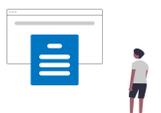

Law, Policy and Governance



[Daily snippets](#)

1. [Munawar Faruqui gets ad interim bail](#)

- The Supreme Court granted ad interim bail to comedian Munawar Faruqui in a case registered against him by the Madhya Pradesh police for hurting religious sentiments. Justice Nariman said the allegations against Mr. Faruqui were vague. He noted that the police had not complied with the **procedure prescribed under Section 41 of the CrPC**.
- The SC, in a scathing judgment in *Arnesh Kumar versus State of Bihar in 2014*, had warned States and their police from **depriving personal liberty** without following due process of law.

2. [Journalists' union wants ban lifted on reporting stir](#)

- The **Delhi Union of Journalists** condemned Delhi Police's decision to prohibit reporters from meeting protesting farmers at the Singhu border. The union urged Delhi Police and the Union Home Ministry to lift the 'ban' on reporting farmers' protests.

3. [Regulatory code for OTT content soon](#)

- Twenty-one MPs cutting across party lines have sought an answer from the government about the content on **over-the-top (OTT) platforms** such as Netflix and Amazon Prime, asking whether the Centre was aware that such platforms were full of content with "*sex, violence, abuse, vulgarity and disrespect to religious sentiments*". **Information and Broadcasting Minister Prakash Javadekar** recently said his Ministry would soon come up with a regulatory code on the content on these platforms.

4. [NITI Aayog seeks to track impact of green verdicts](#)

- The NITI Aayog - the government's apex think tank - has commissioned a study that seeks to examine the *"unintended economic consequences"* of judicial decisions that have **hindered and stalled big ticket projects on environmental grounds**.
- A perusal of the document appears to suggest that **judgments that negatively impact major infrastructure projects** don't adequately consider the economic fallout - in terms of loss of jobs and revenue. Doing so, it reckons, would contribute to public discourse among policymakers for promoting an *"economically responsible approach by judiciary"* in its decisions.

5. [PM lauds the judiciary for safeguarding people's rights](#)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the judiciary for *safeguarding people's rights and personal liberty* even during the most challenging times and prioritising national interests whenever the occasion demanded.
- Releasing a postage stamp to mark the **diamond jubilee of the Gujarat High Court**, Mr. Modi said the Supreme Court had conducted the highest number of hearings via videoconference in the world during the pandemic.

6. [Government regulations and tech platforms](#)

- The Centre has issued notice to Twitter after the microblogging site **restored more than 250 accounts** that had been suspended earlier on the government's 'legal demand'. The government wants the platform to comply with its earlier order of January 31 by which it was asked to **block accounts and a controversial hashtag** that spoke of an impending 'genocide' of farmers for allegedly promoting misinformation about the protests, adversely affecting public order.
- Twitter reinstated the accounts and tweets on its own and later refused to go back on the decision, contending that it **found no violation of its policy**. In India, **the Information Technology Act, 2000**, as amended from time to time, *governs all activities related to the use of computer resources*. It covers all 'intermediaries' who play a role in the use of computer resources and electronic records.
- Intermediaries are required to *preserve and retain specified information* in a manner and format prescribed by the Centre for a specified duration. Contravention of this provision may attract a prison term that may go up to three years, besides a fine.
- **In Shreya Singhal vs U.O.I (2015)**, the Supreme Court read down the provision to mean that the intermediaries ought to act only *"upon receiving actual knowledge that a court order has been passed, asking [them] to expeditiously remove or disable access to certain material"*.

National News/ Interventions



[Daily snippets](#)

1. [Pfizer India withdraws vaccine application](#)

- Pfizer India has withdrawn its application with India's **Drug Controller General of India (DCGI)** to allow its vaccine to be made available in India.

- On Wednesday, an expert committee of the **DCGI declined to approve the vaccine** on the ground that there were reports of "*palsy, anaphylaxis and other Severe Adverse Events*" after the vaccine's approvals in some countries and it still wasn't clear if this was connected to vaccination.
- After being approved in the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union, Pfizer also applied for the vaccine to be made available in India under '**emergency use listing**' conditions. This is the clause under which **Covishield and Covaxin** have been approved in India.

2. [With public library movement, Jamtara turns a new page](#)

- A library movement developed in a short span of time in **Jharkhand's Jamtara district** is receiving a steady flow of students and helping them turn a new page. The district's love for books assumes huge significance as it has the dubious distinction of being the "**phishing capital of India**".
- Many youth, mostly dropouts in the 15-35 age group, have been turning to cybercrime to earn a few quick bucks. Police personnel from 22 out of 28 Indian States have visited the tiny district in search of cyber fraudsters in the past few years. It is said that the majority of online fraud calls received by people across the country emanate from the district. **Netflix's 2020 crime drama, Jamtara**, was based on this.

3. [Police to approach Google to find 'toolkit' creator](#)

- To identify the authors of the '*toolkit*', which was shared on Google Docs, the Delhi police will write to Google to get the IP (internet protocol) address or the location from where the '*toolkit*' document was created and uploaded on the social media platform.
- The officer said that they are taking legal help and writing to Google to get more details about the uploader and creator of the '*toolkit*'. On Thursday, the Delhi police cyber cell had **registered an FIR to investigate an "international conspiracy"** to defame the country. A police officer said that they have registered a First Information Report into the matter after a Twitter handle had shared a '*toolkit*' on Twitter but deleted it later. No names have been mentioned in the FIR, the officer said.

4. [Whopping 900% rise in rejection of crop insurance claims](#)

- The number of farmers' crop insurance claims that were rejected by insurance companies under the Centre's flagship **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** multiplied 10 times in just two years, according to data provided by **Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar** in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha on Friday.
- In 2017-18, the number of rejected claims was 92,869. In the next year, 2018-19, the figure more than doubled to 2.04 lakh. By 2019-20, it was 9.28 lakh, a whopping 900% increase.
- The question came from Manas Ranjan Bhunia, Trinamool Congress MP, who asked whether farmers were denied crop insurance claims by insurance companies, the details of cases reported from different States in those particular years, and the steps the government was taking in this regard.
- In response, Mr. Tomar said under the PMFBY, there was actually no need to file crop loss claims in case of widespread natural calamities such as drought or flood, as claims were calculated on the basis of shortfall in yield of the whole unit. At the end of the season, prevented sowing and midseason adversity claims were settled on the basis of an area approach for which yield data and crop damage reports were provided by the State governments concerned.
- However, there was a **different process when it came to risks impacting smaller areas** such as losses due to localised risks of hailstorms, landslips, inundation, cloud burst, or natural fire. Such losses were calculated on the basis of crop loss assessment at individual insured farm levels.

- Farmers informed such crop losses to the insurance company, the State government or financial institutions, and their claims were assessed by a joint committee with representatives from the State government and the insurance company. *"The companies can reject claims on various grounds,"* he said.

5. [China unlikely to collude with Pak. to target India: IAF chief](#)

- China would lose moral authority if it colluded with Pakistan to target India, said **Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal (ACM) R.K.S. Bhaduria** on Friday. He noted that he did not see China getting into a collusive kind of arrangement in a conflict situation to start with.
- ACM Bhaduria said the fall in the fighter squadron strength of the Air Force had been arrested. The order for **83 Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) being awarded to the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** early this week at Aero India and aircraft deliveries beginning early 2024 would ensure that the numbers would keep going up.
- The first LCA MK1A squadron would be made in 2024 and operationalised in a year after that. While the phasing out of the MiG21s had caused a dip in squadron strength, last year the IAF constituted the first Rafale squadron and has so far inducted 11 jets.

6. [FSSAI caps trans fats in food products](#)

- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** has amended its rules to cap **trans fatty acids (TFAs)** in food products, just weeks after it tightened the norms for oils and fats.
- *"Food products in which edible oils and fats are used as an ingredient shall not contain industrial trans fatty acids more than 2% by mass of the total oils/fats present in the product, on and from 1st January, 2022,"* said the revised regulations notified. In December, the FSSAI had capped TFAs in oils and fats to 3% by 2021, and 2% by 2022 from the current levels of 5%.
- **What are Trans fatty acids (TFAs)?** Trans Fatty acids are created in an industrial process that *adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils* to make them more solid, increase shelf life of food items and for use as an adulterant as they are cheap. They are present in baked, fried and processed foods as well as adulterated ghee, which becomes solid at room temperature. They are the most harmful form of fats as they clog arteries and cause hypertension, heart attacks and other cardiovascular diseases. The WHO has called for the elimination of industrially produced trans fatty acids from the **global food supply by 2023**.

7. [Ka-226T to be 33% indigenous: HAL](#)

- The total indigenous content of the **Ka-226T utility helicopters**, to be jointly manufactured locally by India and Russia with **Transfer of Technology (ToT)**, is between 27%-33%, said Chairman and MD of **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)** R. Madhavan. The final deal is held up as the Russian proposal of 62% indigenous content in assembled helicopters falls short of the tender requirement of 70%.
- The Ka226T is meant to replace the **ageing and obsolete Cheetah and Chetak** fleet of the Army and Air Force and the total technical life of these will start finishing from 2023 onwards.
- In 2015, India and Russia had concluded an **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)** for at least 200 Ka-226T twin engine utility helicopters estimated to cost over \$1 billion with 60 helicopters to be directly imported and the remaining 140 manufactured locally. The first helicopter would be delivered within 36 months from the signing of the contract.

8. [Sri Lanka settles \\$400 mn currency swap with India](#)

- **The Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL)** settled a **\$400 million currency swap facility from the Reserve Bank (RBI) of India** last week. The update sparked speculation in local media that India may have *"abruptly terminated"* the agreement, following **Colombo's decision to pull out of a 2019 agreement to develop a Colombo Port terminal jointly with India and Japan**. However, both countries clarified that the developments were not linked.

- The CBSL obtained the swap facility on July 31, 2020, for an initial period of three months, to cope with the **severe economic impact of the pandemic**. Subsequently, the RBI provided a three month rollover at CBSL's request, until February 1, 2021.
- COVID-19 struck Sri Lanka in March 2020, putting its foreign reserves under strain since, as tourism, worker remittances and exports were badly hit. However, the Rajapaksa administration has said it will not seek an IMF bailout. **Colombo has instead sought further loans from China**, among others, and additional currency swap facilities from both India and China. Neither China nor India has responded to Colombo's debt freeze request. **Sri Lanka owes over \$5 billion to China and \$960 million to India in debt repayment.**

9. **Political parties registrations**

- The contribution reports of only 78 (3.39%) of the total **2,301 registered unrecognised political parties** are available in the public domain for 2018-19, while the reports of only 82 such parties (3.56%) for 2017-18 are uploaded on the respective State Chief Electoral Officers' websites, according to the **Association For Democratic Reforms (ADR)**.
- There are **2,360 political parties registered with the Election Commission of India** and 2,301 or 97.50% of them are unrecognised. Either *newly registered parties* or those which have *not secured enough percentage of votes* in Assembly or General Elections to become a State party or those which have *never contested in elections* since being registered are considered unrecognised parties. Such parties don't enjoy all the benefits extended to the recognised parties.



International NEWS/Events/ Personalities

Daily snippets

1. **Hundreds protest in Myanmar amid arrest of key Suu Kyi aide**

- Several hundred teachers and students protested at a Myanmar university as the military widened a dragnet against officials ousted in a **coup that has drawn global condemnation** and the threat of new sanctions.
- The rally took place after **the arrest of Win Htein**, a key aide to *de facto* leader **Aung Sang Suu Kyi**, who has not been seen in public since being detained along with **President Win Myint**. Monday's putsch ended the country's 10-year dalliance with democracy that followed decades of oppressive junta rule, and sparked outrage and calls by the U.S. President Joe Biden for the generals to relinquish power.
- On Friday, around 200 teachers and students at **Yangon's Dagon University** staged a rally, where they displayed a **three-finger salute borrowed from Thailand's democracy movements**, and sang a popular revolution song.
- Students chanted "*Long live Mother Suu*" and carried **red flags, the colour of Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party**. A similar protest took place across town in Yangon University. In Naypyitaw, dozens of employees from several Ministries posed for group photographs wearing red ribbons and flashing the democracy symbol. **Twitter services experienced disruptions in Myanmar** on Friday, with some saying it could not be used even with a VPN service

2. [Indonesia bans 'hijab' in schools](#)

- Indonesia has banned schools from **forcing girls to wear Islamic "hijab" headscarves** after the case of a Christian pupil pressured to cover up sparked outrage in the world's most populous Muslim nation. The move was applauded by activists, who say non-Muslim girls have been forced for years to wear a hijab in parts of the country. State schools will face sanctions if they fail to comply with the edict from Education Minister Nadiem Makarim. Schools that violate the rules could see their government funding cut, he added.

3. [Imran Khan calls for restoration of Article 370](#)

- **Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan** called upon India to restore Article 370 in Kashmir. He said Kashmiris should be free to decide their own future. Addressing a rally to observe '**Kashmir Solidarity Day**', the Pakistan Prime Minister said he would raise his voice for Kashmir's aspirations.
- The comments came just days after **Army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa** expressed the desire for a "*dignified*" resolution to the Kashmir issue. The Ministry of External Affairs had said in response that the "*onus*" for creating "*normal neighbourly relations*" was on Pakistan.

4. [U.S. moves to end terror designation of Houthis](#)

- The U.S. has moved to delist **Yemen's Houthi rebels** as a terrorist organisation, removing a block that humanitarian groups said jeopardised crucial aid as the country's warring sides cautiously welcomed a push for peace by President Joe Biden.
- The grinding **six year war in Yemen** has killed tens of thousands and displaced millions, triggering what the UN calls the **world's worst humanitarian disaster**. Nearly 80% of Yemen's population need some form of aid for survival, says the UN. The move comes a day after Mr. Biden announced an **end to U.S. support for the Saudi-led offensive operations in Yemen**.

5. [China approves second domestic vaccine](#)

- China's drug authorities have given "*conditional*" approval for a second COVID-19 vaccine, Sinovac's CoronaVac jab, the pharmaceutical company said on Saturday. The vaccine has already been rolled out to key groups at higher risk of exposure to coronavirus but Saturday's approval allows for its use on the general public.
- The approval comes after multiple domestic and overseas trials of the vaccine in countries including Brazil and Turkey, although "*efficacy and safety results need to be further confirmed*", Sinovac said in a statement. Fellow Chinese pharmaceutical company Sinopharm received a similar conditional green light in December to put its vaccine on the market.
- Sinovac said **trials in Brazil had shown around 50% efficacy** in preventing infection and 80% efficacy in preventing cases requiring medical intervention. **Sinopharm said in December that its vaccine had a 79.34% efficacy rate**, lower than rival jabs developed in the West by **PfizerBioNTech and Moderna — with 95 and 94% rates**, respectively.



Opinions and Analysis

Analysis : [Privacy concerns over Haryana's ID scheme](#)

1. All schools have been directed to collect required information for Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal's unique identity card scheme - **Parivar Pehchan Patra (PPP)**. It is mandatory for all families to register themselves on the PPP portal to avail the **benefits of the social security schemes** of the State government.
2. Though the PPP scheme was formally launched in July 2019 to achieve Haryana government's vision for **"paperless" and "faceless"** delivery of schemes, services and benefits offered by the government, it has got a renewed push over the past few months with the government collecting data through schools, residents' welfare associations and holding special camps across the State to enrol families, especially those who are likely to avail benefits of government schemes such as below poverty line families, social security benefit recipients etc.
3. Of the estimated 65 lakh families in Haryana, around 48 lakh have voluntarily enrolled for PPP and provided the data on 'self-declaration mode', claimed the Haryana government. The family ID or PPP, an **eight digit alpha numeric ID**, is provided to those who are residents of Haryana. A registration ID is provided to those who live in Haryana but have not completed residency requirements. As of now, **over 110 services and schemes** being delivered to citizens via the Saral platform have been linked to the PPP scheme.
4. Critics point out that a lot of data is being sought, well above and beyond what is required to deliver education and related services. The demand for Aadhaar numbers - evidently, virtually mandatory - is in violation of the Supreme Court guidelines - especially if no State benefits or subsidies are being sought by the residents. Additionally, in the **absence of privacy laws** in India, or any indication of data protection Standard Operating Procedures being followed for this exercise there is a potential for abuse of this data including, but not limited to, its immediate leakage and availability to spammers at the very least, and perhaps more insidious uses.
5. The authorities concerned, however, said that the data in PPP would be used only for planning purposes and for delivery of government schemes, subsidies, benefits and services and not for any private purpose. *"Only data that is legitimately sought for implementation of government schemes, subsidies, benefits or services is put together and not any other private data."*

Commentary : [A prisoner's tragedy, a nation's shame](#)

1. **Background :**
 - Perarivalan has been in prison for almost 30 years for his role in the **assassination of Rajiv Gandhi** during the 1991 election campaign. **The Perarivalan case** is an example of state agencies sacrificing the lives of those with a 'peripheral role' in a conspiracy.
2. **The story so far**
 - The reason for prolonged injustice at the core of his conviction is his confession to a police officer, a violent legacy of the TADA that was carried forward under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). While **confessions to a police officer are inadmissible as evidence** under the Indian Evidence Act (to protect people from coerced police confessions), **terrorism legislations such as TADA and POTA** made confessions to the police admissible as long as it was made to an officer not lower than the rank of Superintendent of Police.
 - The trail of this Case was damning until Mr. Thiagarajan came out in November 2013 and made the startling revelation that he had not recorded Perarivalan's 'confession' accurately. It was a glaring omission that

completely changed the nature of Perarivalan's involvement. In effect, Perarivalan was convicted based on a **manipulated confession to a police officer**.

3. How the case stands now

- Having served **30 years of life imprisonment** for the conspiracy to murder, his effort to get a remission under the **Code of Criminal Procedure** was rejected by the Central Government in April 2018.
- On February 4, the Centre informed the Court that the **Governor had finally considered Perarivalan's pardon** and had decided that the President alone had the power to consider such an application. It is a shocking abdication of a constitutional duty and a **blatantly unconstitutional manoeuvre** to ignore the advice of the State government, which the Governor is constitutionally bound to follow.



Economics and Finance

Daily snippets

1. PSUs involved in farm sector will not be sold

- Public sector firms engaged in activities allied to the farm sector, such as provision of seeds to farmers, or procurement and distribution of food for the public distribution system, will not be up for sale under the **new disinvestment policy** announced in the Budget. **NITI Aayog** would be in charge of recommending the **firms in strategic sectors** that should be retained, considered for privatisation or merger or 'subsidiarisation' with another public sector firm, or simply closed.

2. New e-commerce policy in the offing

- The commerce and industry ministry is working on a new e-commerce policy which will have various features such as those related to **data and consumer rights**. The other issues to be looked upon while formulating the policy are about the **problem of counterfeit products, packaging and rules of origin**, the DPIIT official said.

3. India's pharma exports on the rise

- India's exports of pharmaceutical products during April-December 2020-21 **grew by 12.4% to \$17.57 billion**, Parliament was informed on Friday. Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Hardeep Singh Puri said, *"During 2019-20, India's exports of pharmaceuticals were \$20.58 billion with a growth rate of 7.6% over the previous year. Total exports during April-December 2020-21 were at \$17.57 billion, registering a growth rate of 12.4% per cent over the same period of the previous year."*

4. DFI Bill will help set up private infra funding

- The legislation for setting up a **development finance institution to fund infrastructure projects** will allow for such institutions to be formed by the private sector as well, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said. While the

Budget has provided a fiscal **push for capital expenditure** in infrastructure sectors with a multiplier effect, it relies on private sector participation in a big way, she added.

- *“Though the government will provide some capital for the proposed Development Finance Institution, the DFI will also raise capital from the market,”* the Minister said. *“In addition, the DFI Bill will provide legislative space for private DFIs.”*

5. **Retail investors to be able to buy government securities directly**

- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** said it would allow retail investors to **open gilt accounts** with the central bank to invest in government securities directly and without the help of intermediaries. *“It is proposed to provide retail investors with online access to the government securities market - both primary and secondary - directly through the Reserve Bank (Retail Direct),”* **RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das** said in a statement. *“This will broaden the investor base and provide retail investors with enhanced access to participate in the government securities market,”* he added.
- *“Allowing retail participation in the G-Sec market is a bold step towards the financialisation of a vast pool of domestic savings and could be a gamechanger,”* said SBI Chairman Dinesh Khara.

6. **RBI to have a growth-supportive stance**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said it would retain an accommodative policy stance into the next financial year to help revive growth on a durable basis even as it held interest rates and vowed to ensure inflation remains within target. The RBI also lowered its **projection for retail inflation** for the current quarter and announced that it would **gradually restore the Cash Reserve Ratio** - which had been cut to address the pandemic’s fallout - to 4% in two phases by May 22 as part of a ‘normalisation process’.
- After breaching the RBI’s upper tolerance threshold of 6% for six consecutive months through November, **CPI inflation** had eased to 4.6% in December, helped by an appreciable softening in vegetable prices and a base effect. **Core inflation**, excluding food and fuel, however, remained elevated at 5.5% in December with only a marginal moderation from a month earlier.
- **What is Cash Reserve Ratio ?** The reserve requirement is a central bank regulation that sets the minimum amount of reserves that must be held by a commercial bank. The minimum reserve is generally determined by the central bank to be no less than a specified percentage of the amount of deposit liabilities the commercial bank owes to its customers
- **What is core inflation ?** Core inflation represents the long run trend in the price level. In measuring long run inflation, transitory price changes should be excluded. One way of accomplishing this is by excluding items frequently subject to volatile prices, like food and energy.

7. **Indian Internet start-ups and getting listed**

- India’s Internet start-ups that operate businesses **ranging from food delivery to e-commerce** to online insurance, are now on the cusp of listing, a report has said. *“The growing scale and maturity of India’s Internet economy is starting to create more value and investment opportunities”.* *“More than \$60 billion has been invested in India’s Internet start-ups in the past five years, with around \$12 billion in 2020 alone,”* HSBC Global Research said in the report. The report put the total sector value (ex-fintech) to reach \$180 billion by 2025.
 - E-Commerce is the largest opportunity, **worth an estimated \$67 billion by 2025**, it said adding this was worth \$31 billion 2019 after expanding at an impressive five-year CAGR of 39%. EdTech is the second largest opportunity with a **market of \$48 billion** by 2025.
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Science & Technology and Environment

Daily snippets

1. Water scarcity likely in the Himalayan catchment if warming continues

- The coldly white snowpacks and glaciers of the Himalayas that make for a picturesque panorama are also important sources of water for about a billion people who live in the **basins of the Indus, Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers**. But with rising global temperatures, these snowpacks and glaciers, which are highly sensitive, are affected. This, in turn, affects the Himalayan hydrology. **India, Nepal, Pakistan and China** hugely depend on these Himalayan rivers for their daily needs and energy production.
 - The results show that the **glacier-melt increases about 15% to 70% in a warmer environment** with its present volume, but then decreases to 3%–38% substantially when the glacier volumes shrink. However, such a decrease can be compensated if there is increased rainfall and if a wetter scenario persists.
 - **Proper water management and governance** are urgently required. Changing patterns of precipitation systems — Indian Summer Monsoon and Western Disturbances — are important for the future situation of water resources in Himalayan catchments.
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Suggested Readings

1. Constitutional validity of the Sedition Law, [Link to article](#)
 2. Press Freedom, [Link to article](#)
 3. Plea Bargaining in India, [Link to article](#)
 4. Cryptocurrency and regulations of official digital currency bill, 2021, [Link to article](#)
 5. Silence of the accused, [Link to article](#)
 6. Bad Banks and the NPA crisis, [Link to article](#)
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Sources referred to : [The Hindu](#), [The Indian Express](#), [Live Law](#), [Bar & Bench](#)

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