown announcement in March, all of our outreach programs grounded to a halt immediately. Despite all the challenges, we had successfully attracted close to 1,205 applications.

This year was the first year we went fully digital - we no longer accepted any physical application and all submissions have to be done online. All of our selection processes, be it state level interviews or national level selections, were all conducted online, via the Zoom platform. One blessing in disguise was that we were able to go fully paperless for our recruitment and selection process.



Flagship Programs

A total of 49 students were sent off in the year 2020 and this includes our flagship programs such as the Semester Program, Year Program and Trimester Program for the Southern Hemisphere (SH). For the SH cycle, we had 11 Year Program, 3 Semester Program and 7 Trimester Program (including the PEACE Project) participants who departed on the program. However, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, they were all repatriated at the very beginning of their exchange experience. This caused major disappointment to many of them. However, their journey did not end there as they were all invited to attend a global virtual programming - the GCC Special Edition where they had the opportunity to mingle with like-minded peers around the world to continue on their intercultural journey.

Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) Program

40 students were selected for the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study Semester Program to the United States for the 2020 cohort. This program is fully funded by the U.S. Department of State, and it provides scholarship for secondary school students from countries with significant Muslim population to spend up to a year in the United States. These participants serve as “youth ambassadors” of Malaysia, in promoting mutual understanding by forming lasting relationships with their host families and communities. Unfortunately, two months after their program commenced, the participants were sent back home due to the pandemic, and they too were enrolled into the GCC Special Edition, together with the flagship program students to continue their journey virtually.



Asia Kakehashi Project

One of the most impacted programs due to the pandemic is the Asia Kakehashi Project, where 14 scholarship recipients were due to depart to Japan in March 2020. However, due to the ever-changing and ever-evolving situation in Japan, the sponsor of the program - MEXT (Japan Ministry of Education & Technology), decided to postpone the travels to October 2020. Despite the delay and the situation they were under, the participants remained high-spirited and optimistic. They safely arrived in Japan and underwent all the necessary procedures before assimilating into the local community.

Asia Kakehashi Project is a fully funded program granted by MEXT (Japan Ministry of Education & Technology), an initiative meant to build bridges between high school students in Japan and Asia. Students from 20 selected Asian countries get the opportunity to study in Japan for 6-10 months, being hosted by a Japanese high school with homestay or dorm-stay to obtain exposure and experience to Japanese education, culture and way of life. Some 40,000 Japanese high school students and 1,000 Asian high school students will be impacted by the project in developing global competence of Japanese high school students through intercultural experiences without going abroad.



Sending Number Breakdown

You can find the breakdown of the sending programs participant numbers below:

PROGRAM	DURATION	HOST COUNTRY	NO. OF PARTICIPANT
Peace Program	3 months	Austria	3
		Italy	2
		Poland	1
Trimester Program	3 months	Germany	1
Semester Program	6 months	Austria	1
		France	1
		Spain	1
Year Program	10 months	Denmark	2
		Germany	4
		Hungary	1
		Switzerland	2
Asia Kakehashi Project	6 months	Japan	14
Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange & Study (YES) Program	6 months	United States of America	40
Total No. of Participants			73

PROGRAM OVERVIEW: HOSTING

At the beginning of 2020, we welcomed four (4) Japanese students who were hosted in KL and Johor respectively. However, after the outbreak, they were repatriated and sent back home which cut short their program from 10 months to 2 months.

Due to the closing of our borders, all hosting programs NH20 cycle were suspended. Although we have received interested applications from several partners across the network, we had to decline them as we were not in a position to host.

18+ PROGRAM & FUNDRAISING OVERVIEW



We hosted seven 18+ participants for NH19, and two for SH20 from Germany. However, programs from both cycles, which were scheduled to end in June 2020 and December 2020 respectively, had to be terminated earlier because of the Covid-19 pandemic. They were repatriated on 25 March 2020.

Due to the pandemic, the NH20 cycle was suspended. However, plans to restart the 18+ programs for the SH21 cycle are in place.

On the fundraising front, we faced challenges from potential sponsors who are giving priority to helping the underprivileged during this pandemic. The lack of a Treasury number that would allow tax exemption for our donors is also another setback to our fundraising efforts.



TRAINING, LEARNING & EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The year 2020 saw a tremendous change across the globe due to the pandemic and this brought about changes in the approach the world took in the way humans interacted, equipped themselves with education and self development as well as adjusting to new modalities.

In AFS Malaysia, we embraced the new world of training, learning and education. Since the start of 2020, we had ambitious plans to expand our Intercultural Learning programmes. This was especially because a huge investment had been made to train key staff and volunteers to become internationally qualified trainers on our very own Intercultural Learning (ICL) Programmes as well as qualified facilitators for the Global Competence Certificate (GCC) in the previous year. However, the pandemic put paid to that ambitious plan for 2020 and beyond. As a result, we embraced new learning platforms to ensure that our programmes can continue for the foreseeable future. New research-based training programmes were quickly designed with the help of our headquarters in New York to support the global demand.



This year also saw the implementation of the virtual Student Learning Journey Curriculum (SLJC) which was implemented in 2016. All AFS participants are now required to attend a virtual blended learning course prior to departure. AFS Malaysia was one of several partner countries to implement this locally for the benefit of Malaysian participants who were leaving for their exchanges. In addition and for the first time, three Malaysians were selected to become Global Facilitators for the SLJC programme and develop content with other facilitators across the network. The programme continues to become an integral part of the AFS participants' journey and we intend to expand our team of Global Facilitators towards this end.

The year 2020 also saw development in virtual offerings to our stakeholders. We offered the Virtual Orientation Facilitator's Workshop in July 2020 and will be offering similar opportunities in the near future. At the start of the pandemic, AFS Malaysia was also selected to conduct a GCC Special Edition for returning and stranded participants across the globe as a result of the pandemic and global lockdowns. Four of our GCC-trained Qualified Facilitators were selected to manage a cohort of 100 participants each through a month-long virtual orientation and support system. Once again, AFS Malaysia was recognized for its accomplishments within the network which has opened a window of opportunity to grow and develop further as a learning hub.



Towards year end, the GCC Qualified Facilitators were once again activated for yet another live learning experience, this time to facilitate a group of 100 Malaysian educators under the sponsorship of MCIS-Life in collaboration with AFS and the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The educators attended a virtual GCC blended learning programme for five weeks and each week, they were facilitated in smaller groups for an interactive discussion on global concerns and ideas. The participants under the Ministry of Education comprised school teachers, education officers at state and national levels, lecturers and managers from public learning institutions among others. This programme garnered the support and recognition of the Ministry of Education for the educators to be certified on their participation in a programme under the professional development appraisal or Latihan Dalam Perkhidmatan (LADAP). Today, we have 100 GCC graduates among the educators in the Ministry of Education Malaysia who are not only the programme alumni but also active global citizens of the world. We are proud to have accomplished this and will continue to train more educators under the Intercultural Learning (ICL) and Global Competence Certificate (GCC) programmes.



GLOBAL COMPETENCE CERTIFICATE (GCC)

GCC Special Edition

Following the worldwide repatriation of all AFS students, AFS International rolled out a GCC Special Edition program for students whose exchange experience was impacted by COVID-19. AFS Malaysia has a pool of trained GCC facilitators and five of them took up a facilitator role for the Special Edition. Considering the time difference, the group was assigned to students from Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, India, Malaysia and the Philippines. At the end of the program, the group received positive feedback from all the students expressing how much they enjoyed the sessions, especially having the platform to communicate with their peers who were going through the same experience as they were.

GCC At Home

Despite the challenging times, AFS Malaysia managed to secure a sponsorship of RM50,000.00 from MCIS Life to allow 100 teachers selected by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to attend an interactive Global Competence Certificate (GCC) online program,. The live sessions for the programs were all conducted by qualified staff and volunteers in a span of 5 weeks.

GCC Facilitators

AFS Malaysia had the foresight of preparing qualified facilitators so when the call for facilitators was announced, Malaysia responded promptly in volunteering our services to AFS International.



CHAPTER & VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic which ravaged the country and all around the world for most of 2020, the Chapter & Volunteer Development Department did not carry out any in-person events due to safety concerns.

We had to resort to what is now known as the New Normal for meetings. The term Zoom became a household word overnight. For those of us who are familiar, it is a virtual platform to have discussions, presentations and webinars. It was no different for AFS. All meet-ups had to be virtual through several platforms like Google Meet, Microsoft Teams etc. apart from the more popular Zoom.

Below are some of the virtual events and happenings of the year:

- Chapter meetings (twice - one each in May and June)
- Volunteer Learning Journey Webinar Series (May)
- Chapter volunteers & returnees volunteered for "Covid-19 Pandemic Emergency Supply" organized by Rumah Bonda (June)
- AFS Returnee Hoodie Project - "Sweater Weather"
- YES Alumni observed the "Americans with Disabilities Act" 30th Anniversary
- Virtual Volunteer Exchange between AFS Malaysia and AFS India volunteers "Cultural Grip over Virtual Trip" (August & September)
- Write up contribution to "Friends of AFS Australia" newsletter by Dr. Jason Lee, returnee to Australia in 2000 - AFS Australia has ceased operations due to the pandemic
- AAI Outstanding Volunteer Award 2019 - the award in Malaysia went to Vimal Vivekandah, returnee to USA in 2015, a chapter committee and committee of AFS Returnees
- AFS Global Ideathon (October/November)
- Virtual Class Exchange between AFS Club of SK Sec 13 Shah Alam and Delhi Public School, Indore (December)



Just before a nation-wide Movement Control Order was enforced on March 18, we were able to organize the usual bi-annual "Leadership Retreat" in Ipoh from 6 - 8 March. An entourage of 40 pax travelled to Perak for the 3 day-2 night event. There was representation from the Board, Staff, Chapters & Alumni. The highlight was a Walkabout Treasure Hunt around Ipoh Old Town and Concubine Lane where participants got to enjoy the diverse cultural heritage. There were also sharing sessions, volunteer engagement, gift exchanges and rich local food to savour. Throughout the weekend, strict SOPs were already observed with masks and hand sanitizers provided and physical distancing made mandatory.



LEADERSHIP

AFS MALAYSIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020

Khalilah Dato' Mohd Talha (chairperson)

Elangeshwaran Muthusamy

Sylvia Chan

Azreen Md Nasir

Datuk Yasmin Yusuff

Thiruchelvam Subramaniam

AFS MALAYSIA NATIONAL OFFICE

Atty Sulaiman

National Director

Annie Yap

*Assistant National Director/ Chapter &
Volunteer Development Manager/HR*

Jasmin Melan

18+ and Fundraising Manager

Kuhan Kandiah Chelvanathan

*Training, Learning & Education
Manager*

Nani Taha

Program Manager

Farah Niza Zulkifli

Finance Manager

Chyna Elvina Chin

Programs Executive - YES Program

Nadia Samsuddin

Programs Executive (Sending Programs)

Nurhasliza Sahadi

*Digital Marketing & Creative Design
Executive*

Siti Sophie Ismail

Marketing and Program Development

Zainal Izuddin Saharudin

*Program Executive Hosting - School
Based*



CHAPTER

Nuriah Manap

Ampang Chapter

Zainuddin Hamzah

Bangi Chapter

Santhi M Raju

Damansara Chapter

Charlie Teo

Johor Chapter

Colin Poobalan

Klang Chapter

Rohaya Md Yusoff

Kedah Chapter

Anisah Abdul Halim

Kelantan Chapter

Jenny Kho

Melaka Chapter

Joycelyn Choong Miao Chen

Negeri Sembilan Chapter

Dr. Hari Ram Ramayya

Perlis Chapter

Datuk Martini Osman

Pahang Chapter

Datin Teo Hwee Ai

Penang Chapter

Lucus Asirvatham

Perak Chapter

Tok Fen Fen

Sabah Chapter

Bahtiar Afandi

Sarawak Chapter

Long Tin Piau

Terengganu Chapter



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Embassies

Embassy of the Republic of Austria
Embassy of Italy
Embassy of Japan
Embassy of the Republic of France
Embassy of Spain
Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany
Embassy of Switzerland
Royal Danish Embassy
Embassy of the Republic of Poland
Embassy of the United States of America
Embassy of Hungary

Non-government Organizations

MCIS Life

MINISTRIES/ GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE)

- *School Management Division*
- *Special School Education Division*
- *Curriculum Development Centre*
- *Cluster/Fully Residential School*
- *Management Division*
- *Co-curricular Unit*
- *State Education Department (JPN)*
 - i) School Division*
 - ii) Curriculum Unit*
 - iii) Relations and Registration Unit*
 - iv) Academic Unit*

Ministry of Tourism Malaysia

Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia (MOFA)

Ministry of Information, Communication and Culture Malaysia

Immigration Department of Malaysia

Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (LHDN)

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Japan (MEXT)

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