

PART II · ENVIRONMENT TO DIRECT HIT TRACKER

ANTIM ASSURED 100+

Daily Current Affairs for UPSC Prelims & Mains

SUNDAY, 14 JUNE 2026 · MORNING EDITION

"From News to Questions, From Questions to Selection"

TODAY'S SECTIONS

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Aravalli Hills: Supreme Court's HPC & the New Definition of 'Forest'

GS3 · ENVIRONMENT · FOREST CONSERVATION · SUPREME COURT · GOVERNANCE

WHY IN NEWS

In early June 2026, the Supreme Court of India constituted a 5-member High-Powered Committee (HPC) to examine the definition, demarcation, and long-term protection of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges. The HPC report is due by August 31, 2026; next hearing: September 7, 2026.

BACKGROUND

On March 20, 2026, SC held that "ecological quality — not mere green cover — determines if land qualifies as forest," while addressing a railway redevelopment project near Bijwasan, Delhi. This builds on the landmark T.N. Godavarman case (1996) which first gave the Supreme Court the role of forest guardian.

PRELIMS FACTS

- ▶ HPC constituted: June 2026; 5 members; report due August 31, 2026
- ▶ March 20, 2026 SC judgment: "Ecological quality ≠ green cover" for forest definition
- ▶ SC ordered a freeze on new mining leases till a Sustainable Mining Plan (MPSM) is submitted
- ▶ Legal backdrop: Forest Conservation Act, 1980 + T.N. Godavarman Thirumulkpad v. UoI (1996)

MAINS DIMENSIONS

- ▶ Judicial activism in environment: SC as environmental guardian — power and limitations
- ▶ Defining 'forest': broad Godavarman interpretation vs. narrow statutory definition — development trade-offs
- ▶ Aravalli as critical ecology: NCR's green lung, groundwater recharge zone, biodiversity corridor

UPSC MAPPING

GS3: Environment & Conservation

GS2: Judiciary & Governance

GS3: Forest Laws

PYQ LINKAGE GS3 2019: ROLE OF JUDICIARY IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN INDIA

Q: Consider statements about T.N. Godavarman case (1996): (1) It expanded the definition of 'forest' beyond the statutory meaning. (2) It was decided under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. (3) It granted the Supreme Court the role of continuing mandamus. Which is/are correct?

Answer: All three — Godavarman broadened forest definition, invoked FCA 1980, and established SC's continuing mandamus (ongoing supervision) in forest matters.

Godavarman is one of India's most significant environmental cases — the SC has been hearing it since 1996 and it is still 'alive.'

Critically examine the Supreme Court's evolving role in defining and protecting forests in India, with reference to the Godavarman case and the Aravalli judgment (2026). (250 words)

Teaching Hook: Godavarman (1996) = India's longest-running SC case, gave birth to "judicial environmentalism." The 2026 Aravalli judgment — ecological quality ≠ green cover — is its direct sequel. Connect: FCA 1980 → Godavarman → Aravalli 2026 as a chain for Mains answers.

GS3

PYQ 2019

Aravalli

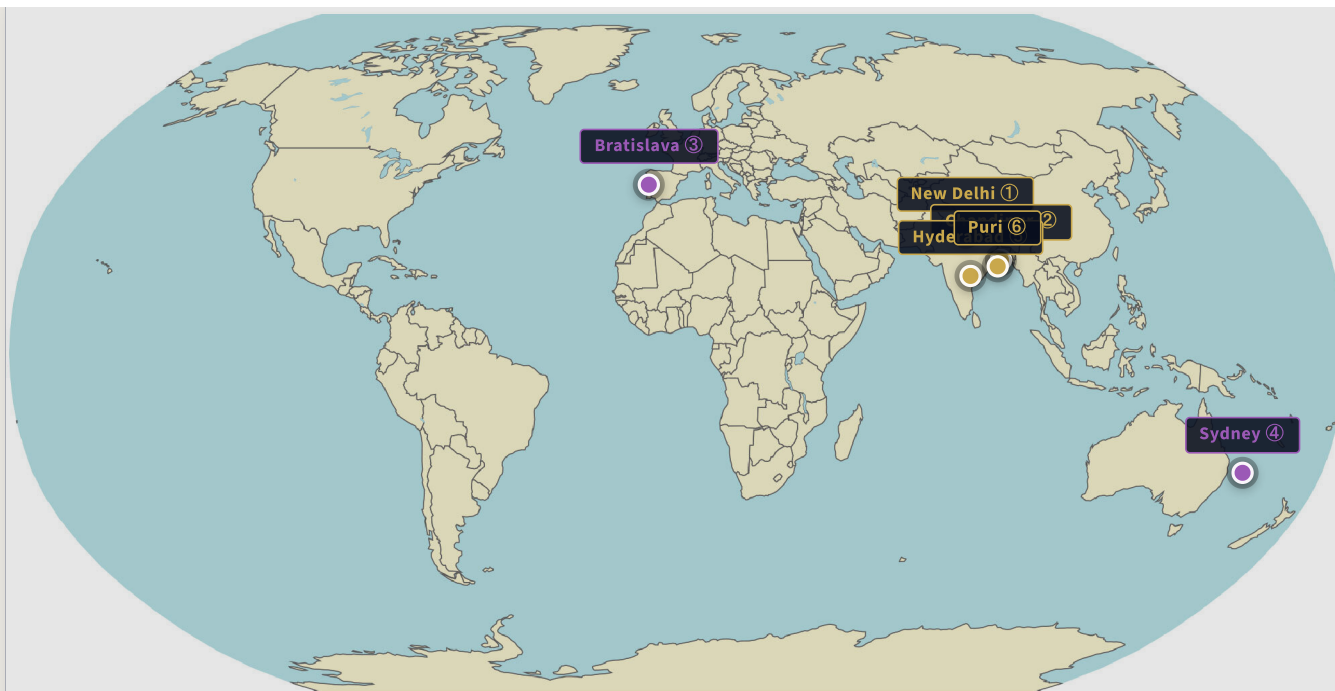
SC Judgment

Forest Conservation

Godavarman

§2 Places in News — 14 June 2026

📌 PLACES IN NEWS — 14 JUNE 2026 | ANTIM ASSURED 100+



- ① New Delhi — India–UK GSCO launch; SkyCast at IGI; ABDM 90 cr ABHA ● ② Chandipur, Odisha — DRDO AD-1/AD-2/NASM-MR tests
● ③ Bratislava, Slovakia — PM Modi's first-ever visit to Slovakia (June 14–16) ● ④ Sydney, Australia — IEP publishes Global Peace Index 2026
● ⑤ Hyderabad, Telangana — DRDL Missile Complex inauguration ● ⑥ Puri, Odisha — Jagannath Temple trademark protection

① New Delhi

NATIONAL CAPITAL TERRITORY, INDIA

WHY IN NEWS

India–UK Critical Minerals GSCO inaugurated (June 5); Mission Mausam SkyCast launched at IGI Airport; ABDM 90 crore ABHA milestone announced.

PRELIMS ANGLE

TEXMin-IIT ISM Dhanbad + Cambridge = GSCO partners | MoES manages Mission Mausam | India = 19th nation with SkyCast | ABHA is a 14-digit unique health identifier.

MAINS ANGLE

Critical minerals as geopolitical currency | Aviation safety and Mission Mausam's dual-use potential | Digital health equity in UHC.

PYQ TREND

NHRC and human rights commissions appear frequently in GS2 (Statutory Bodies). Delhi as a policy hub features in governance questions.

② Chandipur-on-Sea

BALASORE DISTRICT, ODISHA, INDIA

WHY IN NEWS

Integrated Test Range (ITR) Chandipur conducted final trials of AD-1, AD-2 ballistic missile interceptors and maiden NASM-MR flight test (June 10–11, 2026).

PRELIMS ANGLE

ITR Chandipur = primary DRDO missile test range | District: Balasore | NOT in Andhra Pradesh (common UPSC trap).

MAINS ANGLE

BMD capability, indigenous defence production and strategic deterrence in the context of India's two-front threat.

PYQ TREND

Chandipur appears in GS3 defence + GS1 geography combos — always verify state (Odisha, not AP).

③ Bratislava

CAPITAL, SLOVAK REPUBLIC (SLOVAKIA)

WHY IN NEWS

PM Modi arrived in Bratislava on June 14, 2026, for the first-ever visit by an Indian PM to Slovakia since its independence in 1993 (Velvet Divorce). Meetings with PM Robert Fico and President Peter Pellegrini.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Slovakia = NATO + EU member (2004) | Capital: Bratislava (≠ Prague, which is Czech Republic) | Velvet Divorce: 1993 peaceful split of Czechoslovakia.

MAINS ANGLE

India's multi-alignment expanding into Central Europe; Slovakia as EU market gateway; defence, AI, and quantum tech cooperation.

PYQ TREND

④ Sydney

NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA

WHY IN NEWS

The Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), headquartered in Sydney, released Global Peace Index 2026 — India ranked 127th, declining 3 places.

PRELIMS ANGLE

IEP HQ: Sydney | GPI 2026 = 20th edition | Covers 99.7% of world population | Most peaceful: Iceland.

MAINS ANGLE

Limitations of GPI methodology; India's real vs ranked security; global conflict trends and India's neighbourhood.

PYQ TREND

European geography and India's bilateral diplomacy — classic GS2 trap: Prague vs Bratislava, Slovakia vs Czech Republic.

Indices and reports are predictable UPSC Prelims targets — always know publisher, HQ, and India's rank.

⑤ Hyderabad

CAPITAL, TELANGANA, INDIA

WHY IN NEWS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh inaugurated the Advanced Weapon System Complex at DRDL (Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex) in Hyderabad.

PRELIMS ANGLE

DRDL = Defence Research & Development Laboratory | Located in Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Missile Complex | Under DRDO.

MAINS ANGLE

DRDO's role in Atmanirbhar Bharat; missile development ecosystem in India; defence industrial corridors (UP and Tamil Nadu).

PYQ TREND

DRDO + Hyderabad + missile systems appears in GS3 defence technology questions regularly since 2016.

⑥ Puri

PURI DISTRICT, ODISHA, INDIA

WHY IN NEWS

Jagannath Temple Administration secured trademark protection for Nilachakra and key temple identifiers to prevent unauthorised commercial use of sacred symbols.

PRELIMS ANGLE

Jagannath Temple: located in Puri, Odisha | Nilachakra = sacred wheel atop the temple | Governed by Shree Jagannath Temple Act, 1954.

MAINS ANGLE

Religious heritage and IP protection; balancing commercialisation with sacred site preservation; role of state legislation in temple administration.

PYQ TREND

Heritage sites, temple administration and IP/trademark issues are emerging GS1/GS2 intersections.

\$3 Ethics & Integrity Cases

CASE 1 | ACCOUNTABILITY · DIGITAL RIGHTS

A Senior Bureaucrat Suppresses a Cyber Fraud Report

A senior official in a state IT department receives a report documenting large-scale digital arrest scams but suppresses it to avoid adverse publicity before state elections. The official justifies the action citing 'public order concerns', though victims continue to suffer financial losses.

GS4 Mapping: Integrity in Public Service · Accountability · Ethical governance · Conflict between institutional loyalty and public duty

CASE 2 | PROBITY · WHISTLEBLOWING

Defence Scientist Discovers Irregularity in DRDO Procurement

A DRDO scientist discovers that components for the new missile system were procured from an unauthorised vendor at inflated prices, implicating a senior official. The scientist faces a choice between reporting through official channels (risking retaliation) or remaining silent to protect career prospects.

GS4 Mapping: Moral Courage · Probity in Public Life · Whistleblower Protection Act, 2014 · Ethical dilemma between self-interest and public interest

CASE 3 | COMPASSION · EQUITY

ABDM Health Data Denied to a Poor Patient

A daily wage labourer in a rural area is denied treatment continuity because the referring hospital refuses to accept ABHA-linked records from a government facility, citing 'system incompatibility'. The hospital administrator prioritises revenue over patient welfare, knowing the patient cannot afford private records.

GS4 Mapping: Compassion · Equity in public service · Ethical dimensions of digital divide · Values in healthcare administration

CASE 4 | INTEGRITY · ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

A District Collector Faces Political Pressure Over Coastal Highway Alignment

While reviewing a coastal highway project, a District Collector discovers the alignment will destroy a critical mangrove ecosystem not disclosed in the EIA. Political pressure from above and contractor lobbying urges her to clear the file; environmental scientists urge rejection.

GS4 Mapping: Integrity · Environmental ethics · Intergenerational equity · Tension between development and ecology · Emotional intelligence under pressure

Q1

Consider the following statements about NHRC: (1) Its Chairperson must be a retired Chief Justice of India. (2) NHRC recommendations are binding on the Central Government. (3) It can inquire directly into complaints against the armed forces. Which is/are correct? Moderate

Answer: (1) only. Recommendations are advisory; armed forces complaints are not directly investigated by NHRC.

Source: Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2020 (Statutory bodies and human rights)

Q2

With reference to Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA): (1) It is a 14-digit unique health identifier. (2) Registration is mandatory for all Indian citizens. (3) National Health Authority is the nodal body. Which is/are correct? Easy

Answer: (1) and (3) only. ABHA registration is voluntary.

Source: NHA/ABDM | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2023 (Health sector schemes)

Q3

The Global Peace Index 2026 was published by which organisation? (A) UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (B) Institute for Economics & Peace (C) Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (D) World Economic Forum Easy

Answer: (B) Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP), headquartered in Sydney, Australia.

Source: IEP | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2019 (Indices and international institutions)

Q4

Consider statements about India–Oman CEPA 2026: (1) It was signed in New Delhi. (2) It is the first bilateral deal Oman has signed since its FTA with USA in 2006. (3) India gets duty-free access to over 98% of Oman's tariff lines. Which is/are correct? Moderate

Answer: (2) and (3) only. The CEPA was signed in Muscat, not New Delhi.

Source: PIB/MEA | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2023 (India's bilateral trade agreements)

Q5

With reference to DRDO's Ballistic Missile Defence tests in June 2026: (1) AD-1 is designed for exo-atmospheric interception. (2) AD-2 is the endo-atmospheric (lower-tier) interceptor. (3) The trials were conducted at ITR Chandipur in Andhra Pradesh. Which is/are correct? Moderate

Answer: (1) and (2) only. ITR Chandipur is in Balasore district, Odisha — NOT Andhra Pradesh.

Source: DRDO/PIB | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2022 (Defence indigenisation)

Q6

With reference to the Aravalli judgment (March 2026), consider: (1) The Supreme Court held that ecological quality, not green cover, determines if land is a 'forest'. (2) The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 applies only to recorded forest land. (3) The SC constituted an HPC to examine Aravalli demarcation. Which is/are correct? Medium

Answer: (1) and (3) only. Statement 2 is incorrect — FCA 1980 applies beyond recorded forests (Godavarman, 1996 broadened its scope).

Source: SC/newsonair | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2019 (Role of judiciary in environmental protection)

Q7

Mission Mausam is a programme under which ministry? (A) Ministry of Science and Technology (B) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (C) Ministry of Earth Sciences (D) Ministry of Civil Aviation Easy

Answer: (C) Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES). IMD is under MoES.

Source: MoES/IMD | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2020 (IMD and disaster preparedness)

Q8

In the HAM (Hybrid Annuity Model) for highway construction: (1) Government pays 40% of the project cost upfront. (2) The concessionaire recovers the balance through toll collection only. (3) NHAI is the implementing agency under MoRTH. Which is/are correct? Moderate

Answer: (1) and (3) only. HAM recovers balance via annuity (not only toll) — this is a key difference from BOT-Toll.

Source: NHAI/MoRTH | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2023 (Infrastructure financing models)

Q9

The Jagannath Temple in Puri is governed by which act? (A) Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 (B) Shree Jagannath Temple Act, 1954 (C) Religious Endowments Act, 1863 (D) Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites Act, 1958 Hard

Answer: (B) Shree Jagannath Temple Act, 1954 — a state act of Odisha.

Source: PIB | PYQ resemblance: GS1 (Indian heritage); GS2 (State legislation)

Q10

Consider: (1) Oman is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). (2) India's GCC trade stands at approximately \$180 billion annually. (3) India has signed CEPA agreements with the UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Which is/are correct? Moderate

Answer: (1) and (2) only. As of June 2026, India has signed CEPA with UAE and Oman — not yet Saudi Arabia.

Source: MEA | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2023 (India's Gulf policy)

- Q11** With reference to the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM): (1) It taxes carbon-intensive imports entering the EU. (2) It entered its execution phase in 2026. (3) Indian steel and cement exporters are directly affected. Which is/are correct? **Moderate**

Answer: All (1), (2), and (3) are correct.

Source: SOE 2026/CSE | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2022 (Climate change and trade)

- Q12** The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), which publishes the Global Peace Index, is headquartered in: (A) Geneva (B) Washington D.C. (C) Sydney (D) London **Easy**

Answer: (C) Sydney, Australia.

Source: IEP | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2019 (International organisations and their HQs)

- Q13** NASM-MR recently in news refers to: (A) A space launch vehicle (B) A naval anti-ship missile (C) A surface-to-air missile (D) A nuclear-capable cruise missile **Moderate**

Answer: (B) Naval Anti-Ship Missile – Medium Range, developed by DRDO.

Source: DRDO/PIB | PYQ resemblance: GS3 2023 (DRDO and indigenous defence systems)

- Q14** Which of the following is/are correct about Slovakia? (1) Slovakia became independent via the 'Velvet Divorce' on January 1, 1993. (2) Its capital is Prague. (3) It is a member of both NATO and the European Union. **Easy**

Answer: (1) and (3) only. Statement 2 is incorrect — Prague is the capital of the Czech Republic; Bratislava is Slovakia's capital.

Source: Tribune India/MEA | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2022 (India's bilateral relations in Europe)

- Q15** The PFRDA's 'StAR NPS Platform' is associated with: (A) Digital onboarding of pension subscribers (B) A new stock trading platform (C) Stellar astronomical research network (D) A strategic reserves framework **Easy**

Answer: (A) Seamless and Transparent Account Registration (StAR) for NPS digital onboarding of pension subscribers.

Source: PFRDA/PIB | PYQ resemblance: GS2 2022 (Social security and pension reforms)

§5 Mains Questions

GS3 — Defence & Security

"India's successful testing of AD-1 and AD-2 interceptors marks a strategic inflection point." Critically evaluate India's Ballistic Missile Defence capability and its implications for strategic stability in South Asia. (250 words)

Hint: Cover endo vs exo-atmospheric tiers → Mission Sudarshan Chakra → two-front threat (China+Pakistan) → BMD and deterrence theory (stability-instability paradox) → conclusion on self-reliance.

GS2 — International Relations

Analyse the strategic and economic significance of the India–Oman CEPA (2026) in the context of India's extended neighbourhood policy, energy security, and diaspora diplomacy. (250 words)

Hint: CEPA's trade access → Hormuz bypass → GCC diaspora and remittances → Act West policy → compare with India-UAE CEPA → IMEC connectivity.

GS2 — Governance

Examine the evolving role of NHRC in the digital age with reference to cyber fraud and 'digital arrest' scams. What institutional and legislative reforms are needed to strengthen India's human rights protection architecture? (150 words)

Hint: NHRC's quasi-judicial limitations → IT Act gaps → DPDP Act 2023 → need for dedicated digital rights legislation → international models (GDPR).

GS3 — Environment

Critically examine the Supreme Court's evolving role in defining and protecting forests in India, with reference to the Godavarman case (1996) and the Aravalli judgment (March 2026). (250 words)

Hint: FCA 1980 → Godavarman (forest = ecological quality, not recorded status) → Aravalli 2026 (green cover ≠ ecological quality) → HPC constituted → mining freeze → judicial environmentalism debate.

GS2 — Social Sector

Critically examine the potential of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission in achieving Universal Health Coverage in India. What challenges threaten its equitable implementation? (150 words)

Hint: ABHA's 90 cr milestone → digital divide in rural India → DPDP Act 2023 and data privacy → interoperability with private sector → lessons from Estonia's e-Health model.

GS3 — Infrastructure

How does large-scale infrastructure investment via CCEA-approved National Highway projects contribute to India's logistics efficiency, regional connectivity, and the Blue Economy? (150 words)

Hint: PM Gati Shakti → HAM/BOT models → Logistics Cost reduction (India at ~14% GDP, target 8%) → Odisha coastal highway + Paradip port + Blue Economy → Viksit Bharat 2047.

\$6 Answer Writing Value Addition

"Forests are not merely trees — they are the circulatory system of the Earth, and their protection is a constitutional obligation, not a policy option."

— Adapted from T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India (1996) discourse

Use in: GS3 Environment (Forest Conservation, Aravalli judgment, judicial environmentalism answers)

"Peace is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Use in: GS2 IR (Global Peace Index critique, India's internal security)

"Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence is not just about manufacturing — it is about strategic autonomy."

— Context: India's DPP 2020 and Indigenisation Policy

Use in: GS3 Defence (BMD, DRDO, Positive Indigenisation List answers)

Topic	Key Data / Fact	Source
Cyber Fraud	India lost ₹52,976 crore to cyber fraud in 6 years; ~8% from digital arrest scams	NHRC, 2026
ABDM	90 crore ABHA health IDs created; ABHA = 14-digit identifier (voluntary)	NHA, 2026
India–Slovakia Visit	First-ever Indian PM visit to Slovakia; Bratislava meeting with PM Fico + President Pellegrini; Defence + AI + EU market access	Tribune India/ANI, June 2026
Global Peace Index	India: 127/163 (score 2.409, -3 places); Iceland = most peaceful	IEP GPI 2026
Aravalli SC Judgment	Ecological quality ≠ green cover for forest definition (Mar 2026); HPC constituted June 2026; mining freeze; FCA 1980 + Godavarman 1996	Supreme Court, June 2026
NH Projects	₹24,249 crore, 4 projects, 494+ km, Bihar/Telangana/Odisha	CCEA, June 2026

Topic	Key Data / Fact	Source
BMD Shield	AD-1 (exo-atmospheric, long-range) + AD-2 (endo-atmospheric, lower-tier); NASM-MR maiden trial; ITR Chandipur, Balasore, Odisha	DRDO/PIB, June 2026

\$7 AKADEMIA Direct Hit Tracker

2 POLITY & GOVERNANCE STORIES	2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STORIES	1 DEFENCE & SECURITY STORY
1 SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY STORY	1 ECONOMY STORY	1 ENVIRONMENT STORY
6 PLACES IN NEWS	15 PRELIMS MCQS	6 MAINS QUESTIONS
4 ETHICS CASES	7 NEWS CARDS (PART I+II)	3 QUOTE & DATA POINTS

GS Distribution Today: GS2: Governance + IR + Social Sector (50%) | GS3: Defence + S&T + Economy + Environment (40%) | GS4: Ethics (10%) |
Syllabus coverage: Polity, IR, Defence, Science, Economy, Environment, Ethics — all 5 papers covered.

★ THEIAS AKADEMIA — PROOF OF PRECISION

UPSC CSE Prelims 2026 Results

In what critics called the most unpredictable Prelims paper in a decade —

48

QUESTIONS FROM
ANTIM ASSURED 100+

7

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE DOCUMENT

6

QUESTIONS FROM
A SINGLE CLASS

Our students had seen 48 questions before the paper was opened.

This is not luck. This is TheIAS Akademia.

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